

parisian attic cancer dragon

by alex penland

1. dragon

the dragon is dying. it knows this. it is lying on its side on a bed in an attic by a window which looks out over the champs-elysees. the bed is old. the dragon is old. the dragon is too old for this shit.

it coughs.

once again a knight appears. he's breathing heavily, because he had to climb quite a lot of stairs to get here and it was not a pleasant experience in full plate armor. the knight wonders how the dragon got up the stairs and into the attic but when he asks, the dragon says disdainfully, i flew.

go away, the dragon adds, i will pay you so much money just to go away. take whatever you want from the horde and leave me to die.

the knight considers this and asks are you going to terrorize paris? are you going to burn our crops and steal our maidens? how can i trust that you will not destroy the city?

the dragon asks, how do you expect me to fit through the fucking window?

2. dolphin

the dolphin was dying of cancer until they lifted it together into the attic. this proved adept at solving the cancer problem. it died of suffocation instead.

3. donkey

the donkey will not go down the stairs but insists on standing at the door to look at them. it does not trust that the attic ceiling will not fall. it does not trust that the torn and papered walls will not collapse. it does not trust that the floor will not crumble beneath it.

it stands at the top of the stairs and brays with all the air in what remains of its lungs until one of its neighbors comes to feed it. that only encourages the damn thing and eventually it just keeps screaming and screaming and they're not sure if it's pain or hunger or if it just wants attention or what but when the damn thing finally dies they all actually miss it a little. paris had nothing to do with this one. the donkey never even looked out the window.

4. dodo

the dodo bird has a line of visitors which extend down the stair and through the door and into the street and down the champs-elysees. everyone from everywhere wishes to see it. they wish to pluck its feathers and take its blood. they wish to observe its behavior. the parisian apartment is full of natural scientists, perched on the armoire or hidden under the desk or the bed or the faded oriental carpet. the dodo bird shits on the rug. they all take notes. and samples.

5. dragonfly

insects do not often die of cancer. they don't live long enough. this one is a fluke. this one is old. this one is very old. this one is too old for this shit. it has seen a dozen generations come and go over the years and finally its eternal life will come to a rest. it sits on the windowsill and watches people pass below it, wondering, how long do i have left? what is it like to be gone? when i am dead who will remember me?

the apartment is silent and full of dust. there is a summer breeze playing through the rooms. when the maid comes to tidy up she is not up to date on the current tenant of the apartment. She thinks another bug got in and so she bothers the dragonfly through the window and out into the sun.

