

PHOBIAS AND FETISHES

My brother, in his retirement, has a part time job transporting stiffes from the hospital or the morgue to a funeral home. Last week, he made a forty-five minute trip to the funeral home and then discovered he had been given the wrong body. He returned to the morgue and this time asked to check the corpse. The tag on the toe of the new body identified the person as being the right one, but he had been burnt once, so he lifted the covering a bit and was confronted with a hairy leg. He knew the corpse he wanted was a woman. Was this another error? Well, turns out it was the right person. A two hundred and fifty pound hairy-legged woman. He doesn't give a hoot what the stiff looks like, he says, but intensely dislikes overweight people because of their heavy bodies.

Is this the kind of job you want? He says he likes it. Good hours (dead people aren't in a hurry), nice people (the live ones), peace and quiet (yeah, lots of that), no back seat drivers (he'd leap out of the vehicle if there was) and pretty good pay. In spite of all these perks of the job, deal me out. I think handling and transporting dead people would be way too creepy.

My desire to stay clear of the dead ones started, I think, with my Uncle Theodore. He was a nice man, eking out a living by mixed farming and odd jobs in New Brunswick. When Uncle Theodore died, he was laid out in the parlor of the farmhouse. I'm not sure whether he was embalmed or not. The business of embalming is a bizarre and horrible ritual, and with the weather being cold and the family being poor it's not likely he suffered that indignity. But he must have been attended by a mortician, because he had unrealistically red cheeks and the identical smile he wore when he had just heard a dirty joke. Thus each morning, as I passed though the parlor on the way for breakfast, there was Uncle Theodore smirking up at me. "Uhh, Hello Uncle Theodore," I'd mutter as I passed by. What are you supposed to say? It seemed wrong to ignore him and pass by in silence, and I couldn't say a prayer every time without feeling a hypocrite.

Today, I have a fear of dead bodies and I fully realize this feeling is irrational. If I felt the same terror of automobiles or people or houses, I'd see someone to try and get straight, because you can't avoid these things. But dead people can be avoided most of the time so this phobia isn't a real inconvenience. Besides, I'm not offending the dead people. They are, after all, dead.

Without doing any research (which sounds like work and the Mirror gets what they pay for), I think phobias are when you're irrationally frightened of something, and fetishes are when you're irrationally attracted to something. An attraction to dead people would be necrophilia. I suppose a fear of them would be necrophobia.

I think I can understand and sympathize with almost any fetish. There are two fetishes, though, that are way beyond my ken. Yes, dead people is one. Being attracted to dead people is way weird. I won't even try to understand it and even discussing it makes my skin crawl. The other one is foot fetishes. How can anyone be attracted to the human foot? Pale, veined, smelly, crookedy toes, ugly old toenails....it's no wonder feet are hidden in socks and then doubly disguised with shoes. How can people get off on feet? I think feet are best ignored. At the beach, I think there should be a bylaw passed that those who aren't in the water must keep their feet buried in the sand. Both my brother-in-laws are in the feet business. They make shoes for those that have deformed feet. Ooooh, what a job. I know they're providing a valuable service because they relieve the constant and excruciating pain endured by their

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