

Ghastly Women by Elise Tebeau

The light hits my face. The window is a kilometer away. I blink, once, twice, three times. My mind has not caught up to my hands as I drag the ink in lines across my parchment. When I am finished, it is filled with splotches from when I forgot to keep my arm in motion. It happened seven times; I counted.

This room is very big. Nina calls it spacious. She says it looks lovely and pats my cheeks with that look in her eye that means she thinks I am very far away and does not know how to reach me. Maybe I do not want to be reached. People never like it when I say that. My dress is made of chiffon. It is a gray that resembles a cremated corpse and every time I see the frills on the sleeves I have to fight not to scream and rip off my entire arm along with the dress. I wouldn't do it. It would scare everyone too much, and Nina hates blood. It would be very selfish to force her to clean up blood if she hates it. I am making excuses. Maybe tomorrow I'll set the mouse traps and see if I can catch my fingers before they slip away again. It is very hard to draw without my fingers.

I go to sleep at eight pm, but I never really sleep. I simply unlatch my eyelids and unzip my skin and walk right out. It's brilliant, they always think I am asleep! At midnight the faeries come to get me and bring me to their lair where they dress me in flowers and weave my hair into the prettiest braids. The braids are always gone in the morning and I never can remember when they left. Night is my favorite because the faeries don't tell me I'm crazy. They never tell me I'm seeing things that aren't there. They flit and fly and when I tell them I want to be one of them, they shake their little heads sadly from side to side. They say I am too big to have wings like they do. I don't mind much anymore though, it is enough to be welcomed by someone though I am different. Nina is a human. I like her, but not as much as the faeries. Nina cleans my dresses and undergarments and combs my hair and tells the men in white coats things about me that aren't quite true. The men in white coats always find time to inject me with some sharp thing or another after their talks with Nina. That is why I like the faeries better, they never say things that result in a stabbing of my moth eaten flesh.

I think it is April when a man in a suit coat and shiny shoes arrives at the house and talks to me in a Boston accent. I giggle when he speaks. He does not seem to like that much, but I simply can't help it! He tells me there is something very wrong with me and I giggle again because the way he says his words are all thick like he has a whole jar of molasses in his voice and that reminds me of gingerbread cookies and I get distracted so Nina hits me on the head with a rolled up piece of parchment which I do not appreciate one bit. The window is open and the white curtains keep blowing back and forth, and I am reminded of how much I love the wind. Anyhow, the man says I need help. He says he is taking me away. I don't want to be taken away so I slide off the chair and bite his left ankle where his shiny shoes do not cover his skin. In retrospect, that probably only convinced him to take me away even more.

Three men in white coats drag me out to a carriage pulled by two white horses. I want to pet them, but the men say I am not allowed. I think that is very unfair. The ride to wherever "away" is takes a very long time. I gnaw on my fingernails and by the time we get there, I only have bloody stubs. Some woman in blue says they look ghastly. I think ghastly is my new favorite word. I hope everything I do is ghastly.

I am pulled inside a building made of bricks and painted a very ugly yellow. They bandage my hands and force a rainbow of pills down my throat. I don't swallow a single one. There are lots of other women here. They must have been called crazy too. I thought I saw an especially short one foaming at the mouth, but perhaps I am only imagining it.

I have been here 13 days and the food gets drier every day. In two days, I plan to escape. The faeries have not visited me in a while and the night gets dreadfully boring without them. I am hoping if I search hard enough, I will be able to find their lair, and they will take me in like a changeling child. A woman by the name of Miranda tried to talk to me today; I grabbed her hair and pulled a chunk of it out. There was much screaming and chaos that ensued. Now, I'm locked in a room with soft white walls and I'm unable to find the door. They must have built this room around me, but I can't seem to recall that happening.

I have started pulling out my hairs, one by one, and braiding them very tightly. The faeries finally came to visit last night. They told me in order to escape the white room I need a rope, so I'm making my own.

The faeries lied.