

Novel Snippet: Headless Dude In The Morning (from DTD)

written by Holly

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Got 1201 words this morning, and a scene that I just cannot keep to myself.

This was not a planned part of the scene, which I also love. I was just looking for a nice place to end it, playing with the physics of my world, when I tripped over a Muse Bomb I planted last week and hadn't really considered, and it blew up for me into the snippet below.

What you need to know: Aleksa Kralj is in the police station, where she is reporting three men who broke into her apartment intending to kill her, and the man who jumped out of her closet to kill all three of them. She has been in the police station for a very long time, telling and retelling her story to a detective who does not seem to be buying it.

She has just discovered that her building has hidden security cameras in the hallways. And now she is about to hear WHY the detective isn't happy with her description of events.

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It might have been that she'd been awake more than twenty-four hours straight, it might have been that she needed food or a drink...or it might have been a premonition that what she was about to hear next was going to be the reason she didn't get any sleep for the next twenty-four hours. But Aleksa's stomach flipped, and she thought for a moment she was going to throw up.

"You all right?"

"Tired," she said. "Just tired. What sort of problem, Detective Hammond?"

"Only minutes after you and Mr. Fox left your apartment, the video monitor shows a short, bright flash of light through the broken door. For about three minutes after that, we have nothing. Then the man you describe as Derok, wearing a camel coat with no bloodstains on it, a dark silk shirt, jeans, and dark running shoes, and carrying a large black bag full of all the materials you and Mr. Fox did not take with you—since those items were not found at the scene—came racing out of your apartment, turned in the opposite direction the two of you had taken when fleeing, used the stairs, and fled the building."

"He...what?"

"The man you describe as Derok was not dead, and not headless. There were no bodies in your apartment. There was no blood in your apartment. All the wreckage you described was there, but not the gladius. Two sets of men's clothes were on the floor more or less where you described men who had been wearing them, but though it looked very much like someone wore those close, and did not take them off, no one, living or dead, was wearing them when we found them."

"Then...there was no head in the hall?"

Detective Hammond rubbed his eyes with his thumbs. "Oh, I

wish that were true. That would have made sense. But, well...we found the head in the hall. And we found the blood spatters from the second half—and only the second half—of its journey there on the ceiling, the floor, and the walls. When we type-matched the blood we swabbed from your face with the blood from the head in the hall, we got a a match. DNA testing takes a while, but we'll get that back, too, eventually. I'm sure, in the way we can usually be sure about bad news, that it, too, will match. In the meantime, though—"

He shrugged.

The room spun slowly around Aleksa, and only settled when she leaned her elbows on the table and remembered to inhale. "Derok...ran out of my apartment. Alive. Unharmed. After taking what remained of my research notes." She tried to make the pieces fit, but some were suddenly missing. And one was conspicuously extra.

She looked into Detective Hammond's eyes, hoping for reassurance, or perhaps a sign that he was joking. She didn't find any help there.

"Where are the bodies? And whose is the head in the hallway? Does it look like Derok's? Long blond hair, blue eyes..."

Detective Hammond met her gaze with weary frustration. "Looks just like him. And just like the man who ran from your apartment after you left to come here. And now, Dr. Kralj," he said, "you understand my problem."