

The Immortality Problem - By R Scott

The problem is that you never wake up anywhere nice. This time it's inside a dumpster. Last time someone tipped you into an open septic tank. You hardly ever wake up somewhere warm and safe. You never thought you'd feel nostalgic for a shallow grave, but you do.

Commented [IA1]: Second person, present tense is an unusual choice. Some people will bounce off it.

It makes you miss the days when people laid their dead out on a bed. You got to wake up comfortable sometimes. The best this century has to offer is a refrigerated drawer in a county morgue where escape is easy at least. The staff are always on the lookout for people disturbing the corpses, not the corpses disturbing themselves.

Commented [IA2]: Citation needed here. This is used to indicate the age of the speaker, but it's a very fuzzy time marker. Bed burials were a Saxon practice in the 7th century. In later centuries, typically, the dead were not laid out on the bed. Bedding is expensive. The dead rot and leak, so most often they were wrapped in a shroud and placed on the table or in the coffin. (Double-check me on this, because I haven't looked this up.) 18th and 19th century saw the beginning of funeral parlours, tests to prevent burying alive, etc. If he is an American, then he may have been familiar with embalming, which came into wide spread practice during Civil War so the dead soldiers could be successfully shipped home. This needs to be more specific.

You crawl out of the dumpster, glad at least that it contained dry trash for the most part. You're still going to get some weird looks on the way home, but at least you won't smell.

Commented [IA3]: Odd phrasing here. A couple of variations that might flow better: You crawl out of the dumpster. At least it contains dry trash, for the most part. You crawl out of the dumpster, grateful it contained dry trash, for the most part. You crawl out of the dumpster. At least it contained dry trash. You have to appreciate the small gifts life throws your way.

When you check your pockets you are unsurprised to find your wallet gone. Of course it's gone. You were just mugged and shot by (you think) accident. The kid looked nearly as frightened as you were.

Commented [IA4]: Stink or reek would work better here. If you can use a strong verb, go for it.

The cellphone is gone too, but you still have your keys. They were in an inner pocket and harder to locate in a hurried search. Home is only a block away. You don't have a car, but you think it would be nice to not have to break into your own apartment... unless, of course, someone hasn't already done it for you.

Commented [IA5]: Redundant.

Broken glass in the stairwell door greets you as you approach. There are no lights on, but your id was in your wallet. It would have been easy for the kid to find your home. You live on the second floor and he doesn't know to press the door into the frame after he closes it until he hears the lock click so the door is now ajar.

Commented [IA6]: Has done it

Commented [IA7]: More specific. What sort of ID, driver license, Orc Town Citizen Card, Interstellar Pilot Permit? You have an opportunity here to identify the speaker.

Your cat is on top of the bookshelves making a noise like a hovering

Commented [IA8]: I think the sentence is trying to explain that the door is temperamental and doesn't lock unless pulled shut. The way the sentence is structured makes it appear that this behavior is the feature of all doors on all second floors.

UFO, but otherwise unharmed. You can chart the kid's priorities by the wreckage he's left behind. The kitchen cabinets are standing open and there's a light on in your bathroom. You can hear him in here rattling pill bottles. Food first then salable goods. Medications will sell faster than electronics and are harder to trace. You don't have anything recreational like Valium though so he might yet go for the entertainment center.

He hasn't found the gun safe. It's set into the wall behind your false closet and you have to pull on the doorframe to get to it. You don't take a gun, but instead the taser. You take up a place by the bathroom where door will hide you when he opens it. He doesn't see you until it's too late and by the time he realizes something is wrong he's down twitching on the carpet. You use some zip ties from under the sink to contain him and retrieve your wallet from his jacket. The cash is missing, but you find it folded into his shoe.

As soon as he opens his eyes, it's clear he knows you. You still have blood all down your front. Why wouldn't he recognize you? You stuff a sock into his mouth when he opens it to scream. You wish you had less practice doing that.

Commented [IA9]: Nice

Commented [IA10]: Nice

Commented [IA11]: You specified charting the wreckage. Charting implies a series of points. Think about nholding the camera and following the trail to the bathroom. He walks into the apartment and immediately see the kitchen. That means he is in the open floor apartment where kitchen and living room share the same space, usually sectioned off by a counter or the island. If he is aiming for food, why would he go for the cabinets but not the fridge? Is the fridge open? Once he's done with food, the next logical target is electronics. Is there a TV stand he can rummage? Did he knock the books of the shelves looking for a hidden stash of money? Show the trail to the bathroom, because if nothing else is touched, as the next sentence suggests, then it's not a trackable wreckage. This is also a good opportunity to tag the speaker's personality by showing the apartment. What sort of living space is it?

Commented [IA12]: I am not understanding this. How does pulling on the doorframe give me access to the safe? Sliding a false wall aside would make sense, but a doorframe is a fixed frame around an opening in the wall. Needs more explanation.

Commented [IA13]: He is a burglar. Why would he close the door behind himself? I would want to keep all the doors open, except for the front door, because he doesn't know if his victim lives alone. He would want to hear if someone came through the front door. If he closes the bathroom door, then he is trapped in there.

Commented [IA14]: Nice

Commented [IA15]: Logical issue: when the speaker crawled out of the dumpster, he/she was relieved that he didn't stink and was worried about weird looks. "Blood all down your front" is a much more worrying factor here. When people see a blood covered human wandering around, they generally notice. This either needs to be mentioned in the beginning or it needs to be changed here. If nobody is bothered by blood, then perhaps say why.