

BAD THINGS HAPPENED IN QUARANTINE

Flashfiction horror: The Life-Changing Magic of Eliminating Refuse.

It was the worst thing I've ever done and I didn't even think about it, I said, "work will set you free," like it was just an office store commercial jingle, and about twenty minutes later I realized it was a Nazi slogan. I said it to my kids. I'm an awful mother.

Isn't it true? Oh my God, Mother of the Year.

What I was working on was just this really simple thing. I want everything to get organized during this quarantine situation. It's just, it has to be that way. We're not going to get anywhere cooped up in our houses with detritus piling up everywhere. And the kids should help. I don't care they're 5 and 7 years old. They can help clean and organize.

If you haven't done it yourself, I have some advice. Get started now. I mean, my house, to be honest, is flippin' organized now. Every. Single. Thing. Rows. That's my mantra. Put the groceries in rows, put the laundry in rows, put the mail in rows, organize first--then set out the work schedule. They will do it. Just as you ordered. Even your husband. They will. You just make sure they do it.

My house? Honestly? A well oiled machine at this point.

There were some challenges to be blunt about it. What we had--I don't know what sort of craziness went on in your neck of the woods during quarantine--but our problem was, all these animals that people let go because they couldn't, or just wouldn't, care for them.

Stray cats, mainly. Don't know what I would've done if they were dogs or something bigger. I heard people were letting *horses* go because of cost. People are sickening. We have more of those Muslim people moving in than I care to count. Well, I mean, not a *lot* of them to be truthful, but you know, to me, it's a concern. And I know that's politically incorrect. We have plenty of those disgusting white supremacist pigs, too, I'm sure, because I see them riding around making noise on their motorcycles with their fat tattooed bodies and I'm sure those inky symbols are some kind of secret code I don't get.

Any case: it's organization you need above all in times like these.

My oldest son is just old enough to start to be a bother. Because he questions things. He found the rows of stray cats lined up in the freezer. I had labeled them with the dates of when I got rid of them.

Took a little explaining, but at that age, you still have hope of distracting them.

I got him to work on organizing all the old DVDs alphabetically, and all the groceries in the cabinets, and then the toiletries upstairs. I already

had little Steph outside putting the fallen leaves in neat rows on the lawn. In a way, it's a hilarious way to keep her busy, but I swear I did feel just a sizzle when I looked out and saw it.

The hubbie says, aren't you going a little far? And I'm thinking, watch it, pal, I'm in charge of this space right here, don't make me get hostile. He's part Lebanese and I always suspected that part of him made him a questioner when it comes to purity and cleanliness, and I guess that's reading a lot into things, but it is a funny little suspicion I have.

So what I have planned today is getting the freezer back under control. You have to have room for food supplies in the old quarantine empty-shelves-at-the-store phenomenon, but, freezer space is useful for keeping a large variety of things. I'm just thinking of neighbors, I might have need of a second huge freezer just to look after them, if things go that way.

Steph is about three and a half feet tall. Shawn is four foot one. They are very limber and I don't think it's necessary to break any bones or anything, nothing like that. It's just a question of fitting things in cleverly, and I know how to do that.

I've done it in my mind. That's key, and then you just make it happen.

Right now I have to put on my TV show, frivolous as it is, and so help me, it better be quiet around here when I do so.