

Tea-time for Schuyler

There was once a dollhouse in a little girl's bedroom, and inside it there were a great many halls and doors. Oh, the games this little girl played! It would be pointless to try and describe how much fun she had playing those games, though, because no reader would understand, and because she is a pile of mouldering bones and stains upon the floor where her flesh used to be.

Much as this grim discovery might put off some people, it did not put off Schuyler. No, he was, indeed, ecstatic to make this discovery, having spotted her through a window whilst tied to a crude chair and dressed in a *frock*. After all, it stood to reason, since the little girl was dead, perhaps--

"*DRINK YOUR TEA!*"

The eye at the window was as wide as two hands spread out, and a foot and forearm and perhaps a dozen other articles of luncheon Schuyler had pried from the bodies of the dead, or about the size of his outstretched arms. It was also possessed of a large, transparent boil on the white, which held some manner of parasite that swirled and swam with a great deal of agitation in its pocket of clouded murk each time Fee-fi wetly blinked.

Schuyler blinked his slit green eyes at Fee-fi's single great one, and writhed his tail in the air behind him. The frock chafed awfully -- besides which, Schuyler was *beautiful*, and wearing clothes hid his lovely sable fur. "I cannot move my arms," he said, very reasonably, "for you have tied me to a chair, Fee-fi."

"*I SAID, DRINK YOUR TEA!*" Fee-fi roared, her foetid breath a mighty wind blowing his ears back, very nearly as foul as if it had been a broken wind instead.

Schuyler shook his head violently, ears flicking about, and focussed on the tea-set before him. It was cracked, yes, and a mysterious brown ooze had dried into those cracks, leaving the tea-china most agreeably bonelike, much like the little girl's corpse outside. Which, as Schuyler had been thinking, was most cheering, as it implied that--

"*DRINK IT!*" The tea-room split in twain as Fee-fi the giant pulled open the doll's house carelessly, the old wood creaking and groaning as weights shifted and something cracked far above Schuyler, perhaps in the bedrooms or attic.

Shortly, a doll plunged past him, through the basement, and to the bedroom floor with the familiar, satisfying *blutch* of a decay-softened corpse breaking to pieces.

"Yes!" Schuyler said, with enthusiasm. "Lovely! Mmm! What lovely tea! Glug glug, I am certainly a very lucky person to have been given the opportunity to drink such lovely tea! It tastes of, of--" Schuyler realized he had no idea what tea tasted like, and thus improvised "--of powdered bonemeal in bile! And string! How lovely it is to taste string in my tea!"

Fee-fi thundered about the dollhouse, upon her five colossal feet, and turned her other eye -- a pustulent mass of smaller blinking eyes, the size of peoples' eyes rather than giants', sewn into the wet hollow of her skull to make up for the missing eye -- to the crack in the opened dollhouse. She drew away into the cavernous depths of the bedroom, and plodded away in heavy, earthshaking steps.

Schuyler let his breathing ease, and flexed his claws -- not for the first time - but all he could reach was his own posterior, his limbs twisted near to tearing by the ship's rope Fee-fi had used like twine. For the comfort of it, he clawed himself, just to feel the heat of blood upon his hands, and strained to peer out of the window.

There! The dead little girl, her yard-thick bones spread out across a patch of bedroom floor the size of a city market. Was there any clue there, as to how the giant child had been struck down and murdered? Perhaps Schuyler could glean some small detail, and pass word to his friend and partner in crimes large and small, petty and mortal, the lightfearing Gaylord? Surely Gaylord would slay the creature, and so save the day (and Schuyler)?

Indeed, could Schuyler not already hear the excited high-pitched squealing Gaylord made when in delightful-to-watch agony or in murderous frenzy?

Thundering footsteps, in a five-wise gallop, returned to rattle the dollhouse on its shoddy foundations, causing dust to shower from the ceiling above. Crude fingers, each one the size of a boar's arse, stuffed another chair into the room, opposite Schuyler, a shrieking thing bound into it with broken bat-wings and cord.

"*POUR TEA FOR GUEST!*"

"Typical."

"I tried to poison her in the dark," Gaylord cried, waving a wing broken back and bent on itself, "I tried to rescue you, I tried--"

Schuyler flattened his ears to his skull. "What have I told you about poisoning giants, Gaylord?"

"I do not remember," little Gaylord moaned.

"Do it by drinking the poison yourself and getting yourself *eaten!*"

"I did not want to die, I could not bring myself to make such a sacrifice! Oh, forgive me!"

"*POUR TEA FOR GUEST!*" Fee-fi roared, saliva splattering upon the window-frame's broken glass.

Gaylord and Schuyler both flinched, tense in their chairs, whilst the miasma of her breath cut through their nostrils and burrowed into their sinuses with an especially faecal sensation, like having someone shit up their noses.

"I don't suppose we have any other friends we might poison and induce Fee-fi to eat, do we, Gaylord?"

"No," little Gaylord replied, "we do not."

"Typical. Well, let us practice our manners so we might make such a friend in the future, Gaylord. Do pour the tea, won't you?"