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## Danse Macabre

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# Danse Macabre

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The phone rang, but William Donaghue didn't bother answering it. He was busy polishing his antique knick-knacks, a daily routine that required most of his attention. In his hands there lay a small figurine of a couple dancing. However, the little porcelain man and woman were not attached to the wooden base properly; their hands had the smallest of spaces between them, such that they were not actually touching. Despite this, the figurine was one of William's favorites, and he took extra care when cleaning it.

There was a low beep in the distance, and a familiar voice reached William's ears.

*"Hello, Mr. Donaghue? This is Dr. Ramirez calling. It's time for your monthly check-up again. I hope that you can make it this time. I know it's been hard since last April, but you really should try and..."*

The voice trailed off as William continued polishing. He looked down at the porcelain man and woman once more. The woman's dress was a sunny yellow, with a pink sash tied into a bow at the waist. The man's suit was light blue, with a white shirt appearing like a small cloud underneath his buttoned coat. The man and woman had painted faces as well, but over the years the black outlines of happy smiles and shining expressions chipped away, until only the carvings of the faces were left, which could only be seen in the right light.

The mail slot opened, and William could just make out the sound of a letter hitting the carpet floor. He got up, carrying the figurine with him, and made his way towards the door of his small apartment. He took the letter and sat back down into his recliner. Opening the envelope, he read:

*Dear Dad,*

*I hope you're doing okay. Everything is great out here. Richard made a big contract with a foreign company. He says he's bound to get a promotion soon. And guess what? David said his first word! I'm sorry we haven't been able to come and visit much over the past year, but Richard says he's been so...*

William set the letter down on the table beside him, still holding the figurine loosely in his hands. He closed his eye for just a moment. He often felt tired as of late.

The image was hazy and blinding, but the two figures dancing were clear enough. The woman wasn't wearing yellow at all, but white, with fine lace and a floral pattern covering the trim. Her face was clearer too; such sharp features, that coy smile and electric-blue eyes. The young man beside her was beaming, with the usual stupid smile he wore whenever they were together. Their hands were just a hair's breadth away from each other then. If he only reached out a little more...

William Donaghue was found three days later. The landlady had noticed the smell and called for the police. They found William sitting in his recliner, a faint smile on his lips; he died peacefully in his sleep, the coroner said. On the ground beside him was a knick-knack. The two pieces had been knocked out of the base, and laid separate on the floor. From that day on, William's daughter Carol would often smile at the knick-knack, for when she fixed it, she found that the figurine now fit together perfectly, the couple's hands finally touching as they danced.