

## The Cadaver

No one had noticed that Santiago Perez was dead since his corpse kept on walking even though his heart had stopped beating. He had trained his body to follow a strict routine that would continue even after his demise because funerals were so expensive for an old man working without pension in a foreign land. He had no friends or family besides the mops and vacuum cleaners which he kept in a stuffy old basement. Santiago decided long ago that his funeral should be attended only by cleaning appliances that could sympathize with his solitary condition.

Santiago preserved an illusion of vitality that fooled even the most scrutinizing observers. He persisted on cleaning the toilets which he had maintained for years with a youthful vigor that was missing during his life. He sang and danced while mopping the floors. He ate lunch with a family of sparrows and learned the long-forgotten language of all birds. He mastered the fine art of whistling a symphony using a leaf. His zeal for the simple pleasures of existence was so great that he shared his bliss by selling tears of joy caught in green glass bottles for a dollar each.

Only when his last pair of teeth fell out did the others realize his death. He was ungraciously removed when a foul stench of decay began to seep from his pores. Nonetheless, this did not dissuade him from working for his long-overdue funeral. He kept on sweeping avenues and parking lots and alleyways during winter. Passersby would pay his unfortunate corpse to stop for fear that he would sweep the entire country off the map. He wouldn't listen. He had the tenacity which the living envies in the dead. It soon became apparent that Santiago Perez would toil forever and ever until the last bits of trash vanish from the face of the earth, until nothing remains, not even the sea.

JOSH BARTOLOME