

## Suits

by Madeleine Dougherty

Charles was a precise man. He rose from his bed promptly at five-thirty, showered, and began to dress. He always wore a suit. There were all kinds of suits. Plain black suits for bestowing sympathy on a grieving widow. Finely-tailored suits for practicing law. Crappy suits for practicing good law. Ill-fitting suits for people who are trying to appear to be someone else or haven't the money to look like anyone else. Beautiful suits that CEO's wear like second skins. Suits worn by grooms and prom dates of which the former should hopefully look better in than the latter. Weird suits that only ever appear on runways and are never worn by real people. Drip-dry suits for those without irons or the desire to use them. Plaid suits for people without any sense of fashion, or substitute teachers. Male suits. Female suits. Suits for bodies that no longer have the exuberance to put on anything ever again. Charles wore a fine, black suit with a gray tie and a yellow handkerchief in the pocket. He wore it to every occasion. It lent a certain sophistication to the events in which he was primarily causing bodies to only ever need one more suit. The handkerchief was exchanged for a dark blue or black one if he found it pertinent to bestow his condolences on the mourners who have survived his trips to their fair cities.

He loved the yellow handkerchief. He picked it out especially. It wasn't gold, too pretentious, or warm like honey or the sun. It wasn't pale or sickly. It was flat yellow like ballgame-hotdog mustard or fuzz-ball bumble bees. He spent a long time deciding on that color. White was too sharp, too calculating, like chess. Black was too metaphorical, the devil all in black. And matching his handkerchief to his gray tie was right out in his book. Green was too

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feline-ish. Blue matched his eyes. Again, matching was automatically disallowed, except when trying to imitate sympathy. Brown might have worked, but like black, a little too dark. Red was laughable as a choice. He didn't want to advertise his profession. And purple was too much like the Joker and simply did not go with his blonde hair. His yellow just worked in all ways. It enhanced his eyes, as the tailor had said, it balanced the gray and black, and it made a statement, so that he wouldn't have to.