

1990

Auntie Insane

Jackie Mummaugh

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/calliope>



Part of the Creative Writing Commons

Recommended Citation

Mummaugh, Jackie (1990) "Auntie Insane," *Calliope (1954-2001)*: Vol. 1990 , Article 4.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/calliope/vol1990/iss1/4>

This Fiction is brought to you for free and open access by the English at ScholarWorks at WMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Calliope (1954-2001) by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu.

Auntie Insane

Jackie Mummaugh

"Morning! What do you want for breakfast?" the large brown eyes peeked into my room.

"Gimme a minute to..." I mumbled.

"Eggs? Okay. Good choice." She scurried to the kitchen.

I shut my bedroom door, then sighed. Already, after two weeks my head throbbed with terrible thoughts of taking my Aunt to an institution for elderly people with mental disabilities. I still wasn't over how her own children abandoned her, after her Alzheimer's set in. I guess the reason she was here was because the thought of her in an institution made me shiver. But my life as an artist was ruined! I never had time to myself. This was terrible. Was I stupid enough to take on a responsibility I couldn't handle? She was driving me nuts. I staggered to the kitchen.

"Fried, poached, scrambled, or raw?" her forehead wrinkled.

"Fried."

"I only know how to scramble."

"Then, why ... never mind!" I was exasperated.

"Scrambled it is," she laughed. "It's fun to be here with you. I love all the colors. Hospitals have no colors. Everything here is so bright. It's so..." she rambled on. The chatter box continued while I got out the things needed for breakfast. I handed her an egg. Her wrinkled hands crushed it. The slime dripped between her fingers. Tears welled in her eyes.

"I killed it! Dead! Gone!" she sobbed.

I led her to the couch. She buried her face in my shoulder.

"It's gone..." She began to calm down. I wasn't about to bring the incident back to life. I was all prepared to let it slip by, but she was still babbling into the cushions. Suddenly she sat up.

"I'm sorry," she whined. "But Mom hates it when we spill stuff, Janey. Go clean your messy-garbage-eggy-breakfast."

"I'm not Jane--"

"Go! she roared.

I was frightened. I got up and backed away from her. She stretched her short chunky body out on the couch and began to hum the National Anthem.

Cowardly, I turned to the kitchen. I began to wipe up the cracked shell. Her humming was continuous. This lady couldn't possibly be related to me. There couldn't be some kind of crazy gene running through my bloodstream.

"There is no way..." I began to tell the stove. I caught myself complaining to an inanimate object. I touched my forehead as if to find if it was still there.

I decided to take a nap. I told my aunt I was going to lie

down awhile. She thought it was a good idea, or so she let on. I relaxed in peace under warm covers. Then I began to doze off.

Suddenly, I heard a large crash. It sounded as if it came from the basement. I worried about my aunt. I hoped she was alright. Hopefully nothing bad happened. I rushed downstairs to the basement.

There in front of my canvas, sitting on a stool, was my aunt. She turned to me and gave me a look of disgust.

"I'm so glad you could finally join us," she said.

I looked around for someone else to complete the "us." She went on as if nothing happened. Over towards the side of the room, I saw a few broken paint jars. They could be replaced.

My aunt clicked her tongue to get my attention. She began to lecture me about my painting. She explained it perfectly. I felt the same way when I had been working on it. She took a brush and splashed a streak of yellow on it. I lost my breath.

"Doesn't it look much gooder now?" she asked.

I had to agree. It was unbelievable. I was amazed how well she interpreted it. Now it looked even more complete than before.

She accidentally rubbed yellow in her thin silver hair. She didn't seem to mind. Then she started to paint the cement floor. I assumed it was a self-portrait. I was too intrigued to prevent her from going on. She painted brown eyes, rosy cheeks, and deformed lips. It looked like her before she met with old age. Her head snapped up.

"Kimmie--where is the dog?" she demanded an answer.

"Well, I am not Kimmie, and there is no dog here, and there won't be. I don't understand what is wrong with you. I know what it is but I can't handle it. Isn't it about time to get better?"

"This act you always put on is not only annoying, but stupid and foolish." I couldn't believe that I let all that anger slip out.

A single tear slid down her flabby cheek. I felt like a monster. She had no one who really loved her. I couldn't believe I yelled at her.

"Muffy was run over," she whispered.

"Muffy who?"

"Doggie Heaven is where she is. The big green car killed her. She's squashed. I saw her guts on the tires!"

"Stop it! Stop it!" I was disgusted.

She ran to her room. I heard the door slam. I couldn't do this. She never let me have a minute to myself. She needed professional help. Sorrow overcame me as I dialed the emergency number that an institution gave me.

I walked to my room, thinking of a way to tell her it was time to leave. I paced around my bed. I remembered that she understood my paintings. I rushed downstairs to the basement to settle at my easel.

About an hour later I walked upstairs for a snack. On the table was a single carnation from the flower garden. A tear-stained note was next to it. In purple crayon, it read, "Sorry so much. Muffy sorry too."

I felt terrible. She was just an old woman doing her best to live the rest of her life in peace. So what if she slipped up

once in a while. Nobody should expect perfection unless he is prepared to give it. This wasn't her fault. Before she was fine. I even remembered when she was the only one who encouraged me to become an artist. All I had then was her. She was the only one who cared. I almost felt as though I was in debt to her. I owed her at least this much. When I was young she treated me as her own child. She made her children act as though I was their sister. I couldn't watch her slip any further away from reality.

I walked to the phone. I pushed the institution's numbers again. This was the right thing to do. Although she wasn't exactly what people would call sane, I knew I could take care of her. I needed not only to prove it to myself, but to my Auntie, too.