

Poor Eva is covered with flowers¹ – or, this is how they found her. Encased by them all and cut at the stem, for a garland meant for his grave, the petals, fallen one to the other, are woven, in. Out now and unfinished, here she lies. It seems that she had fallen into a recline, as they had to the floor – and still now, poppies and long-purples line her lingered frame.

A crease has folded white, her gown clutched taut and under itself, drawn up to here, the small of her back and pulled between her legs, thighs fixed firm and waxen and the swell of her stomach, still, heavy. Bent dead to her weight is the mattress.

The scateurs left lay heavy in her lap, an elbow bent around, a sharp-lined shadow – blue – at her waist, stops where her side meets the bed's, the linen once more clean. A stain dried hard to the white of her gown, like his brush-stroke shadows on her turned to dirt, discursively. Two circles once wetted down to her breast are now a milky brown and brittle. Would flake and pull if picked at, scrubbed, a leak now long dried up.

There, in her room on the third, with her arm astride the drape of the bed that hangs soft and always at her side, she ended her short confinement.

And how that arm just hangs, its incline down, to the right, though tilted up a crick where it meets the curve of her pillow, the pillow that holds her head, limp – as in his painting. An unfair portrayal, she had thought and much the same, a slackened wrist, her elbow bare, seemingly cold and outwardly boneless, her hand a half-way clutch, no more than then and now no longer, capable of wielding a brush.

A peony is cast right to the edge of her frame – seemingly tumbled and out of grasp, though whose I could not say. Had it escaped her own? Discarded and cut from the floral arrangement, the half-done garland meant for another, his death now six days passed?

And the window's sun washes her face and colours it a little, her eyes unshifting, open. An impression of warmth, it passes, she lays once again stuck still and waxen, a front of a plaster doll, not quite as before when he wiped her face for forty times, soft soaped and painted over – but oh, what a picture she makes.

Her head bowed up, her mouth left wide, left opened up unfinished – left agape. Lays on her lips a breath caught short and stilted. Her legs unbent, uncovered, her skin turned white below her knee, and grey where once was red.

Red and soft, squeezed oval, tight in her bloated leg a clot caught short of her lung and catching her breath. Stopped part-way in her calf; it stopped her there – choked and the size of a grape.

Left is a vase of fresh-cut flowers, violet, stalks a green and petals yet in bloom, and a glass of water, just a quarter full, bedside and beside her head - someone will have to empty it, now.

¹ Mme Auguste Manet to Berthe Morisot, 1883, in *The Correspondence of BERTHE MORISOT*, ed. Kathleen Adler and Tamar Garb (London: Camden Press Ltd, 1957), p.132.