



Elephants and Corpses

Kameron Hurley

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The corpse-jumping body mercenary Nev is used to filling other people's shoes. When his assistant Tera recognizes the most recent waterlogged cadaver they bought off the street, though, he finds that his new body is carrying more trouble than he bargained for.

Elephants and Corpses Details

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From Reader Review Elephants and Corpses for online ebook

Jessica ❁ ⇒ Silverbow ⇒ ❁ Rabid Reads-no-more says

Reviewed by: Rabid Reads

Nev is a body mercenary, a kind of necromancer who actually inhabits the bodies he reanimates. And he doesn't just reanimate them, he truly brings them back to life. The body. Not the (spirit of the) deceased. And he seems to revive them into better shape than they had ever been in their original incarnation.

Normally I would hate this kind of story, b/c while I hate all Dead Things, this type of scenario is what I hate the most of all the Dead Things.

BUT.

This was the second time I'd read ELEPHANTS AND CORPSES, and my love for it remains unchanged.

We don't know how old Nev is, b/c as long as there are corpses nearby, a body merc will never die, but we know that he's significantly older than his fifty-one-year-old body manager, Tera.

You: What's a body manager? o.O

Me: I had the exact same thought.

Body mercs apparently keep a stable of corpses, both for versatility (they are mercs after all) and for self-preservation. A body manager . . . helps maintain the collection. I think.

It's a twenty-five page story, there's only so much world-building, etc.

But more importantly, they also help their merc retain their humanity.

When all your human connections are long dead, and you primarily deal in death, you can become . . . detached.

Tera keeps Nev from becoming some kind of sociopath alien thing.

And Hurley conceals all of this, while dropping you into the middle of a crisis, and punching you right in the FEELS several times over. It took a page or two to adjust to the grossness of the concept, but the gross was quickly overwhelmed by the urgency that then somehow managed to spiral into heart-clinching introspection on what it means to be alive.

All in a few short pages. *tips hat*

You can read it for **FREE** here:

<http://www.tor.com/2015/05/13/elephants-and-corpses-kaameron-hurley/>

Trish says

As with many of tor.com's short stories and novellas, I stumbled over this today thanks to the review of another member. The cover design drew me in (as is the case with most of tor.com's stories).

This story is about a mercenary that can jump from one body of a deceased person to the next, making him/her effectively immortal. However, as his body manager (basically a help) points out: being alive is not the same as living and being alive in the biological sense also isn't enough. After they purchase a body, all hell breaks loose and Nev, through heartbreak, discovers his humanity.

What struck me was the world-building. The world depicted here is a mixture of ancient and steampunk scifi. Old and new. The future of religions is being addressed and there was a war not too long ago, too, by which the author portrays two ways people can be lost (chucked out of society when they are no longer useful, as well as the usual problem with cults) on top of the protagonist's struggle.

Really rather beautiful despite (or because of) the grittiness.

You can find the free story ***here*** .

Tamara says

4.5 stars

To him, though, the body was beautiful, because it was dead. The dead didn't kill your elephant or burn down your workshop. But the dead didn't give you turtles, either. Or haul your corpse around in case you needed it later. And unlike the guild said, some things, he knew now, were not as dead as they seemed. Not while those who loved them still breathed.

You can read it for free here.

A very touching and solid short story about a corpse-jumping body mercenar and his body manager. Life, death, missing people you've lost etc...

I loved this short story and wish it was longer so that interesting ideas it had like 'body merc' and that cult called God's could have developed and explained more properly..

Alina says

Very interesting, I would have liked to read more of it. The minus for me was the sometimes ambiguous wording: wasn't always sure who's the character talking and for figuring who was the sister I had to go back some paragraphs.. (this made it worth for me more of a 3.5+)

Jen says

Really good but I had to dock a star for the elephant. NOOO!!! NOT THE BABY ELEPHANT!!!! Not cool!

carol. says

Excellent.

<http://www.tor.com/2015/05/13/elephan...>

Olga Godim says

I've heard good things about this author, but I was doubtful. When I saw this short story on Tor.com, I thought it was a great opportunity to try a new author and see if we suit.

We don't.

The story is engrossing – I couldn't stop until I finished it – the world fantastic but surprisingly realistic, bleak and controversial, and the characters live and breathe on the pages. My problem with this tale is that I don't like the characters and I don't want to be in the gross and unjust world Hurley has crafted for her story. Everything is rotten in there: no beauty, no talent, no hope. If you like dark dystopia, this author might be for you, because the quality of writing is exceptional. This writer is, without a doubt, one of the best active in the genre today.

Stefan Bach says

"Bodies are only beautiful when they aren't yours."

A 25 pages - or 10 minutes - short story by Kameron Hurley, one of the most talented authors in fantasy genre today.

And she delivers with this very original story about a corpse-jumping mercenary and his everyday life in trading and inhabiting those corpses.

Now, what could one exactly achieve with such capability you may ask.

Well, you would be surprised.

If you're talented enough, you could use such predicament to your advantage and develop business around it. Something Nev, our main protagonist, certainly did.

For example, family can pay you to inhabit a corpse of their recently deceased member so that they can properly say their goodbyes etc. Opportunities are endless, indeed.

It's why Nev had fallen in love with bodies in the first place. When you spent time with the dead you could be anyone you wanted to be. They didn't know any better. They didn't want to have long conversations about it. They were vehicles. Transport. Tools. They were yours in a way that no living thing ever could be. But one day, when you stumble upon a high-ranking corpse, you could jeopardize your entire... let's say life savings work.

Certainly there's a novel material in this short story. One can only hope to read it some day.

Cathy (cathepsut) says

Interesting story about a body mercenary—someone who can inhabit corpses, bring them back to life to use or jump to other corpses when needed. Good thing during a war, not so much during peacetime. Nar, our MC, procures a body that is more trouble than it is worth.

This was fun and a concept I hadn't come across before . My kind of humour, nice plot twists, some inventive swearing, a cute ending.

Can be found here:

[Http://www.tor.com/2015/05/13/elephan...](http://www.tor.com/2015/05/13/elephan...)

daisy says

*"I don't care much for people," Nev said. "That was your mistake. You thought I'd care about the bodies, or Tera, or her sister, or any of the rest. I don't. I'm doing this for my fucking **elephant**."*

I really, really enjoyed this. Definitely want to see more of this world because the little snippets revealed in this short story have me hooked!

This short story is available on tor.com, so I'd highly recommend you pop on over and give it a read! :)

SUSAN *Nevertheless,she persisted* says

Loved this short story and really wish it had been a book.

Very original concept,great characters. Would read more by this author.

Tadiana ☆Night Owl? says

Final review, first posted on Fantasy Literature:

Nev has the ability to jump from a dying body into a nearby dead one, as long as he's actually touched the dead body. He keeps a cache of dead bodies on hand so he's never stuck for something for his soul to jump into. Perhaps unsurprisingly, there's some demand for body mercenaries like Nev, ranging from soldiering to a cheap party tricks to giving a grieving spouse a few more moments with their deceased loved one.

One day Nev and his assistant Tera purchase a newly dead body for his collection, and wind up with a lot of unexpected trouble from others who want the same body for their own purposes. A mixture of love and revenge impel Tera and Nev to pursue the matter further, rather than slinking away safely. This decision soon gets the two of them into a deep load of trouble, or perhaps into hot water ... or maybe just deep water. (view spoiler)

Kameron Hurley weaves in some interesting details about this world that, while they aren't directly pertinent to the story, add depth and complexity to it. There's Falid, a sweet miniature elephant that is the only living thing Nev really cares for, and the fact that in this society only women are allowed to own property. Although Nev has lived in a woman's body and apparently was originally born as one, he chooses to live as a man. Additionally, there are insights regarding attachment to others, and what it really means to be alive, that give this fantasy adventure tale some unexpected depth.

Free online: <http://www.tor.com/2015/05/13/elephan...>

Divine says

One thing that I could commend this for, is its exceptional world building. It isn't every day that you could get a compact and believable setting for a short story, especially one that tackles high fantasy. I love the whole idea of body mercs and I just wished the author would write a full novel or series(!!!!) about this. Recommend for all fantasy readers out there.

?Tash says

In 6,828 words Kameron Hurley tells us a story of a corpse-jumping body mercenary Nev, his blunt partner, an all-female cult after Nev's latest acquisition and a miniature elephant. One would think that there's too much going on, but Hurley pulls off a decent high fantasy, with interesting characters and solid world-building, given the number of words.

"...but living people need to care about things. Keeps you human. Keeps you alive. And that's my job, you know. Keeping you alive. Not just living."

Yes, even after all that, Hurley still manages to somewhat imbue the story with existential contemplation of what it truly means to be alive.

I think a One Republic gif is in order

karen says

Bodies are only beautiful when they aren't yours.

another fine, free tor short. these things are great because they allow you to sample authors completely risk-free! because it takes a special kind of author to be able to pull off a story whose concept revolves around a "corpse-jumping body mercenary," and i think for the most part, hurley nailed it.

she does a good job defining exactly what the heck a corpse-jumping body mercenary is (it's pretty much what it sounds like - a guy who can jump into any body he wants, provided it's dead and not *too* badly decomposed), and she fleshes out the world and characters well. there were a couple of times where i became

confused - just some difficulty following dialogue and mixing up the two characters, but that's likely on me, and not the fault of her writing.

but it's a strong story, with interesting characters, solid problem-resolution, and a wholly original premise. also, a trumpeting miniature elephant named falid. (view spoiler)

it feels good to be back on the tor train!

i know i have a lot of catching up to do!

read it for yourself here:

<http://www.tor.com/2015/05/13/elephan...>
