

## You Will Speak for the Dead

**R. A. Busby**

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In R. A. Busby's novella *You Will Speak for the Dead*, a house cleaner faces an unexpected personal crisis while wrestling with his most bizarre job yet.

Putrid kitchens, bug infestations, and massive piles of junk are all in a day's work for Paul and his fellow hoarder house cleaners. But their 982 Avirosa Avenue job is different from the start: the client refuses to say much about the house or its owner, a strange white substance fills the air within, and a large quantity of mushrooms are growing inside.

Not long after starting the work, a change comes over Paul. He begins having visions and memories that aren't his; his health begins to deteriorate. He develops a bond with the house's owner via her abundant keepsakes, which possess a living aura that allows Paul to interact with her without the two ever having met. As his feelings of connection to the house grow, it's up to Paul to discover the secret hiding within the mountains of debris that once represented someone's life.

The novel is most concerned with interconnectivity and the staying power of memories; its horror elements are minimal, beyond scattered instances of body horror. When Paul chooses to ignore each of his physical alterations soon after they appear, the potential for significant fright or revulsion diminishes. Instead, Paul's account of his life-changing experiences are centered, showing how working in the house alters his view of the world. He even breaks the fourth wall to try to relate to the audience at times—a habit that can be distracting.

In the revealing novella *You Will Speak for the Dead*, a house cleaner develops a new perspective on life after coming into contact with a mysterious presence at his newest assignment.

IAN DAILEY (September / October 2024)

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