

MAUDE MOLD

#23

by Stanley Lieber

TUMMY RUBBISH

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The Bifröst flag flapped on the front of Maude's new apartment building as she loaded old hard drives onto the little wooden shelf Plinth had mounted on her bedroom wall. Sometimes memories were good.

She secured the shelf with her thumbprint and locked her room. Spiro would still be at school, but he was far from the only little shit running around here. Some of them didn't even bother with their classes. They probably got in here when she was gone. Wait 'til she caught one...

"For it is the lot of some men to be assigned duties about which they may not speak. Such work is not for every man. But those who accept the burdens implicit in this silent labor realize a camaraderie and sense of value known to few. These memories cannot be stolen. They will last always, untarnished, ever better."

TAB2's stomach hurt. He removed his visor and tried to wipe the words away, but the unwanted message remained flashing in his near vision. God, Dad. Nearly two years past his installation date, he still wasn't used to this thing. Not really. They were always fixing things in front of his eyes. And then there were the waves and currents of pixel floaters, miscegenating disparate objects and connecting the square dots in a confusing moire that—he'd rather be left alone. Some conclusions he still wanted to stave off.

He was here.

"Hey, Maude," he said, as the older woman squinted down at him and exhaled purple smoke directly into his face.

"Stay out of my room," she said, and slammed the screen door behind her.