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## In My Bottom Drawer

I BELONG TO A FAMILY OF HOARDERS. I am referring to my personal, immediate family — my wife and my child. My parents and siblings recycle their possessions with ease, taking pride in their clean minimalistic living spaces. Our small house, however, is getting fuller by the day.

I'm not even sure I can identify half the items that litter our home. We're surrounded by endless objects we apparently love and with which we cannot imagine parting. My own minimalistic ambitions don't stand a chance in the presence of my wife and child, but when it comes to my work I'm every bit as guilty. I'm a hoarder of ideas. I never throw anything out. No narrative rumination, no half-baked character detail or high-concept pitch. I've got physical notes, folders, scripts and more, stuffed in boxes and drawers that I can't even locate...but I know they're here *somewhere. Somewhere.*

When I began writing I had a very tidy approach to planning and executing ideas. As I was self-publishing, every single project I gave birth to became a reality. There wasn't a bottom drawer as such – or even a middle drawer – there was just the page and then the finished article. But as time went on, I started working in the margins and my pile of discarded projects grew to be something of a concern.

These now live at the very bottom of the lowest drawer. Some ideas were simply distractions from a deadline. Some were passion projects I felt certain could work, if only I gave them enough time and space, which I



never did and never will. Some were commercial entities I thought could open up new publishing opportunities. I don't think I ever considered any of these projects as serious proposals, more fun sidelines. Most were never written, just planned and sketched with page after page of doodled notes.

The middle stratum of my drawer contains the projects that I've sent out on submission but have failed to place. Some were requested and developed with publishers, some were supported by arts funds, some were sent off spec with hope in their hearts. Each eventually met a grisly end. These are my willing cadavers. At regular intervals I return to this collection and pick the meat from the bones. Characters, scenes, plot strands — there always seems to be something worth extracting. Over time, each and every one of them will find a home, in a symbiotic sense at least.

Finally we reach the top tier. These are the ones I really care about. Like that famous optical illusion of the young woman hiding within the picture of the older lady (or the reverse) I'm constantly trying to locate the shape of them. They feel precious and filled with potential but they're delicate. This segment of my bottom drawer is the one I return to with trepidation. I fear, if I give them too much attention, if I settle on one shape over another, I'll misinterpret their essence and they'll begin the slow, steady slide down the pile. As of right now, they're perfect.

My wife and I talk about decluttering our lives all the time. Maybe it'll happen, maybe not, but I doubt I'll ever empty out that bottom drawer. My hoarder's avarice simply won't allow it.