



REGINA BRETT



## How many of us die unnoticed?

**T**he rent envelope sat outside Apartment 402 for days.

Bob, who lives down the hall, saw it and wondered why the Romanian guy hadn't picked it up. The Romanian guy went out for his daily walk promptly between 10 and 10:30 a.m. He'd nod or say hello as he passed. He returned home to The Breakers Apartments on Lake Avenue every day around 4 or 5 p.m.

The envelope was still there days later. It haunted Bob. "I'll wait one more day," he told himself. A day went by. Then another.

When he saw the building manager, Bob mentioned the rent envelope. When he came back the next morning, he asked, "Did you talk to the Romanian guy?" The building manager shook his head.

The Romanian man had been dead for two weeks. He had collapsed against the bathroom door. They had to take the

hinges off to get the body out.

For days, Bob checked the newspaper for the obituary. There was nothing.

He wrote me. How can someone die without anyone noticing? Bob shared what little he knew. The Romanian guy was 6 feet tall, rugged, with salt and pepper wavy hair that hung over his ears. He had lived in the United States for decades but never lost his accent.

Days passed. Bob collected more puzzle pieces. The Romanian man walked all over Cleveland's West Side and downtown. He ate lunch at Massimo da Milano. He walked to the library. He cared for a retired disabled woman who had been a lawyer for the Catholic diocese. She left him her savings when she died a few years ago.

Finally, Bob learned the man's name. Traian Trosco.

I called the Cuyahoga County coroner's office. Traian was 64. He died from heart disease. Investigators think he died April 17. No one has claimed the body.

He was a quiet man who kept to himself. He carried a back-pack, a walking stick and talked mostly to himself.

Al Clark, an investigator for the coroner, handles the "No Families" files. He tries to find someone for everybody. In eight years, he's only failed twice. He doesn't want Traian to be buried before finding a next of kin.

Al is studying an envelope of papers from Traian's apartment. In 1944, Traian received a certificate from Regional a De Timisoara. In 1963, he

received a diploma de absolvire. In 1968, a diploma de bacalaureat from Republica Socialista Romania. In 1981, he completed a course on English as a second language.

Traian wrote this on a picture frame mat that held no photo: "To my love please be mine forever. I love you with all mine heart. I am for you only."

Whose love was he?

Al hasn't been able to find a soul. Traian never married. He had no children. His friend, Diane Sherban, died four years ago. He has a sister, Joana Palincas. Al doesn't know where she is.

Traian was last seen April 12 by the custodian when Traian asked, "Is it Easter?"

His neighbor Bob wonders how many people die without anyone noticing. Sadder still, how many people live without anyone noticing?

Bob will never ignore a neighbor's mail piling up. He'll never again wait "one more day." He said a prayer that Traian is at peace. It comforts him to know that we might not notice when someone leaves this world, but surely God knows when one of his children returns.

**To reach Regina Brett:**  
[brett@plained.com](mailto:brett@plained.com), 216-999-6328  
**Previous columns online:**  
[cleveland.com/brett](http://cleveland.com/brett)