

The Humility Of Hungar

Trigger Warning: Disturbing Content, mild gore

My plate is sparkingly clean. No crumbs interrupt the ragged image of my face, exaggerated by the white porcelain. My hands are wrapped tight around a knife and fork in a classic image. I can picture the scene- me, banging my fists on the soft cloth of the table, screaming for more and more and more food to be shoveled onto my plate. But it is not polite, so I say nothing as my stomach flips over itself like a dying bug.

The air smells heavily of charred meat and buttery sweets. The soft voices of women in large dresses and men in dignified suits overfill my ears. It is a heaven of overindulgence, and yet I still am a starving man. A succulent voice in my head- handcrafted by some odd devil- whispers gently for me to eat. One more plate, it says. A small second serving, it recommends. I can do neither, so I rip off a portion of a cloth napkin and stuff in my mouth. My teeth render the cloth into thin strands that struggle down my throat. It is rough, unnatural, and painful. I eat the rest of the napkin.

The voice grows.

My host to this dinner announces something in a washed-up voice. My mouth chews on nothing but the phantom sweet air as he keeps talking. Oh, how ravenous and hostile my need. How I crave something- anything- to shove down my throat.

How do you define food? Still... my fingers twitch- the prongs of an ornate dinner fork, ready to tear food- isn't everything, all of us, food if you think about it- apart. The skin of those beside me seems nothing more than thicker sausage casings now, hiding gooey flesh beneath ready to be sucked down my slick throat. There are no more people, friends, besides me, only four-course meals on spindly legs. Unknowingly, till much too late, I sink my teeth into my browned fingernails just to have something to momentarily stop that voice, now even louder, in my head. The nails taste of the dirt bodies inhabit.

My fellow guests laugh at my hunger, mock my starvation. I can feel their fingers pointing at my restless body that nibbles on the ends of my fingertips as blood, luscious and joyous, fills my mouth. The voice in my head is no longer charismatic, no, it is demanding. My stomach has teeth and is eating itself.

I need the eyes of my fellow guests- oh, how'd they pop in my mouth- more than they do. They do not know hunger, gorged on fine pastries and steaks that slip off the bone. Oh, how I was once them, overfilled. Heaven above, holy father, are these the consequences for my greed? Oh unholy Lucifer, is this the mark of humility blessed upon me? If so, why just make me hungrier?

When no one is paying me attention, I rip my thumb away from the rest of my hand. The wet sound reminds me of slicing through a glistening steak. I do not feel it for the hunger pains of my stomach are drowning me. Gently, I place my torn-off thumb into my mouth, like one places the body of a loved one in a casket. My skin tastes like sweat, my blood like iron, the bone like chalk. It is the most wonderful feeling to have it roll down my throat. For just a second- one beautiful second -the hole in my chest fills. But it caves in once again, and I suck on the wide wound like a child, letting the blood flow in between my teeth. It is not enough and never could have been.

In pitiful desperation, my eyes fall on my lovely daughter, who smiles at a friend beside me. Can food even be defined? She is draped in light pink silks like frosting and she appears to me like a multi-layered cake. Her laugh is full of life. My daughter is a very noble girl- she knows all her manners, she helps those who need it, she is kind in ways I never will be. She would taste so sweet, young as she is, drunk on youth. When I was young, everything was sweet. I was never hungry.

The voice in my head is quiet. Its twinkling, guiding voice does not rise as it whispers in command for me to eat my only daughter. There is flesh stuck to my teeth. Blood stains my jaw. I tell myself there is something holy about sacrifices- why else would we send so many happy young men to die in yellow fields or force women to marry sick men and bear children? - as my jaw unravels open to a wide maw with pearly teeth. As my hands sink into the supple flesh of her arm like a fork sinks through ice cream. God above, blame me not, when you have made me this ravenous way.

I am right. My daughter tastes so very sweet.