

The Feast

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Adult Category

She is lying in the desert. A light breeze brushes sand over the fleshless bones of her body scratching the surface. She is numb and doesn't feel the irritation. Her eyes are pointed skyward and birds circle above. She knows that they won't land because she has nothing left to give.

The flesh was torn from her bones and she willingly gave it to her attackers. Ok, if she was being honest, it wasn't entirely willingly, she fought them, made some sarcastic remarks, begged and pleaded to be listened to, but eventually they wore her down and she allowed them to feast on her flesh just so she could have five minutes to herself.

It was a glorious five minutes too. She was able to eat her rice cakes with peanut butter and cinnamon, a snack consciously made to avoid gluten and sugar so that she might be more present in her life, while writing out this week's grocery list.

It was then that they decided to attack. Seeing her enjoy the quiet contemplation of what her family might eat in the coming week, brought to light their most immediate needs.

"Mom, I'm hungry!"

"Mom, she took my toy!"

"Mom, where's my laptop." Yes, even her husband calls her Mom.

She knows that their dependence on her is partly her fault. She gives in too often, but it's so much easier.

"Your laptop is on the chair."

"There's yogurt in the fridge."

"You need to ask before you take."

She remembers that family is a blessing. And they are, they are a blessing, but it doesn't make her a saint. And yet, she can't help sacrificing herself.

She drives, cleans, and cooks. Wipes noses, brushes hair, and whispers, speaks and finally shouts words of caution in an effort to keep everyone alive. In return there are hugs, kisses and cuddles, the joy of watching them grow, but there are also tears, resistance and defiance. All of these things eat away at her as she questions each choice, as she questions the direction, she is moving her family in, as she wonders above all how she became supreme being.

The feeling that lives, all of their lives, are heavy in her hands. She is the one in control. To make sure all the gears and gadgets that bring them from bed rise to bed time are well oiled

and able to function. She juggles, she dances, and if she must, she runs, treating herself to the occasional deep breath to get through it all.

She wonders when the last time she cried was? There was a line from a TV show she remembers from years ago. A Mom speaks about using her child's nap time to cry. This wasn't something she felt like doing when her children were young enough to nap, but now a good cry would suit her, but there isn't a minute to do it.

The wind shifts and the birds above her start circling closer. She wonders if there is a piece of flesh stuck to her bones, a small piece of her left that they can smell. Surely it isn't the sweetest bit, they took that first. Whatever is left must be rotten with sun aged decay, but it doesn't stop their decent towards their fermented snack.

She is unable to move to save herself. Weighted to the sand beneath her she has no choice but to wait for the last bits of herself to be picked clean.

They lap an invisible course around her. Each turn brings them closer. She can see that they are hungry and that they are tired, and she excuses their final feast for these reasons. She reminds herself that without her they would not survive. Without her they would not be able to fly free.

And when they do, when they finally fly free, the last bits of her flesh swallowed with barely a second to savour it, she is alone. The quiet feels strange. She lies motionless not convinced that they're done with her, but as the minutes pass and they don't return she begins to wonder how to proceed. She questions the stillness; she questions the lack of direction. It takes some time for her to adjust to this... she's unsure what to call it. New life, perhaps? She takes a deep breath, expecting to rouse the sand when she exhales. But instead she feels her lips quiver and her heart break. She is alone. She did not save a single piece of herself for herself. She has given everything away.

The tears roll quickly down her bony cheeks and into the sand around her. As they gather and pool the sand hardens sticking to her bones. It takes some time before she realizes that the sand has formed around her bones, layering itself, replacing the flesh she lost. She begins to feel a new strength and sits up, surprised, this is not the body she had when all of this began, but it is strong.

Looking over the vastness of the desert she sees the footprints she left marking the path she took to get to this spot. She studies them and smiles. They bring her joy. With hands on her hips she takes one more deep breath and allows the tears to dry before she turns around and continues the path forward.