

A Bit of Metal (short story)

The knife on the cutting board made a satisfying *chop-chopping* sound as I tapped off the bit of onion that had stuck onto it. I stepped back, surveying my work, pushing aside a tendril of my hair with the back of my hand. A few slivers of chopped onion scattered onto the ground; no matter, I would simply clean them up later. After all, cooking is a messy business. One must remember that, of course. There was sure to be more food on the ground before the evening was up.

I checked my watch. Ten minutes until 7 o'clock, it seemed. The sky was dimming behind the shards of white plastic that blocked out the window, and the world falling beyond it. I found myself staring listlessly into its depths, running my eyes over the ever-crossing rows of the blinds, straining beneath my lids to try and see through to the glass that made up the window pane. Utterly absurd, really, to think one could see through such a solid object. I turned away after swatting away the image like a pesky fly, and busied myself with the carrots.

The old hunk of metal that sat in the corner was my stove, and it clicked medievally as I carefully adjusted the heat, stirred the pot. It seemed that the lentils hadn't burned. I was grateful, for it seemed I had been trying to stare through that window for longer than it had felt like, for the tone of light present in the kitchen had dulled, ever so slightly. It was the kind of tarnish that smudges the atmosphere, in which the only explanation is that it has shifted, ever-so slightly, ever-so gently, from day into night.

It was at this moment that I became painfully aware of the stifling heat in the kitchen. Of course, it was emitting from the stove and the oven, both of which were in use by none other than myself; but the heat was unbearable, it was breaking over my brow like waves, and I felt

sweat bead and blot immediately all over my body. I sucked in a deep breath of air, a gasp, and almost felt myself choke. The air was rank with a terrible staleness, yet filled with moisture; it felt that the very natural balance of properties it contained would burst, cease to exist, fracture, kilter, off balance; something.

Anything.

But, regrettably, nothing like that actually happens in the real world. The only thing present with me in the room was the sucking heat that sat, stagnant, clouding up the room, and making it hard for my lungs to beat.

It was then that I realized the knife, laying blandly upon the counter, upon the cutting board, upon the mass of chopped onions and in front of the bundle of carrots that were idly waiting to be cut themselves. But it was the knife that was mocking me, taunting me as it flashed its silver-plated metal, like eyes rolling up at the ceiling. I saw it all and couldn't remove my eyes from its own.

I reached out a hand, wanting to prove something. Perhaps it was to the knife, and I was simply trying to assert my rightful dominance over it. It made me shake with anger the way it was just sitting there, acting as if it was powerless, trying to pretend it wasn't alive the way I knew it was and knew it could be. My fist closed around the hilt, swung it upwards.

Warm and wet, is what I thought first, because of course it is never pain that one thinks of in these situations. Or perhaps it is all that one thinks of... at this point in time I am finding it harder and harder to remember these days. I thought, sparingly, about my blood pouring out of my body, what it would look and feel like, how it would sop on the floor. What sound would it make? Would there even be any blood at all? How it would mix with the damp, heavy air,

hanging suspended in a red mist in the middle of the room, festering and blistering as it evaporated into nothing at all.

But maybe it would evaporate into something.

Anything.

After all, I do not know too much about puncture wounds... still, I had the power to know...

It was through the haze that I saw all this, the knife sticking into my gut. It was through the blinding fury that shook my hand and let the knife slip, right through my once-sturdy grasp and in turn, right through my center. I strained my ears upwards, and in doing so, I almost heard the sharp clatter of the knife knocking into the ground, a hard and cracking slice; the sound of finality. A look of surprise on my face, as if the knife itself had arms and hands and thumbs, and had plunged itself into my stomach on its own accord. I saw white, only for a second, and thought it was my eyes that had rolled back. Not sure if I was thinking all that clearly, if I'm being honest.

I continued chopping the carrots, relishing in the bright clack it made as it hit the cutting board, constantly, repetitively. Finally satisfied, I set down the knife, gingerly, and turned my back on him to open the door to the freezer, and bury my face deep inside, crowding across the ice cube trays and the box of frozen pizza into a corner as my stifled limbs fought their way inside. The moisture display across my skin stomped like angry ants, and singed like hot flys popping idly in the sun. It whizzed and burned, a most delightful feeling, really. I closed my eyes and let myself lie there, sighed in satisfaction.

Another wave of realization dawned on me right there, my arms tangled in my hair amidst the deep cold that issued from the opening of the freezer door. It was the knife again; I should never have let him go out of my sight. I should never have risked having him loom behind me, menacingly, as was undoubtedly his nature. And here he was, poking out of me, ever-so slightly as my body sagged against the body of the refrigerator, trying mundanely to hold myself up. My fickle fingers slipped on the ice chips, and I knew then that I had been slew. I lay there, bathing in my own fictional blood, not daring to let less than a cry of pity crawl up and out of my constricted throat.

My body lay amidst the stink of it all, and I felt the floor beneath my bleeding frame turn upwards and dissolve into steam, the humidity and humanity mixing and mingling into a mist that sprayed across my cloudy eyes; yet I did not fall. The spell of stupor had almost completely drawn the curtain across my drowsy lids, but out of their corners the two spied the same flash that cut through the foggy heat, but this time it showed me something different. As I spiraled towards shock, the knife turned its face up towards me and with a start soaked in misery I saw my own face reflected in its sharp metallic grin.

Everything turned blurry as it snapped its teeth at me.

