

Avery Strife

## I Smell Potatoes

Soft limes tremble above hunting cougars. The accelerator was on full and we flew directly towards the smell. Heirloom women were there. Not now, but at some point in the distant future. I recognize/smell her. I have had her before. She will be hen in my house. The nest I built with my sweat and mucus. It is a warm nest, good for eggs and long winters. Onwards.

We inhaled the scent. John was driving. This was his idea.

I was cleaning my mouth, or really I only said I was to make it seem like I had some reason to let the machine screen the call. Would I go out? Tonight? I know it's hard to find a third on a whim, and I didn't have much to do. I did have a bottle of green in the cupboard, I'm ready for just about anything. No he didn't have anyone in mind, but if I was up for a quick hunt then take anyone, he really said anyone.

Would I bring my bottle and be the third? I'd be the second, wouldn't I? I asked, knowing that I'd have to be third. I'm always the third.

So it didn't turn out to be just anyone. Not the fat one who did say yes. Not the one with the glasses either. I liked her but John thought she smelled off.

I was half way to the sun when she caught my eye.

John thought she was empty. I knew better.

Here's what I say: I smelled her about two cycles ago and she was ripe with rot. A deep red rot that grows only on the highest mountaintops of the east. I love that springtime touch and this was a full lacerating liquor. It wasn't blue but something deep violet.

She wore an eye patch and one of her left arms was decorated with a flowing ribbon. It was high fashion decades ago/a mysterious stance. A hired killer from a comic book, all knives and no skirt.

John got past her wind but I was hooked. I'm fast like that.

I was at one of these parties when I was a kid. The music was hot and the sex was lacerating. This is when I first met John. We hit several of the same nests and had a similar scent, so it was a first-rate match. We scammed so many kinds of couples it was lucky we both came out uncontaminated.

Then there was the time we met up with the police.

They made me a third. I didn't want to, but it was hard to say no. They caught us with a hot bolt and it was obvious what they wanted. Gave me a shackle and I was out of my mind for weeks.

I stopped hanging with John after that. He was trouble/couldn't smell well. I could, but I still went along. It was always my fault.

The red skies were rolled into the unruffled morning.

I pulled the cork on the green and I took a long pull.

I dabbed a bit behind my ear and over my cheeks. I felt that I could float on angel blossoms. We pulled over and the steam billowed around us. The nightlife cleared a wide berth and we strode unflappable in the downtown neon. All took notice of us, how could they not? All the heirloom women heard our audacity.

I tipped my hat to all the other thirds that captured my eye.

John spotted her from his lamp post and jumped up it, singing, Ciao Bella. She turned in a glimmer. Her scented belly beamed at me and she headed straight over. She took my hand and began walking towards Red's Falafel stand. Made John pay for her platter and spoon fed me like a lover should. Tonight I was all hers.

John was second so she talked with him and petted my black head, then chopped up some rocks while John turned on the stereo.

I'd been in the shelter two weeks ago and now look at me! A new nest, a real friend, and fresh rocks being churned. Let demons explode!

I hit the green again and began to caress her shell.

She took another drag from her stick and purred. I could feel her wetness. Her pores seeped brown droplets.

She was an angel, my angel. I was hers. I was the third. John kissed her upper mouth while she sang a sweet melody. It was going to be alright. All of me melted into her folds. She shook me. My suit was getting tangled in her legs. I hate these things, but right now tradition and desire resembled each other.

I was robin's egg blue.

John now twirled around in front of her. She smiled at his agility. She was really getting into this/liquid was now pouring out of her belly. He danced while she sang. I began to enter her. My suit fit in all the places it should and she responded with a gentle tug of her legs, eggs and jelly warm on my chest. I thought of mother, my nose filled with her smell. I let loose and spilled onto her back. Her shell glistened orange/just seeing her white folds open. She dipped her finger into the glass of green and painted trails on my face. Her eyes told me everything.

On my eleventh cycle, my father told me that there were two kinds of men in this world. The man I became I would choose by my actions. Don't be an aimless wanderer. Those who lack aim get eaten. He told me of his third, how his suit didn't fit him correctly, how that was one of the reasons we were so poor. Life is a series of choices, and if I had purpose in my hikes, all of life would, or could be, food.

"I've told you things about fish that I've never told anyone else. How to take pliers and pull the skin to separate the flesh. One quick pull is what it takes to do it right. If not, the filet will rip and then the whole thing will be worthless. If done right, there will be an underlying flavor of death in each mouthful."

I wanted to be a second like my father and his father before him, but I have never had the courage to believe in nothing. The drama and passion is always in our minds, but the energy spent is nothing but an encore to the sensual aroma of fresh meat. Thinking of the fields of tenderloins growing in the plains make my fangs salivate. An alarm clock sounded in the background. I was stuck to her now. I could still grind into her belly. She turned me over. John touched my face. He was beautiful in this light. I smelled potatoes.