

Taste a Little Waste with You

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Flies buzzed at the meat. It was autumn, and the meat was still full of maggots. The flies were sucking their last bit of nutrients from their flesh-cradle before flying off to lay more eggs on some other piece of rot. A stream of rancid bubbles sputtered out of various pores in the decaying mass; the gas released a sickly-sweet aroma. No bones protruded from the meat; it was all flesh and blood and pus. If not for the odor and the writhing of fly larvae, it would have appeared as a peculiar boulder in a clearing in the woods. It was the only structure in the clearing. Tendrils of yellow slime oozed from its base, running into the ground around it. This rot was not fertilizing—no tree or grass or weed crept near the meat. It was monolithic and grotesque.

The buzzing of flies was broken by the crunching of leaves underfoot. Low humming accompanied the footsteps of thirteen cloaked people. A woman led the other twelve, distinguished by her ornate white and gold robes. Her eyes were covered by a featureless mask of pure alabaster, which extended from the base of her nose to the back of her head. Only her mouth was exposed, her lipstick a vibrant red on her slightly agape mouth. She breathed in the sweet smell of pestilence, knowing the way by memory and by taste. She was followed by two lines of six; those behind her wore robes of black or earthy red, humming with their heads hung low as their guide took them to the empty place where only the meat was. She stopped abruptly, and the others halted almost simultaneously. Only one robed man in the back of the left line stumbled, before righting himself and mumbling. The lead woman turned slowly, her robes billowing, as she began to address the procession.

“We have failed Her, our immortal goddess. She has gone a summer without our love. She is unwell.” The woman in white’s voice was comforting; the devotees she was addressing raised their heads to meet her covered face. Their faces were disfigured. Many were missing eyes, ears, or parts of their cheeks. The flesh had scarred poorly, leaving massive dark stretches, clearly never treated. Only the man who had stumbled was free of obvious blemish. His gaze often faltered. The woman resumed her speech, “Look how She hungers! To not care for our Mother would be to reject Her gift of eternal rot. She wants to take one of us now, to remind us why we love Her.”

The twelve formed a circle around the meat. The leader stood in the center beside the object of worship. She cupped a chunk of the meat into her hands; limp sinews and slime traced its path back to the mound as she pulled it away. It dripped; errant maggots tumbled from the piece. The twelve began humming again. The woman opened her mouth and held the oozing mass at the entrance. It was warm and wet, leaving moisture in the air which she breathed in heavily,

savoring the stomach-churning taste. A pustule burst under her finger. She took a bite. The yellow bile in the viscous mass trickled down her chin, dripping onto her chest and coloring her robes in sopping filth. She chewed, the chunk sliding over her teeth, so decomposed that chewing did little but expose her tastebuds to more of the sour bolus. She swallowed loudly, dropping the uneaten portion of goop to the barren ground. She began stumbling around the circle and heaving. She could hardly walk as the need to eject the meat debilitated her. She leaned over in front of the man from the back of the left line and erupted the contents of her stomach down his chest.

The stench was powerful, and he reeled backwards. The others gasped. The man looked embarrassed. His puke-soaked robes betrayed his lithe body. The woman in the circle let spittle slide from her mouth for a few moments as she regained her composure. She stood again.

“Come, boy. She has a taste for you now. She will take you.” The others surrounded the man, reaching at him with what remained of their limbs. He allowed them to lead him to the meat. No space was left where the woman had scooped out the chunk. The lead woman stood behind the procession now. “Allow him to enter Her. She would not take one who does not wish to join the others.”

The group resumed their posts around the circle. The man stared at the meat, feeling his breathing become ragged. He could touch it now. He felt the humidity from it on his skin, his hair standing on end, gooseflesh spreading over him. It was exciting, tantalizing. The smell made his head spin. He wanted to touch it now. He pushed one hand into the meat. Its thick, sticky texture drew the hand further into its moist warmth. There was a gentle suction inviting him further. The man groaned. He felt it take his hand completely, liquifying his flesh into itself; he could no longer escape. His hand felt like it had been absorbed by some blissful heat. He plunged his other fist into the festering gore eagerly. It was the same feeling. He shuddered. The woman leaned in his ear now, her hot breath on his neck exciting him even more. “Let Her take you completely.” The man groaned again as his arms were taken to the shoulders, his slim torso now pressed to the supple meat. “Doesn’t it feel nice?” The man nodded. “Good.” The woman grabbed the back of the man’s neck and shoved his face into the meat. He tried to pull back out, but he was stuck. His voice was muffled, screaming, and gagging through the sea of putrid viscera. A few moments passed, and the struggling and heaving ceased. The man shook and groaned again as his entire body was taken into the hot, mucous disease of the meat. He was gone in moments.

The devotees turned to leave. The meat was satiated for another season. One of them looked at a fellow disciple with their only eye. “In winter, I hope it asks for a foot or something. These body melding things take so long. And it never chooses me anyway.”

“I hear that. I mean, seemed just a few years ago the biggest ask was an ear or tongue.”

“Wouldn’t be so bad if it picked one of us that’s been around a while.”

“Always the new guy.”

“Yeah, always the new guy.”