

Summer Will Come

A wintery horror short-story
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TW: plane crash, death, graphic descriptions of advanced frostbite, gore, transphobia, cursing.

The plane crashed at the top of the mountain, and I needed to emerge from the wreckage as unscathed as I was when I boarded. Everything lay in pieces around me. Blue and purple faces lay contorted with lost screams. The backs of chairs were bruised with the traces of hands desperately clinging on. An eye hangs by the teeth of a woman across the aisle. A teenager is bent forward so far they are almost sat upright again.

There was no time to go about the niceties of wishing them well or covering what was left of their faces; noxious air from the still burning engine would kill me long before the cold.

Did they deserve this? One passenger kept insisting that I cross my legs and refused to keep contained in his own seat. He even took the time to comment on how curvy I was under his breath as he adjusted himself. My friends always complimented my fat ass, which was fine. But the way my hips had to also be like that sideways really fucked me off. Why did my ass mean *I want to grab that* but also *I want to fuck that* and *why isn't that in a mini-skirt?*

Once I had made it out of the remains I could see that the plane barely resembled what it was meant to be. The shell was shredded so that thin sunlight illuminated the entirety of what was the inside. My pockets were crammed with what I could grab from carry-ons, and layers of coats hung over my shoulders. The unrelenting chill cut through to my heart as I dared to observe my surroundings. Where was *anything?* Anyone?

Fuck.

My flight was meant to be a connection to Scotland.

I was due to have my top surgery the day after touching down.

I tumbled down the snowy mountain towards an outcrop of trees that needed to become my shelter.

I tried making a fire with no luck. I saw online once that its never as easy as the professionals make it look, but I thought that if I simply tried to channel them enough it would all be okay. I think that was in a Try Guys video. My heart rumbled with the Christian vigour of Bear Grylls but no god of fire blessed me. The mountain decided not to make a convert of me.

My coats were getting cumbersome and tightly restricted my shoulders.

I was looking forward to tearing off that medical binder. Letting the emerging fault lines find light after the ripping of cotton. In this future the doctor hands me a jar filled with yellowing liquid and two lumps of flesh, bloodless and sterile, all mine but no longer *mine*. The bandages find refuse in the blue plastic bin and I'm free to go. I leave without a shirt on with the knowledge that I will never again have to think about whether I was slouching enough or what binder worked best with what top. That was going to be my future. That could have been my now.

The sun must have risen and fell more times than I ever intended to count. I refused to even try to keep track which was helped by the only minor shifts in light as the hours bled away. It was more as if the sun was hiding and re-emerging from behind the leaves of shifting branches in the wind. Movement

was not needed of the sun. I saw once in a movie that keeping a diary when you were stranded alone was a miraculous tool for keeping you sane. Why document the delay?

The movie was *Life of Pi*. The tiger always scared me more than the situation, but I guess that was intended. Being on edge and observed constantly while otherwise alone sounded like hell.

It's weird feeling like I am being watched all the time by things I cannot see, by things that don't have words to cut me with. I remembered the stares back at home when I first started binding, the way their eyes would grab my self and tear it open looking for something to hate the taste of. The trans flag on my jacket became a way to connect but also limit the hatred to something tangible. Looking back on myself now, I realise that I had never lost that anxiety I carried with me, even now with a fully realised moustache.

My fingers tingled as I threw a mint onto my tongue.

I woke with an intense pain in my ribs. One that filled me with dread and a small shame. I hadn't taken off my binder since I last left my flat. It certainly wasn't new but it compressed my chest all the same. All the rules and guidelines flashed in my memory, of which I had stuck to as much as I could. This time it must have slipped, but there were slightly more pressing things to worry about. With a sigh and my hands wanting to ball into fists, I peeled the binder from my skin without taking off my outer layers, and threw it on the ground as hard as I could. The relief wasn't instant but it never was. Slowly I was able to take bigger and bigger breaths, as I buttoned up two of my coats all the way up.

The dreaded rising of my chest was not as easily ignored as I had hoped. I would even sometimes feel a *jostle* or shaking underneath the many layers between me and the cold. I wanted to scream. I wished that, if a predator ever did find me, one with claws and starvation, it would take the two easy lumps of meat from me first. Even better, that would be enough to satisfy them and the rest of me would be left behind.

As I was picking nice-enough looking berries from a bush near my shelter, I saw that my finger nails were the same colour as the snow.

Alexander, my flatmate and confidant, was back at home still working on their 3D modelling project. They are learning it for the first time so its been in the beginning stages for almost a year.

I lifted my shoulders and held my stiff hands against each other in a poor imitation of comfort as I remembered how their voice sounded when they mumble along to their new favourite song. I remembered the way they loved to dance in the rain barefoot. The way they once picked up a frog from the edge of a pond and chucked it in my hood, only for it to jump on top of my head. I screamed like a child. They hugged me for forgiveness.

At that thought, I wrapped my arms around myself.

I felt the need to hunt something.

The growl of my stomach decided for me that nothing would be more satisfying than biting down on fresh meat. I couldn't be a lion in this situation, though. I was going to have to be the vulture.

Raiding the forest floor for goods was much harder and required much more patience than I first thought. Given the barren nature of the mountain, I hoped that there would be at least something untouched waiting for me.

I found fuck all.

My tummy didn't have the energy to grumble at me any more.

I remembered Alexander's home-made stew.

The way the fabric of their harem pants glanced their ankles.

The warmth in me could have lit the fire I had tried to build long ago.

I shake off Alexander.

I couldn't find my binder on the ground any more. Since, a storm had rushed through the trees stripping them of what little foliage they had and topping the ground up with snow.

My fingers were becoming unresponsive to any command of movement. As I went to hook my thumbs underneath the rim of my boxers I didn't notice that my left had failed to fall under the edge and my ragged finger nail caught on the fabric. I saw that tiny slab of nail float down and land on my shoe, dull and

still. The part that bothered me the most was the lack of blood. Aside from an echo of throbbing, there was no way to tell something had fallen from me. That something that was once *me* was now *there*.

I couldn't help myself from smiling.

The snow around my feet looked yellowed from my infrequent toilet trips.

I'm back in the school playground and we have just invented a new game called "Dalmatian" because the teachers banned "Bulldog." We got away with repeatedly changing the name for what felt like forever. I learned more about dog breeds back then than I would care to bother with learning now.

Once, Alexander and I snuck out of a back window of the changing rooms before P.E. to deflate footballs and "forget" where the netting was kept. Laughter filled my childhood. My body hadn't been moulded into *woman* yet. The boys never avoided me because they thought they would catch "girl germs". I, at least, was one of them, and I took for granted how free I was from gender.

Alexander stands in my teenage bedroom clapping and cheering after I had just put on my first binder. White. Clips. No stretch. Cheap. Scratchy.

Flat.

Putting on a binder for the first time was like finding something amongst forgotten things that had been pulled to light for the first time in decades.

I ripped up that exact binder not two weeks later. I remember how hot I felt inside, how tight every muscle was, how laboured and shallow my breathing had become.

A deer jumps out from behind a particularly dense crop of bushes and I almost shit myself awake.

I place my hands on my chest and deeply sigh, feeling heavy and tangled.

Maybe if I laid here long enough the rocks would swallow me, the trees would take me into their network, I would become the sugars powering the relentless trotting of a fox. Or maybe I would freeze and become snow to be tread by hikers lost.

The sun hung for longer than I could track.

That deer sniffed my hand.

Smoke from the attempt at a camp fire vanished and was forgotten.

The sun failed to touch my face through the pines and branches.

Alexander strolled past my shelter in their pride parade outfit.

The whispers of the breeze had my mothers voice.

My fingers were succumbing to the freeze and no one was coming to help me. If they do come would they see the tits and hips and think the blue doesn't match the yellow? Will they

think me a damsel maintained in an exquisite crystal of ice at the peak of my prime? Will they marvel at my tattoos and try to decipher their meaning?

I like dolphins. Sunflowers are the first plant I kept alive for more than a year. There isn't anything especially poignant about the book quote, just that it sounds nice when you say it. My top surgery scars were already enlisted in a cover up of smoke, vines and arcing lines.

The horror of what people may think about my corpse, full of misunderstanding and ignorance, drove me to standing. My fingers were going to be gone soon. I had always loved them. Some of them even bent backwards a little bit. That was something lost to them now but I could still use them. If they refused I would force them.

I laid my jumper and undershirt flat on a rock and started with stabbing holes where my nipples would be. Juice from berries marked where my pen knife should go. It was lodged between my fingers like a cigarette and felt clumsy as it was thrust into the fibres. The berry markings stood out against the mustard yellow of the jumper like blood, like the sunset, like strawberries.

A part of me almost stepped back never wanting to look or think about berries again. Was this fucked up?

No.

I had done everything the doctors ever told me up to now. My T-shot was always on time. I gave myself stretch breaks. I did specific exercises to build out my shoulders and upper arms and didn't push beyond my limits. I fought my GP everyday to

be given my prescription and never lost my temper. I waited like a good boy for each precious appointment where I had to condense every gender feeling into 1 hour of rushed questioning in clothes I hated that were so undeniably masculine. I had done everything so fucking right.

That didn't stop the plane crashing. No amount of tears and wailing would have kept the plane in the air any longer. No amount of pouring my heart out to the cold would convince it to think about sparing me.

With that thought, I continued cutting into my clothes. Strangely now my body didn't feel tense, nothing was holding it back, it felt eager. A sane person would vomit at the thought of what I was about to try, at what the results would be if I was successful. That would be me too in any other situation.

Was I really about to do this? This was just as grotesque as surgery but this time I got to witness the process.

Bent down on the ground, my right hand clung onto the fabric as my left drove the pen-knife deep into the jumper. Pinprick holes were all that came out of it, so I let the knife fall from my grip. My fingers couldn't move much, but in their contorted hooks they could certainly rip. I began to dig through the openings in the fabric finding purchase on a thread which was then pulled loose, eventually followed by hundreds more. Discarded flaps and chunks of myself and clothing tumbled down the stone.

Rising from my work two new holes stared back at me. Through parts I spotted the rock underneath. My hands throbbed at the thought of doing it again to my undershirt but I didn't care to listen to their complaints.

It wasn't cold enough.

My nipples were reddened and sore but still attached. The tips of my fingers were almost entirely black. Most of my nails had been planted in the snow.

I clawed at the fabric around the holes on my chest. One managed to lodge inside perfectly so I yanked outwards to widen the hole.

Another joined its side and with the small sound of splitting threads my smile widened. More fingers crammed into the hole until more tears followed creating a quiet cacophony that startled some birds above me. It wasn't until I properly looked down that I understood that not all the tears were fabric. Several of my fingers were hanging on by thin slices of bloodless flesh, the sinews and bone suddenly exposed. Carefully pulling them from my jumper I tried to gently position them back into place but everything was too solid. Like pieces of chicken that hadn't fully defrosted.

My stomach rumbled.

After hours of ripping and re-placing and forcing my joints to bend my jumper hung on my body and gaped across my collar bones and down to my belly button, leaving my chest exposed to the chill.

I couldn't stop there. After what felt like days of freezing my tits off I needed more.

The touch of Alexander's soft hands on my hips sung in my memory as I whispered an apology.

Once again the ripping of fabric consumed me.

For the first time since the crash the sun shone on my face. Parts of me were gone now that I never thought I could lose. Parts of me that felt coupled with my *self*. My soul possessed them as much as my body did, but at least what was once superfluous flesh was also discarded waste now. My doctor was now free to give that appointment to someone else who needed it. My hips were in the process of sliding off me in thin layers of stiff skin and fat. They would be trimmed to what I needed in the days to come.

I kept one coat from the plane separate from the rest of them after establishing my shelter. This one wasn't used to cushion the forest floor as I slept, but was instead stowed in the branches above to accompany me down the rest of the mountain. In the thin rays of sun I stretched up to hook what was left of my palms on the hood to yank it down.

Even if I didn't make it down to the bottom of the mountain, even if the last human I saw was the asshole sat next to me in the plane, even if no helicopter came to rescue me, that was okay. The cold could take me now knowing that it would do so with my consent.

Living a little more would be nice, though.