

Feed Him

July 20.. – North Shields

The fat sun sweated. People oozed grossly though the congealed streets. Cars belched sticky fumes into the sickly sky and their mad lights flashed. This was heart attack town, clogged up, eating itself alive.

A little girl, all summer dress and sparkle, flicked her long hair over her shoulder and threw her tennis ball smartly over the soft grass. Her puppy dog, sharp eyes and frantic tail, raced after it. The hound collected the ball and hared back, ears quivering and red tongue lolling. The girl threw her arms out and laughed, hurling the ball again.

In the distance a group of teenagers sat around a pizza box, big bottles of fizzy drink by their sides. Old chip wrappers tossed gently in the slow breeze. One lay back and his round belly emerged from the bottom of his football top. Another glared at the girl and the dog as they got closer, muttering to a grey faced mate: "Too much energy there. What's the matter with her?" They passed a couple of tabs between them. One hawked and spat on the grass, sliming the stalks.

At the edge of the park there was an estate. Every one of the four hundred or so houses looked the same: artificial brown and cramped. They'd probably been built within the last twenty years but they were dated before they'd gone up. Tired eyes stared from small windows.

One house, squatting half way round one of the baked crescents, suffered from its rampant garden. The plants were swollen and angry, draining the sustenance from the soil, leaving the ground hard and yellow. The hedge enveloped the property, brushing lecherously against the windows: any light must have been absorbed.

Deep in the shadowed front room, filling an old bed entirely, there was a man of indeterminate age. His bulk forced his chest into his chin; if there was a neck in there somewhere it hadn't been seen for years. The fabric of his flannel tracksuit strained, taut and stained. Rolls of flesh protruded where the clothes rode up. His fat red hands hung at the end of his fat red wrists: one almost elbow deep in a king size box of crisps, the other drubbing and twisting, keeping time to the mechanical workings of his jaw. The sheet covered what little of the mattress might once have been white whilst the cushions propping his back against the wall had long ago lost their covers and some whispered sad little feathers through the rents and tears in their material.

The television groaned in the corner.

The door opened and a tiny, bird-like woman scuttled in. She was almost bent double under the weight of the tray in her arms that was filled with thickly buttered bread, white rimmed bacon and crusted black pudding. The man on the bed barely looked up; he just snorted and motioned that she leave the tray beside him. The empty crisp packet was tossed aside and his fist plunged into the pile of pork, blood and dough. Grease glistened on his heavy jowls. He only paused for a second to snap something at the woman who still hovered at his elbow. She recoiled back, like he'd hit her, and he grinned unpleasantly revealing teeth that were alternately orange and black. He swiped at her but missed; she jumped and hopped-ran out of the room. He belched, dropped a big crust on the floor but couldn't reach it. It was spread side down.

His face crumpled up and turned scarlet. His wet lips quivered and his little gimlet eyes scrunched small. He yelled "Muva! Muva! Get here!" The door opened again and the little lady, seemingly older and even tinier, came back in. He slobbered something out and she bent down, worrying at the crust which had already stuck to the dust on the carpet. The butter stretched thinly as it lifted from the coarse grain and she almost dropped it again. She made as if to leave but he burped at her and beckoned. He inspected the wretched slice as she quivered before him, like an ant before a hob-nailed boot.

He roared, as if it was her fault. He kicked out and caught her around the waist. She stumbled back and slipped on the crisp packet cast down earlier. She fell backwards almost in slow motion and cracked her head sharply off the mantel behind her.

A photograph of a small boy in school uniform, smiling and smart, fell down and shattered beside her as a puddle of blood gathered behind her wizened head.

And she stayed like this for minutes, even an hour. Her son finished his meal and watched her, waiting for her to get up.

But she didn't.

And as the shadows lengthened in that dark room, and as the ugly plants pressed themselves against the window, he left his bed for the first time in months. He farted loudly as he flopped on the carpet, on all fours. He rolled and crawled the inches to his mother, breathing her last. One fat finger stroked her hair and then pressed itself into the blood behind her. He raised that finger to his lips and suckled greedily. The sun was crazy crimson, burning up. He lay over her, mouth to mouth, and tore at her lips, feeding. Feeding: the last time she would feed him.

And that's where they found him, ten days later, spread over the dessicated corpse of his half devoured mother. Flies had already laid their eggs and maggots munched on her and him equally: the alive and the dead, the feaster and the fodder. The secrets behind the closed doors.

May 20.. – Durham Prison

Because I wanted to eat. And that's all there was to it. Great haunches of bloody steak. Whole, blue veined, cheeses. Barrelled sausages glistening with white fat. Rolls, roulades and roundels; pies, puddings and perfectly gargantuan portions of thick ribboned pasta. Because I wanted to eat. That was the only why.

I was born in the kitchen in time for lunch: spat slithering onto the worktop, narrowly missing the serrated blade of the breadknife. I landed squealing in the butterdish: greased up, basted and fresh.

Well bred, upper crust: I used my loaf in the early years. Largely from the settee: a full fat spread, lathered and unctuous. Dripping with good health.

But I got lazy.

My mother has a lot to answer for. All three and a third stones of her: dried up like an old raisin. She's the sparrow woman and the lizard lady: scaled, feathered and horned. My feeder. My sustainer. My jailor.

Our house was a four bedroomed detached near Newcastle. But I didn't go upstairs after the age of nine and I didn't leave the front room after thirteen. Sorry, I couldn't leave the front room. Even if I could have heaved my whale flesh from the stinking fabric of the mattress, I couldn't have got through the door.

And still she fed me. I didn't want to stop her.

Did anyone notice? Why would they? Some might have known I was there but they soon moved on. I was easier to ignore. The curtains were closed' the hedge encouraged to devour the open spaces of the garden, left to grow bulbous. My mother hurried past the neighbours, laden down with groaning bags that seemed ready to burst at their fragile seams.

But I'm not there now. Although you know that; you might have read about it in the paper: half the wall winched away; that mustard yellow crane grunting under my weight.

Three and a third stone heavier.