

The Anger of Her Heart



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Her family had always lived, as long as anyone cared to remember, not in town but lakeside. They'd always carried weight in the community – on where and how, for example, New Year's would be celebrated.

Her father would ski-doo back and forth across the lake, shuttling between homes to secure assistance, delegate this or that duty; supply the beers – which once opened had to be chugged before they froze up and down from the neck – to those who'd dragged the log bar from the island and rebuilt it in the party-tent where the pot-belly stove burned and the mirrorball hung; receive visitors in his ice hut, the seasonal campaign centre, where the men would strategize, kick the caterpillar tracks on Jonno's new quad, and wait for the ring – which never came – of a bell-rigged fishing line. All over a few beers.

She would often go with her father on his rounds, or sit in the campaign centre. She was impressed with the easiness of it all – how their language never caused nor carried umbrage, how the epithets and cursing in fact signalled the close knit of the lake king and his paladins.

“So, the bar's sorted; Ken, you and your boys on that again.”

“Yeah. Fuck: we did 'er last year and she's fuckin' heavy. Hows about we rotate duties?”

“Well fine, Ken, fine; if you're gonna fuckin' bitch about it then that's no problem at all.

Not at all. Have another beer? Steve: open 'er up for Ken there, don't want 'im breakin' a fuckin' nail.”

Laughter from all, Ken included, as Steve offers to cradle Ken's head, bottle-feed and burp him. Ken'll do the bar, no question he'll get her done.

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This was what she saw and what she knew. And yet as she got older and started doing community runs for rather than with her father she found she did not have his way with words.

She had his words yet. But in her mouth they put a sting in her tongue and roughened its edges. She could not slap someone on the shoulder and laughingly call him a cunt while offering up another beer, for this beer would catch and choke in his throat. They would ask her father had she found someone yet, someone from town maybe whose skin was thick enough and who was selectively hard of hearing enough. *Every time she speaks it's like I'm being ear-fucked* they'd joke.

During campaign meets in the hut, she'd be sent out on beer runs, or to check that Mary knew she was making appetizers from fresh for tomorrow's party, or to take Mick home because he'd come on skis and it was dark and he was drunk.

And so, where first they'd taught her how better to curse, they taught her now how to keep a dignified silence.

They taught her at any rate how to keep a little quieter so as to preserve the natural beauty of it all, the balance and the order. They taught her, for which she would surely be grateful, how to pluck out her tongue that it might not catch at the ears of women and children. Nor lick at the wounds wrought by the anger daily swelling her heart.

The tongue would not tell the anger of her heart, though who knows but that one day, and soon, it will chide and crack like the ice in thaw.

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