

Earthquake

Craig Brush

He rips off the lid of the tin of baked beans, pours them into a bowl. Slaps its bottom. Three beans plop out and a dribble of sauce. Ham sauce, his favourite.

The toast pops, is buttered. Coffee is poured.

Ding! sings the microwave.

He takes out the bowl, prepares, sits down at the table, opens the newspaper, but is not reading.

'Today's the day,' he says out loud. Teddy bears amble across his mind towards their picnic.

En route to his mouth, the toast and beans drop off the fork, sit grinning up at him from his crotch. White shorts, of course.

He picks off the toast, wipes the sauce up with his finger, which unaccountably makes him stiffen. Licks his finger.

Podge had already left for work, with his usual enthusiasm. Stodge was undecided about work today. Because, for a reason that was still not entirely clear, today was the day.

Or rather, was clear, but no less mystifying for that. The fault line that all human relationships are built on had all of a sudden, for him, buckled, the ground on which the fifteen years they had taken to build their edifice, tilted, there was an immense shudder and the earth beneath had cracked wide open. For him.

Stodge could only interpret it as a force of nature. It was one of those physical facts that have always been there, that are tacitly hoped would never be experienced, but when they are, are still unexpected, the knowing but hoping to not know the destruction the world can unleash.

Stodge was called Stodge because of the food he liked to eat. Podge was called Podge because he had always had a tendency to fat. They called each other this, as did their friends and families, except their mothers.

Something told him it was time. The indecision was somehow thrilling, and terrifying. Fifteen years of mostly joy. Fifteen years of the smells, the touch, the eye contact, the fury, the rage, the there but not there, the silences, the shut the fuck up, the caress on the cheek,

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the roaring with laughter, the doctor, the nurse, the philosopher, the counsellor, the bitch, the cunt, the recalcitrant, the Savlon, the destroyer, the clown and King both, or Queen.

Something compels Stodge, something both known and yet mysterious.

Stodge is a designer. He controls things, he moulds things, he wills ideas into being. Podge is a model-maker. That is how they met. Podge meticulously manifests other people's ideas into miniature form. Stodge works at home most days, but can't today because he is in a quandary (and adores a cliché).

Several hours later, Podge comes home, thrilled. His most recent model is a triumph. Stodge has an Irish Stew in the slow cooker.

Podge is so pleased with himself he wants sex. Before dinner. And their nightly glass of wine.

Stodge puts his hands on the kitchen bench and bends over. The Irish Stew smells delicious. He opens his arse (remember, he adores a cliché). Podge inserts his moderately sized but beautifully proportioned cock.

Stodge knows that this is probably the last time this will happen, but is not sure why. He likes it as he always has. So, why?

Podge groans and shudders. That was quick. He's not usually that quick. He usually grinds away forever.

Podge slumps onto Stodge's back. It forces his left hand forward onto the slow cooker. It burns. He flings it backwards with a cry.

There is liquid and a stench.

'Have you come already?'

But, no – Podge had gone.