

It Wasn't For Myself
by Natalie McNabb

I have done one noble thing in my life, but it wasn't for myself—it was for the woman I love. And, what wouldn't one do for love? I guess it was for her cat, too. The thing scratched at her and twisted to be free as those bitches scuttled past barking and nipping at one another. Yet, my love would stand in her uncomplicated way, smiling straight up at the sky as if only she, the gods and a content cat existed while humming my lullaby in her broken, unhurried way.

Yes, it was for my love and her cat that I did it, though the dogs bugged me too when they shit all over my grass and walks. And, they would shit at the base of my sunflowers too, my sunflowers that only wanted to push up toward the sky and sip the water I poured over their roots. But, rain would eventually sneak in and dissolve a nitrogen-laden offering left at the base of a sunflower stalk before I could find, scoop and toss it over my back fence into those bitches' own yard, and the sunflower would cease growing at calf, knee or hip height.

The dogs would bark too, even more incessantly than they would shit, which always awoke my love's cat. No matter how she stroked the poor thing it would bristle and claw at her while the bitches barked. So, I would sing this lullaby to my love and her cat—

*When our blazing sun is gone,
When he nothing shines upon,
When you show your little light,
My love, you sparkle all the night.*

And, the bitches would bark as my love stroked her cat and I would sing through her window more and more softly as the night wore on—

*And, your lover in this dark
Thanks you for your tiny spark.
I could not see which way to go,
If you did not sparkle so.*

I became familiar with the bitches' routine. As they tired, I whispered more and more softly as I moved nearer and nearer to my love's window—

*In the darkest night I keep
As I through your window peek.
Yet, you cannot shut your eyes
Till the stars fade from our sky.*

My lips would be all but pressed to the screen when the barking stopped and those bitches slipped into slumber. The cat and my love would at last sleep, and I too would retire to my own bed. Thus, I kept vigil.

But, the shit offerings and barking always resumed. Alas, it was for my love, her cat, my sunflowers and everyone's sleep that those bitches received my own offering—

INGREDIENTS:

- *1 whole salmon, head intact*
- *1 handful 108mg iron pills*
- *2 cups Glühwein pulp (the waste at the bottom of brewed wine) made of raisins, oranges, sugar and any spices one wishes to add*

DIRECTIONS:

1. *It is unnecessary to remove the scales, guts, liver, swim bladder and gills from the salmon as one would for human consumption. Simply open the fish—slip your knife tip into the vent and slice upwards toward the head and away from the guts, forcing your blade through the bony segment between the pelvic fins and stopping when you reach the base of the lower jaw.*
2. *Press the Glühwein pulp throughout the guts, down the craw and into the mouth of the salmon.*
3. *Stuff iron pills into the mouth, down the craw and throughout the salmon guts.*

I slapped that salmon upon the walk before both dogs. The smaller of the two locked onto the head of the fish and the other clamped its jaw around the tail. The smaller, greedier bitch won the tug-of-war that ensued by pulling the larger one off the walk and into the street and growling throatily. The larger bitch let the salmon tail drop from its mouth and sat on its haunches, but could not resist joining the little one eventually in choking down every fin and bone, despite the little one's barking and nipping.

The toxicity of my concoction performed its wonders upon them both. The littlest never returned. The other meanders about mutely upon emaciated legs, and her shit no longer plagues my sunflowers, grass or walks.

So, here I stand on my dog shit-absent walk in the middle of my dog shit-absent yard as my love stands next door stroking her cat and smiling straight up at the sky as if only she, the gods and a content cat exist while my sunflowers approach a most magnificent adolescence. Yet, my love will need my lullaby tonight, for she has become accustomed to it. Love—it is such a complicated, compelling thing.

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