

LITERARY FICTION

My Husband the Hunter

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Hadn't you heard, honey?

My husband is a hunter.

He hunts humans—has a hankering for them.

Oh yes, oh yes, it *is* a dreadful habit, isn't it? I'm surprised you hadn't heard, though. He's not quite quiet about it. Doesn't bother to *hide* it. Doesn't bother to cover up *the whispers*. Which is silly, really, because enough whispers whine together and certainly you can make out what they're wailing about!

And sometimes, too, it's not even just whispering. The moaning can get rather drawn out and miserable for all of us. He, too, finds the moaning fairly intolerable—I mean, unpalatable. But they're young, these conquests, so they haven't yet learned how to be *quiet*.

How to *shut up*.

Yes, yes, he likes them young. Flesh still plump, still gratifying to bite into, to lick into, fresh like a sweet peach that still has its skin. Men, women, doesn't matter. Something, though, about the fear not yet having spoiled the meat. The fear has a bitterness to it, apparently. He can't stand that, can't stomach it. Numbs the tongue, ruins the fun.

He truly does love the sport of it, you understand. Has quite the talent for it. His hands simply *have* to hunt humans, he says.

And I say, well I say, I mean, *I simply always am telling him*, I say—

Careful now, my dear.

Your cannibalism is showing.

The drool, you see, it drips down, it drops off the sharp edges of his incisors. It's quite the messy affair. And his eyes, well his eyes they start to dart, start to flicker back and forth, slowly stalking his victims across the quad, down the hall.

They're so youthful, so *appealing*. They draw him in. He's not too picky, either, as long as they are young and they are attractive and they are adoring of him. He thinks he's hiding it. *Ha, he thinks he's hiding it!* But he doesn't have it in himself to help himself from himself.

I can't blame him for his blood lust, now can I? I can't hold it against him!

What is it that my mother always used to say?

Oh yes.

Boys will be boys.

He's just so hungry, you see. Always so achingly empty. Can never get full. He'll feed and feed and feed and never fully get full and I fear for him, I truly do. And I'll say, well I'll say, I say—

Are you hungry, my dear? Let me prepare you dinner.

He's surely starving for affection. Desperate for attention. Eating up the devotion of his many admiring students because they come to him—*they come to him, these dumb-as-rocks kids*—in droves, in

worship, falling on their knees and begging he devour them and he simply must take advantage of their susceptibility—otherwise what kind of hunter would he be, if he let his prey go so easily?

I know the tastes he prefers, the flavour that is his favourite. I imagine the salty brine of his victims' dependency, the sweetness of their naivety. His addiction is to the power, though, peppered on his prey, their pathetic captivation with him his only sense of salvation from the meaningless monotony of his aging existence. But his desire is his downfall because their love just rots in his gut after he gobbles it up. My husband, the hunter. Insatiable, gluttonous, guilty.

His humans give him such terrible wrenching stomach aches. Such maggot-bearing miseries. Sometimes he doesn't even sleep. The maggots—I think they eat him from the inside out. So he's always hungry and he's always empty and he's always hunting to fill that hole. His skin it is sagging, and his eyes they are yellowing, and his body it is hurting.

His hunting is getting harder.

He is getting hungrier.

I hope my husband can hold on to all his hunting trophies. It surely has to be his favourite hobby. Me, too, see, I'm always happy to allow him his hunting season. I'm a very supportive spouse.

You see, I say to him, I say—

Careful now, my dear. It appears your prey is running.