The Fall of Masculinity

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The branches of the old oak tree next to my room are tapping relentlessly against the glass window pane. The tapping sounds ominous, like the tree has uncurled his fingers and is drumming them against the window as a warning sign. Sometimes it even sounds like he is scraping his twigs against the pane and I feel like he is warning me about the harsh and restless wind that awaits me outside. I want to stay in bed and envelop myself in the soft fleece blanket, burying my head in the pillow. But today I can’t sleep; the acids in my stomach are churning and twisting, creating a sour inner whirlpool. I haven’t eaten for two days and I can feel all my energy is down. But I can’t eat, haven’t had an appetite since the phone call. After today I will no longer consider myself a man.

I can feel myself shaking as she comes into the bedroom. “Oh, don’t be scared!” she calls to me, reaching out to give me a hug. She always smells like vanilla and mint leaves and I love the smell of fresh mint. ‘I promise this will all be okay,” she coos at me as her lips curl into a smile. But this wouldn’t be okay, not if this were happening to her. I try and take even breaths.

Her long chestnut hair falls down over her face, revealing only one olive colored eye. Her eyelashes are long and black and freckles dot her entire face. She has the most beautiful hands I have ever seen, with long graceful fingers adorned with chunky stone rings. I love it when she gives me backrubs with those beautiful hands. The acids begin to churn again, swirling around my stomach and gurgling at me. I can’t stop thinking about her perfection and my impending imperfection. “Come on Jake,” she calls out, walking back towards the kitchen. “You need to get ready.”
I want to snack a little just so the acids in my stomach have something to do besides eat my lining. But I can’t eat before surgery; even though my mouth feels like corrugated cardboard I still can’t have a drink. Every time I move my tongue against the roof of my mouth it feels fuzzy, like I’m licking the taupe carpet in the living room or something. I tell myself it’s time to get up out of bed, its time to get ready. I wish I could have a drink of water.

She thinks I can’t understand her, or at least that’s what she told me the other day. There was a whole one sided conversation the other day where she just talked and talked and I did my best to just sit there and listen. But I could hear her on the phone with the doctor the other day, discussing my ‘procedure’ and the possible complications. Neither of them ever asked if I wanted this done and it was just decided without ever even consulting me.

If I want to be with her it’s the only option. She “just can’t take that chance”, or so she keeps telling me with that guilty look on her face. I can’t argue with her either, she saved me from my old life and showed me what love truly was. And I wasn’t about to call the doctor and opt for the surgery so she took charge and did. But then again, that’s not anything new. No one ever consults me- it’s only my life.

I know I have to get out of my bed but it’s just so hard on these cold blustery days. I’m not surprised it was the oak’s ominous tapping that awoke me this morning; not only was it warning me of the weather but also the looming tragedy. It’s the only word I can really use for it- tragedy. But she refuses to direct and keeps referring to it as ‘the procedure’. “You’ll still be the same after the procedure!” she keeps saying to me, “You won’t even feel a thing. I’ll take care of you Jakey just like I always do.” Then I think, please don’t call me Jakey. It’s a stupid pet name and I hate it. But I just don’t say anything.

If she was male then maybe she could understand. I will not be the
same. Can never be the same after today.

I have refused to communicate with her for the past few days. When she isn’t chirping at me the silence hangs between us like a smothering fog. But I don’t argue and talk back to her, never really have since we first met.

I have loved her since that moment we met in Teske’s, the garden store. She liked to go there and hold the bunnies. I knew the first moment I saw her that she was the only person for me. We never fight; sometimes she gets upset with me and yells but I don’t ever get upset back. I snapped at her once and then felt incredibly guilty for hours. So instead I just sit there and try to look like I feel really bad about whatever she is angry about.

But ever since I heard her on the phone with the doctor I haven’t really wanted to speak to her at all. If she really loved me she would not make me have a surgery that wasn’t even a necessity. But there is just no way to argue with her; she doesn’t want me to be fertile anymore.

I hate the doctor. The moment I see him I hate him. What thin gray hair he has left is strategically plastered upon his shiny head in a Donald Trump comb-over. I never trust people with comb-overs. It’s almost like they are trying to hide something from you- but we all know you are really bald. The doctor’s bushy gray eyebrows move up and down like caterpillars wiggling across his forehead as he babbles on about ‘the procedure’. Little flecks of spit shook out of his mouth every time he pronounces a word with the letters sh or th. This stutter makes me feel somewhat superior until I notice his nametag and all the letters that trail after his name. The lights glint off his yellowed teeth as the spit shower continues. I am repulsed as a speck hits my face and I immediately want to move away from him. But I don’t want to be rude so I just stay seated.

He speaks mainly to her, his eyebrows dancing as her face furrows
trying to understand ‘the procedure’. She keeps asking him the most ridiculous questions like, ‘Will it hurt him at all? Will he know what is going on? Is he going to be comfortable later?’ like I’m not even in the room. I want to kick her after hearing her insolent questions. Of course this is going to hurt me! How would you feel if you were cut open? The doctor replies that I will be put under and afterwards they would be distributing pain medication. I perk up a little at this thought; I’m expected to not indulge myself in anything. The last time she caught me drinking beer she yelled at me for a solid ten minutes and then made me go outside. I just hung around the garage.

I can see the trees outside the hospital waving their branches in the breeze. Some of them still have their leaves left and they are turning the most intense shades of crimson and burnt sienna. The other trees have turned to skeletons and are left stretching their bare limbs in the wind. I want to be out there, feeling the leaves crunch below me. It gives me the greatest satisfaction in the world to stomp on dead leaves- well, other than peeing when I really have to go. That’s another really good feeling. Oh, and a really great meal. Sex too.

I’ve always found myself attracted to the outdoors. I mostly just love the smells of fall. Sometimes, when the wind blows just right, I can even taste the fall air; I think it tastes like barbecue sauce and burning leaves.

I focus on a squirrel running around outside, darting from tree to tree gathering nuts. I can feel my entire body tense up as the bright hospital lights continue to beat down upon me. I wish I could run outside right now, just run out of this hospital and leave. I want to feel the leaves crunch.

I hate the smell in here. It smells like a combination of rubbing alcohol, wet dogs, and sickness. It’s overwhelming and as I take each breath
the acids begin to leap and boil in my stomach, threatening to spill out my mouth at any moment. But I don’t want to do that, not here in the middle of the checkup room. I suddenly realize the doctor is staring straight at me. “Alright Jake, you can come with me now! We’re ready to get you prepped.”

No! This cannot be it. I realize suddenly the repercussions of this surgery, and that it’s my fault I haven’t resisted this at all and this is my only chance to save my balls! My eyes flick around the room and center on the blue door. My one and only exit. I realize it’s them against me. One. Two. Three.

I jump from the table and bolt towards the door, head down, eyes on the floor. I can hear her scream, yelling my name as I sprint out of the room. “Jake!” she screams, “Get back here now!”

I run into the carpeted hallway and look both ways. Each hallway looks like it lead to more and more checkup rooms and I realize that I have no idea how to get through the maze of hallways. As I’m deciding someone suddenly grabs me from behind and picks me straight up off the floor. I can hear him grunt and I’m surprised by his strength. “Come on Jake,” the doctor huffs, “It’s time to come with me.”

In a few hours, I will no longer be a man. The papers have already been signed.

There is not enough pain medication. I feel my eyes open, and I am in a cage with a doctor looking at me. “Jake!” he calls out, “How are you feeling buddy?” I feel like I just had my balls cut out doc.

My eyelids begin to feel heavy again, and I relent to the impending sleep to dream about squirrels running around the red oak trees.

I wake up and my ballsac is aching and itching and everything in my pelvis is just throbbing and my head hurts and there are white lights in my eyes. There is a giant plastic cone strapped around my head and I am in a
bright room on top of a silver table. “The procedure went well,” I could hear him saying, “And Jake will not be a father anytime soon! He will only have to wear the protective collar for seven to ten days. It’s for his own good, so he can’t bite the stitches.” Then, nothing.

She thanks him profusely and hooks a leash onto my red collar. “Come on Jakey,” she coos out to me, “Let’s go home now buddy.” She pats my head and I realize I still feel slightly high from the anesthesia.

I waddle out of the office after her, the clear plastic cone weighing my head down and blocking my view. We walk outside and I go straight over to a sign reading ‘Ames Veterinary Hospital’ and lift my leg up, relieving myself. Ah, sweet relief. As I ponder the loss of my testicles I can’t help but feel the slightest bit of pleasure as the red oak leaves crunch beneath my paws.