

RESURRECTION

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Since he was a child, he'd dreamed of himself in one form and woken up, always disappointed, always jolted by the reality and by the way that others looked at him. In the first years, they'd seen him completely differently, had called him by a painfully inadequate name, and had expected all kinds of things from him as a result.

But even later, when he'd been allowed to wear the clothes he wanted to wear and a name that suited him better, there were always compromises. That shirt, but not that one. Those pants, but not the tight ones. A jacket with everything, because it covered so much. And never the makeup he wanted to wear, because makeup meant the wrong thing to the wrong people.

His parents had made him go to church as a child. He'd given up on God when he was told that he wasn't welcome at church anymore. He frankly hadn't expected there to be anything after death. He'd been an angry atheist. Fine, he'd been a stereotype. But at least he hadn't given himself any false hopes.

He hadn't needed to rely on ancient ideas born of fear of death and a lack of understanding of science. He knew what was logical and what was logical was that there was nothing after death, that there was no soul, no spirit. A body died and went back to the earth. It became food for worms. If there was immortality, that was all it was, a chance to be part of the circle of life, the cosmos that would eventually expand too far and then shrink back to another big bang, to begin again.

But here he was, not just a soul, but himself inside a body. A perfect body, without any scars on it. All the male parts were there that he had

dreamed of his whole life—and a nice set of them, too. A size no one would complain about.

He was standing in an open grave. It surprised him because he'd somehow thought that his family would cremate him, as he'd told them he wanted. He'd always thought that it was a kindness to them. Once he was dead, he imagined there would be nothing left of him to care about. And it would be easier for them if he didn't have to have a space in the family plot. Yet here he was, in the family plot, resurrected facing east, toward the sun rising in the bright morning light. He saw none of his other family members there. Were they gone already? Had they been resurrected before him? That was entirely possible, as he recalled something vaguely about a first and second resurrection, and then a final resurrection just before the judgment.

So he'd be judged of God. He'd be sent to hell, or to a lower level of heaven. What he'd read in books was that he'd be happy there, that God would send him where he'd be happy because in the end, God loved all His children.

As it turned out, he couldn't imagine being happy with his family members who had rejected him during his lifetime and refused to call him by his proper pronouns or by his name. They would only allow him to come to family activities if he dressed as a woman and let them treat him as they'd once treated him.

He'd never liked being a woman, but it had been much worse once he knew he was a man. Then it seemed that his family needed to show him their latent misogyny, because they pushed him down into the dirt again and again, told him that God had made him a woman for a reason, and that he was rejecting God's decision to be who he was meant to be, which was a servant to men, an object for them to look at.

He'd never hated women, but he hated being a woman then for more than one reason.

Wait. There was a friend he hadn't seen in years. He lifted his arm and called out her name. She turned and saw him, then ran toward him. She embraced him fully and wept.

“I didn’t believe in resurrection,” she said.

“Neither did I. But this is pretty convincing,” he said.

She looked down at herself. “I thought somehow I’d be different. Fixed, I guess.”

“Fixed?” He tensed.

“More beautiful. Without the extra weight I’m carrying around.” She put a protective hand around her stomach.

“You are beautiful,” he said. “You always were.”

She stared at him, but she said nothing about his form, though they were both naked and she must have been surprised. Yet she wasn’t.

“I thought I’d be able to see again, too. But it’s different now.”

“Different how?” he asked. He’d never thought of her as blind. She passed so well in the seeing world, never using a stick or a service dog. He’d always thought she must be only partially blind, but it hadn’t been something he’d ever felt capable of asking her about directly. It seemed rude.

“I don’t know. Maybe just that it doesn’t matter anymore? Or that everything has a sound that I can hear.” She pointed to the grass on the cemetery grounds. “I can hear it. Can you? It’s singing to me, telling me where to step.”

He strained for a moment, then shook his head. “I don’t hear anything.”

“Oh, well, maybe I’m crazy, then.” She laughed.

“I don’t think so,” he said. What if resurrection was more than just about how your own body turned out? What if it was a resurrection for the whole world, so that everything out there was more in tune with what was inside your heart? What if the world was alive enough now to know what you needed, and to give it to you?

“The other graves aren’t opened yet,” she said, waving at them.

He stared, confused. “Maybe they were filled in again?” he said. But there was no sign of them ever being opened, of the ground being disturbed at all.

“What if they weren’t the first ones resurrected? What if we are?” she asked.

That was impossible, surely. He could believe that God loved him, even that God had made sure that he had the body he wanted at last. But to be loved before the others, who had always been perfect, who had never doubted their faith, who had never cursed God—no, that wasn’t right. He couldn’t be rewarded for what he’d done. Not like that.

“Look at that,” he said. It was a great white light on the horizon. He had plenty of energy to go toward it if he wanted to. Like they said, go toward the light.

“You go,” she said. “I’ll stay here.”

He hesitated, then reached for her hand and held it. “I don’t want to go, either,” she said.

“Why not?”

“Because I don’t know that I want any more than we have right now. Here. Together.”

He felt something stir inside of him, something that had died long before his body had. It was a sense of hope.

“What if we’re afraid to ask for more because we’re so used to having so little?” he asked.

“What if?” she said, and she walked the other way, away from the light.

They didn’t feel the earth moving beneath their feet, or the sky go dark. There seemed to be no consequence for not going toward the light, other than the light getting just a little bit smaller. But by the end of the day, when they’d found an empty house that looked nice to stay in for the night, he looked back and saw that the light was still there. Maybe he’d change his mind later, but for now, he was going to sleep. He was going to enjoy being alive again, and being himself for the first time ever. And he was going to enjoy not feeling as if there was anything wrong or missing. That was the real resurrection.