

Early (Valentine's Day Challenge)

by Gabriel Orgrease

As Brenda stepped out along in the air the morning cold was clear as her ice-trees shimmered.

Despite last night's storm she cleared the gray-stone steps of the butcher shop just fine. There was no slip, no fall, nothing at all remarkable in the scene as her squat legs; her arms loaded down with pig's knuckles carried her along, wrapped in an old wool coat, to her warm abode. It was in the ambiguity of her heart that she carried her burden though she knew that Johnny Dunn would be there, asleep. Waiting, agrog in their bed, him got back only a few hours off work at the salt mine shaft, the nightcap of bourbons with his workmates not as yet off worn.

But the least from her purse they would have a fine meal on this Valentine's afternoon.

Maybe, just maybe there would be yellow sun. Birds at her small feeder twittered. Beside her door there was a black squirrel in the dogwood she saw scratched his armpit. Neither bone nor this stiff paper would be wasted.

She could have wanted so much more than the radio played old timey or with the electric bill paid up with Johnny him a steady job, chocolate hearts, roses a card, his love, a child. It was nice now they had water though on these cold cold nights the toilet froze.

Inside and unwrapped she stoked the wood stove and put up a perk of coffee. He rustled. Brenda heard Johnny fumble in the bedroom, too early, "He should stay down longer," she said to the calico cat intent on her white paper wrapped packages.

"Hey darlin' love here," Johnny said from where he stood at the door, "I brought you a little somethin'."

