

COD: Extreme Hunger

by Katie Moore

Mason Adams shuffled his feet behind the podium and cleared his throat. "Theo was my son. The medical examiner calls his death a suicide, but that's a funny word, isn't it? It means Theo killed himself. I have a different opinion."

A ripple of whispering concern spread through the sparse collection of mourners. Mrs. Adams wrung her hands and hunched over, hiding behind her shoulders.

"My son was born hungry. He could never get full. I don't just mean he was hungry for food, though it started that way. As a baby he was never calm unless he was being fed. I swear me and his mother didn't sleep at all those first few years." Mr. Adams paused, almost smiling, over memories of his boy.

"Somewhere around four his hunger shifted away from food, and more toward...obsessions. I think it started with dinosaurs. We didn't think that was strange. All little boys like dinosaurs, right? He knew everything about them. He could pronounce their names when he was still saying pis-ketty instead of spaghetti."

Mid-laugh, Mr. Adams caught himself. His eyes welled, flooded with guilt for chuckling at his son's funeral. The uncomfortable audience looked away, distracting their eyes with stoic flower arrangements and scrapbook photo collages.

When he spoke again his voice grated like sandpaper. "Let me get to the point. After dinosaurs it was baseball, then soccer, karate, the drums. Each one a new fixation that became his whole world until he figured out it didn't satisfy him. Then he didn't just give it up, he hated it. I know some of you remember the day he burned his drum set. Why didn't we know it was a problem then?"

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He paused and clenched his fists.

Mrs. Adams trembled and choked back the wail aching to escape with her teardrops.

“After that it got worse. Bigger boy, bigger obsessions. Talking music or politics with Theo was like walking blind onto a minefield. Every new girlfriend was...well it was terrifying for us, and torturous for him. Every time a girl broke it off we thought...we thought he would kill himself.”

“Religion was the worst, suddenly we were being preached at by a teenage soldier for Christ and everything Theo saw around him was sin. For awhile he stopped eating, and all he did was pray. None of you ever knew that. We told you all that he was kayaking out West, remember?”

“I won't say it was religion that killed my son, but when Theo realized that not even God was going to fill him up, finish off his hunger, well...like everything else he gave it up and hated it. Not just God, this time it was life. Theo was searching for some kind of nourishment, and he never found it. He never got full.”

Mason Adams placed his hand on the foot of his son's casket.

“Theo, I hope you're full now.”

