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Thanksgiving Brunch Mitzvah or, the End of the World for Women by Marleen S. Barr

I am a thirteen year old named Robbie who has always enjoyed Thanksgiving. This year, as ever, I happily joined my beloved immediate family: Daddy, Great Grandpa Izzy, Grandpa Lester, Uncle Arthur, and Cousins Mark, Richard, and Milton. All eyes were focused on the succulent roast festooned with stuffing, Brussels sprouts, and mashed potatoes. Everyone was salivating as Daddy used a carving knife to penetrate the crispy skin. As warm fat oozed out of the roast and the savory smell of fresh rosemary permeated the dining room, people announced their preferences.

“I’m a breast man,” announced Grandpa Lester.

“I prefer thighs myself,” interjected Cousin Milton.

Wishing to participate in the macho portion request fest, I said that I would like to chomp on a wing.

“This chick did not have wings,” matter of factly muttered Uncle Arthur.

Daddy abruptly dropped the knife. The whole family turned as white as the mashed potatoes.

No one remained interested in reserving his particular carcass preference. All eyes were focused on Daddy.

“Robbie, we have to have The Talk,” said Daddy.

“Puhlease, I’m thirteen. We had The Talk years ago. And I have a boyfriend. I’m going to the junior prom with Avi Aronstein,” I insisted.

Not that Talk. I’m talking about a different Talk. Because you’re thirteen, this Thanksgiving is different from all other Thanksgivings. Today you will become a man. Today is your Thanksgiving Brunch Mitzvah.”

“Brunch Mitzvah? What’s that?” I asked.

“Oy, a Brunch Mitzvah is no easy celebration. Tradition dictates that on this occasion fathers tell sons the truth. Robbie, in order to become a man, you must know that women were once included in society,” explained Daddy.

“Women? What are women?”

“Yes, women. Women, before the world ended for them, were once defined as humans who do not have penises and who give birth through orifices called vaginas. Babies were born after men insert sperm into vaginas.”

“No shit. But what about the gestation machines? How can women be better than gestation machines? And what happened to the women? Where are all the women?”

“Gestation machines do not exist. They are right up there with tooth fairies and dragons.

Great Grandpa Izzy remembers when a new form of bird flu decimated humanity. Social institutions fell

apart--including food production; all the farmed animals died. Professor Wolfgang von Weisswurst--an eminent science fiction scholar who won the 2023 Science Fiction Research Association Pilgrim Award for lifetime achievement in science fiction scholarship-- formulated a plan which saved human civilization. According to von Weisswurst, women are extraneous. He posited that people, that is to say men, would survive if a small percentage of women were concentrated and hidden in windowless factory farm buildings. Some would spend their lives in gestation crates; others would be slaughtered and used for food. I clearly remember when men adopted von Weisswurst's plan to combine Harry Harrison and Suzy McKee Charnas' science fiction visions with meta-Nazism. They rationalized their decision by reasoning that women who are relegated to animal husbandry would no longer have to bother with finding husbands. What a great way for men to at once to turn women into bacon and avoid being called male chauvinist pigs. Your mother is being treated like a sow. Robbie, soylent green is women.

Great Grandpa Izzy continued the Brunch Mitzvah proceedings with the ritual toast. "L'chaim--for men," he intoned while raising his wine glass. As he cut into the roast which had been stored in the family deep freeze since his youth--and used especially for my Brunch Mitzvah--his knife hit a metal kosher food designation tag imbedded in the cooked flesh. He removed the tag and stared at the surrounding skin. He saw a familiar heart shaped tattoo. "Robbie, it is time for you to "meat" Great Grandma Rosemary," he said while nonchalantly sipping more wine. "Oy, who knew that when I married a shiksa she would end up being kosher?"