

## Castration

In 1313 a Franciscan monk committed to God those parts of himself sacrosanct by most men, the knife was sharp and both his fear and pain faded away with his new found purity.

Tell you about myself? Well I'm twenty-six years old, worked in the Chambers for the last ten years and of course I'm a Celeb. My job? I sweep the ashes out of the Chamber after every run. No, I wasn't forced, chose Celeb status of my own free will. Why? There're a lot of reasons. I never liked other men, wasn't high enough on the merit list for Hetero status, the government does provide every Celeb with a job and you know how hard those are to come by, besides, we Celebs are guaranteed to stay clean.

Have I been to see my Breeders lately? Well yes right before . . . it was last Restday. Dad still wouldn't talk to me but mom was nice. See, I was born before the Purge so I'm one of the few left around who really knows who their actual parents are. Mom always makes a big deal when I visit, of course they never leave the breeder farm but she seems happy there. I wouldn't know about sex but I think she feels safe there. We were placed in the farm when the government first introduced mandatory culling and reclassification to control the disease, that was back in the 90's.

Dad hated it there. When I was little he used to rant and rave about freedom of choice and his constitutional rights. I don't think the disease ever read the Bill of Rights. I guess he never understood the government's responsibility to protect us, not to mention the survival of our race. Back then at least eighty percent were infected, that's way down now. When we first got there I didn't like the Breeder farms either. Once you tested, clean isolation was permanent. We never talked about the soldiers that were stationed all around us.

Before the Purge Dad used to take me fishing every spring. We'd drive down to the river and sit on the rocks, impaled worms dangling in the water. He used to send me up to the stand for pop and crackers. I'd munch away and he'd tell me about the river, the fish he'd caught when he was a boy and how he and grandpa used to fish in the exact same spot.

Fishing on the river is a family heritage my dad would say, make sure you pass it on. I don't fish anymore. Of course all of us have to make sacrifices, who knows that better than a Celeb?

The day it happened I came home from the reclassification center, sore from the operation but excited, now I had a status all my own, a guaranteed job and the chance to leave the Breeding farm. He was sitting in his chair when I came in, said hello but he acted as if I wasn't there. Tried to hug him but he pushed me away. Said that I was dead now, no longer his son. Ran to my room, never seeing the tears my mom said were streaming down his face.

He couldn't accept my reclassification. I tried to show him how it was the right thing to do, how necessary it is for excess males to be classified Celeb so they can work in the unclean areas without fear of infection. I even brought home my textbook from school and the pamphlets that they hand out around classification time. He said I'd be better off a Homo, or even going wild. He has this bizarre image of the wild ones as rebels fighting repression, 'Revolutionaries and Patriots' he used to call them. He never saw them for what they really are, the infected carriers of a deadly disease, a cancer nestled within the very breast of humanity.

Every visit I would sit in the chair across from him while my mother served us supper, trying to tell him what I saw at work, those thin pathetic stick people, covered in running sores and smelling of death. Some came willingly, others had been captured by the weekly patrols. It didn't matter how they got to the Chambers, they all ended up in the same place. Some believed the government claims of a cure, in a way I guess those claims are true, they all wound up cleansed. Most were too weak to even walk, but they all screamed when the conveyor belt dumped them into the Chamber. He never listened.

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