

# She Eats the Termites

Nuala Alvord

“What are you gonna do?” Moira asked, grinding into her temples with rough pink thumbs. “Bludgeon him with a mallet?”

“That’s exactly what I’m going to do,” I said, patting a bandaid to the bridge of my nose in the bathroom mirror. I grabbed a canvas tote off the toilet and emptied it out on the floor. Two mangoes, both rotten. A bottle of cheap chianti with a woven palm sleeve bent around the base. A box of pink candles. My nose hairs were crusted with blood. This was my moment. I had my opportunity. A time of rage to jump upon.

“You want to know what I think, Earl?” Moira inquired from the living room. Before I had time to open my mouth, she said, “I think you’re capable, but terrified.”

“I am only capable,” I responded bluntly and loudly. I ripped open the candle box with unnecessary force. My hands were trembling as I counted each piece in my palm. I couldn’t let her know that she was right about me. She always was.

There were seven there.

“Seven should be enough to light that lantern, yeah?” I called. No response. She wasn’t mad at me, she was just making assumptions about the state I’d return to her in. Nose bleeding down my chest, buckling kneecaps scuffed to the bone, and a zig-zagging spine bobbing my head up and down like a busted accordion. Well, that wouldn’t be me. There was no power, so nine white candles dripped like weeping ghosts on the coffee table.

“Moira, he’s out of his gourd,” I spoke aloud, exasperated as I stormed over to our cabinets to dig around for my choice of weapon. “He’s a lunatic and he can’t do this right now. We just went into a blackout, so what am I supposed to do?”

“Get the police? Stay put? Tend to your pregnant girlfriend at home instead of rushing down to the basement to bust the head open of some guy who’s hoarding pit bulls?”

“What if they come up here?” I offered. “What if those mutts come up here and tear you apart?”

“How?” she laughed, dropping her neck on the backboard of the couch. “Are they gonna dress up as postal workers and knock on the door so they can come in? They can’t get in here, Earl. You’re being paranoid.”

“I’m being *cautious*,” I retorted, sticking my head out of the cabinet to assert myself, then poking it right back in to resume my search. “We’ve put up with this crap for a year and a half now. The non-stop barking, the snarling, the smell of feces, the banging fists on doors, the *shredded* animal parts on my doorstep, Moira.”

“How do you know it’s him?”

“I’ve seen him hauling those guts around in styrofoam coolers.” I slammed my fist on the floor. Couldn’t find that stupid mallet. “I’ve seen him getting rid of it in the dumpsters across the street when he thinks no one can see him. But I do. I see him.”