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# THE FURY OF GRACIE MAY

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Everything must be perfect. Check again. Straighten the towels. Light the candle, summer meadow, no, the other one, she prefers the other one now. He stopped, took a deep breath, started the breathing exercises he'd got off the internet, you could find anything on there. Do you know how many suicides assisting websites there were? Too many to count, I mean, who needs help with that really, it's pretty simple, but then, he supposed, people do like to be inventive, to make a statement in their final moments.

There, that's better, he was calmer now. He looked around a tidy house and smelled the enticing smells wafting from the kitchen. She'd be pleased, he loved it when she was pleased, how he loved it. When she was happy it was all so good, when she wasn't having a bad day, the days that weren't at all her fault but nearly always due to his failures.

The low growl of her car engine on the drive, silenced following a final snarl, then the cracking, turning, sound of a key in the front door lock. His body went icy cold with anticipation. Breath held awaiting her mood. God, let today be a good day, don't let her be having one of her dark days.

The door slammed shut behind her, for a moment she was shadowed in darkness, a spectre in the gloom, and then she stepped forward into the dim light of the hall. She sighed heavily and gave him an unreadable half smile. His heart swelled with happiness; it was a good day. She looked exhausted, poor dear, such a long day being a doctor. He immediately took her heavy bag and placed it in the office, next to the left side of the desk, where she liked it. He hurried back in time to take her jacket from her exhausted hands and place it carefully on a hanger in the downstairs closet, as she liked it. Her handbag went on the hanger beside it.

She inhaled the cooking smells emanating from down the hall and moaned with an almost sexual pleasure. "Oh, that smells good Baby. Is it casserole?"

"It is," he confirmed, brimming with pleasure and pride at his success.

"Oh perfect, I am just in the mood for one of your chicken casseroles."

His heart froze in its chest, fluttering, holding its breath like a frightened child. "Gracie May?"

"Yes Dear heart."

"It's pork."

"What?"

"It's pork."

"It's what?"

"I'm so sorry Gracie May but its pork."

"*Pork fucking casserole!*" She balled her fists by her side and closed her eyes impatiently, her lower teeth protruding as she attempted to control her bubbling temper. "Pork casserole... When you knew I wanted chicken, you did pork. Jesus, why do you do this shit to me? I've had a really long day and..." She took a deep breath, eyes closed once more as if seeking patience behind her agitated eye lids. "Alright, that's okay; we'll have bastard pork casserole. Who cares what I want right?"

She marched toward the kitchen; painted toe nails opaque through the veil of nylon which shrouded them. She muttered over and over "pork fucking casserole" and he flinched every time, foreboding growing like a cancer in his chest, making it hard to breath.

When he realised what she was doing it was too late. He gasped but before he could stop her she had wrenched the cupboard doors and flung them open. Her eyes grew wide

with utter horror as she took in the wine bottles before her, labels cast haphazardly in every direction, some completely turned around, the whole cupboard just jumbled beyond all recognition.

She stumbled back, covering her mouth in disgust. "My god..." she whispered.

"Gracie May I'm sorry, I haven't had time..."

Her hand connected with his cheek with a resonating slapping sound and he stumbled back. She was glaring at him with wild eyes full of fury.

"Why do you do it?" She screamed, incensed with rage. "Why do you do these things to me?"

"I'm sorry Gracie May," he whimpered stumbling back away from her.

"Do I deserve this?"

"No," he pleaded meekly, shaking his head. "I forgot... I'm sorry..."

"Must I do everything myself? Get no support or help at all? Do I really ask so much of you?"

"No..." Another slap assailed him and he stumbled back helplessly. She gave him a kick to the thighs sending him sprawling across the floor, banging his head against the wall where he cowered.

"You think I want to come home to this?" She demanded, stepping over him. "Why do you make me do this?"

"Please Gracie May..." He whined feebly.

"I've been at work all day, and then I have to come home to this." She reached down behind the comfy chair and pulled out a dark brown belt, coiled like a serpent in her claws. She turned to him. "I don't deserve this, I've had such a long day and then I have to come home to this. It's like you hate me, do you hate me? Why? Why?"

He held up shaking hands in surrender. "Please Gracie May, I'm so sorry; I know I've let you down."

She slowed in her assault and lowered the belt a little, eye brows raised, expectant, and waiting.

"I know you don't need this, to come home to my failures. I'll do better, I'll make it better, I swear I will Gracie May."

She dropped her head and placed a hand to her face, her shoulders trembled helplessly as she began to sob.

"Oh don't cry Gracie May, please don't cry, I can't bear to see you cry."

Her whole body shuddered furiously and high pitched animal like keening sounds came from beneath her hand which still smothered her face. "Oh god, I hate this, I hate that you make me like this. I hate myself for hurting you, you must know that."

"I do, of course I do, you have such a gentle soul. I push you to this, I know I do." He went to stand but froze as her crying stopped abruptly. She lifted her face rapidly from her hand, dry eyes glistening. She sniffed. She glared down at him. She sniffed again.

"Baby?"

"Yes Gracie May."

"Is that summer meadow I can smell?"

"No Gracie May," he answered excitedly. "No, it's the other one, the new one."

It was too much; he'd pushed her too far, why did he torment her like this? Fury burned so hot it scalded her insides, pained her aching chest. What kind of a man tortures

his wife in this way, pushing and pushing with his vicious brand of mental cruelty? That's what it was, it was a form of abuse, no wonder she got so upset, she was really just protecting herself, fighting her corner; any woman would do the same. How dare he treat her this way, it was unforgivable, and although she knew she'd be terribly sorry later she knew what she had to do.

He fell to the floor face first as she tore his shirt open. Across his back was a lattice of angry welt marks spider webbing across the ruined flesh. He cried out as the searing pain tore across his skin, the belt lashing down opening the scars like hungry little lips revealing blood red tongues gleaming within. His cries were pitiful and anguished as the red hot pain tore through him; Humiliating torture burning in every vein and artery which raced like electricity through his body.

Gracie May wielded the belt like a gladiator's whip as her attention was stolen by the distant vibrating call of her phone. She threw the belt at him and he curled up into a foetal position, clutching his knees to him.

"Why do you have to put my bag away, it's like you want to piss me off?" She shouted as she hurried down the hallway, throwing open the closet door and scrambling about in her bag. She snapped the phone open, "Doctor Gray... Hmm, I see... No, don't be silly, it's fine to call me at home... no, not at all, I'm happy to help. I'm on my way; I'll be there in ten minutes. No, please calm down... she'll be fine, keep her temperature down... How old is she?... Six, then yes, please do give her some pain relief... I'm on my way, just try and keep her cool and comfortable."

Gracie May snapped her phone shut. "I can't do this now okay?"

He pulled himself to his knees and crouched there as if praying submissively before her. She touched his cheek tenderly and he didn't flinch for he knew it was over now. "You know I love you right? I'm sorry we've had our little fall out, it's probably my fault. It's just that I love you so much and I so badly want things right between us. You know I love to air any disagreements straight away to stop them festering, to make things good between us. You know I hate to hurt you Baby, it hurts me so much more than it does you, you know that, right?"

He nodded miserably.

She sighed impatiently. "Alright then, clearly you don't."

"I do!" He answered quickly. "I do Gracie May, I'm sorry; I hate it when we quarrel."

She shook her head sadly as she buttoned her coat up. "It's hardly a fair fight now is it? I'm a woman and you're a man so you'll always physically overpower me."

"I'm sorry Gracie May," he muttered numbly for want of anything else to say.

She smiled down at him warmly. "Let's not say any more about it, I forgive you, you silly thing. I always do don't I. Now be a dear heart and clear up that mess on the carpet. That will stain something chronic. Salt water should fix it. And here, I have some cream to ease your back, should stop it scarring." She handed him the little tube and kissed his forehead. Then she wafted out of the front door, slamming it behind her.

For a moment he stayed crouched on the floor, his back throbbing and burning, his shirt torn and ruined in his hands. He glanced around at the blood spatters on the cream carpet. She'd be very upset if they were still there when she got home. He sighed and pulled himself to his feet. It wasn't a problem, he'd tackled these stains before, and he knew

exactly how to make the carpet appear clean once more.

**THE END**