

Gold Beating

A father gets into his car, shirt untucked, and drives home to his family and warm bed. He's got a spouse he never married and three kids. The fourth one, who lives in Seattle, doesn't claim him as his father, which was true because his real father was dead. The father enters his home drunk off of Goldschläger. At first his youngest daughter who is eight years old with eyes so blue that the oceans quiver when she visits the beach can't tell if he's drunk because he hasn't said a word to anyone yet.

"Do you think he's drunk?" She asks her oldest sister who resembles their dad the most.

"Of course he's drunk; he's drunk every night."

So the youngest daughter accepts her father's intoxication and prepares herself for the drunk talks about problems that only exist to him. He walks into the kitchen and stands still, staring out the window into the dark world he just came from. He snaps out of it and walks into the living room to sit in his recliner to talk and nod off. The mother was sitting in the recliner, but when the father comes home, the recliner is always his. No exceptions. The four girls in the house crowd the couch behind the coffee table and begin to chat. Normal childhood conversations commence and the father still hasn't said a word.

"Mom! She won't let me use the blue."

"Heather, give her the blue."

"Mom is there any dinner left over? I'm still hungry."

"The rest of dinner is for dad."

"I don't want it." He hiccupped.

The youngest daughter looks at her father and sees the alcohol behind the whites of his eyes.

Some time in the future, the daughter would learn to drive with her father. By that time, they had moved out of her childhood home and migrated to Northern California. That winter was snowy and the roads were icy, but she would learn anyway. The daughter drove on their property that had tall pine trees older and wiser than her father. Behind the wheel, she confused the order of the foot pedals and accelerated towards a large tree instead of breaking before it. With her wide blue eyes, she stared at her father in the passenger seat. His eyes were blank and small flakes of gold swam behind his irises.

"I'm going out." The father sways into the car and crookedly drives up the dirt road to the left of the house - not the driveway to the right of the house, but the dirt road that lead up the mountain to the gun range he built years before his second daughter was born.

His youngest daughter ran into his bedroom to gaze out of the window that had the best view of the dirt road. She watched half to see if he would crash the car and half to know which way he was going. She went to sleep that night before her father got home. When he woke her up in the morning for school, she got dressed and learned about pumpkins.

Now the girl is a woman and lives in a dorm room of her top pick in schools. She worked hard and got a scholarship that pays for 90% of her unmet financial need, which was all but the cost of her text books. Most of her parents' money went to cigarettes and alcohol, so she needed the help.

Her roommate (the one whose girlfriend never left her side, not the one who sells medical marijuana) cooked a spaghetti sauce one night to impress her girlfriend. The daughter's roommate shared the sauce with her mother when she was young. Now she shares it with a lover her mother doesn't even know exists. The recipe called for red wine that was never added into the sauce when she was a child because her parents sheltered her. When she was older, her mother cooked the sauce the right way, and they never went back to cooking the innocent

sauce.

The bottle of wine used in the home-away-from-home sauce sat on the counter until the drunk father's daughter got home from one of her classes. She peered at the wine with curiosity. She drank one vodka shot in high school at a Halloween party years before and earlier than that, stole a two ounce bottle of cherry flavored vodka from her father which he bought because the liquor store didn't have his Goldschläger once.

No one was home in her dorm and she checked all the rooms to make sure. She took a cup out of the cupboard but knew she didn't want that much. She just wanted a taste. She didn't taste any alcohol in the sauce when she tried it after her roommate boasted about it. The daughter put the cup away and grabbed a half cup measuring spoon out of a drawer and poured just enough red wine in it to fill it one third of the way full. She drank the wine and grimaced at the flavor.

She audibly thought "Oh my god, who drinks this?"

She went with her roommate to the store to buy the wine the night before although she was only 19. She was just tagging along, so she didn't need to show anyone her ID. The daughter knew the wine was cheap and only worth the ink printed on the label, so she accepted that finer wine would taste better.

The day went on, roommates came in and went out. A friend came over to stay the night, and the daughter and the friend baked store bought chocolate chip cookies.

When the friend wasn't in the kitchen with her, the daughter stole drinks of the wine that she poured into a clear glass.

"It isn't that bad."

Midnight rolled around and her friend wanted to sleep and did so. The daughter organized things for the next day, taking sips out of the bottle and her red stained glass here and there. She slowly noticed her vision blurring and her head felt light. When she looked

around the room, the corners of her eyes coated the room in cloudy black shadows. She moved her blue eyes back and forth vicariously, feeling the effects of alcohol for the first time in her life. The way the black clouds blurred her vision enticed her to pour another glass.

As the daughter entered the kitchen where the wine was, she zigzagged her eyes around the room to continue feeling the effects of the alcohol. As she did so, she watched the wine bottle transform into Goldschläger. She yelped and leaped back in surprise, holding onto the door frame to support her swaying body.

The daughter panicked. She dizzily wobbled into the bathroom to splash water on her face and calm her nerves.

"I'm not like him. I am *not* like him!"

The daughter of the father who drank grabbed a towel and slowly dried her face. She then observed her features in the mirror. Through her blurry vision, she could see the color red familiarly tinting the whites of her eyes, and her pupils were blue molded grapes.