

# YOUR CAKE

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What a

lovely day to bake your cake.

You'll thank the sun for shining when you take a slice,

stuff it into your greedy little mouth.

You'll be glad that I was in the mood for baking.

The ingredients on the counter are all lined up, crisscrossing sunbeams disguising their labels and shapes as I shade my eyes.

You won't come downstairs for at least another hour. Sleeping far too much these days; you can't blame me for that one. This morning you'll wake up with the smells winding

up  
the  
stairs  
and under the door,  
into your hairy nostrils.

I open the flour; dust it over the work surface gently. That's right. You'll stretch - *smells so good* - you'll say.

The flour looks okay,

like snow; or something else.

Now for the eggs in the bowl; their translucent wobble, that reminds me of aerobics class – ho-hum – the sunlight makes the yolks look green; there's five in the bowl. Five eggs. This a luxurious cake.

I take a fork and stab the yolks

– rar

rar –

tearing them apart so that it is just

innocuous greenish jelly. Of course, I could have used the whisk. But I wanted to use the fork. And now I pat my hair down in the mirror you drilled into the hallway wall. I look lovely in the sunlight; the rays are picking out the colours in my hair – gold, you said – but really, there is so much more. Red, orange, grey, brown, and yes, gold. Back to the cake, adding sugar and butter; slicing through the yellow with my sharpest knife and then strangling with my fingers,

all jelly running down my wrist. I didn't remember to take off my watch. A little gold watch. I leave it in the sink, turn on the tap. Drowning treasure. The telephone rings while I am looking for the chocolate in the pantry: big, black blocks – I ordered in bulk because you have such a very sweet tooth. I yank the telephone cord from the wall. I don't want to wake you up. Goodness knows how you are sleeping anyway; the sunlight must be cutting white scores across the room by now. Soon, you'll come downstairs,

I'm sure you will.

There's the chocolate, underneath the barrels covered in skulls; that's the white powder that you use on the rats. I bought it all because the company was going out of business. It was cheap. But it's not hygienic to keep the poison in the pantry, right next to the flour. I'll have you move it later, once you've eaten your cake. You'll come down in your blue dressing-gown, won't you. I melt the chocolate in a bowl that I balance on top of raging boiling water. That's very hot. The hob isn't clean; strands of spaghetti and cake mix twist around each other. Oats and boiled milk. Oh, well. The black chocolate begins to strain around its edges, to leak its own juices into the bowl, and then there are only tiny islands of firmness. How

lovely. I add some other things to the mix – tum-te-tum – special ingredients that I know you like. Soon, the smell will go twisting up the stairs, and you'll come down – *That smells so good!* I spot yesterday's plate on the table; only a few crumbs left – you liked that one a lot. Was the telephone ringing earlier? Shouldn't you be at work? I look at the watch; it's half-past ten, the numbers are wobbling under the water, and the sun is shining so brightly. Outside, I can see the trees heavy with little red birds and covered with speckled green leaves. A boy is delivering the

post. I stoop down next to the oven, where the cake is rising, ghostly in its tin. The oven isn't very clean, smeared with finger marks and egg. Oh,

well. The cake is ready now. I take it out of the oven and forget to use a glove, thinking that I hear you on the staircase, your big, clomping boots. My hand is quickly covered in red that jumps into individual blisters, popping up like little white slimy mushrooms. I stare at my hand and shout 'Dammit!' There's no other sound in the house. Where are you?

The telephone wire lies gently on the floor, a lifeless snake. I wait five more minutes; it feels like five minutes, but I think that the little gold watch you bought me is drowned in the sink, so I can't be sure. My Christmas present. I wait for a sound, but there is not one. Your cake is getting cold. It's nice to have the cake while it's warm between your fingers.

I pick up the cake; the tin is cooler now. I turn the cake on its head and bash the bottom of the tin. The cake comes out perfectly. Now it's standing on the plate. There's no other sound in the whole house. I take the plate and walk to the foot of the stairs.

Don't you want your cake?

I go back to the kitchen to get the knife.

Then I come back.

I'm coming up the stairs with

your cake.