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The End of Love

The schmaltzy cards are the first to go, the year Mother's Day is outlawed. The dictator ensures that. He personally rides a Panzer through a store, sweeping cards filled with sweetness and flowers. He feels a kind of power, a sense of taking, taking what has been taken from him when he was young. He feels as if the clock has turned, and equilibrium is being restored.

"Happy Mother's Day, motherfuckers," he barks, riding down the aisle of a supermarket, "Ride of The Valkyries" playing at full blast as mothers and children flee the scene, and row after row of cards is toppled, cards meeting their end under the cold, unsentimental grind of the wheels.

Second are the mothers themselves. He begins to round them up. He ensures that every mother in the nation is thrown into the back of a train. The trains have no particular destination, just rushing the mothers back and forth across the nation, leaving them with no homes, and no children. He doesn't have a plan for the mothers. He just wants them to be separated. Frankly, he thinks he treats them well, even if they are a bit crowded. There are orchestras on the train, and even movie nights. He knows the movies they like. The dictator himself has a fondness for romantic comedies, for heart-stirring dramas.

His third plan is to arrest children who speak of their mothers, these loving souls, who utter that awful word. Mother.

But one night, his army in tow, prepared to strike, to rampage, to destroy, to interrogate, he stares into a cheerful blue frame house, where a young child gazes helplessly through a window, clad in somewhat ostentatious purple pajamas. The dictator personally took this child's mother himself, and he knows he should stay out of sight, but the child sees him before he can duck.

He stares at the dictator, a deep knowing look. He could try to escape. He could call for his father. But he doesn't. And the dictator has to admire this resistance, the futility of it even. This child has grown up young. In some ways, he reminds the dictator of himself, his own small-town childhood, a world in which the word mother was never uttered after the age of eight.

He thinks of his own mom. She just up and disappeared one night, stole away into a Packard without a goodbye. He's heard rumors of sightings. In Europe. In Siberia even. Some of the stories seem ludicrous. Some seem like smear tactics by the underground media. But stories, the dictator knows, begin with truth, however small. They just reinforce the darkness, the secrets in his underworld: She left him. She left by choice. And she may well be out there at this precise moment. That sense of knowing and not knowing pulls at him, like a kind of deep force.

"Happy Mother's Day," is all he whispers, waving sadly to the child, so no one hears him. So that he doesn't have to arrest himself, although, maybe that's what he needs. Maybe he needs to arrest himself, send himself to the farthest regions of the world and feel what pain really means.