

# Insatiable

by Craig Lancaster

More and more, as she watched him slide away from her in increments, she thought of that first summer together. How his searching hands would find her, any time of day, and pull her in for closer examination. How his eyes, his mouth, his tongue would set out in insatiable discovery, like an explorer unleashed on terra nova. In the middle of the day, as the house sweltered, he would traverse the ridgelines of her hips, the switchbacks in the nape of her neck, the canyons that hadn't been breached in so long. Those days, once the sweetest of memories, had turned to taunting her.

And now, her hair in tight curls, wearing clothes that would be loosened only by her own hand at the end of the day, she cried in the darkness of the pantry, clutching a can of black beans.

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She thought of their home now as a collection of zones, diced up and labeled like a board game. Her knitting room, where solitude was a limitless resource. His office, stacked in prospectuses and Covey texts. Her armoire. His leather recliner. Her kitchen. His backyard putting green. The bedroom remained theirs, but battle lines hashed across that space, too, creating a score of demilitarized zones that only they knew.

Over time, all-out war had ceded to détente, a kind of purgatory, and while she did not miss the fights, she yearned for the passion that drove them.

She dabbed at her eyes with the kitchen towel and then punctured the beans with the can opener.

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The sound of his feet on the stairs, bounding up them two at a time, gave her insides a twist, and she pivoted from the center island to the oven, putting her back to the basement door.

“What's for dinner?”

“Enchiladas.”

“Again?”

"Again. If you want something else, there's a refrigerator full of food right there. Help yourself." She waved her hand to her right, not turning.

"Relax."

She bristled. He settled in at the table, letting loose with that series of grunts. "Ohohohohohoh." She closed her eyes.

"So, hon, looks like I'm going to San Diego next week," he said.

"Oh?" She plunged the spatula into the dinner, carving it into servings.

"Yeah, meeting a new vendor. Could be interesting."

"How long?"

"Four or five days."

She brought his plate, setting it in front of him and handing him a fork. "I could get some time off," she said.

"Why?" He shoveled an oversized bite into his mouth, then spat it out. "Hot!"

"Go with you," she said, sitting down across from him. "It's been a long time since we've been there. Might be fun."

He stabbed at the food, opening steam vents in it. "You know, Glen and I had pretty much planned to get in a few rounds of golf. Maybe next time, huh?"

She stood and then walked back to the oven, where she served up her own meal.

"You know, hon, I think I've figured out what I don't like about your enchiladas," he said. "They're just a little bland. What do you think? Maybe some jalapenos on top? It might spice them up a bit."

She sat down again, pressing the apron against her thighs. Her fork sliced clean through the soft corn torilla, whittling off a bite just so. She put it in her mouth and savored the taste, chewing it gently into pulp and then swallowing.

In the confines of her head, she answered him as he put the plate on the counter. "You know what, hon? You're a fucking asshole."

