

RUSTY FEARS 7

“WELL FED”

BY LUKA SUK

PROMPT: WASTE

[Music]

ANNOUNCER:

Well Fed by Luka Suk

[Music]

NARRATOR:

I like visiting the old woman who lives in the house by my river. Under the cover of night, when I'm prowling around looking for something to eat, she always makes sure I'm well fed. She leaves these bins out on the pavement that are filled with all kinds of mouthwatering treasures. Crunchy hollow containers made of glass or metal or plastic. Stacks of paper with bitter ink in shapes I can't decipher. Vile piles of old rotten meat and molding bread. It's all divine. A variety of textures draw me in as long claws and sharp teeth tear through the weak, black sack to devour the rancid contents within.

She knows I'm there. I know this because I can see her watching me from the window of her home. It's a good distance away, but close enough that I can see her unwavering gaze trained on me as I feed. The light that comes from within is harsh on my eyes, so I never look back for long, if at all, but I'm content with letting her watch as long as she keeps her distance.

The old woman seems to understand this agreement. Every night she stays within the confines of her home while her bins sit on the pavement bulging and overflowing. There was one night where she even left something uncovered on top of the pile. It was a strange little thing with a soft spongy texture covered in some kind of bright coloured paste. It wasn't a sponge, I know that. Sponges taste bitter and leave a dry feeling in my mouth, and this thing was so moist and horribly sweet. I didn't like it that much, but I ate it anyway. After all, she was watching me as she always does, and I didn't want her to think I wasn't fond of her gifts. She might've stopped leaving her bins out.

Growing curious, I found myself trying to watch her during the day as well. It was a challenge. The sunlight made it hard for me to see clearly, but I was still able to make out some vague shapes and forms. I'd peek up from the currents and watch her routine. She rarely left her home. Apart from the odd man who stopped by to leave some objects by her door, she didn't have a lot of visitors. Neighbors in passing would greet her as she worked on her garden, but would never stay. Perhaps she was lonely. I could say I was the same.

One morning, as I waited for the sun to set so that I may begin my feast, I watched as a metal beast approached the house. It smelled awful, like some kind of acrid smoke. It matched the man in the black suit who stepped out of it. What a strange relationship these two creatures must have. He walked up to the door, adjusting some strange shiny metal band on his wrist. When the old woman answered, a look crossed her face. I was never good at picking out human emotions. But if I had to call it anything, I suppose I would call it disgust. Regardless, she opened her door and let him inside.

I'm not sure what they talked about. I couldn't hear them from where I was and between the light and the distance, it was hard to see what was happening. Even so, I could tell it was intense. They were moving around a lot, going back and forth around the house. Before long, she made her way to her windows and hesitated. There was the slightest movement near her head before the glass was covered. With nothing left to watch, I dove back beneath the murky depths and waited for darkness to fall.

By the time the sun set, the metal beast had disappeared. The sour smell was still lingering in the air as the old woman put her bins on the pavement. I knew it would be a good feast because she seemed to struggle with them a bit. That meant they were nice and heavy. I was on the other side of the black stone, waiting patiently for her to return to her home when she saw me. She didn't run. She never did. She did, however, beckon to me before going back inside. Was there something in there she wanted me to have? Something she thought I might like perhaps?

I approached with some level of hesitation. I wasn't sure if I could stomach another one of those sickeningly sweet sponges. When I ripped open the thin, black plastic, however, a strong smell hit me. It smelled familiar somehow, but I couldn't quite place it. Skeptical, I looked up and saw the old woman looking at me. That was nothing new, of course, but this was different. Her lights were dimmed, well enough that I could see the look on her face clearly. This one, I knew I couldn't place, but it must have been something good because her lips were turned up and her teeth were out on display. She was smiling, I think. Humans did that when they were happy right? So maybe she was happy. I tilted my head and tried to imitate that look, thick drool falling from my mouth. I could be happy too.

Something strange flashed across her eyes as she nodded to me, urging me to go on. I wasted no time getting to my meal. This was nothing like the rotten fruit peels or the chewy paper bits that were usually left in there. This was much better. I hadn't eaten anything like that in a long, long time. Some sour metallic scent hit my nose, but all it did was add to my hunger. It was so easy to rip and tear into this-this...meat. That's what it was, some kind of meat that I had once, long before my retreat to the river. Something I had since forgotten the taste of, but now that I had it again I couldn't get enough.

I was so lost in the gratification, I almost neglected to take note of a shiny metal band that lay on the ground next to the bins. It didn't stay there for long, though. As soon as I spotted it, I made sure to devour that as well. It wasn't long before the contents of the bin were gone, I looked back at the old woman. She was pleased, I think. I "smiled" at her again before slinking back into the river, my hunger fully satisfied for the first time in a long while.

Nights passed before I returned to the old woman's house. The meat she left me had fulfilled a need in me I forgot was there. Not to mention, I was fortunate enough to watch the man's metal beast drown in my river. It was able to keep me full for a few days more.

The gentle routine I had become accustomed to began to change. I started visiting her less and less. I didn't need to feed quite so often, after all. Still, those bins would always be waiting for me. The meat she was now tossing away was always fresh and warm. I noticed that I rarely saw her neighbors anymore, if I ever even saw them at all. It didn't matter much to me, though. At the end of the day, they're not the ones who left their bins out just for me.

I know there will come a day when the old woman will no longer be able to feed me. One day she will not leave her home and I will find no bins on the pavement. But I will find a way to have my feast, even if I have to rip apart her windows and endure her harsh lights. She always keeps me full.

[Music]

ANNOUNCER:

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