

THE CONCESSION

By

Mikki Aronoff

“Mom, you PROMISED!” Mother lassoed me home for Christmas break by swearing she’d make sugar cookies with egg replacer. I’d stumbled into the kitchen in my Santa Claus pj’s, headed for the coffee maker, and there she was cracking another shell meant to hatch a chick, trying to separate slimy albumen from a yolk trying not to break. It all looked like it’d leaked out of a giant’s nose, which I told her, suppressing a gag. “It’s the ONE thing you said you’d do,” I added, then hated myself for whining.

“These eggs are from happy hens,” she chirped back at me, whisking them to a froth. “It’s not like some sad cow swinging from a hook.” I’ve been lecturing my family since 12th grade about their disconnect. Three years pointing a finger at our beagle cross, then at whatever roast she was preparing for dinner. Then back at Tippy with suggestions that we truss and bake him in a slow oven.

“Oh, Tippy, Tippy, you shall never pass over my tongue.” My brother’s sing-song mockery carries from the next room. Max is on the floor, nose to muzzle with the greying mutt who wandered into our backyard years ago.

Father chimes in. “Lips that touch bacon shall never brush mine,” he croons in mom’s ear, lifting a slice of salty pig from the pan and sliding it into his mouth.

I rush upstairs to my derision-free bedroom, my coffee sloshing onto the carpeted stairs. A minute’s worth of pouting is more than enough for me, so I wolf down some emergency rations of cashews and raisins, open my laptop. I’ve got a couple hundred words down when I hear off-key strains of “Away in a Manger” wafting up the stairway.

Soon my whole family is crowded together on my braided rug. Mother bows as she hands me a tray of tiny sandwiches, peanut butter and grape jelly, cut into triangles, no crust. Dad switches off the light as Mother takes a match to a sparkler and they begin to belt “Do You Hear What I Hear?” and Tippy is howling and howling and

howling. I put my hands on the keyboard, start a new chapter, one in which eggs get to keep their yellow secrets.

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Mikki Aronoff has work published in *Flash Boulevard*, *New World Writing*, *MacQueen's Quinterly*, *ThimbleLit*, *The Phare*, *The Ekphrastic Review*, *The Fortnightly Review*, *Milk Candy Review*, *Tiny Molecules*, *The Disappointed Housewife*, *Bending Genres*, *Gone Lawn*, *Mslexia*, *The Dribble Drabble Review*, *The Citron Review*, *Atlas and Alice*, *Cease*, *Cows*, *Flash Boulevard*, *trampset*, *jmww*, *Switch*, *The Offing*, and elsewhere. Her work has received Pushcart, Best of the Net, Best Small Fictions, Best American Short Stories, and Best Microfiction nominations.