

Pig man

I am robust. I am fit. I will live another hundred years. I have the body of a twenty year old, but the memories of an old man. Can memory feel old? Not, if you ask me. I look so damn good! The wrinkles are there all right, but they can't get any worse. I have a new set of organs, not the first, cloned from my own genes, grown in the bodies pigs of course. Whenever I need new ones, another pig is seeded and in a year, I check in for the transfer. The contract is for life.

I live well, a retired man, enjoying leisure of every kind. Today I am on a flight to the islands where I keep a yacht. I can see them floating in a sea of blue. They look like they could be adrift. The green specks are hemmed with white and then deepest blue.

The aircraft is banking. I feel the tug of forces as my weight increases on the turn. I never expected, at my age, to feel this rush of pleasure, this thrill, this heartbeat so steady. I ought to be dead like my father, but I will live to be a dozen times older than he ever was or could have been.

My first wife died before the new medicine came along. I buried her, thinking my time would be up soon enough. Luckily I had money, and then the guts to do what I did. I bought my way into one of the first programmes.

They showed me the sow. I didn't care. Some do. The animal chewed, it's ears folded forward. It's head turned and I felt her look at me, her eyes a good approximation to human. Saliva dribbled. I touched her side. Somewhere inside her were a piglet and organs that were not strictly her own. They operated on the unborn piglet *in utero*, replacing her tissue with mine, her genes with mine. For now, she was me.

The protestors were hard to dodge, and I wore disguise. There had been attacks, after all. I did what I had to do.

My second wife will be with me always. She wouldn't have married just anyone either, because she was too was one of the first. She didn't want to marry a man who would soon be a corpse, she wanted someone who would live as long as she would.

She is waiting for me. We set the sail and begin the short voyage. We always take the clockwise route, because the stream is less ferocious. Slow but sure. I love to look at her with the sun behind her, the breeze lifting her hair. She looks twenty! I call out to her, and she turns to me. I can make out the gleam of her smile. I can see that she loves me, loves all, loves to be here. I adore the slap of water against the hull.

Night. Something is bothering me. Something to do with a dream I had on the plane. I know what it is. It is the pig, that sow, the one in which my heart grew. The second heart I ever

had. Her eye was watering, which I had forgotten. I think I asked the technicians if the pig was healthy. She was just fine, they said, in fact, the healthiest pig that ever lived!

I asked about the tears. They told me that was normal for a pig. But now, in my dream, I know that the pig is weeping. I rub my eyes, sit up and look out at the moon. It sparkles on the water. I reach out to pull my wife toward me. She brushes my hand away thoughtlessly. She is asleep and I know that the hot and humid air makes her avoid my body's heat. I am forced therefore to lie there alone with the memory of my dream.

The pig stands in its sty. I stand before it. I kneel. We stare at each other. A detail strikes me. The animal has eyelashes!

I reach out, and the pig turns slightly so that her flank is presented. I begin a slow stroke, the length of her body. The skin is silky, unlike any pig's. As I reach the end of my motion, and as my hand clears the ribs, the flesh becomes soft and yields. I press here and discover that I can feel mass under the skin. These must be the intestines, or stomach, or liver. I am no expert.

Suddenly the animal turns and lies down, her belly rolling round and settling between the legs. I can see a row of nipples, or should I call them dugs?

I feel sick and go up on deck. It is hot. I dive into the dark water, and the sudden rush of cold and silence strikes down the memory of the dream. I break back into air and my lungs fill. Through water-filled eyes I make out the silhouette of the yacht, and the shape of my wife hurrying onto deck. She is calling. I dive under again, and touch the sandy bottom. The rippled surface of the sand is soft and yielding, like silk. Suddenly the image of the pig again. And in order to drive it from my mind, I push myself down onto the bottom, on impulse pushing my face down into the soft sand, hoping for new sensation to erase the dream. And it comforts me, a little, rowing with my arms and legs, propelling my face through the sand, feeling it's soft abrasion against my skin.

Afterwards, drying myself on deck, I stroke my belly and find the soft part below my ribs. I push my fingers in and up. I find a firm mass. My liver? Suddenly the pig again, but dead, it's flank cut open, it's eye lifeless. No blood, but the wound livid. And the void where organs should have been raw and cruel.

Tears roll down my face. A word comes to mind: threnody. I cry out across the sea to the place where the pig parent of my heart was burned with none to mourn her.

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