

Bread Pudding

A one-act play by Joseph Manuel

SCENE--Booth in an Izzy's buffet restaurant in Salem, Oregon.

It is a regular, sleepy day in Salem, Oregon. The establishment is not very packed, even though it is a buffet. The color of the booths is a tired shade of green, weary and worn after seating many an Izzy's regular. The lighting is dim, dull, uninterested. The staff consists of a graying, bespectacled manager, with a short-sleeved shirt too small and a run-of-the-mill necktie too wide. Identical, nameless servers patiently meander about, occasionally filling up cups of coffee while plastering forced smiles on their woebegone faces. Time of year, summer.

[W is seated at one side of a booth, J and K share the other side. They are all eating dessert. After moments of quiet silence due to all of them eating, W clears his throat.]

W [*Mournfully*]: I remember when I first heard about bread pudding. I was like five or six, and my grandmother offered me some. And I was like, "Bread pudding?!? That sounds gross! [*Says with extreme incredulity, as if the idea of bread pudding was too ludicrous to even be comprehended.*]

I'm never going to eat that! Why would you combine bread and pudding!

So I never ate it, even though it was easily accessible.

I then avoided it as much as possible, because it just sounded gross. Would it be dry, or liquid-like? What kind of bread would it be? What kind of pudding would it be? I mean, think about it, the two just don't sound well together. They should really never be mentioned in the same sentence.

But then, as the years went by, when I was like 18, there I sat, in front of some bread pudding. After avoiding it all my life, something happened, and I decided to try it, just for the fuck of it.

And you know? Do you know what???? [*Pauses while waiting for J and K to ask him, "What?" They don't ask him, and continue eating their food.*]

It was good. And I really liked it. [*Says this with a strange, almost triumphant tone of voice.*]

It was really fucking good!

But then it made me sad. [*Returns to mournful, melancholy tone of voice.*]

I was sad because of how good it was. This was something that was so good, and I judged it based on its name.

It was then that I realized that I could have eaten it this whole time. I could have enjoyed it my whole life up until that point. I missed out on about fifteen years of eating bread pudding, all because I thought it sounded gross. Had I just had a clear mind about it, I would have enjoyed a great life, complete with many, many, many spoonfuls of bread pudding, and its deliciousness.

I wish I would have just tried it when I was five. [*Stops talking, and looks at J and K, who are still eating their food.*]

J: What the fuck was he talking about?

K: I have no idea. I wasn't listening.

THE END