



I Ate the Cake

by Juliet Robinson

It was me. I ate the last slice of cake.

I wasn't going to tell you, but with everything that has happened since it has been playing on my mind.

I wasn't even hungry, I was just being greedy. You were upstairs putting Leysa and Ivan to bed. I had finished putting the dishes away and was in the sort of bored mood that leads to browsing from the fridge.

You didn't notice till the morning.

That night was ordinary. We couldn't agree what show to watch on Netflix, so as ever we ended up watching your series. I sat next to you on the sofa scrolling my phone. I remember going out of my way not to check the news sites. Like everyone else I had been fed up with the constant doom and gloom.

I went to bed before you. You woke me when you turned your light on to read and again later, kicking me in the thigh asking me to roll onto my side and stop snoring.

The morning was the usual rush. All four of us scattered and hectic. A flurry of breakfast, clothes, school bags, missing shoes and house keys. I was halfway down the hall, toast clamped between my teeth, when I heard you shouting about the cake.

'Who ate the cake? That was my lunch. I don't have time to make a sandwich!' Choice swear words followed. I pushed the children out the door, shouting goodbye and rummaging in my pockets for my errant van keys.

I didn't lock the door, I just slammed it behind me.

I dropped the kids at school and headed for the warehouse.

By lunchtime, everything had changed.

Military operations. We knew they were lying. We knew. But what could we have done?

We met at the school. The whole world seemed to be there; cars filled with frightened people, parents shouting for their children, horns blaring, dogs barking, sirens wailing. It was chaos.

Leysa arrived pulling Ivan along. You bundled them into the car and I tried to follow in the van, but there was so much traffic.

Missiles.

Smoke.

Silence.

When sound did return it rushed to fill the silent void.

I believe you got across the bridge before it was destroyed. I looked for our car in the rubble but couldn't see it.

It was night before I managed to get home. I had abandoned the van, though I kept the keys. Habit. Our house was silent and strewn with the detritus of your hurried packing.

I believe that you, Leysa and Ivan travelled to the border. You crossed into Poland and made it to your sister's house. My phone service hasn't been reliable since that morning, I expect that you have left me messages. You're no doubt out of your mind with worry about me.

I am ok. I am with the civilian defence force. The last few days we have been digging trenches in the forest around the city.

I think of you all, always. I am glad that our last night was ordinary. Its mundanity makes it an achievable dream; I feel as if I could step right back into it, into our lives.

But I am sorry I ate the last slice of cake.