



Slurried

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The freezer case at the supermarket had ready-made pies. You were supposed to let them thaw in the refrigerator, but his family liked to eat them mostly frozen. They tasted better that way. Store bought pies had too much salt in them. When you had cheap ingredients you threw in extra salt to make it taste better. Most people couldn't tell, but he could. He had been a baker. He knew all about pies. He could make good pies, but didn't like to. So he accepted a piece of the mostly frozen French silk pie and pretended it was good.

He looked down at the clear plastic lid that had protected the pie. The whipped cream rosettes had touched the lid slightly and had left a delightful circular pattern. He imagined Monet painting snowflakes. His mind drifted backwards and he was younger. He had shoveled snow all day long and it was time to get drunk. A bottle of whiskey was buried in a snowdrift waiting for him. He had forty three dollars. He would have made more, but he didn't accept payment from the widow three blocks over. She had been more than generous with payment in years past.

As reality returned he felt tired. There was always something to do. When everything was done he didn't feel tired any longer so he wrote some poems. He was hungry. He liked soggy cereal. He liked soggy puffed rice cereal the best. It could soak up to one third of the milk and it became a slurried mess. The milk was mixed with the puffed rice goodness. The puffed rice was swollen with the milk goodness. He would strain a mouthful of puffs with his teeth and pretend he was a plankton-eating whale. He fell into bed and drifted off.

Dreams were rare to him, but not tonight. Tonight he was part of a great adventure. People he knew were strangers, and strangers to him were known. He lost an arm but it healed quickly. He fought bravely but was on the losing side. In prison camp he was treated badly. His fingers were rotting away and they laughed at his fingers. One day they let him out of

the prison camp and said the war was over. “No hard feelings” they said, extending a hand for shaking. They had forgotten his shaking hand had been lost. He was lost.

He woke with a start. His body had determined the need to wake up, but his mind was still ignorant. He mentally examined his overall state. His legs did not hurt. His abdomen was hot but pain free. His migraines had not returned. He did not have to piss, nor was the dog whining to be let out. As his senses slowly returned he feared perhaps one of his kids had cried out for help. He opened his mouth to call out but couldn't. His mouth had filled with stomach acid. He had heartburn. It smelled like French silk pie.