

A Diet To Kill For

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Hell is blood, where is she?

I'm standing here, clenching my buttocks in case, you know, it's only natural. Look at them all, staring at me. Can't they stare at each other like they usually do? Life, come on! Where is she? How do the teenagers manage it? Thank life I put it off! Paid for it, though, didn't I? Not half! Blood, all those years, best of your natural span, they say, all the other teens looking down their pimply noses at me. Well, I would too, keeping away like I had some disease, did in a way. Allergic-to-precocious-marriage disease. Not contagious, is it? Life, I showed 'em, though, didn't I? Twenty-one and a grade three civil servant on the fast track. How about that, eh? Not many!

Look at old ma Sysalyst! Still wearing her hatchet face. Too late, lady! She'll be mine this afternoon. Nothing you can do about it. Your daughter's going! Might as well get used to it, give us a smile, doesn't cost you anything. Gives you brownie points for good protocol, too. Yeah, OK. Where is she? It's not the last century, millennium, whatever. She knows it's the right thing. Right by the Diet, by our families, we'll get used to it, too. Oh Mama, wish you were here. This is where you wanted to see me, wish you were here. Hospital. You'll pull through, I think. I know. This is for you too. And the Diet. I'm going to be a green-good daddy. Lotsa brats, I mean little smoothtooths, ready to multiply the faithful in their turn. Boy, am I going to make up for lost time! You'll be so proud, Mama, so proud of your – what's that bloody row?

Hell is blood, it's her!

My eyes swivel, can't help it.

Ah, the virgin-white plaster of her hair! Verbena, my wife! Almost. Gotta get through this! Don't look at me yet! And you, battleaxe, *stop* looking at me! I haven't

just crawled out of the sewer. I'm a grade three civil servant, for diet's sake! What have I done wrong? Bite it, boy, knees are gristling, gotta siddown, can't, fleshy bad protocol, better divert them with talking-in-tongues, a fit even, weeping and wailing and knashing of even teeth, too early to sit, can't, get a grip, grip, on yourself, Dougal boy, you can do it. Can! Look at her! That's better. Look! Yeah, that's much better, knees steady now, not gonna sit ahead of time, never would. Good man, Dougal, you can do it. Look at her. Look! Knees of steel, mine. Look! Here she comes! My beauty!

Truth is, we've seen each other before. Course we have! My people wouldn't let anyone palm off some infertile hag on me, course not. And hers, well, ladies' pleasure, innit? Truth is – what an entrance, swift and sure, bridal precision good as it gets, stops at just the prescribed distance in front of me. Let's take a good long look, do it right.

Yeah, we've seen each other before. Alone! Anti-protocol, but hey – we kept our distance, but the voices carried. Liked her voice. Liked her smile, not a trace of Hatchetface. And now the epidermis. So cool as she pushes the plaster back! Aaah, years of fertility in that, years and years! Hey, this is good, this will be great, I shall be a wonderful husband, a prolific, proficient provider, for you and ours. And for the Diet.

Look! Accept her! It's easy. Look. Accept her totally! Of course I do. Verbena! Look at that body, accept her totally! How could I not? Verbena, my love, future, totally, I'll make you happy, multiple-mother happy, wife-happy, Verbena-happy! Why can't they get on with it? Come on, Hatchetface, play your part, say the words.

The Half Minute of Appraisal is complete. No person has stepped forward to contest the union.

Blood, she's even sounding pleased. Better a happy harridan than –

I, Marcialle Sysalyst, hereby do vouchsafe that my daughter Verbena was born

in Brumcent, the very beating heart of our Diet's Region, twenty-four years ago ...

Life, I thought she was younger, how come she's still a Maiden?

And neither there nor here in the less holy South has she ever let meat or blood pass her lips. Her compliance is Certificated, as is that of our family through three generations. Her first matuncle and two great-pataunts were respected diet-developers; most of you have absorbed their implants. Her fertility is apparent.

Life, yes!

She is a graduate of Higher Training with distinctions in home skills and numeracy. Her head, her heart and her uterus are, and will always be, faithful servants of the Diet.

Hatchetface has cracked a smile! Oh, wonders! This lot love it. They'd burst out clapping, if it was allowed. Look at them near to bursting with the effort of smiling without showing their teeth. Come on, old git, she's had her say. Now it's my turn. Croak your words before you fall over with fatigue, Mister Master of the Ceremony.

We have heard with joy the words of the mother of the bride. Now who will speak for the bridegroom?

I will speak for myself.

Mama in hospital and Daddy dead, no other issue, what do they expect? Think I'm gonna let some apeface age-mate who would hardly deign to speak *to* me now step up to speak *for* me? No way. They don't know Dougal Civserv!

I am Dougal Civserv, my own man. I was born here in Brightnove twenty-one years ago. No meat or blood has ever passed my lips. My compliance is Certificated, as is that of my parents. I am a graduate of Higher Training with distinction in public administration. I am grade three and fast tracked in the civil service of the nation. The commitment of my head, my heart and my sperm to the service of the Diet is and will always be unwavering.

That should do it. Everyone looks happy. Let them sit now, must be fed up of standing anyway. Yes, they're doing it. Wish I could soon, just this second half minute of Verbena and me, staring at each other like two rabbits in headlights, poor creatures. Not that we're – I mean, look at her, aaah, worth the wait, worth everything, I'm going to be such a brilliant husband, you will love me, Verbena, and even if you don't – of course you will, I'll give you every reason to. Look, accept, stand steady. Time must be nearly –

The MC nods, and Verbena and I can finally sit down like everyone else. It's a big relief for me, but Verbena has to shift around in her seat to preserve what little that diaphonous wedding dress has left of her modesty. She shakes her head to get the white hair plaster to settle over her torso. Oh, I like it! Life, are we married yet? Of course not, it's the eating that binds us. Something to look forward to. Oh, very much so!

I see the MC give another signal. Side doors open, and acolytes flood in, bearing trays of food. And drink. Oh, I have done so well! My beloved Verbena and I have done so well! Our families have done so well, all those Association-sponsored marriages down the years, and now food and drink can be served, with no offence taken. Probably. Everyone knows that “twixt cup and lip” a family's reputation can slip and shatter. Hell is blood, I remember at old Greenie Cupshaper's Celebration, good friend he used to be, when that guest from teeth knows where was served something with splatwort in it. Turned out that perfectly ordinary herb was sometimes put into to animal feed in his home Region, wherever that was, don't remember now. Proper spoiled the Celebration, didn't it? Nothing like that here!

Look at them vittels. Everything a smoothtooth could wish for! Nothing but the best! Thank you, Mama! You were right, I should have done this years ago. If only you were here now instead of tubed up in Brightnove General! Still, it's your Celebration, too. I'm doing it for you. Sort of.

Tuck in, tuck in, my fine guests and witnesses, tuck in and keep your teeth

unmarred, unjagged, unchipped, unchallenged, just perfect! This is us: smooth-toothed and blood-free, the perfect people, even if the birth-rate is not in our favour. Life, I have time to make up for on that score, and now, as I can finally take the sacred rucola rolls to my beloved and in their eating signify that we are now wife and man, the time for fecundity and mellow fruitfulness will begin! Was ever a duty such pleasure?

Flandria is a region within the Inner Union. You've probably heard of it, though you may pretend otherwise. A youngster like you probably were couldn't have afforded to take your bride there on honeymoon, but a CivServ can, and I do. Joyfully. It's a short hop across the Channel and then north a bit, but that's what passes for luxury nowadays, and luxury is what I aim to provide. The Association's hotels there are all in town centres and are uniformly comfortable. What's more, we are lucky with the weather, which is unusually cool, such a relief after the heat and humidity of Brightnove and Lewes.

Course, you don't want to know about our copulating like rabbits, hoping for a similar result. Well, maybe you do but I'm going to pull a curtain over our immodesty. Suffice it to say we do not need to shut our eyes and think of the Diet, and I don't think Verbena even shut her eyes under the blindfold – but enough of that. Let's just note that the first week passes in a haze of passion and bliss. Yes, well then, after that Verbena decides she wants to do something else, check out the lie of the land, since we are abroad for the first time and maybe the last: these days, who knows? My wife is so adventurous she wants to venture into the countryside.

“It's only outside the towns that we'll see much change from home,” she says .
“Can we, my husband? I'd so love to see somewhere really different!”

She's got a funny way of talking, has my beloved. I doubt if she can keep it up. Hope not. I mean, I talk old-fashioned in my mind, to myself, sometimes, but that's because it's trendy. But my darling rather over-does it. Anyway, I try to play along.

“I know what you mean, my love, but the thing is, unapproved hotels can be awkward. You never know whom you might meet there.”

Life, that sounds awful, but it does seem husbandly, so we're both happy with it. I mean, we know she's going to get her way, it's only right. My need to demonstrate acceptance of my new wife far outweighs my misgivings about strangers, and beneath the roleplaying I really fancy a change of scenery, somewhere new and different, foreign, edgy even. Wouldn't you? Of course we go.

We log into to the Association's leisure channel and sift through its animated maps. It's easier than colleagues told me to resist the temptation to check the work channels and the Diet updates. Who'd've thought? We opt for the most picturesque village, even though Verbena giggles at our attempts to pronounce its name and I have to find an alternative use for her lips, but I've promised not to tell you about that.

The village is a sight for sore eyes that even ours appreciate. We dismount our Bubers in the central square, the only square in fact – small village – and pay them off. Most of the houses are scattered around a tall, imposing structure, the village inn. Everything is built from old materials –now the height of Continental chic. They would be the height of ours, too, if we had any left. We lug our cases into the hotel section and are greeted by a human receptionist, who seems pleased to see us and babbles merrily in what must be Foreign as he transcribes the extracts from our papers he needs for his forms. Then he stows away our documents for safe keeping, emerges from behind his counter, still babbling and smiling, grabs both our cases and leads us up a flight of narrow, thick-carpeted stairs to a spacious, well-lit room containing several fittings whose purpose is unclear. There he kindly leaves us and without more ado we we shut out the bright Flandrian light and set about – oh yes, it is a fine honeymoon, the Diet will be pleased and we are ecstatic.

A few hours later, ecstasy recedes and hunger washes over us. However foreign they are – we are – they have to satisfy our dietary requirements, that's just international law. Slowly, we wash and dress – smart casual, though the concept

might not be quite the same here. You see, I passed cultural awareness training with flying colours, so I know. The stairs creak as we descend, must be real wood: luxury, I'm telling you. Then I get a whiff of it. The whiff gets stronger. Disgusting! No, it can't be. It bloody is! How could I? How could I have brought my green-innocent wife to a place where sharptooths indulge in their vile pursuits? And to eat among them! Life's blood, got to tough it out again, get it over with. I can do it! Poor Verbena, though. Here goes.

I give Verbena a reassuring look. She understands. We each draw in a deep breath and push through the swing doors. Five men and three women are sitting around two tables next to each other. They are eating, indeed relishing, blood and meat! Disgusting! My beloved Verbena has never been allowed near such a scene, I can be sure of that. Even I have been trained to avoid it. I feel sick. Sick and angry. Wouldn't you?

The talk in the dining room lapses. Hard eyes search our newcomers' faces, our physiques, for an indication of our tendency. Neither of us gags at the stench, but I guess it's sketched in our expressions that we are not infidels. Nevertheless, a grey-haired woman motions us with pointed chin and broad hand to take seat among them. We do. Protocol demands it, but not all of my training has equipped me to deal with a group of carnivores who act as though I am one of them. It has not allowed me even to imagine it. But the unimaginable has become real, and the horror of it roots me to the spot. Mistake! Protocol error!

My stupid failure to move dissolves their doubt. Fury seeps into eight faces. The nearest to me, a fat, ruddy man's face, the epitome of all that I have been taught to classify as unhealthy, moves into the centre of my blurred vision. One of the rabble thrusts a drinking beaker into my hand. Hell is blood, pig's blood, that's what it is, warm and stinking, worsened – if that's possible – by the tang of the heavy stimulant that they will have mixed into it. This is not an invitation or a question. It is a challenge.

Death, I'm still motionless, appalled. Where in torn gums is my mind? What's happened to it? I've got to protect Verbena, the honour of the Diet. I'll spit into their toothmarked beaker, that'll show them. No, they'll bleed us, tear our families' reputation asunder like ... overcooked skin. But doing nothing is worse, I have to act. Life! Saliva, flow into my mouth! Legs, obey me, move!

Verbena steps in front of me. She moves quickly to the threatening man's table, empties her bag on to it, and selects from the scattered contents her reserve passport, which holds our joint certificate of non-belligerence from the inter-diet police. Her right index finger jabs at the rubber-stamped proof that it is up-to-date and valid.

The papers protect us. Of course they do: none of these carnivores is willing to precipitate a feud in which international protocol will be against them. They know full well that in such circumstances, it is always wiser to limit your insults to words.

Verbena forestalls even those. She takes the transparent beaker from my unsteady hand, raises it to the light and examines it. Blood-free marvellous, she is!

"So rich a colour: deep, full and natural. It's beautiful!" Not a trace of disgust in her face. She sets the beaker down, looks at it serenely, turns and sashays calmly out of the room. In the silent room, my limbs start working. I gather up the papers and the rest of Verbena's belongings, then follow her out, not quite so smoothly. The carnivores, bless 'em, let us go.

Up the stairs with more haste than the first time. Silently into our room. Close and lock the door. Adrenalin rush. Embrace. Yet Verbena is shame-faced.

"I should not have ..."

You should. You did. *I* should.

"Thank you, my love." You are, you really are, now. Life, we can laugh about it now. We do. Back to our old selves, but our new selves. First things first: I write an order and slip it into the dumb waiter for a meal of real food to be sent up to us.

Later, sated, super-satisfied, on the verge of second sleep, I make a sacred vow: never again will I expose my poor, sweet wife to the risk of drowning in uncharted waters. She deserves my full protection, and she shall have it!

The next morning, I take us back to Bruges. From there, we follow a trail of Association hotels, safe as houses, back to our marital home, to our new life in Lewes. Where we get a grand welcome from my irrepressible (ha-ha) in-laws. The old fartie doesn't bother to conceal his eagerness to know how we got on in bed, and when he receives, from Verbena of course, the news of our reproductive harmony, he hugs me like I'm his long-lost son, and even old Hatchetface cracks a smile. It looks genuine, too. We spend a couple of days with them – well, you've got to, haven't you? – and this gives them the chance to note the enhanced diet-consciousness of the head of the eating unit that they can expect will soon expand and bring them further smooth-toothed happiness. Oh yes, they deem the honeymoon a green success.

Being in Brightnove and not having to go back to work immediately – wonder what that lot are going to say, not that I intend to tell them what really happened, except for, you know – I nip over to the hospital to try and tell my Mama how close her only brat came to a sticky whatever. I'd pour my heart out to her, only I can't tell whether she twigs a word I utter, my poor darling Mama. If only ... well, no, you've heard that already. I just hope no-one was eavesdropping when I outlined my plans for revenge. What? You didn't think I was just going to let it go, did you?

We let Verbena's doting parents escort us to Lewes. After all, they paid for most of it. Do you know Lewes? Used to be a big posh place with its own jail, now it's just a suburb of Brightnove. Greener than average, though, not a bad place to live, if you can stand the fleshy heat: sea breeze doesn't carry that far, though the sea itself almost did, back in the day. Anyway, our new place is what, cosy? Poky? “All right for the time being”. The housewarmer will be a bit of a crush. I mean I'll have to invite a load of drudges from work. No, they're not so bad, but some of them are murderers, I

mean meat-eaters, who ought to have their sharp teeth smashed, for starters. Yeah, I could start with them!

That thought makes me want to go back to work. So I do, a little bit earlier than I really need to. Verbena stays at home for the time being and amuses herself with bits of decorating, and then she gives me a really warm welcome when I come back home. Life, Mama was right: I should have got married years ago!

Of course, “work” is all right. I mean, it's a doddle. My Civil Service department, like most others, I have to admit, has long since solved the social and economic problems entrusted to it, at least to the satisfaction of the public. Its real problems are in-house, to do with impartiality. Like everyone else, we CivServs moan about who gets promotions and senior appointments, and why, but the managers, bless 'em, enforce the policy of distributing top posts equally between the major diets. The public prefers this to the old policy of trying to keep them in harmony with the shifting balance of diet preference in society at large – you won't believe it but not everybody has seen the light yet – or to the even older policy of basing them on merit. The public is happier than its servants about this, but hefty salaries and perks console us bureaucrats and stifle any protests from us.

For the sake of this “impartiality”, as though it were a green-good thing, no employees are allowed to wear diet emblems, nor even to carry Association or Alliance cards during working hours. Dietary discussions are forbidden. You can even get the sack for starting one! Well, as you can imagine, although no-one can mention it at work, everyone knows who eats what. All government buildings are kept free of eating rooms, but people need to eat, and eat properly, I mean in line with their diet. Obviously, people like to get their lunch near where they work, and, these days, if you know *where* they eat, you know *what* they eat: there's no such thing as an ecumenical restaurant. Perish the thought! Anyway, I eat regularly with a group of smooth-tooth CivServs at Maxine's in Eubank Street. So here I am again, greening my gums and getting joshed about the honeymoon (see, no-one ever thought of calling something so wonderful a meatmoon, did they?) and waiting, half hoping (but

only half) for the talk to turn in its usual direction, to any Decisions coming up. Yeah, we always have a good old argument about them, really sort of get our teeth stuck into the subject. As it were. Decisions are usually about the finer points of Dietary protocol or new lines of reasoning, but today is different. Something big is in the air.

Smarmy young Thompson gives old Jenkins his cue to breaks the news.

“I wonder when the next Decision is due.” As though you don't know, arse-licker.

“Damned soon.”

“Any idea what it's about?”

Jenkins gets to his feet and makes the swimming gesture that calls everyone to silence. He lets it hang in the air to add impact to his words.

Most of the group usually know more than the old man about Decisions, but we enjoy watching his attempts to raise his own prestige.

“Thursday evening, next week. Quarter past eight. Cod's roe.”

Maclaren's eyes bulge. As well they might.

“What do you mean, *cod's roe*? What the blood has *that* got to do with anything?”

A pained expression fills Jenkins' thin face. Decent actor, I'll say that for him.

“I should have thought it was obvious. Whether we can eat it or not. I should have thought it was obvious.”

Jenkins' expression slides into one of satisfaction as he reads his colleagues' faces. Smug so-and-so.

I can't stop myself blurting out – “But that is heresy!”

“Maybe not. I mean, after all, you cannot say that cod's roe is alive.” Double-smug, blind bastard you are, Jenkins!

The thought of eating any kind of fish makes me sick to my bones. I shut my ears to the arguments that rise and intensify all around, and concentrate on taking in and savouring the pure food on the plate in front of me. You'd do the same, wouldn't you? Course you would!

You can imagine what a release it is to get back to the office and to the mindless impartiality of work. Even so, my brain and belly are both burning with acid. I mean, how on earth has a nauseating poison like cod's roe come to be a matter for Decision in our region? What if it gets accepted? Hell is blood, it doesn't bear thinking about!

I've got to do something. First off, I pin-hole Jenkins in his office. The old bugger seems glad to see me. Jenkins' cheeks are pinker than usual and his eyes gleam.

“Come in, Dougal. Have a seat. I bet I know what brings you here. Worried about maybe having to eat cod's roe?”

I swallow hard. A bitter taste invades my mouth. Try and be civil, CivServ.

“It does seem a bit much, Mr. Jenkins. I mean, like, diet is diet. Life, you can't just cherry-pick what you eat. Can you?” Maybe he knows something I don't.

“I take your point, young man, but, you know, or you'll find out, from time to time, it's well worth being a little bit flexible.”

“Flexible? With the diet? How is that possible, Mr. Jenkins?” No he doesn't. He doesn't know blood-all!

“Well, you understand, we in the Diet are a big family, and we like it that way. So, you see, sometimes we have to listen to members who are, as it were, on the fringes of the family.”

“You mean our Asian affiliates?”

“No, no. We do, of course, have to listen to them, but I refer to people much nearer home, in this case. This suggestion originated in Flandria. Not so far, actually, from where you and your honourable wife took your green honeymoon.”

I can feel my face flush as I remember my dietary difficulties in the Inner Union. Must learn to control my thoughts.

“No-one thought much of it at first,” Jenkins goes on, “but some Decisions in Flandria went in its favour.”

“No! How is that possible? I mean, cod's roe – it's so obviously fish!”

“Well, I can see that some people, even in the Diet, might consider it a bit of a grey area. That is to say, roe don't actually swim, one has to admit.”

“But – so what? It's heresy!”

“Be careful with that word, Dougal. It might be used against you one day. Anyway, the idea, let's call it that, thrived in its region of origin. Those early Decisions in its favour propelled it further, to territories where orthodoxy, fortunately, if I may say so because I'm sure you will agree, dampened its fire.”

“Thank life!”

“Quite. Outside Flandria, almost all further Decisions went against it. In fact, it seemed to have spluttered out. Only, recently, it looks to have acquired a new lease of, erm, life.”

I can see in the mirror behind the wimp Jenkins' desk that my face is now vermillion. But it's pure anger, not embarrassment. Death, I can feel hot liquid welling behind my eyeballs.

“But they can't force us! Nobody can! It's against nature!”

Jenkins is still pretending to be cool as a cucumber.

“You are quite right about the first part. We all have to decide together, as you well know and as we always do. I shouldn't worry about it if I were you. The Diet always gets its Decisions right, in the end.”

“But –”

“But now it's time for you to get a grip on yourself. Go and do some work: that'll calm you down. And let me proceed with mine.”

I find I have nothing more to say, and so I leave the spineless old git to split hairs on his own.

Back in my own opulent office, though, my anger winds down, and curiosity springs up in its place. How could anyone, anyone in the Diet, that is, the only people who count, possibly have imagined that swallowing fish eggs could ever be acceptable? I mean, there must be a reason, and I've got to find out what it is. Then I can work out how to put a stop to that fleshy heresy once and for all, even if I have to do it alone.

Over the next few days, I seek out a quiet moment with each of my colleagues who follow the true diet, and put that burning question to them. Would you believe it, not one of them claims to have an answer? Yet none is worried! “Chill,” they say. “When it comes to it, we'll make the right Decision”.

Well, I worry about it. Course I do. Can you imagine, being forced into *heresy* by a load of dimwits who make the wrong Decision? Stranger things *have* happened. The fear keeps me awake at night! Starts to interfere with my reproductive duties, even. Hell is blood! My lovely Verbena looks so hurt, I can't stand it. I'm going to do

what I've never even dreamed of doing before. I'm going to ask for help from people outside the Diet.

Zuck Tamplin is not a colleague I like. He is one of the few sharptooths who actually sharpens his teeth, and it's obvious he resents the fact that I'm younger than him but senior to him. So when we're having a natter about food statistics, and I casually insert a question about cod's roe into the conversation, the young squirt sneers.

“Oh, yes, I see. Hardly married a month and already drooping, yeah? Just get the right stuff in your mouth and, whoopee, there's lead in your pencil, know what I mean?”

I don't know what he's on about, frankly. Soon as I can, I get back to my own office. At least there I'm free of the meaty stink of Zuck's sharptooth breath.

Later that same day, another junior civil servant slides into my office. This lad, Glen Higgs, is a more discreet sharptooth. Still, he gets straight to the point.

“I hear you've been asking about cod's roe, Dougal.”

“No, I don't think so. Though ... I might have mentioned it, actually, in relation to the monthly statistics.”

Higgs gives me a canny look.

“Ah, well, as it happens,” he goes, “I'm very well informed about all the relevant statistics. If there is anything special you need to know, I might be able to help you.”

“How would that be?”

“Oh, certain classified documents come my way. They would interest you, I

think.”

Unasked-for help from a carnivore? Blood, that's odd! I can see that the bloke is waiting for an answer.

“In return for what?”

“Oh nothing, nothing. You'd put in a good word for me anyway, write me a decent report, back up my application for promotion, wouldn't you?”

I'm about to say that it would depend on my conducting a full case review. I mean it would, wouldn't it? Follow procedures, first rule. Only I notice that Higgs is indeed clutching a file stamped “Classified”. Opportunity has come knocking. So I change my mind.

“Well, yes, Glen, I would. You're a man of your word, a top-notch civil servant in the making. The least I can do is give you a helping hand.”

The benighted carnivore places the file on the table right in front of me, then he effs off, smiling, without saying another word. My tender palate has gone dry. I pick the file up and open it.

The dossier contains birth-rate statistics. In contravention of all protocol, they are broken down by diet. I must admit, my heart thumps inside my chest as I scan them. The birth rate is falling across all groups. Now Zuck Tamplin's scabrous comment makes sense to me. But there is worse, something Tamplin surely could not know. I can hardly believe it myself. I don't want to, but you can't argue with hard statistics, otherwise we'd be back in the Middle Ages, or somewhere just as barbaric, like the last century. The figures show it loud and clear: the age at which smoothtooth mothers produce their final child has fallen again. Hell is blood! We followers of the

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