

SAVORLESS SALT

Written by

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INT. BUNKER - DAY

A calendar at a concrete wall. May. The first 5 days are crossed. A female hand rips May away. Every month ends in the trash until December. With a black marker every day before December 24th gets crossed.

INT. BEDROOM KIDS - DAY

LUCAS, 10 years old, is sleeping.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

On a small shelf a row of metal food cans shine under fluorescent lamps. Self-drawn labels of made-up brands cover the existing labels of the cans. HANNAH, 42, with a skin that hasn't seen sunlight in a long time and a look that doesn't expect to ever see it again, takes a can from the shelf and pulls off the self-made label to see which vegetables it has. Peaches.

She takes the can and wipes it with a piece of paper which she immediately throws in a plastic container.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

In the middle of the center wall there's a big LED display showing 133 CREDITS in huge letters.

Big pearls of sweat drop from the head of JEFF, 43. He's bicycling at a devilish pace on a bike connected to the display. He's eyes stay focused on the display.

133 credits. 134 credits.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Hannah cuts vegetables. A pot of water is boiling on the fire. She throws powdered bleach in the pot before putting in the vegetables. She takes bread from a closet, wrapped in plastic. She wipes the plastic with a paper cloth and again throws it immediately in the plastic container.

INT. BEDROOM KIDS - DAY

Lucas is still sleeping. Suddenly his little brother, DYLAN, 5 years old, throws his full weight at him.

DYLAN

Lucas! Lucas! It's Christmas!

Dylan jumps from his brother's bed and hurries away. Lucas' tired eyes glance at the wall to his left. The wall is filled with small drawn stripes. Lucas sighs and wipes all the stripes away with the sleeve of his pyjama.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

In a very small bathroom, Jeff washes himself with powder and the tiniest amount of water.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Hannah decorates the table with paper flowers before serving the feast meal between paper plates and plastic cutlery. It's not a meal that would impress anyone earning over minimum wage. Mashed potatoes. Peaches. A small lump of corned beef. Dylan doesn't care and seems ready to attack his plate like a wild animal. It's not quite as easy for Lucas.

HANNAH

Not too quick, Dylan. I want you to enjoy. Don't forget it's Christmas.

LUCAS

That's royal, considering the last one was 412 days ago.

Hannah is taken aback.

HANNAH

You've been... counting?

Lucas just stares at his plate. Jeff has difficulty hiding his smile, which he should if he wants to keep the peace.

JEFF

How often should we celebrate Christmas then, Lucas?

LUCAS

Every year. That's 365 days.

JEFF

You've heard of Einstein, Lucas?

LUCAS

Yes.

Lucas keeps his eye at his plate, playing with his food.

JEFF
Einstein said time was relative.

DYLAN
What's *relaive*?

Hannah puts down her fork and knife. Her appetite is gone.

JEFF
Relative means something isn't absolute but you should see it in relation to something else. Dylan, you're 1 meter 17.

DYLAN
19!

JEFF
19, I'm sorry. In comparison with me you're small. But if I was an ant, you would be huge. You see?

Dylan nods, but his attention goes to trying to swallow a fork of mashed potatoes twice the size of his mouth.

LUCAS
What does that have to do with Christmas?

Hannah smashes her elbows on the table.

HANNAH
It means we're having Christmas when we say it's Christmas! Here you go, Dylan.

Hannah shoves her leftovers to Dylan and leaves the table to put her plate and cutlery in the plastic container.

Jeff shuffles a bit closer to Lucas.

JEFF
(quietly)
It's not wrong to be counting, Lucas. Or to ask questions. But sometimes you should do it silently, not out loud. Look at me.

Lucas looks up from his plate for the first time.

JEFF (CONT'D)
Promise me you won't stop counting.

Jeff winks at his son and Lucas suddenly smiles back.