

Comfort Food

Life was fulfilling but hectic for Maria. She was a supervisor in a small corporation, often working into the night, weary by day's end. What truly helped was her comfort food—for when she was home, alone, finally by herself, finally in the quiet with no distractions.

Maria enjoyed all sorts of comfort food. Macaroni and cheese. Old Twilight Zones. Dashiell Hammett novels. John Coltrane (the quieter stuff.) Clean sheets and a fluffy down quilt. Sunsets. The quiet of night.

The world offers many comfort foods, for every taste. Maria often wondered, while eating a delicious warming spoonful, why she chose comfort food over another human being. She could be cuddling rather than listening to music. Maria chatted with other people about their comfort foods. She did not understand why horror movies or spices which burned your tongue were comforting—but to many they were. Some enjoyed a variety of comfort foods, as did Maria. Some had only one or two (usually a hobby they retreated into.)

Most people did not see it as Maria did—that comfort foods were retreats, were backing away from reality, were hiding places. And she knew of weird comfort foods—porn, drugs, fox hunts, boxing. Maria thought some folks lived in their comfort foods, it was far better than their reality.

One night, thinking about her comfort foods, and her work that encouraged them, Maria became depressed. Not even KFC helped. She felt alone, very alone. She should not trade a life partner for comfort food. Nor could she find less stressful work.

Maria went to a shelter and got a dog.

Having the dog encouraged her to find a life partner, and she learned that family was (often) a comfort food. That other people could be comfort food. Maria settled into middle age—comfortably.