

THE PERILS OF PARIS by Ana T. Drew

EXCERPT

As always when I try to meditate, I grow sleepy. Just as I begin to nod off, someone near me farts.

It's a whale of a fart, silent but deadly. In terms of impact, it's closer to a biochemical attack than to an "oops, sorry" mishap. Incidentally, no one says "oops, sorry."

I open my eyes and look around. Several other students do the same. Everyone shifts uncomfortably and turns their faces away from the source of the effluvium.

The woman on my left appears to be the culprit. Her cheeks, ears and neck are flaming red.

Oh my God, she's the raw food eater!

The many health benefits of the uncooked peas and cabbage do come at a price. There's no such thing as free lunch until proven otherwise. Like Faust signing a deal with Mephistopheles, one must give something to get something. Like Anakin Skywalker transforming into the powerful Darth Vader, one must join the dark side of the Fork.

I stifle a smile.

The raw eater half opens her left eye and looks around, as if trying to assess the damage she's inflicted. When she catches me looking at her, she shuts her left eye... and immediately opens the right one to check if anyone besides me saw her looking and getting caught.

I crack up.

A deep belly laugh gushes out of me, and there's nothing I can do to stop it. I'm roaring and shaking. My face muscles hurt. Tears stream down my cheeks. I haven't laughed like this in an awfully long time.

Perhaps not since childhood.

Maybe never.