

DAPPER DADDY
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In a cramped office in New York, a designer sat at his desk sketching out the details of a shirt. He had been tasked with creating a piece of clothing that could be mass produced without losing quality. His mind was filled with images of how the shirt would move and feel when worn, how the fabric would highlight the curves of the male body.

The designer worked diligently, an artist pouring his soul into his creation, and within a few short hours the shirt was complete. He looked at it with a satisfied expression, admiring the intricate stitching and shape he had created.

The shirt was meant to be a simple item, something that would be replicated thousands of times but still retain its individual character. As he looked at the finished product, the designer felt a swell of pride in his work. He knew that this shirt would travel far, that it would be bought and worn by men all over the world.

And with this thought, the dress shirt's journey began.

It traveled through the factory in pieces that were then sewn together; through the hands of Inspector #17, who placed her sticker on the inside; across the country in a box; into a department store on a shelf, where its small size made it a tough sell...

...and finally to a suburban TJ Maxx, where it was picked up and purchased by Alex Clairborne, who needed a white collared shirt to wear under his letterman jacket on game days. His buddies, Hayden and Liam, got matching ones for their own needs: lavender for Hayden to wear to church, blue for Liam's upcoming job interview.

They spent the rest of the afternoon basking in the sights and sounds of a sunny Saturday. A trip to the mini-golf course was money and time well spent, because Willa Strawdeman and her posse were there too. At the sight of them, all three boys stood up straight and tried to look as broad as possible, hoping to catch their attention.

"Do you think I have a shot with Willa?" Hayden whispered to Alex, out of sight of the girls.

Alex hesitated. He'd once played football with Brock Friedman, the last guy Willa went out with. Brock was tall and dashing, his physique sculpted from two-a-day workouts; he was a tight end in college now. If that was Willa's type, Hayden didn't fit the mold. He was skinny in the way only a teenage boy can be, with shaggy hair and a slouchy gait that made him look like a zombie rock star, arms swinging to and fro behind him as he walked.

But Alex didn't want to crush his friend's dreams, so he shrugged and said, "You never know, man. She might be into artistic types like you."

Hayden grinned, looking a little more confident as he putted.

A movie at the theater was next, followed by ice cream cones while walking along the harbor—truly living it up with their newfound freedoms. Along the way, they talked about what lay ahead for them: college applications, dream jobs, relationships...the possibilities were endless. It wasn't until they got in Alex's car to head home that Hayden noticed the brand of shirts they'd bought. "*Dapper Daddy?*"

"You mean Dapper Dandy?" Alex asked, keeping his eyes on the road. "That's the phrase, right?"

Hayden pushed his long curls out of his eyes and made a big show of squinting at the brand name, like he was reading it under a microscope. "No, literally - Liam, check this out - it says 'Dapper Daddy.' All three of them do."

Liam confirmed that yes, the tags all said 'Dapper Daddy'. The group immediately began debating if it was a gay brand - Google was inconclusive - and if it was still acceptable to wear the shirts. The question was raised as to whether 'Daddy' meant *gay* or just *old*. Alex pointed out that there were no external logos on the shirt, so no one would know the brand unless they somehow saw the inside tag. They spent the rest of the ride home making jokes and coming up with ridiculous scenarios involving 'Dapper Daddies'.

The shirts were fast on their way to becoming an inside joke by the time they arrived at Alex's house, the only stop needed since Hayden and Liam both lived on the same street. The sun was starting to set, and the air had cooled significantly since their arrival hours earlier.

"Seriously though, it's cool to wear this to church right?" Hayden asked as they got out. "I don't want anybody thinking I'm gay."

Alex shrugged. "No one thinks you're gay. It's literally just a shirt. Maybe it's from another country and the name got translated weird."

"*Don we now our gay apparel,*" Liam sang, and all three boys laughed.

"Yeah, you're right, there's nothing gay about it," Hayden said, looking at the shirt in his hands.

The conversation changed to more lighthearted topics as the sun finished setting and darkness began to envelope the warm night. They talked about which girls they thought were hottest and whether the football team could win the game on Friday. Alex, the team kicker, was confident they could pull it off; Liam was less so but held out hope; Hayden chose not to get involved in any of it, instead musing quietly about his church event the next day.

"What's happening tomorrow at your church that you have to dress up for?," Liam asked Hayden. "Your dad's the pastor every Sunday."

"There's this group of pastors visiting from other churches and we have a mixer after the service," Hayden said. "My dad told me to wear a collared shirt."

"You wanna come over after and play Diablo IV?" Alex asked. "My mom said she won't mind as long as we keep it down."

"One hundred percent," Hayden grinned. "Someday I'll have my own place where I can play all the demonic video games I want!"

Finally they said their goodbyes and Alex watched his friends walk toward their own houses, the last of the fireflies fading behind them as they moved further and further away. He couldn't help but smile as he heard Liam's parting shot of "Goodnight Dapper Daddies!". Hayden's response - "Shut UP!" - was equally as entertaining.

Once they were out of sight, Alex turned back to his own house. With one last glance at the stars twinkling above him, Alex shut off the porch light and stepped inside.

The sun was high in the sky as Alex woke up and realized it was already nearly noon. He groggily got out of bed, then paused to take a proper look at himself in the full-length mirror hanging on his bedroom wall. He had a new breakout on his chin, he noted with a sigh. But at least he'd been able to sleep in instead of having to wake up at 8 like poor Hayden every Sunday.

He had texts from Hayden saying he'd probably be done around noon and would head over after. "im excited dude!!!!" was the last one, followed by a million devil emojis, which Hayden always loved to use as a tiny form of rebellion.

"sounds good bro see u then. just come in" Alex texted back. The message didn't deliver immediately, leaving a blue bar lingering at the top of the conversation. Stupid phone service.

Hayden's impending arrival gave Alex just enough time to put on a t-shirt and shorts, brush his teeth, and find a plate of cinnamon rolls in the kitchen that his parents had left for him. He crammed two into his mouth while he emptied the dishwasher.

His phone chimed and he lurched for it, expecting a response from Hayden. He rolled his eyes when he saw "Dad" at the top of his chats instead. "Can you turn off the sprinklers? The timer isn't working."

Alex responded that he would, but ate another cinnamon roll first. His message to Hayden was still undelivered, so he sent another one. "You see this?" Once again, it didn't seem to be going through.

The annoyances continued when he got mud on his hands while he was turning the sprinklers off. He huffed back inside, kicked off his shoes, and was heading upstairs when he heard the slam of a car door outside. Immediately, his frustration dissipated. Game time.

Alex peed while he had the opportunity, and heard the front door open and close while he was washing his hands. "Come on up!" he yelled. Hayden's muffled confirmation floated through the bathroom door, followed by his heavy footfall pounding up the stairs.

Eager to get gaming, Alex opened the door to the bathroom with a wet palm, opting to dry his hands on his shorts instead of a towel. "There's cinnamon rolls downstairs if you-"

The words froze midway out of Alex's mouth as he walked into his family's TV room. His feet locked in place.

"The shirt was a success," Hayden said, turning to face him.

Only it wasn't Hayden. Hayden didn't have wrinkles. Hayden didn't have muscles. And Hayden certainly didn't have a majestic black beard...

...but Harlan had all those things.

"Oh!" Alex said, as it dawned on him. "H-hey!"

"You okay, kid?" Harlan asked with a deep voice that seemed to shake the very air around them. His words filled the room like thunder following the lightning flash of realization Alex had just experienced.

Alex squeaked out an unconvincing "Yeah!", not wanting to make his friend feel weird, but he was overwhelmed by Harlan's presence. It felt like he was seeing the man for the first time. How could that be? They'd been friends for years, and Harlan had always been this big, eliciting gasps and turning heads wherever he went.

It started with the belly, because that's what people always saw first. It looked like Harlan had shoved one of Alex's mom's yoga balls under his shirt, resulting in a jaw-dropping musclegut that protruded two feet in front of him. It was taut and massive, hoisting up and down with every step Harlan took. His shirt buttons strained so palpably that Alex wondered if he was in danger standing in front of them.

But no one ever called Harlan fat, because he wasn't. He was built like the Rock of Gibraltar. His breadth was almost frightening, filling any room he entered. Giant, swollen arms rested akimbo against his thick lats, with football-sized biceps filling his sleeves. His humongous thighs turned his strides into a distinctive waddle, making his enormous ass shake with each step.

Containing all this immensity was Harlan's brand new dress shirt. It looked painted onto him, outlining his body as if it had been poured on, clinging to the dips and planes of bulky muscle and following the curve of his shoulders down to pecs the size of watermelons. Shiny lavender

fabric hugged every curve of Harlan's gigantic chest, wedging beneath its overhang to emphasize the roundness of his tits. They were pushed firmly together, creating a valley of cleavage that was more like a mountain pass, every inch on view thanks to the top three buttons of his shirt being undone.

His collar was open too, making a frame for his show stopping beard. The straight black whiskers stretched to the top of his chest, fanning out into a wide, round bottom that Harlan kept neat and trim. There were strands of gray in it now, which Alex didn't remember seeing before-

"We going to play some Diablo, or are you just going to stare at me?" Harlan asked, tapping a brown wingtip against the floor.

"Oh! Sorry, yeah, I...I dunno what's with me today."

"I tried to turn the system on while I was waiting for you," Harlan said, motioning to the television, "but I couldn't figure it out."

"Old man," Alex teased, bending over to start everything up.

"I'm 56!" Harlan said defensively, which was not a convincing defense of his youth to Alex. Neither was the way he pulled up his pant legs before sitting down, nor his low groan as he slowly lowered himself into the couch cushions. He spread his legs apart to make room for his belly, which still partly rested on his thighs and pushed his muscletits up toward his chin.

With the game started up, Alex squeezed himself onto the small sliver of sofa that Harlan wasn't using. "How was church?" Alex asked as he tried to get comfortable.

"Well, I didn't burst into flame when I walked in," Harlan joked. "My great-niece was being baptized, so I went, but I don't like church. I haven't set foot in one since before I came out."

That didn't sound right to Alex, but he went with it. "That must piss your dad off."

"My dad?"

"The pastor."

Harlan raised his bushy eyebrows. "My father was a lawyer. He's why *I'm* a lawyer."

Alex felt a knot form in his stomach. He knew Harlan was a lawyer, but why did he think his dad was a pastor? It was strange how the human mind could play tricks on someone, even about something as simple as a person's profession. He couldn't shake off the feeling that something was different about Harlan, but he couldn't put his finger on what it was. He'd forgotten Harlan was gay, but it wasn't that. Maybe his hair? It was slicked back tightly against his scalp and shone like a waxed Lamborghini. Alex remembered it once being curly, but it was straight now, just like Harlan's beard.

One thing that lightened Alex's mood was Harlan's focus on the screen. It was endearing to see this hardened, aged man approaching a meaningless video game with such intensity. His eyes were glued to the display and all of his wrinkles became more pronounced as he squinted at the text. His tanned skin was tough and weathered; the leathery crinkles around his eyes resembled a spider's web. The lines on his forehead deepened into grooves as he studied the progress he was making. Alex was relieved that Harlan's piercing blue eyes were focused on the game instead of him. His long beard seemed to trap the intensity of his gaze, making it that much more intimidating.

"Goddammit," Harlan snarled. He kept fucking up, like he'd never played the game before. It didn't help that his cumbersome fingers were too big for the controller. Alex looked at his friend's hands in wonder. They were twice as big as his own, and twice as thick. Angry veins bulged like tree roots out of the black hair on the back of his palms.

"I can take this one," Alex offered, as Harlan got beat down yet again by a boss.

"I don't WANT you to," Harlan snapped. But he just kept getting worse as Alex watched, like he was forgetting how to play the game while he was playing it. At one point, he angrily wrenched open a fourth button on his shirt, which drew Alex's attention back to his monstrous pecs. He'd been so distracted by the rest of Harlan that he'd barely noticed his friend's chest hair. It was like a luxurious black carpet laid over the canvas of muscle.

After another defeat, Harlan set his controller down. "I'll just watch you, kid. I'm too much of an old man for this." He leaned back into the sofa cushions and folded his hands over his belly. That was when Alex noticed Harlan's nipples making thumb-sized indents in his shirt.

He wanted to change the subject from the game since Harlan wasn't having fun, so Alex asked, "What size shirt is that? Like...5XL?"

Harlan smirked. "No size. Made just for me, like all my shirts." His chest puffed with pride and nearly exploded out of the skintight lavender twill. "Someday when you're a big old daddy like me, you'll get yours made too."

"That's a long ways off," Alex said as he unpaused the game. He couldn't imagine ever being as old or as big as Harlan. Or dressing like him. Harlan was always dressed for business, even on the weekends. Dress shoes, dress socks, dress pants, dress belt, and a dress shirt with bold cufflinks, always. That wasn't Alex's vibe.

Harlan chuckled and patted Alex on the back before settling back again to watch Alex play. Despite his lack of success at the game himself, he seemed genuinely impressed by Alex's skill. "Guys your age are so good at this stuff. I've only played a little Mario here and there, and I remember when those were cutting edge."

After another 45 minutes, Harlan stood up and announced he needed to head home. Ever the meticulous lawyer, he smoothed down his shirt and adjusted his cufflinks before heading out.

Watching him maneuver his mass down the stairs was harrowing, but he carried himself with such poise and confidence that it inspired Alex to stand up straighter.

“Thanks for the nice time, young man,” Harlan said as he opened up the front door. “Always good to see you.” Instead of a bro-hug, he offered Alex a sturdy handshake.

“When should we hang out again?” Alex asked.

“It’s a busy week at the office, but maybe next weekend,” Harlan said. “We could golf.”

Alex imagined himself on a golf course surrounded by old hairy beasts like Harlan, bored out of his skull while they talked about the Wall Street Journal or whatever. “I don’t really know how, but maybe.”

“It’s high time you learned. We can connect later in the week,” Harlan said. A breeze floated over the porch and blew his shirt further open, rustling his chest hair. “Be sure to pay attention at school, and say hello to Liam for me.” He waved politely and lumbered over to a gleaming silver BMW, starting the engine with a roar.

Alex watched as Harlan’s luxurious car disappeared down the street, then went back inside to continue playing the game. But he couldn’t shake off the feeling that something was off about Harlan, something he couldn’t quite put his finger on. Maybe it was just the way he looked, a hulking mass of muscle and hair. Or his stern, businesslike manner. Whatever it was, Alex couldn’t help but feel a sense of unease. He wondered if he would still be friends with Harlan in a few years, or if their age gap and different outlooks on life would eventually drive them apart. Only time would tell.

“He just seemed so different. And right near the end he shifted into full, like, businessman white-collar mode. ‘We can connect later in the week,’ fuck off.” Alex slammed his locker shut and turned to face Liam. “We just don’t have anything in common with him.”

“Of course we don’t, he’s almost forty years older than us,” Liam shrugged as they walked to class. “He has gray in his hair.”

Alex nodded. “Yeah. I was thinking today about how it’s weird that we’re friends with him. He’s older than my dad, and I always forget that. Like yesterday, I pulled into the parking lot here and was expecting to see him walking in.”

Liam snickered. “Imagine him being a student here. Like, going to school dances and shit.” They both got a mental image of stone-faced Harlan bouncing on the dance floor, bursting his shirt buttons and knocking people down with his belly. It put them in a better mood.

Alex and Liam laughed as they continued down the hall. It was hard to imagine Harlan being a student here, trying to fit in with the younger crowd. “Maybe that’s why he hangs out with us,” Alex said. “It reminds him of being young again.”

Liam stood up straight as Destiny Ritter walked by. She didn’t look his way, but being in her peripheral vision was enough for him. His best asset was his 6’4” height—even if he didn’t have any meat on his bones—because it always kept him visible, and he dressed his lankiness in thrift store finds that he chronicled on TikTok. Today’s outfit was baggy acid washed jeans, Timberland boots, and distressed 1980s t-shirt with teddy bears all over it. His styling gave Liam a laid-back coolness that, in Alex’s appraisal, improved his chances with girls.

“Destiny?” Alex said under his breath.

“Shhh,” Liam scolded, as if Destiny Ritter was going to hear her name whispered from a hundred feet away.

“Anyway, I wonder what Harlan’s up to right now.”

“Working, dude,” Liam said. “He works a LOT. Oh, speaking of, wanna get coffee after my interview tomorrow?”

“For sure. When is it?”

“Right after school at the grocery store, they said I should be done by 4:30. Could meet at Skip’s Coffee then. I’ll text you if I’m running late but 4:30 should be good.”

Alex gave a thumbs up. “Yeah, that works. I’ll be done with practice. Remind me during school tomorrow so I don’t forget!”

Skip’s Coffee was a local institution where everyone had a standard order. At this time of year, Alex’s was iced mocha with a shot of raspberry. He sipped it while he waited for Liam to show up, feeling grateful he’d found a table. It was going to be nice to hang out more with someone his own age, who understood his references and teenage tribulations. The Sunday afternoon he’d spent with Harlan still lingered in his head; although Harlan was a good pal, there wasn’t much common ground when you were forty years apart in age.

Ten minutes passed as Alex scrolled through his social media. As he opened TikTok, it dawned on him that Liam probably had a new video showing off his interview look - he got them up super fast. Alex typed in “liamthrowingfits.” No results. That was his username, right? He checked his spelling, tried again. Nothing. Not even typing “Liam” got anything to populate. Had Liam deleted his TikTok? There was no way, he was so proud of that thing. Had to just be a glitch.

Alex moved on, getting so engrossed in his FYP that he didn't even notice when Liam walked in and placed an order at the counter. Suddenly, he heard a loud thud and looked up to find Liam sitting across from him, causing Alex to yelp in surprise.

"Sorry kid," Liam rumbled.

For one woozy moment, Alex worried there was something different about Liam, but a quick itemization got him feeling better. Same broad, hulking shoulders stretching the fabric of his shirt; same lush auburn beard; same hairy chest peeking out from his undone buttons. Exactly how Lionel always looked.

"You all right?" Lionel asked. His ruggedly handsome features were chiseled into a classic masculine scowl. The furrow of his bushy brows gave his face more depth and character, like a renaissance painting that had come to life.

"Yeah! Yeah, sorry, you just sneaked up on me."

"You guys and your phones," Lionel sighed. "You gotta look up from them or the world will pass you by. I'm gonna grab coffee while there's no line, you want anything?"

Alex shook his head and held up his drink. "I'm set." Lionel stood up and walked over to the counter, and Alex watched in awe. It always knocked him back how big Lionel truly was. At a squat five-foot-seven, Lionel's lack of height actually made him look bigger, because he was as wide as he was tall. Alex had never seen someone look so square. It looked like Lionel was wearing football shoulder pads under his dress shirt. Mountainous arms bobbed angularly at his sides, forced outward by the sheer expanse of his lats hanging off him like sides of beef in Rocky Balboa's meat locker. His butt resembled a pair of classroom globes, their roundness showcased by the slight wedgie provided by his dress pants, which were held up by the longest belt Alex had ever seen—it had to be made custom.

Lionel turned to the side and leaned against the counter as he waited for his order. His size was even more astonishing in profile. Pushing down on his belt buckle was a truly magnificent ball gut sticking straight out from his body, its exaggerated curve leading down to his immense, distended bulge. Alex didn't like looking at that, so he followed the curve of Lionel's musculature the other way, up to his giant rack bursting out of his shirt. His pillowy pecs were full and round, sticking a foot past his chin, with fat nipples protruding half an inch from their base.

Heads all over the shop turned Lionel's way as he got his coffee, dropped a \$20 bill in the tip jar, and walked back to the table. Alex saw the barista and two customers each sneak photos of Lionel as he lumbered, his steps askew thanks to his overworked thighs. He didn't want to make his buddy feel awkward, so he looked at Lionel's face. Just like the rest of him, Lionel's head was broad and square, framed by a sweeping flow of auburn waves streaked with silver. The ends of his thick hair intermingled with his beautiful ruddy beard, which never looked less than immaculate. Framed by the mane were chiseled cheekbones and a strong jaw set in an unyielding line. He was intensely handsome, in a tough-guy way. That was Lionel: a beastly, beautiful brute.

Lionel sat down at the table, and Alex couldn't help but feel intimidated by his size despite their close friendship. His massive frame filled up an entire corner of the café, making it seem almost cramped with Lionel's presence. He leaned back in his chair, which creaked under his weight. A fourth button on his shirt popped open as he stretched, his furry pecs unfurling further outward with every deep, audible breath.

Alex couldn't help but admire how composed Lionel appeared despite being so large. He had an outer calmness that could not be disturbed; it seemed like nothing could faze him, not even people gawking openly at him.

"So how was your interview?" Alex finally asked, when it seemed like his friend was comfortable.

Lionel grinned and adjusted his cufflinks, a low rumble of laughter coming from his throat. He spoke only in a way that commanded respect. "Glad I wasn't alone in thinking it was an interview! I was so nervous when I went into the building—then I remembered: I own the building! They should have been trying to impress *me!*"

It took a couple more questions for Alex to remember that Lionel worked in commercial real estate. He barely understood what that was, but it was clearly lucrative, because Lionel looked like money. His custom clothes shimmered with an expensive sheen, and his watch and rings gleamed every time he gestured with his big hands. Alex felt a pang of envy for the wealth and success that seemed to come so easily to Lionel. He wished he had that kind of power and influence.

As Lionel talked about his business, Alex tried to maintain eye contact but kept drifting to Lionel's impressive physique. He'd noticed how big Lionel was before, but something about today made it impossible to ignore. Maybe it was the tightness of his shirt, or the way he'd been standing by the counter, showing off each angle of his body. Alex wondered how Lionel kept his beard so shiny and healthy. So many men had scraggly facial hair, but Lionel's was a work of art.

Lost in thought, Alex didn't even realize when Lionel stopped talking. He snapped back to attention and apologized. "Sorry, I zoned out. What were you saying?"

Lionel grinned, revealing a set of perfectly straight, white teeth that made Alex feel even more envious. "I was just saying that the market's been good to me lately. I've been closing deals left and right." He took a sip of coffee and stared intently across the table. "What's on your mind, kid?"

"I'm not a kid! We're the same age," Alex said with a good-natured eye roll.

The folds in Lionel's face deepened further as he smiled wryly. "You're 58? You *must* share your skincare regimen."

Alex turned as red as a Santa suit. He'd momentarily forgotten he and Lionel were four decades apart in age; that Lionel was old enough to be his father...or even, conceivably, his grandfather. "I'm just trying to keep up with you and Harlan," he grumbled.

"That is an unfair comparison," Lionel scolded. "We are at completely different stages in life. We're grown men, while you're just starting out. Look at me, Alex. I'm serious. Don't do that to yourself."

Alex sighed and leaned back in his chair, crossing his arms over his chest. He knew Lionel was right, of course. He was still struggling to find his footing in the world, while Lionel and Harlan were both successful and established in their careers. It was just hard not to feel left behind, especially when he was constantly comparing himself to them.

Lionel's voice softened, and he leaned forward, resting his massive forearms on the table. "Listen, kid..." he said, using the endearment again despite Alex's protests. "I know it's tough out there. But you've got to stop comparing yourself to other people. The saying 'comparison is the thief of joy' is absolutely correct. You're doing your best and working hard, and that's all that matters. You've got to focus on your own journey. You must have something exciting coming up that you're looking forward to, right? Something to focus your energy toward?"

Alex sat and thought for a minute. Then it came to him: "My football game on Friday."

Alex woke up before his alarm on Friday. *Finally*, he'd made it to the end of this weird week. One more school day and he'd get to play some football, then hopefully see Harlan or Lionel over the weekend. He didn't know what they'd do together - he knew they'd want to golf, *blech* - but they could all figure something out.

But first, the Game Day fit.

He had parameters. All the players had to wear slacks and a dress shirt on game days, which eliminated about 95% of Alex's closet. His gray dress pants were already ironed, so he went with those, and the one dress shirt he hadn't worn to school already was the nice white one he'd just bought for this very purpose. "Oh, right, Dapper Daddy," he chuckled as he tore the plastic wrapping off the shirt. He remembered someone thinking that brand name was off-putting. In his mind, it was Harlan, but that didn't make sense because Harlan was the *definition* of a dapper daddy, though Alex felt weird thinking of him that way.

He slipped his arms into the sleeves slowly, as if by doing so he could hurt the garment in some way, as if his clumsy hands would tear through the silk fibers or break the delicate stitching. His fingertips seemed to tingle slightly from unease and anticipation, which only amplified when he used them to button up the shirt one by one. The fresh fabric crackled against his skin, more warmth emanating throughout his body with each secured button until he let out an involuntary and abrupt moan, quickly muffling it with his palm.

Suddenly self-conscious, Alex quickly pulled on his pants, tucked in his shirt, and zipped up his fly over his boner. The look was completed by his burgundy letter jacket, which thankfully covered most of the shirt's wrinkles.

As he grabbed his football gear and headed out the door, Alex couldn't shake the feeling of excitement coursing through him. He'd always loved the feeling of competition, the rush of adrenaline keeping him on his toes. But today, it was more than that. There was something about the way the fabric of his shirt clung to his chest and his pants hugged his thighs that made him feel powerful and confident. It made him feel new...better. It was no wonder Harlan and Lionel dressed the way they did, he thought.

The radio in his hand-me-down car flipped on before he had a chance to connect his phone, but he liked the song playing - *Sunflower* by Post Malone - so he let it be. "Crash at my place, baby, you're a wreck..." he sang softly, tapping his fingers on his steering wheel as he drove down his street.

While sitting at a 4-way stop, he quickly double-checked his face to make sure there were no new breakouts. The one on his chin was going away, but still visible. Oh well. Everyone his age had acne, it was hardly something to be ashamed of.

"She wanna ride me like a cruise—" He sang, then coughed. Sheesh, Post Malone had a high range. Alex moved down an octave, which made singing along with the chorus easier. He piloted the car with one hand and rested his hand on his crotch with the other. Wearing a dress shirt and pants was really turning him on for some reason. He was used to sudden rushes of arousal thanks to his teenage hormones, but this time it was accompanied by a new feeling of pride. Growing into a man came with awkward moments, but the payoff at the end would be so worth it.

School approached over the horizon. He guzzled some water from a squeeze bottle leftover from practice. Singing was drying him out. Alex's posture changed as the final chorus came around. He puffed his chest and lifted his chin to take on the challenge of lowering another octave. The chorus came out of his mouth in a scratchy rumble that filled the car and reverberated through his veins like a thunderstorm. He hummed and growled, feeling the music through his entire body. His lips trembled as he reached for the lower notes, scrunching his face in concentration as he found the low, gravelly sound.

Alex parked and hopped out of his car, the warmth of the morning hitting his face. He looked to his right, briefly expecting to see Harlan walking into school with his massive gut undulating in front of him, straining the buttons of his dress shirt. But that was silly. Harlan was coming up on his 40th high school reunion. Man, what it must have been like to go to school with him, or with Lionel...

His throat still felt dry, so he squeezed out more hydration from his water bottle, clenching the valve in his mouth as he rummaged through the backseat for his backpack. It felt so comfortable there that he forgot he was still sucking on it as he walked into school, until...

“You smoke pipes?!”

Alex looked over at a guy in a letter jacket next to him - he had football pins, so he had to be on the team with Alex - and took his pipe out of his mouth. A cloud of creamy white smoke poured from his lips. “I, uh...” Alex stammered, looking at the princely Oom Paul pipe in his hand. “I’m...rarely without it,” he said, placing the pipe back in his mouth and clenching it in his teeth. It was a perfect fit for his jaw, the bend alleviating all strain.

“It looks so cool, man.”

“Thanks, son.” Alex's voice was low and raspy as he spoke, the smoke from his pipe making his words sound deeper and more authoritative. He spoke with a slight chuckle, as if amused by the surprise of the other student. The kid held the door for him, so Alex swept through with an appreciative nod.

The common area was bustling with students, but Alex felt a newfound confidence that he had never experienced before. Pride swelled in his chest as he walked tall in his dress shirt and pants, the sound of his dress shoes tapping against the linoleum floor. Girls turned their heads and whispered to their friends as he passed by, and even some of the guys gave him nods of approval. “Pipe is so fuckin’ sick,” he heard one say. Alex relished in the positive attention, puffing smoke out the side of his smirking mouth. The smoke hovered around his head like a moving cloud, gathering with particular concentration around his lower face, small tendrils reaching out to poke against his skin.

He noticed this strange phenomenon in the bathroom mirror when he was washing his hands before class. His pipe smoke wasn’t dissipating, so he waved his hand to clear it, even running his palm through his hair and across his cheeks where it was strongest. “That’s better,” he grunted, fussing with his hair some more to make sure it had the cool-guy tousle he liked. It was laying flatter than usual today, but that was fine by Alex - he often had trouble taming the volume.

His first period teacher didn’t seem to appreciate him smoking a pipe in class, which he thought was weird, because he did it every day. She didn’t make him put it out, but he did have to sit in the back, gently puffing on his pipe and creating a cloud around his head. The cloud would swell and contract as he waved it away so he could see the presentation, leaving behind a trail of smoke that hung in the air like a thought bubble covering his face. Every time he cleared it away, his hair seemed slightly shorter - and the stubble on his cheeks slightly denser. Students would turn around and look at him now and again, and he smirked back at them, enjoying the admiration. It gave him enough of a chubby that he stayed in his seat for a few moments after the bell rang, clearing his thoughts so he didn’t have a hard-on in the hallway.

When he stood up to leave, the cloud parted to reveal his heavy five o'clock shadow. The smoke seemed to soak into the stubble as he walked, watering the bristles and causing them to connect and flourish with each step he took. They grew thicker, fluffier, becoming proper whiskers with such gravity that they began attracting hair from the top of his head. His hairline parted like the Red Sea as it migrated down to his cheeks and chin, exposing an inch-wide strip of skin down the center of his scalp that quickly widened to two inches, then three.

Alex walked into his second period class sporting a full beard and a rapidly balding head. This hour's teacher wasn't offended by his pipe, so Alex sat in the front and took notes on paper, not noticing his handwriting shift from teenaged chicken scratch to legible, formal penmanship as the hour passed. With his head angled down, smoking became a bit more complicated, and he had to swat away the white cloud more often. Halfway through class, the waving motion of his hand switched to gentle strokes against his beard. It was getting longer, silkier, fluffier, and he loved to touch it. A handsome mustache settled like a roof atop his pipe, growing grander and fuller as class went on.

The teacher asked him a question halfway through class and he answered in full sentences without skipping a beat - odd for him; usually he muttered jumbled fragments that made no sense whatsoever. When his classmates chuckled at his unexpected eloquence, Alex couldn't help but smile beneath his thicket of facial hair. He sat up tall and proud, his spine popping, then stretching...it felt so good to feel his clothes tighten around him that he beamed radiantly as he shot up four inches taller right in his seat. It happened with such force that it threw the rest of his hair off his head, the strands raining down around him like a barber had just snapped off his cutting cape. All the hair on the front, top, and crown of his head fell away, leaving just a narrow strip of hair encircling the back and sides of his skull. Alex reached up and casually brushed at his scalp, the skin on his head smoothing as the last of the follicles withered.

As his clothes fixed themselves to fit his taller frame, the fabrics and tailoring improved too. He still wore dress shoes, but now they were Italian-made and as polished as his bald head. Posh wool pants now cradled his legs, with a suitably longer inseam. His dress shirt buttons were mother-of-pearl instead of plastic, sewn onto plush cotton twill that led up into a tall, bold collar that grew bigger as Alex adjusted it. When he noticed extra fabric rustling around his wrists, he unpinned the two football letters from his jacket and put them through his starched French cuffs. They obligingly morphed into expensive cufflinks as class ended.

"Good job today in class, Alex," his teacher said as the bell rang and Alex stood up.

Alex looked down on the man with a big grin. "Thank you, sir!" he said in his deep, resonant voice. "I do my best."

"I can tell. Keep it up."

Alex walked into the hall with a big smile and even bigger beard on his face. His facial hair was thick and lush, its golden brown hairs voluminous and luxuriously long, curling and tumbling

around his face. As he grinned, the beard seemed to expand, puffing out and growing thicker and fuller, forming a luxurious mane around his lower face. Its softness gave it a pillowy look, with a subtle sheen that caught the light and emphasized its beauty. Its grandeur was a pleasant contrast to his bald head.

His firm footsteps took him through the pipe smoke before it had time to drift away. As he traveled down the hall, the fog that surrounded him stained his facial hair with each passing puff. By the end of the corridor, his beard and horseshoe of hair were a brilliant pristine white, like an iridescent pearl. Its luminescence gave him an ethereal presence among the rest of the students in the hallway.

He was done with his pipe for the time being, so he took its carrying case out of his backpack and put it away before he entered the restroom. His quick pit stop earned him an admiring fist bump from another student. "Brooo, most epic beard in school."

"Thanks!" Alex said with a smile that pushed his enormous handlebar mustache up ever further into its impressive Hungarian shape. The mustache stretched across his entire face and covered his mouth completely. It was as white and fluffy as marshmallow, the hairs so long and thick they shimmered thanks to all the wax he used. Its impressive curls at the ends left a lasting impression on everyone who saw it.

Alex peed in a hurry, as he always had to during the passing period, which made what was happening occur with alarming speed: his cock was elongating in his hand like a balloon animal, growing thick and heavy as he relieved himself. Veins bulged out across it and shot down to his testicles, which were hanging lower as they swelled into huge balls that matched the manliness of his beard and baldness. Alex itched around his groin as overgrown salt-and-pepper pubes poured from his briefs replacing his formerly trim bush. He didn't take notice of how much effort it took to stuff himself back into his underwear or the fact that his dress pants sagged under the weight of his giant bulge.

It was impossible for Alex to concentrate during third period. The powerful hormones coursing through his body made him break out in a sweating fit. He dabbed his bald head with a monogrammed handkerchief and assumed a necessary posture due to his big bulge: legs wide open and groin perched on the corner of the chair. A few heads turned his way due to his noisy breaths. When his teacher asked him to quiet down, Alex opened up his notebook and began sketching away to keep himself occupied.

What started as doodled rectangles on a blank page quickly began to take the shape of a skyline, with points of light representing windows and tall spires reaching into the sky. The details of the skyline, from the individual windows to the curves of the towers, were precise and delicate. Alex's hand moved confidently across the page as he built a cityscape populated with a variety of structures, each one unique and identifiable. He twisted at the curls of his mustache

as he sketched out heights and measurements for each building, carefully measuring his lines and angles as he drew a grid to keep everything at scale.

He was so consumed by shading in the city he was creating that he didn't feel his body hair beginning to thicken up, even as it became itchy and coarse. The sparse covering on his legs and arms doubled in length and density, shifting from brown to swirls of white and black as it sheathed his limbs and spread across his body. His pits sweat more thanks to the thick bushes of hair now under them; his back broke out with generous coverage that crept down over his ass and up across his shoulders. As hair curled out from his open collar, the heat generated by it got Alex to flip open another button of his dress shirt, just in time for curls to bloom out as he grew a thick, furry pelt of chest hair. Alex scratched at it, his knuckles sinking into a salt-and-pepper forest while he finished his skyline.

Alex left class the most hirsute male in school, regardless of age. The torrents of testosterone churning within him had him strutting down the hall with a cocky smirk on his face, unbothered by how different he looked from other guys his age. It didn't appear to bother the other guys, either – Alex was greeted with fist bumps as he sat down at lunch with his buddies, none of whom mentioned his resplendent white beard or severe baldness.

“How you boys doin’ today?” Alex rumbled.

“Good, dude,” one said. “Lookin’ sharp. Cufflinks on Game Day, nice.”

“Cufflinks every day,” Alex corrected. He carved up his chicken tenders and began eating them with a knife and fork, opening his mouth wide to raise the curtains of his mustache. It was a practiced way of eating to avoid getting food in his beard. “I’m a man of class.”

The others laughed appreciatively. Alex smiled at them, looking around with a twinkle in his eye, his mood elevated by the testosterone coursing through his body. His buddies didn't have facial hair anywhere close to him, though one of them had a thin layer of peach fuzz covering his face. Alex didn't look down on them for it – he knew they'd catch up to him eventually – though it was fun to feel like the table alpha. He was the one the rest of them wanted to be like.

As the group went back to their food and chatted, Alex was suddenly struck by how much manlier his own voice was compared to theirs. He took a moment to appreciate its bass, the pure tonality of it. Like his facial hair, it was formidable, with a volume that filled the air it occupied, commanding the attention of everyone around him. He took a deep breath and savored his big, manly voice for a minute before keying into the conversation again.

They were talking about girls, which didn't interest Alex much, so he just ate quietly. But in case it came around to him, he thought about some of his crushes. Pretty girls, though at the moment he couldn't remember what they looked like, or their names. All that came to mind was tall, strong men with stubbled jaws and crushing handshakes. Masculine men with muscles, style, and success they loved to flaunt in public and in the bedroom. Alex pictured them wearing suits, or sleek athletic wear...or nothing at all. He pictured them going to bars and clubs and taking his

breath away. He thought about what they would do to him, or what they would have him do. He thought about their deep voices calling him Daddy while he—

Alex pressed his thighs together to hide his throbbing erection. His underwear was damp with his pre, and he hoped it wasn't showing through his pants.

Then the nightmare question aimed his way from across the table: "What're you thinking about, bro?"

He did the first thing he thought of that would distract a group of teenage boys: unleashed a long, deafening burp.

The response was rapturous. A couple boys burped back before a whole conversation of belches opened up: extended ones, short ones, quiet ones, some pitched high, some low. Alex happily joined the fray, burping along with his buddies, not feeling his buttons tightening over his stomach. His lean teenaged abs thickened into a substantial sphere that then began to swell outward, getting larger with each belch at the table, regardless of who provided it. Alex's chair was pushed back inch by inch as his gut pushed against the edge of the table, creating more space for his potbelly to grow, and grow, and grow. His friends cheered him on as his waistline ballooned, every burp inflating him further, making his buttons gap and his belly hair curl out. His bellybutton popped out of his shirt like the top of a volcano, then sank back in again as his gut inflated outward, his shirt and belt stretching to fit a man twice their size.

A passing teacher shushed them and they finally settled down. Alex chuckled and rested his hands on his mammoth musclegut, giving it an affectionate rub as he checked his buttons. His bulk made it difficult to reach his tray on the table, but he managed to finish his lunch as he listened to his friends ramble. He wasn't gripped by any of their conversation topics, so he just ate politely and excused himself when he was done.

Conversations went quiet table-by-table as he walked past, his rock solid belly floating in front of him like a zeppelin. It hovered perfectly parallel to the ground, never sagging, keeping his shirt cellophane-tight just how he liked it. Even when he saw his football coach and began walking faster, his mighty belly never jiggled.

"Coach!" Alex thundered as he dumped his tray.

His football coach turned around, a look of surprise flitting across his face for one moment before recognition settled in. "Alex! How's my kicker?"

"Pretty good, sir," Alex smiled, giving his belly a proud pat. His fingers lingered on the struggling buttons on the underside of his iron gut. "Fueled up for tonight."

"Not missing any meals, huh?"

Alex's deep laugh echoed off the walls. "I'm sure not."

"Well, it shows in the weight room. You're killing it in there."

A row of pearly whites shone through Alex's beard. He couldn't believe his ears. "You really mean it?!" His coach had never complimented his lifts before, so hearing the praise meant a lot to him.

"I don't give compliments I don't mean," his coach said, not acknowledging the way Alex seemed to grow at the mere mention of the weight room. The boy's letter jacket rippled as a firestorm of activity began to take place under it, his body beginning its manly metamorphosis. At first, it could be passed off as pride - a straightening of the spine, a puffing of the chest - until Alex's jacket tore open across his back and his third button over his chest popped off, exposing his hairy pelt in its full glory. His thighs swelled within his pants, the sharp stalks of his quad muscles pushing out like rebar. "In fact," Coach continued, "I'd say you might be the strongest guy I've ever coached."

Alex's whole body visibly expanded, bursting the seams of his letter jacket as his shoulders stretched to colossal breadth. His ass, trapped under his dress pants, nearly knocked down a girl behind him as it ballooned outward with each new inch of mass, the fabric pulling tight across the enormous cheeks. "Thanks, Coach! I try to set a good example for the boys," Alex said, his head bobbing like a buoy as his body was rocked with growth. Gigantic lats blasted out from his sides, pushing his arms so high that it looked like he was going in for a hug. Muscles bubbled out across his enormous back like mountains on a map. As the giant curves of his lats solidified, his biceps swelled to the size of a head as they cramped, with bulging triceps hanging down behind them like kettlebells. His head was pushed forward as his traps mutated so large they resembled a neck pillow popping out of his shirt collar.

"I know, I know," Coach nodded, "you take it as seriously as I take setting an example for you all. It feels good to be looked up to, doesn't it?"

"It sure does," Alex said, his monstrous size ensuring Coach's statement was literal. As Alex grinned down at his authority figure, his pecs expanded to heroic proportions to keep pace with his body's increase in size. His shirt stretched tight over the newly formed contours of his chest, strands of hairs curling out from under the fabric as his face held a proud, triumphant expression. His coach returned the smile without flinching as Alex's chest exploded with mass. Proud mountains of muscle burst out beneath the fabric of his shirt like airbags detonating, the area between them deepening into a bottomless chasm as they grew rounder and fuller with each passing moment. So much weight pumped into Alex's new tits that they began sagging atop his colossal gut, each droop countered by more size up top until he had pecs the size of throw pillows forcing his shirt wide open.

The ruins of Alex's letter jacket were falling off his hulking mass, and his gentlemanly instinct was to fix them as best he could. Unable to reach across his chest anymore, he was left patting at his sides as he talked to his coach, not seeing his precious letter bunch up into a puff of silk,

or his jacket snaps become buttons. It was only when he reflexively pulled on his new wide lapels that Alex remembered he'd put on a burgundy plaid sport coat with one of his favorite pocket squares. It made sense, since a sport coat or blazer was part of his daily uniform, unless the day's business called for a full suit.

"What size does a guy like you wear, anyway?" His coach was asking when he tuned back in.

"No size," Alex said proudly. "Made just for me, like all my shirts."

"Well, whoever makes 'em, they're doing a great job. You're the best-dressed man I've ever met."

Alex's jaw widened beneath his beard, the bones cracking into a huge square that fit the knotted muscles composing his bullneck. His chest swelled further out of his shirt, the button at the base of his pecs rotating under their projection. Behind him, his backside bulged with even more brawn to keep him balanced. "Thanks, Greg," Alex said, his voice morphing even deeper. "That's very kind of you to say. I enjoy looking my best."

"What's your next class?" Coach Greg asked.

Alex felt like his thoughts were a rushing river. They were all there, right in front of him, but they couldn't be grasped individually. "I don't quite remember," he chuckled honestly. "I'll check."

"Damn block schedules, huh? They mess me up too. I don't know how you kids keep 'em straight."

Something inside Alex bristled at being called a 'kid,' but he pushed that thought down. "Sure do," he said, extending his hand for a powerful shake. "Always a pleasure to talk to you."

"You too, sir," Coach Greg said, which made up for the 'kid' thing. His coach had called him SIR! Alex's heart soared. He swaggered back to his table to retrieve his bag, not bothered by the shocked stares aimed his way, or the fact that his thighs had to swing around each other for him to walk. He wasn't thinking that his giant belly would get in the way of his kicks, or that he could no longer run. All he wanted was to talk his daily walk outside, smoke his pipe, and think about all the compliments Greg had given him.

"Greg's a nice young man," Alex said to himself as he packed his pipe. Leaning over the lunch table shifted the weight of his gut and made his shirt buttons bulge, tufts of belly fur poking out between the gaps. Alex smiled when he noticed. "Going to need some new shirts soon."

He felt so much better having his pipe back in his mouth. It was like a comfort blanket, as was the felt-brimmed hat he picked up from where his backpack had been. Placing it on his bald head made him a gentleman from head to toe, of which he was immensely proud. He strutted out of school with his chest high and his steps firm, unconcerned about the optics of leaving school in the middle of the day right before a game. As he crossed the street toward the park, he waved politely to the drivers waiting at the stop signs, enjoying their expressions of awe.

The admiration of strangers didn't go away when he walked into the park. Joggers, nannies, and sun-worshippers all acknowledged him with respect as he lumbered by them, and he returned it with a nod of his head or a tip of his hat. An artistic-looking young man with a patchy beard briefly engaged with him about his pipe, and Alex gave him tips and pointers about which ones to invest in. The guy called him "sir" twice, too, which sent thrills up Alex's spine.

It was tiring to carry around so much weight, so a bench in the shade beckoned to him. Alex walked over to it, bagged his pants, and sat with a contented groan. There was a small plaque on the bench that he read as he smoked his pipe:

In honor of his retirement, this bench is dedicated to the architect
ALFRED CASTLE
who loves this park and must always have a place to sit.
Your friends, Harlan and Lionel

Warmth stirred in Alfred's enormous chest, as it did every time he remembered his friends had adopted a bench for him. Him...a retired architect...he puffed his pipe and ruminated on the impact of these words, smoke pouring from his mouth and Oom Paul until it practically cocooned him. He removed his hat to fan the smoke away, revealing new sunspots on his scalp that looked less incongruous the more he waved his hat. Each time his fedora cleared the cloud, Alfred looked older, smooth young skin thickening and folding, eyebrows growing as fluffy as his beard. His muscles shifted into maturity under his clothes, giving his burly brawn a lived-in appearance that was missing before.

"Mmmm..." An erection strained at his dress pants as his mind cycled through the same process as his body, the final stroke of converting the young jock into the storied elder he was meant to be. His brain bulged with new intelligence and skill, weighed down by memories of his career and life. He didn't know what it was, but he'd never felt anything like it. He had so many wonderful things to look forward to now, and as a retiree, he had the time to do it all. It felt so good to be Alfred Castle...it was so good to be Alfred Castle...he had the body and mind of a grown man but the libido of a teenager, and he was going to...TO-

"Came in my pants right there in the park."

"Still potent and virile, my friend," Lionel chuckled, slapping Alfred on his back. Next to them, Harlan was laughing too.

The three muscle daddy bears made for quite a sight on the golf course. They were there every week, giant bodies bursting out of their tight golf shirts, cigars hanging from their bearded jaws while they talked about their sports teams and the latest finance news from the Wall Street Journal. Their swings were short and flat thanks to their epic bellies, but their games had long since adjusted to the limited mobility offered by their muscles.

Those muscles were their calling card at the country club, earning immediate respect from every other man. No one minded that the trio ended their weekly games with a trip to the sauna, where they'd flex and suck each other off in a celebration of masculinity so intoxicating that it often convinced other men to join in.

Harlan smashed his ball into orbit and turned back to Alfred, who looked at him in admiration. The man radiated masculine sexuality. His fat nipples protruded through his polo shirt, which had all its buttons undone to show off the hairy cinderblocks on his chest. "Speaking of virility, Alfred, how's that new grandson of yours?"

"He's the most handsome boy in the world and sleeping through the night already," Alfred beamed.

"I'm sure Robert appreciates that."

Alfred smiled at the mention of his only child, Robert. "He does, very much. I just had lunch with him and was marveling at how he's fully turned into me. Remember how insistent he was as a teenager that he was nothing like me? Now he's got a son of his own and he walked into the restaurant wearing a sport coat and a white shirt, with the muscles and belly to fill it out. Has a nice big beard now too. He looks just like me. Talks just like me, too!"

"Does he still want to be called Bobby?"

"No, he gave up on that a long time ago. He's embraced 'Robert'. Robert the dad in a sport coat."

"That man's become a dapper daddy," Harlan said with a grin. "And he comes by it honestly."

"Sounds like he's changed for the better," Lionel observed with a point of his cigar.

"He has. I suppose we all did at some point in our lives," Alfred said, wriggling his feet in place to get settled for his drive. "There's nothing better than being a dapper daddy, gentlemen."