

Patrick leaned against the wall and watched his mother work. He couldn't help chuckling. He'd never seen his mom put so much effort in a meal. He'd gotten up at ten to the sound of her cleaning the house, and the moment he stepped out of his bedroom she gave him a list of ingredients to go buy.

When he'd come back she had her cooking gloves and apron on and she set to work. He'd offered to help, but other than peeling potatoes and chopping vegetables she wouldn't let him in the kitchen. He'd watched her make bread, and a cake.

He wasn't sure if that was the last time his mother had baked, but he had a memory from when he was six or seven. It was Christmas, for some reason she didn't work that day. They had spent the day making bread, cookies and cakes. He'd helped as best as he could, even improvising gloves to avoid leaving fur in the bread dough. He smiled at the memory.

"Patrick, can you make sure the bowls and plates are clean?"

"Sure thing mom." He knew they were, since he'd been the one to do the dishes last night, but he washed everything again, both to please her and to have something to do. After drying them he set the table.

A moment later his mother sat down. "All done. The roast is resting, the bread is going to be ready in twenty minutes. the soup is..."

"Mom, I know, I watched you do all of it."

"I'd forgotten how much I enjoyed cooking."

"Well, you should try to do more."

She shook her head. "No, tonight is a special occasion. I can't afford to take the time off to cook." She smiled at him. "Once I retire. I finally have a retirement plan that will let me do that."

Patrick considered things for a moment. "You know. with the odd jobs I've been picking up in Richard's neighborhood, We probably have enough money for you to quit the waitressing job."

She placed a hand over his. "No Patrick, that's your money. We can split the groceries and bill, but it's your money. "

"Mom, I can..."

"No, Patrick. What these last few weeks have made me realize is that you are an adult now. You need to have your own things, that means your own money so you can buy things you want."

Want? He didn't want anything that required money, did he?

"Now, go change into something more presentable."

He looked at what he was wearing, jeans and his wife beater. "This is fine."

"Patrick, we are having guests, put your church shirt on." She stood and headed to her room.

It was his fathers, not the president that was coming over. Still, he went to his room and pulled out the shirt he wore when he went to church, then looked at his jeans. They were faded in places and almost worn through in others. He probably had a pair in better condition.

He found one, a black pair that wasn't quite as worn. Dressed he headed back to the kitchen. As the timer beeped his mother came out wearing her best dress, a gray and gold summer dress that went down to her knees. He almost commented, and would have made a fool of himself, but there was a knock at the door.

"I'll get it," he said.

He opened the door and his greeting died on his lips. His fathers were standing before him, wearing brown slacks and one had a black shirt on, the other an orange one.

"Hi Patrick," one of them, in the black shirt, said.

Patrick shook his head. "Sorry, you're wearing different colors."

"It was Danny's idea," Donald said, nodding to his brother in the black shirt.

"I thought it might make things easier on your mother."

"I'm sure it will, come on in."

"We weren't sure what we'd eat," Donald said, showing the bottle he was holding. "So we brought a bottle of red and one of white."

Daniel raised his bottle.

"Thanks." Patrick took the bottles and eyed them suspiciously.

"Don't worry," Daniel whispered. "They aren't expensive."

They took the few steps taking them to the kitchen. His mother was fidgeting next to the table.

"Mom, you remember Daniel and Donald," he said, indicating them, and then placing the bottles on the counter.

"Yes," she replied, "welcome to our home." She hesitated before offering her hand.

Daniel took it. "It's a pleasure to see you again, Margarete."

"Yes, it is," Donald said when he shook her hand, although he didn't sound as enthusiastic as his brother.

"Please, have a seat." She indicated the table. "Patrick, you too."

"I can help serve the food."

"Go sit down, I'll take care of that." She took the bottle from him. "I'm afraid we don't have wine glasses, I hope normal ones will do."

"That'll be fine," Donald replied.

Patrick took a can of orange soda out of the fridge before sitting down. His mother place an empty glass before him and then glasses half full with red wine before Daniel and Donald and her place. She collected the bowls and filled them with soup.

They ate in silence for a long moment. Patrick tried to find a way to break the uncomfortable silence, but it was Daniel who did it.

"Where do you work, Margarett?"

"I work at Olympic Mattress, it's a mattress factory. I'm a team supervisor. I also work at a diner a few blocks away."

"Two jobs?" Donald said. "That can't be easy."

"It can get tiring, but we do what we have to. Actually, today I should have..." she paused, then shook her head. "That isn't important. But that might change soon, I decided to apply to the position of floor supervisor when it opens."

Patrick looked up. "Really? I didn't know that."

"I'm not sure when it will happen," She said, "and I can't be certain I'll get it, but I want to try."

"That's great, mom."

"I hope you get it," Donald said, raising his glass to her.

"What does being a team supervisor entails?" Daniel asked.

"It mostly mean I make sure my team works efficiently, if one of them had a problem I help them resolve it. But me and the other supervisor have started polling everyone for ideas on how to improve the work flow. We take an hour every week too refine our choices, and at the end of the month we present the best one to management."

"Are they receptive?" Donald asked,

"Very much so. Last month we suggested a new layout for the sewing machines that will help the flow of production. When we came back after that weekend, a quarter of the floor had been rearranged, and two teams are working on it."

Donald finished his soup. "Why didn't they do all of them?"

"The layout isn't proven, so they don't want to risk disrupting the entire production. They are going to leave it like this for six month, to give everyone on that line the time to get use to it then they are going to compare it to the

rest of the floor." She took the bowls away and brought the roast to the table. She offered the knife to Donald, and he sliced it while she place the salad on the table and cut the bread.

"That's really impressive," Daniel commented. "Me and Donny aren't exactly team players."

"What do you do?" she asked.

"We're computer game designers."

"And you do well?"

"Well enough," Donald said.

"They made Castle Crash," Patrick said.

His mother's eyes grew wide.

"To be honest," Daniel said, "it hit it big after we sold it. And it would never have become as successful if we'd kept it. We don't do a lot of marketing."

"Or try to gouge the player base," Donald grumbled.

"What do you mean?" Patrick asked.

Daniel finished his piece of roast. "The company we sold it to made it so a lot of the big bonus can only be bought with cash, instead of earned through play. That isn't the way we do things, but I have to give them this, the controversy did have everyone talking about it for a while."

Margarette buttered her bread. "don't you have to work with others to make games?"

"Not really," Donald said. "Sometime we have to hire someone for part of the game, like the music, but they are working for us, not with us."

Daniel took over. "Our current game has us working more closely with others because we've been hired to make it for a new game system, so there's a lot of conversation, but even that isn't really working with a team. We do our part, test it with the system. If it doesn't work they decide if they want to adjust the system or the game."

Donald looked thoughtful for a moment. "You know, I think the last time we worked as part of a team was in high school."

Daniel nodded. "Our senior year, chemistry."

"Right. We were teamed up with... That wolf guy, the one who was on the baseball team, and this cow, I think. Anyway, yeah, that was a disaster."

"What happened?" Patrick asked.

"The project was about demonstrating an exothermic reaction."

"So, being the down to earth, dependable teens that we were," Daniel continued, "we decided to make a fertilizer bomb."

"You what?" Margarette exclaimed.

"Just a small one."

Donald nodded. "And the ingredients weren't in a sealed container, they were on a board so we figured there wasn't going to be a 'bang'."

"Because of that I'm guessing there was one," Patrick said.

"It was more of a loud 'paf'," Daniel said.

"A lot of smoke and heat."

"And singed fur, don't forget that."

Donald chuckled. "Danny was the one who lit it so he was right next to it when it went off. He ended up on his ass."

"Did you get hurt?" Margarett asked.

"No, just my fur that got singed. for about two months my face fur was uneven. Donny was the one really troubled by it."

"Why?"

"We're twins. We've always looked alike, and for the first time people could tell us apart easily. I wanted to shave my fur to match him, but dad wouldn't let me. I think that was the only time I was really angry at him."

"He knew you wouldn't be able to do it."

"I know, but I was still pissed at him."

Margarett nodded. "It isn't always easy to do what we think is the best for our children," she said thoughtfully.

Daniel raised his glass. "Amen to that."

Donald joined it. "Very much so."

Margarett looked at them surprised before lifting her glass.

They looked at Patrick. who chuckled and raised his own. "How about I get back to you in twenty years or so." He drained his glass. "Do you want more?" he pointed at the empty glasses.

"Who's driving?" Donald asked.

"I will, go ahead. I'll have water."

"Mom?"

"Sure, why not. I have the afternoon shift tomorrow."

He filled both the glasses halfway, then rinsed Daniel's and filled it with water from the fridge. he got himself another soda.

Margarett got praises for the food, and the banana walnut cake impressed Donald so much he asked for the recipe. They talked for a while after they were done eating, until Margarett let out a yawn, which spread to everyone else.

Donald and Daniel stood to leave, and Margarett called to them.

"Patrick told me that you've invited him to celebrate his birthday at your house."

"We'd like for both of you to come," Daniel replied.

"Who is going to be there?"

They looked at each other. Donald was the one who spoke. "Well, the kids invite their friends, and the parents come too."

"How many people are we talking about?"

"Possibly close to seventy-five."

"And what will be happening?"

"We have a pool, so swimming, talking, someone usually starts a volley ball game. If the weather isn't on our side we'll be inside. We have a few game consoles."

Margarette nodded. "Alright, We'll think about it."

Donald nodded. "That's all we can ask for."

Patrick escorted them outside, where they hugged. Patrick found he didn't want to let go of them, holding both close to him and breathing in their scents. They kept their arms around him, and he stayed like that until he started to feel aroused.

He let go of them. "No matter what my mom decides, I'll be there."

"We're looking forward to it." They turned to leave.

"You two drive safely."

"No worries there," Donald replied. "Slow-mo here is the one driving."

"You had that extra glass of wine, now you pay the price." his brother said.

Patrick smiled and watched them walk away. He watched their ass and tails until they got in their car. He stayed outside for a time to give his heart time to settle before going in.

"Mom," he said, entering the kitchen, "go to bed, I'll clean up."

She put plates in the sink. "It's okay. I can take care of this."

"Mom, you spent the day cooking. It's my turn. Go to bed."

"Are you sure?"

"I am." He hugged his mother. "Thank you for doing this. I love you mom."

"I love you too Patrick."