

Patrick was sweaty and itchy.

the whole week had been hot, a lot hotter than it should be for only a few days into summer. And they kept saying that They'd fixed climate change back in the thirties, Patrick thought gloomily. He grabbed another broken lamp and threw it with the others.

The ear clip beeped, letting him know a call was coming in. He'd gotten it after a week of holding the phone to his ear while talking with Arthur. It was well worth the five bucks. He pressed the stud.

"Hey Arthur, how is it going?"

"Hi Pat," someone he who wasn't Arthur said. "It's Aaron."

"Hey Aaron. sorry, Arthur usually calls round this time."

"I know. I let him know I'd be monopolizing you today, that is, if you're interested in having lunch together."

Patrick grabbed the phone out of his jacket that was hanging off an intact tall lamp Joey had say was called a Pixar, because of the way it looked. Patrick had no idea what that was suppose to mean, but it was one they could still sell. It was five minutes after noon.

"Yeah, I guess I could, but just to warn you. I'm kind of grummy. Sweating and dirt don't mix well. Where do you want to meet?"

"Well, I'm standing at the gate of Joey's Junk, being eyed by two canids like I'm on the lunch menu."

Patrick had a moment of surprise at Aaron being at the junk yard, then laughed. "That's just Livid and Angry, Joey's pooches. They're harmless. Head to the office, and I'll be there in a few minutes."

When Patrick made it there, shirt and jacket in hand, Aaron was seated on the stairs, holding two wrapped sandwiches.

"You didn't have to bring food," Patrick chuckled. "we could have gone somewhere."

Aaron looked sheepish. "I didn't. Joey introduced himself. When I told him I was your brother and we were going to have lunch he gave me those, then got in a pickup and left."

Patrick sat next to his brother. "He usually provides lunch when I work." He took one of the sandwiches. "If you prefer, we can go somewhere, I'll have to grab a quick shower first. I'm not fit for even this area's diners."

"It's okay. And I did bring something." Aaron pulled a can from behind him and handed it to Patrick. Orange soda. "I

know you don't want us to buy you stuff, but I thought in this heat you might enjoy a drink." He pulled a second one for himself, a strawberry-kiwi soda.

"This is fine." He popped the top with a claw. "It's the stuff I couldn't afford at any time in my life that makes me uncomfortable." He took a long swallow, then a large bite of the sandwich.

Aaron sipped his soda while looking around. "This is so surreal. I didn't even know a place like this existed."

Patrick nodded. "Joey managed to grab the last permit before they passed the recycling act, in... twenty-eight, I think. The others went under because the intake more or less dried up, but Joey specialized in large appliances and other big things that aren't easy to recycle. By the time the recession hit he was the only one left, and people started coming in with smaller stuff. Stuff they should be recycling, but they can't get money for that, and as tight as the economy became they needed even the few pennies Joey gave for what they brought."

"The city let him do that?"

"Looks like it. even if things are picking up now, people still come. but now we get collectors and people looking to dress up their place for cheap, so he's seeing a return on it."

Livid chose that moment to drop herself on her haunches next to Aaron and look at him with baleful eye. She licked her chops.

"Don't give her any food. Joey don't let them eat people food, but she keeps trying."

Aaron rubbed the black canid between the ears and she panted. "So it's just you and Joey working here then?"

"Nah. He has two cousins that come in when ever they feel like it, but this isn't exactly a busy place. He just calls me in when someone brings something big, or when there's something he doesn't want to deal with." Patrick finished his sandwich and soda. "That why I'm here today. He'd got eight years of lamps piled up in the back and he's decided to get rid of the ones too broken to be sold. I've been sorting all morning. When I'm done we're going to shovel that in his pickup and he'll drive it to the recycling center."

Aaron nodded and nibbled on his food. "Pat, I hope you're not going to find the question offensive, but how much money do you have?"

"Thirty-three bucks and eleven cents."

"And that's literally everything you have, right?"

"Yeah."

"Fuck," Aaron whispered. "I'm sorry, I really thought

Alex was trying to pull one over us."

"It's okay. I'm kind of surprised no one called to double check."

"Not something we wanted to do over the phone."

Patrick smiled. "So that's why you're here?"

"Only part of it." He looked at the sky. "I've been going through some stuff."

"Okay." Patrick waited.

"Sorry. This is weird. You're my brother, but at the same time you're not part of my family. You're the only one I could think of to talk with about this."

"Shoot."

Aaron took a breath. "A couple of years ago something happened to me. Ever since I've had this anger festering inside me. I keep it in check, mostly, The dads haven't realized anything, but I'm pretty sure Arthur suspects, and if he does the others do to. I had to stop competing, because the last time I did my opponent kind of cheated and I lost it on him. I broke his leg."

"Why are you keeping it from your fathers? wouldn't they help?"

"They'd want to, but they can't. It's complicated."

"Okay, What are you hoping to get out of talking with me about it?"

"Am I wrong to say you have something of a temper?"

Patrick chuckled. "No, you're not."

"How do you deal with it?"

"I pray, a lot."

"Oh." Aaron petted Livid and she rested her head on his lap.

"Seriously though, I try to think about what I'm doing. I've learned to noticed the signs I'm about to lose it and I try to catch myself."

"So no mantra? no secret recipe to keep in check?"

"No. I'm afraid not. Not keeping it bottled up would probably be a good way to start though. And for me, my faith that God hasn't burdened me with something I can't overcome helps."

"And that's enough, faith?"

"Most days. I have dark days where I curse God. I'm not perfect. Just like the rest of us, I'll falter, step off the Path, but at some point we get back on it. You don't believe in God I take it."

"Never really spent any time thinking about it. Historically, my family and the church hasn't gotten along all that well, with us being gay and all."

"How far back does it go? I mean everyone being gay."

Aaron shrugged. "As far back as we know. Great-grandpa Robert had the family tree done, and it went as far as some guy in France, in the fourteen hundred I think. He was the first one to take the name Orr. According to the stories, we've been persecuted through out the centuries. We have it good now, none of that phobia anymore, but I think the church's been breed out of us."

"You don't need a church to believe in God."

"Okay, but how do you deal with science."

"What?"

"Doesn't the bible say that God created everything? doesn't that mean you can't believe the theory of evolution is real?"

"Wow, okay, now you're sounding like one of those Anti-religion extremist."

"Sorry, I didn't mean to, but I am curious about it, how do you reconcile religion and science?"

"Well, I'm not a scientist, so that isn't really a problem for me, but yes I do believe in science. I do believe that earth is older than what the bible states, and that somewhere in the far past, Livid there and Joey share an ancestor."

"Doesn't that go against the bible and the things it teaches?"

Patrick shrugged. "It doesn't matter. It wasn't written by God. God doesn't dictate how things are. He set them in motion and he's watching what happens."

Aaron was silent for a moment, then he chuckled. "You're a lot more thoughtful about this than I would ever be."

"Finding out about you, dad, and being gay has forced me to do a lot of thinking. I wasn't quite that deep when I was seventeen."

Aaron nodded. "I'm not really a deep thinker."

Patrick put an arm around Aaron's shoulders and pulled against him. "That's okay. Sorry if I couldn't help with your anger."

"S'okay, I have a backup plan. I'm going to join the army."

"Isn't that a bit extreme?"

"I don't think so. That way I can channel my anger into protecting my country."

"And here I thought you guys were going to sit on your money and live the easy life."

Aaron laughed. "Oh no, we're all going to get jobs."

"But your dads have money."

"And it's their money. We're living off it now, because we're too young to get jobs." Patrick eyed him. "okay, because we're still in school. Once we leave school we're going to have to come up with our own money."

Patrick looked at Aaron eyes wide.

"What?"

"That sound you just heard, that was my expectations being shattered. I mean, I liked you all, even when I thought you were going to have it easy all your life. You're good guys and I like being around the lot of you, except for Damian. That guys just gives me the creeps. But now... What?"

Aaron looked away. "You're instinct about him are right."

"What do you mean?"

His brother started to say something, then stopped. He shook his head. "Look, just be careful around him. That's all."

Patrick considered the words. "I will."

Aaron checked his palm. "Shit, I should probably let you get back to work. I don't want you to get in trouble."

"I won't, but I should get back to it."

They stood, and Patrick was the one to hug Aaron, much to his brother's surprise. "Thanks for talking with me, and if you ever need to talk again, you have my number."

"Thanks for listening. I love you."

Patrick didn't know how to reply to that, and by the time he decided he loved him back, Aaron had already left.