

Patrick didn't go directly to his mother's house. She wouldn't be home until five thirty, and he didn't want to be there alone. He walked the neighborhood, nodding to the people he saw. He had no doubt the old rhino would call his mom, she was always poking her nose into other people's business, but for once he didn't care.

Mister Omaka was watering his roses and they talked for a bit. The ocelot had worried something had happened to Patrick, and he explained about the fight with his mother and staying at a friend's place. Patrick promised he'd let him know how the talk with his mother went.

At five forty five he headed back. His mother would be waiting for him and it would be unfair to let her worry needlessly. The door opened with its usual creaking.

"Patrick?" his mother called.

"Yeah, it's me." He put his jacket in the closet before heading to the kitchen. He stopped in the opening, she wasn't alone at the table, an older ram was seated across the table from her.

"Hello Patrick," father Durony said. "Would you take a seat?"

Patrick didn't move. "Why are you here?"

"I am here because your mother asked me to come."

What was his mother doing involving the priest in this? He looked at her, but she was looking at the table.

"She explained the argument that lead to you walking out."

"Yeah, so?"

"Please Patrick, sit down."

Patrick didn't move immediately. He wanted to yell at his mother, this was a private matter, but that wouldn't help anything, specially not before father Durony. He took the closest chair and sat down.

The ram looked at him, one eye was going cloudy. "Patrick, I want you to know that I'm not here to pursue any agenda. Your mother told me that she opposes you seeing your father, and I told her she was wrong."

Patrick couldn't stop his ears from moving forward.

"I would never advocate for a son to be kept away from his father unless there was safety issues." His mother opened her mouth, but the ram raised a hand. "Margarette, you agreed to let me talk."

She looked at the table again.

Father Durony looked at Patrick again. "Now, your mother

has some concerns. Is it true that your father lives in sin?"

Patrick considered going into details about what he knew his fathers got up to with his brothers. It might be good to see the old ram shocked, it might even send him off screaming. But the priest was being reasonable, for now.

"He's gay, he and his husband are raising their kids." He kept things vague. He doubted his mother had given details.

"She said you have visited them."

"A few times now."

"Have they done anything to you?"

What was he talking about?

"have they tried to touch you inappropriately?"

Patrick laughed at the old ram. "Of course not."

"Patrick, please, this is serious."

Patrick got his laughter under control. If only this priest had an inkling of how well behaved his family had been with him.

"No, they have not done anything inappropriate. They are good people, and my brothers are pretty fun to hang out with."

"That's a relief. And your brothers, are they... normal?"

It was with some effort that Patrick kept his features neutral. "Normal?"

"You know."

"How the Hell," Sorry, "would I know that?"

"You must have talked about it with them."

Like there was any chance Patrick was going to discuss that with him. "Maybe you go about asking your family members about their sexual preferences, father, but I don't. I've gone swimming with them, I've played cards, and we've talked about life. And just so you know, If they had told me about their sex life, I wouldn't tell you."

"Patrick, I'm asking out of concern."

Patrick barely stopped the snort. "I don't care. I don't see them coming here to go to church, so that isn't any of your business."

Father Durony raised his hands. "Alright. You are right, they aren't my parishioners. That is between them and their priests." He folded his hands before him. "Is it true they claimed that you are gay?"

"They did." Patrick prepared himself for the next question.

"And are you?"

"No," he lied.

The ram peered into his eyes and Patrick maintain the gaze. "Good," the priest said. "I'm proud of you for resisting temptation."

It was a good thing his hands were out of view because they clenched. Resisting? Temptation?

The ram smiled. "I'm happy to say that you have my blessing to continue seeing your father."

His blessing? Like Patrick needed that. Just who the Hell (sorry) did he think he was?

"And hopefully, with your guidance you can help him see the error of his ways, and guide him back on the Path." The ram stood. "I will leave the two of you to continue talking."

With all his self control Patrick stood without shoving the table out of his way. He hoped the priest wasn't going to say anything more because Patrick was inches from throwing him out of the house.

Instead he escorted him to the door.

"God be with you," the priest said and he stepped outside.

Patrick forced the words out. "And He with you, father." Patrick was certain now he didn't want to have anything to do with father Durony and his church. he closed the door and went to the bathroom.

He rubbed water in his face. He needed to calm down. he couldn't let loose the anger the priest had stirred on his mother. He toweled his face dry and went back to the kitchen, taking the chair father Durony vacated.

Patrick sat down opposite his mother. he waited of a moment in case she had something to say. When she didn't he did.

"I want to make something clear, mom. I'm done tolerating your narrow minded point of view."

She looked up. "What does that mean?"

"It means I don't want to hear anything about this sin bullshit."

Her eye went wide.

"Patrick, they..."

"Stop."

"Patrick."

"I'm warning you mom, stop."

They were both silent for a long time.

"If you expect me to like him because he's your father, Well I don't."

"Mom, you don't even know them."

"I know all I need to know." She crossed her arms over her chest.

"How can you? all you know about them is that they're gay."

"That's enough. I could never like someone like that."

The statement hurt enough that he almost told her he was gay, but he stopped himself. He wasn't ready for that argument. "Fine, then I'm out of here."

"What?"

"What do you want me to do mom? I told you, I'm not dealing with this anymore. You want to be some intolerant woman, fine, you be that, but I have no interest in being around someone like that."

"I'm not..."

"Bullshit. You hate my dad because he doesn't fit your narrow definition of perfection. one thing that you've decided is a sin, and he isn't fit to be around. Well, let me point out something. You lie, and lying is a sin, and if I remember my bible correctly it's actually mentioned in the ten commandment, While being gay isn't. So you tell me who between you and them are in deeper shit."

"Patrick, I'm sorry I lied to you. I'm trying to protect you, don't you see that?"

"I'm not a child anymore mom. I don't need your protection." He stood. "And to make it clear. They are not the reason I'm leaving this house. You are." He turned to head out of the kitchen.

"Patrick, don't go."

He turned and looked at her.

"Please. Don't abandon me."

"Why should I stay mom? so I can listen to more of your intolerant bullshit about people you're not even willing to get to know?"

She winced.

"Please Patrick, I'll try."

"Try what?"

"I'll try to get to know them, somehow. Just stay."

Patrick sat back down. "Are you serious?"

She nodded.

"Alright. Then lets invite them to dinner."

"What? we can't do that?"

"Why not?"

"They're..." she shut her mouth before Patrick could say anything.

"Mom, they are my father. If you want to be part of my family, that means you're going to have to interact with them. If all you can do is explode anytime they are around, I'm not going to be around. You need to realize that, and you need to decide what you're willing to do about it, because I've made my decision."

She nodded. "Patrick, do you have any idea what you're

asking?"

"yes, that you stop seeing them as this one thing and start seeing them as people. Mom, by inviting them here, we're in control of the environment. This is your house. They will respect that, I will make sure of it."

She looked around the kitchen. "This place is a mess. What are we going to cook? I can't afford the kind of food they're used to."

"Then we make them our kind of food. I'll pitch in so we have enough for four."

She looked at him, uncertainty in her eyes. "When do you want to do it?"

"Soon. Friday would give us the rest of the week to prepare."

She shook her head. "I work Friday, I can't have anything done in just an hour. but I can take Saturday off. I'll owe Beatrice a shift, but I can manage that. That's going to give me the day to clean this place and prepare the meal."

"Alright."

"If I do this, you're going to stay?"

Patrick took his mother's hands in his. "Mom, I want this to happen because I want to stay here."

Her smile was uncertain, but it was there.