

Patrick came awake with a start and winced as he jostled his knee. Joey was shaking his shoulder.

"You said you needed to leave at six thirty. It's six fifteen."

Patrick started stretching, then stopped as he pulled on his side. "Thanks."

Joey handed him two twenties and a ten. "For the day."

"You shouldn't be paying me for not doing any work."

"I said I would. Now take it before I shove this in your pocket myself."

Patrick keep the money. "Thanks."

"You're welcome. I know I can't stop you from working at the bar tonight, but take it easy. And then stay home and rest up. You're not going to be helping anyone if the Sarantos get to you in this state and cut you up."

"I will. It isn't like I have any work lined up for this week anyway."

The bulldog nodded. "Sorry, but I'm not going to call you if I get a large delivery this week. I'll check in with you next Monday. If I believe you when you tell me you're feeling better I'll schedule some time for you."

Patrick put the ice pack off his knee and handed it to Joey.

"Keep it," the bulldog said. "It should be good for another twelve hour, and it's a one time use. Buy me a new one next time you're working."

"How expensive it is?"

"A couple of bucks, five at the most. Just grab whatever is cheapest."

"I will, thanks." Patrick stood and put some weight on his leg. His knee was numb enough that the pain wasn't too strong. He took a few steps to reach his jacket.

"Fuck this." Joey reached his jacket first and handed it to him. "I'm going to drive you."

"I can walk. I'm not an invalid."

"No, but if you force yourself to walk on it, you're going to become one. Don't argue. Come on. I'll help you."

Patrick felt bad for taking Joey out of the scrap yard. At this hour there was no one else here and he could miss customers. The drive to the church took less then ten minutes, so he was there very early.

"The bar you work at is only a few block that way, right?"

"Yeah, Don's Cup."

"Okay, that's not too far. Stay off that leg as much as possible Pat. I'm not kidding, If you don't take care of it it isn't going to heal right and you'll end up limping for the rest of your life."

Patrick looked at the bulldog. "You know, you're going dad on me so strong right now that you should probably think about adopting me."

"Don't tempt me. There's a few times where I've felt like throwing you over my knees and spanking you for the stupid stuff you've done."

"What stupid stuff?"

"Don't act that way. I saw you climb that tower of junk so you could reach the sink the customer wanted."

Patrick shrugged. "Nothing happened, and she really wanted that one."

"Damn it, Pat. That's why I feel like spanking you. Nothing happened? it's pure fucking luck you didn't bring that whole thing down on you and her."

"No, it wouldn't have, not on her anyway. If I'd felt it move in any way I would have made sure to be on the opposite side."

Joey glared at him. "You are so lucky I know your mom would skin me alive if I dared lay a finger on you. Now get out, I'm sure your priest is waiting for you so he can get things started."

"Yes dad," Patrick laughed as he exited the car.

The bulldog glared at him again, made sure he was clear and drove away. Patrick watched him for a moment before entering the church.

It wasn't large, serving only the community, and the seven pm service didn't get many people. There was only a two already seated. Most would show up closer to the start.

He dipped a finger in the holy water and crossed himself before heading to the confessional. He knelt down and a moment later the panel slid open.

"Forgive me father for I have sinned. It's been a week since my last confession."

"What have your transgressions been my son?"

"Well, I got in a fight."

"Did you start it?"

"No."

"Did you do all you could to keep it from happening?"

"I think so, but by the time it was going I was pretty angry."

"Anger is a dangerous emotion my son, it often leads to sinning."

"Yeah, I know."

"Anything else?"

"I've been angry at a few customers at the bar who were mistreating the waitresses."

"And what did you do about it?"

"My job, mostly. I tried to get them to calm down and leave them alone. If I couldn't I escorted them outside."

"Why did you say 'mostly'?"

"Because at least once I might not have been as gentle with him as I should have been."

"I see."

"I've also been having impure thoughts."

"Of a sexual nature?"

"Yeah."

There was a slight chuckle from the other side. "You are a young man, those will happen."

"But they're still a sin."

The priest didn't reply immediately. "It's the acting on them which is the sin, and will lead you off the Path. Keeping impure thoughts out of your mind is certainly commendable, but the important thing is to keep them out of your actions. Anything else?"

Patrick thought about it. "No, not that I can think of."

"Very well. Say an our Father and three Ave Marie and go in peace my son."

Patrick crossed himself and left the confessional to take a seat in the middle of the pews. He put the ice pack on his knee and said his prayers.

People sat around him, then the service started. Father Durony was an older ram whose black fur was graying. He always spoke with passion and fought hard to keep his followers on the Path to Eden. Patrick used to listen intently to everything he said, but as he got older Patrick noticed that the ram focused a lot on the negative side of things, instead of the positive, so he wasn't as attentive an audience anymore.

He wondered what he was going to do while his knee and sides healed. Maybe he could try some of those computer games he heard about at the bar. Don was addicted to Castle Crash. Jen played a lot of StarFuries. He'd listened to both of them talk about the games, but he didn't see the appeal. He'd see what books were in his list and read that.

He'd have to tell his mom about his knee, and the fight, since that meant they'd have less money coming in this week. He really hoped he'd be in better shape by Friday. He couldn't afford not to work at the bar, that was where the bulk of his

money came from.

"And God sent two of his angels down to Sodom," Father Durony's voice boomed, "for he had seen they had lost their way. Lot, still God's servant waited for them in the city's gateway. The bowed to the winged beings with his face to the ground. 'My Lords,' he said, 'please come to your servant's house. There you can wash your feet, spend the night and be on your way in the morning.'

" 'No', they answered. 'Our father bid us observe your people, and judge them on this night.' Lot insisted, for he knew his people, and they would not be judged favorably, but they insisted. 'Then, let me feed you before the night, that your mind not be clouded by hunger.'

"The angels acquiesced and followed him to his house, where Lot Prepared a meal for them, Baking meat on wood of Ash, and they ate. As they finished the men of the city surrounded Lot's house.

"They called to him. 'Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we can have sex with them.'

"The Coyote went outside to meet them. 'My friends, do not do this wicked thing. Remember the path. Remember the reward for walking it.'

" 'Get out of our way', they replied. 'that they came to judge us, they must know what we do.' They pushed forward, pushing Lot back to the door.

"The angels stepped outside and the others were pushed back. 'Our Father sent us here on this night to judge how to bring you back to the Path. The Path is lost to you, All you follow is Sin.'

"They told Lot to take his family and leave. Run as fast and as far as they could, for on this night, Sodom would be no more."

The ram paused, catching his breath for a moment. "What does Genesis nineteen tell us? It tells us that God can, and will judge us at any time, and if we stray too far off the Path, God will not bring us back. It tells us that Sin is the surest way off the Path to Eden. We must fight Sin as hard as we can, or God will pass judgment on us and we will never find our way back to Eden."

Patrick felt the sermon was a little harsh, after all, didn't God forgive the repentant? Or was there really such a thing as sinning so much there was no coming back from it? Patrick hoped not, although the verse did seem to indicate the sin of homosexuality was a sure way off the Path.

Once the service was over Patrick waited for most to have left before standing and limping out. The air was cool again, he hoped it would start warming up soon, as he walked to the

bar.

Once there Don had him sit on his stool and ordered him not to move from there. He did that even before Patrick told him about his knee, so Joey had stopped by.

Fortunately, Patrick didn't have to escort anyone outside that night. Once everyone was gone, Don Drove Patrick home, against Patrick's objections.

once home he put the pay from Don in his mom's check book, ate the meat pie in the oven and went to bed.