

Patrick's mother was at the table when he got home for dinner. "Evening mom. What are you reading?" She had a booklet and papers in front of her. He went to the coffee machine, but there was no coffee. He must have arrived only seconds after her. He got some coffee going and turned. She was still looking at the booklet. Or maybe she was very absorbed by that.

"Mom, are you okay?" He sat opposite her.

She looked up. "Oh, hi Patrick."

"What's that about?"

"It's information and forms for the supervisor training they've arranged."

"You planing on going? How much is it going to cost?"

"Nothing. It's paid by the company. They're really better than the previous owner. They even had these on paper for those of us who didn't have readers."

The machine beeped to indicate the coffee was ready. He poured two cups and put them on the table. He took the milk out of the frige and shook it to check how much was in it. He placed it in front of her and wrote a note on the board about buying more. He'd have his black tonight.

"Free training? that's pretty good. When is it?"

"It's on the weekend of the twenty third."

Patrick nodded. It was a week an a half away.

"But I don't know if I'm going to sign up for it."

"Mom, why wouldn't you?"

"They can only take twenty people. What if more than that sign up and I'm not picked?"

"Then you're no worse off than before."

"What if I don't pass the training?"

"Then nothing changes. Mom, why are you hesitating? it's free. What do you have to lose?"

"I'm going to be gone for a whole weekend. They fly those who go to New York City on Friday after work and they come back on Sunday evening. The weekend is the only full shift I get at the diner, we need that money. And it's the only times I know I'll get to see you."

Patrick took her hands in his. "Mom. I think we can manage not to be in the same house for a whole weekend. And as for the money, I can tighten my belt. You can't pass this up. You were right when you said the new owners were good people. The previous ones never bothered trying to educate you or anyone working for them. Do you want to go mom? don't think about me, or the money. Do you want to grasp this chance to

get a better job at the factory?" He kept the guilt he felt from showing, because he had another reason for hoping she'd go, a more selfish reason.

She gave him a small smile. "Yes, I want to go."

"Then go mom."

She nodded. "I'm going to borrow your computer and fill the forms online."

Patrick did a quick mental check of what was easily accessible on his system. He'd deleted the porn he'd been watching, and he'd erased the history like Richard had showed him. She wouldn't see anything inappropriate. "Go ahead. I'll start on dinner in the mean time."

He didn't grab the phone as soon as she left. He needed restraint. He couldn't make the calls if there was any chance she would come back. After dinner, while she was watching her shows would be the time.

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His hands were shaking as he punched in the number. He tried to calm himself while it rang.

"Hello?" the voice he was learning to recognize said.

"Hi dad."

There was silence, then a soft. "oh my God." and then. "Patrick?"

"Yes, it's me." Was something wrong?

"It's Daniel. Donny was right. It hit me pretty hard when you called me dad."

Patrick had a moment to wonder why he'd thought he was Donald, then remembered they were twins and sounded the same. "I'm sorry. I didn't realize you might be the one answering."

"Both our phones have the same number. Whoever's closest to his answers. Give me a moment, I need to sit down."

Patrick found he was smiling. He was talking to his other father.

"Okay, I think I'm going to be okay now. I sort of promised myself that if this happened I wasn't going to cry. Are you still there?"

"Yeah, I am. Sorry, I was just letting it sink in that I'm talking to you."

"Does it feel surreal to you too?"

"A little bit, but in my case it could be because you and Donald sound exactly the same."

"Well, we are identical."

"That must have driven your folks crazy."

Daniel laughed. "No. We have no idea how he did it, but dad could always tell us apart."

"Could your mom?"

"She left us when we were two."

"Oh. I'm sorry."

"It's okay. It was a long time ago and to be honest, we never missed her."

"I couldn't imagine being without my mom."

"I get that. So, why did you call?"

"When I talked to Donald on Monday I said that I didn't know when, but I wanted to visit you again."

"Yes, he said that. The kids were overjoyed when they found out, especially Arthur."

"Yeah, he seemed pretty heart broken when I said I wasn't coming back."

"He has a big heart, and he'd not afraid of becoming attached."

Patrick thought about it for a moment and felt a little guilty at having cause him, his brother, pain. "Well, if it's okay, I'd like to come over on the twenty third."

"Yes, that's perfectly fine," Daniel said quickly.

"If you have something already planned that's fine, I can come another time." He didn't want to impose on them, but that day was ideal. With his mother doing the training he wouldn't have to arrange for Don or Joey to cover for him.

"No, no. it's fine. With the kids being still in school we don't plan anything big on the weekends. Just some quiet time at home. Some of the kids might have been planing on hanging out with their friends, but I'm sure they'll prefer spending time with you."

Patrick felt like he was imposing, and he was about to say they shouldn't break their plans when Daniel continued.

"The forecast calls for a warm and sunny day. We have a pool so bring a swimming suit."

"Ah, a swimming suit?" Patrick tried to think if he had anything that could be used as such. He could probably cut his oldest jeans into shorts. "I can probably manage something."

"You don't have one?"

"No. swimming hasn't been something I've done."

"I'm sure you can borrow one of the kids'. Alex or Aaron are close to your size."

"Dad, you don't have to bother with that."

There was a light choking sound. "Damn it. I wasn't going to cry." A moment later Daniel sounded calmer. "It's okay son, oh, I like how that sounds. It's okay, they have spares, and I know they won't mind."

Patrick couldn't say anything for a moment, he was the one crying now. "I'll be there early afternoon."

"Do you want me or Donny to pick you up?"

Patrick considered it. He would certainly save a lot of money that way, but he shuddered as he remembered the one time a tiger gave him a ride. "I'd prefer taking the bus. I'm sorry, I'm just not entirely comfortable with the idea of being alone in a car with you yet."

"I understand. We'll all be eagerly waiting."

"I can't wait to see you dad."

"I can't wait either son."

They disconnected.

Patrick needed a moment to regain his composure, but he hadn't cried this time. Once he was okay he called Don.

"Don's Cup."

"Hey Don. Patrick."

"How is it going?"

"I'm good. I won't be able to come in on the twenty-third I have some personal stuff to take care of."

"That's a Saturday. We're normally pretty busy. That puts me in a bit of a bind."

"I know, I'm sorry. I can talk to Kenneth, you met him a few months ago. He's the bull that dropped by on my birthday."

"Do you mean the one I've been seeing everywhere online?"

"Oh, yeah. I forgot about that. I'll see if I can talk Malcolm into taking my place. but even if I can't, I'll find someone and I'll make sure he comes by on Friday so you can meet him and tell him what you expect."

"Alright, but really, if you can't find anyone, don't worry about it. We'll manage."

Then he called Joey to see about getting more work. He'd need the money to cover the day he wouldn't work and to pay to go visit his father. He'd found a faster way to get there, since he'd taken the time to go through the options. There was no way he could afford the fast rail, but its predecessor was still running, and while much slower it was also much more affordable. All he had to do was convince Joey.