

When Patrick entered the kitchen his mother was in the middle of eating her cereal. He made sure there was enough milk in the fridge before filling himself a bowl.

"Mom, about the other day," He started, sitting down.

"I told you last night, you don't have to worry about them anymore. They said what they had to say and they aren't going to bother us anymore."

"Look, that's not what I mean. I..."

"Shit, I'm going to be late." She emptied her bowl in the sink. She kissed the top of his head. "Don't worry about the dishes, I'll do them when I get back from work." And she rushed out.

He looked at the clock on the stove, it wasn't even seven. His mother normally didn't leave for the bus until seven fifteen. Her transparent attempt at dodging the issue annoyed him.

When she came back from work that evening he tried again.

"Mom, can we talk?"

"I'm sorry Patrick, I'm just too tired. I had a difficult day. I'm going to take a nap, and we can talk later." Her nap stretched through the night.

The next two days, he didn't see her, Don needed him at the bar due of being booked for a party on both night, which meant he got home late and She was gone to work by the time he woke up.

He tried again when they ate dinner, and she waved his attempt aside. It took all his will power not to scream at her. He realized she was determined not to talk about his father's visit. He could continue pushing and get angry at her, he'd probably snap at some point and say something hurtful, or he could drop it for now and wait until she was in a more receptive mood.

After a week he didn't even want to talk to her. Anytime he thought about talking to her about his father's visit, he could imagine her waving it aside and he'd get angry. So he didn't. He didn't want to be angry her, but he couldn't seem to stop himself, so he did his best to avoid her.

If that wasn't enough, as time passed he realized he watched guys more and more. No, he wasn't just watching them. that wasn't right, he'd always watched guys, but now he was studying them.

They had been right when they said he'd been turned on seeing naked guys in the locker room. Because of that anytime he watched a guy he didn't let himself look to close, he glossed over them.

Now he was paying attention to them. Often he caught himself looking at them closely. Their arms, legs, ass, and especially their crotch. Fuck, why couldn't he stop looking at guys.

He thought he was tantalized because they were covered up. So he went online that night, after his mom went to bed, and looked at pictures of naked men. He was shaking as he watched them, breathing hard, panting and, he suddenly realized, hard.

He shut down the computer and took a cold shower. It didn't help, so he prayed. He forced himself to pray until he wasn't erect anymore. After that he went to bed and prayed until he fell asleep.

He woke up with morning wood, like most mornings, and was under the shower, in the process of taking care of it when he realized that instead of just focusing on the sensation, like he'd always done, he was now seeing images of the naked men.

With a curse he let go of himself, feeling guilty. He hadn't felt guilt over masturbating since he read up on it at fourteen and realized it was just a biological need and nothing more. But now because he'd looked at those picture they kept coming back anytime he thought about taking care of himself.

He finished his shower quickly, scrubbing himself down harshly, he preferred feeling pain to allowing those images to affect him. His fur felt raw once he had dried off and dressed, then he headed directly out to look for work. He had to stay busy and keep his mind occupied.

Not for the first time he wondered where the Sarantos were, he hadn't seen any of them for more than two weeks, That rabbit had been the last time. He supposed it was how things went, when he could use them to vent his anger on they were nowhere to be found, but the moment he'd want some peace and quiet they were going to jump him.

He didn't have any luck finding work. His near constant growling didn't help, but he couldn't stop it. The anger was directed at himself and he didn't know how to let it go. He should never have looked at those pictures.

When he got home, his mom had already left, and there was a message from Joey asking him to come in the morning. Relieved he would have something to do he ate and tried to read. It didn't go well, but he forced it until he fell asleep

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Patrick arrived at the junkyard in a bad mood because his morning hadn't gone any better than the previous one. Fortunately three pickups were already there dumping appliances and various other house hold items in the sorting

area.

He greeted Joey with a grunt and set to work, picking up the heaviest items he could lift and carrying them to their designated areas. He thought that this would tire him enough he would stop thinking about his situation, but each time he came back to the sorting pile, the guys from the pickups were there too, and he couldn't help watching them.

They were Cervids, elks, or maybe caribous, he couldn't tell, The four of them obviously related, with the eldest in his forties, then one in his mid-twenties, low twenties and the youngest probably eighteen. They got along, joking and ribbing each other.

At one point the father and the youngest got into a friendly tussle and Patrick stared at them, envying their closeness.

He grabbed a fridge and lifted it over his head, moving fast to avoid being toppled over by its unbalanced weight, all the while cursing his mother for robbing him of his chance to experience that closeness with his father. What right did she have to keep that from him while he was growing up.

He reached the area where it went and threw it against the others with a scream instead of putting it down. A few of them tipped over. He cursed and got them upright again, forcing himself to remember his mother had done the best she could, the best she knew how to do.

It still hurt.

When he went back for the next item one of the pickups was gone, and only the guy in his mid twenties and the eighteen year old one were there, trying to move a large industrial oven off the truck's bed. Patrick rushed to them as it started tipping over and the young elk got a panicked look as he tried to support it.

Patrick put his back against it and braced his feet, feeling the strain as he took more of the weight. His feet slipped a little then he wasn't moving, and neither was the stove. He glanced to the elk who now had his shoulder against it.

"Shit! Matt, you okay?" The one on the truck said.

"Yeah, The tiger who works here his helping support it."

"Oh thank God. I was scared you'd be crushed."

"How the fuck do you think I felt?" the elk next to him grumbled. "Now what?" he asked.

"I don't know, can the two of you push it back on the truck?"

The elk looked at Patrick, who shook his head. "I'd need to move to get enough leverage," Patrick said, "And if I move I'm not going to be able to hold it up."

"If I let go can you hold the weight? I can go get something to brace it."

"No!" Patrick said. "If you're pulling your weight, keep at it, We're holding as much as we can. Don't let go." He looked at the office, he thought he could see movement in there. "Joey!" He roared.

A moment later the bulldog ran out of the building. "What the fuck's going on?"

"This thing almost tipped over and crushed this guy."

"Then why the hell are you both still under it?"

"Didn't know how valuable it was."

"Fuck that, it's certainly not worth more than either of you."

Patrick nodded. "Okay, on my mark we get out from under it." The elk nodded and Patrick counted down. As one they threw themselves away, and the other elk yelled in horror and the stove came crashing down.

Patrick coughed in the dust cloud and waiting for it to clear before getting to his feet. The entire time The older elk was yelled Matt's name.

"I'm fine!" Matt finally replied, then had a coughing fit.

"Thank God, I heard conversation, but I couldn't make it out."

"Sorry," Patrick said, rolling his shoulders. "I didn't think to warn you."

"Hey, you have nothing to apologize for, If not for you my baby brother would have been crushed."

"You guys are going to be okay?" Joey asked.

"I'm fine," Matt replied.

"OKay, I'll go get the loader so I can move that." With that the bulldog left them.

Patrick leaned against the stove. Matt and his brother joined him, resting on each side of him.

"Thanks," The elk said, shaking his hand. "Without you I'd be dead. I mean it, you saved my life."

Patrick shrugged. "Don't worry about it, I'm just happy I was able to get under it in time."

The older elk put an arm over Patrick's shoulders. "Hey you saved my brother, that means I owe you, big time."

"Yeah, me too." Matt got closer and squeezed Patrick's thigh. "That's Jeff by the way."

Patrick didn't know what to say, momentarily overwhelmed by their closeness. Even with a bit of dust in the air they smelled good, manly, and their closeness made him tingle.

"Whatever we can do to thank you just say it," Jeff said.

"Me and Matt always repay our debts."

Patrick smiled, It wasn't often he dealt with people who looked forward to repaying their debts. But then he noticed the hand on his leg, the arm over his shoulders, their closeness. Had Jeff whispered that last part? Oh fuck. The image of the three of them, naked on the bed of the truck formed in his mind, and he found that he wanted it.

He shoved them away. "Fuck no!"

"What?"

Patrick put some distances between him and them.

"Look," Jeff started.

"No! I don't fucking care what you think you're going to do. I don't want any part of it."

"What's the problem?" Matt asked. "Jeff and me just want to thank you." he put a hand on Patrick arms and the tiger jerked away.

"Don't you people get that I said no?" he growled. "Now leave me the fuck alone." He grabbed a washing machine and dragged it away. The gall of these people, just because they were fags they thought everyone wanted to have sex with them, well, he wasn't like that. He wouldn't be like that.

He screamed trying to drown the voice in his head calling him a liar and threw the machine as far as he could. It fell among windows to breaking glass. He grabbed a crowbar someone left leaning against a post and Slammed in the closest object, a patio door.

He broke anything with reach, yelling the entire time. He Didn't want to be a fag. He was following the Path, he would stay on it no matter the temptations. He wasn't going to let people like them lead him astray. he wasn't going to let someone like his father do the same.

"Patrick!"

Patrick turned, crowbar in the air and stopped, looking at Joey standing before the loader.

"Put the crowbar down," the bulldog growled. "What the fuck is going on with you?"

"With me?" Patrick threw the bar on the ground. "They're the ones pushing for me to have sex with them."

"What the fuck are you talking about?"

"You weren't there. You didn't see them get close to me and whisper about how they were going to thank me."

Joey stared at him in disbelief. "Of course they're grateful, you literally saved that guy's life. But I can't believe they would blatantly offer to have sex with you."

"You should have felt them, close to me, arms over me, I could see what we were going to do." Patrick paced and

growled.

Joey watched him silently for a moment. "Right. you could see it. And you wanted nothing to do with it?"

"Of course not!" Patrick glared at him.

The bulldog stared back. "Bullshit."

Patrick made fists. "Are you calling me a fag?"

"Are you?"

Patrick took a step toward Joey. "Don't you dare call me that."

"Or what? You're going to hit me? Pound me until you feel all macho and tough?"

Patrick took another step, but staggered a little, like the words hit him physically. He looked at his fists and then at Joey, confused.

"Fuck Pat, You're acting like it's nineteen eighty and being gay is a problem. It's twenty forty-three, for God's sake."

"That's the fucking problem. I don't want to go to Hell, but God's already damned me."

"Pat, I'm pretty sure God doesn't work that way."

"How the fuck would you know? you don't believe in Him."

"And you wonder why? Who the fucks follows a god who decided you're already going to Hell even though you haven't done anything wrong?" Joey closed his eyes and calmed himself before continuing. "You're part of a church, do talk to them."

Patrick laughed. "Right, because the guy who preaches every week about how God punishes anyone who sins is going to have a sympathetic ear for a sinner like me."

"Then go to another fucking church," Joey growled. "Fuck Pat, You need to deal with this. I can't have you here if you're going to be this angry. You just destroyed a couple hundred dollar in doors and windows, so go home."

"I can't go home, I don't want to be around that woman."

"Then go somewhere else!" Joey cursed quietly. "Pat, go home, find a way to deal with this, because you are becoming a danger to yourself."

"Fine!" Patrick grabbed his jacket and ran out of the yard. He hated himself for having talked to Joey like that. The man had never been anything but understanding and helpful, and he'd almost punched him.

He ran as fast as he could. Since there was no Sarantos around on whom he could unleash his anger he needed to do something else to burn it off. He pushed himself hard and ran right by his house. He kept going. he didn't slow down when his body screamed for him to stop. he turned around and ran home.

When he got there he hurt, but he was too tired to be angry. He took a quick shower and put on an old pair of shorts, old sweatpants that had been repaired often and then turned into shorts. the elastic was dead so he used an old belt he'd found a few years ago, It had belonged to his father, and it had helped him feel closer to him.

He stopped as he realized it hadn't belonged to him. He expected to be angry at the reminder of the lie, but he was too tired. He sat in front of the computer and turned it on.

It was old, His mother had bought it when he was nine because the city started offering free internet access. He'd been so happy, He'd envisioned himself playing all the games his friends were playing, but that hadn't happened, He'd forgotten that he didn't have much free time, being busy with taking care of the house while his mother worked two and something three jobs to pay the bills.

Now the computer was just too old to play them. He could barely handle the newer version of the browser as he started looking around idly.

He wasn't sure why he was online, but then typed 'gay church' in the search bar.