

## ***Just Wait Til Your Father Gets Home!***

By [Verandert](#)

Cody took a nervous knock on the door, hoping that it didn't sound weird. He was paranoid about everything that had to do with this date. It was already a miracle that Kaitlyn Anderson had agreed to go out with him, he didn't want to do anything that would screw it up.

The door opened, and he saw Kaitlyn's mom standing there in raggedy jeans and an old college hoodie. She was older than he expected; he and Kaitlyn were only 16 after all. "Why, hello, Cody!" She said. "Don't you look like just the cutest little thing? Kaitlyn's almost ready. You know how it is with us girls!" She gave a nervous giggle. "In the meantime, how about you come on in and have a snack, huh?"

"Oh, uh, thanks, Mrs. Anderson, but I'm saving room for dinner."

"Well, then how about just a glass of water? You look like you could use one."

Cody grinned, his nervousness equally apparent. Was his sweating really that noticeable? The inside of the house was decorated in a retro style, with a lot of 70's kitsch floating around. It felt a bit oppressive, almost. Cody wandered into the kitchen, with Mrs. Anderson filling up a glass of water at the sink. "Um, not that it's my business, but...is Mr. Anderson around? Kaitlyn talks about him a lot and I was kinda hoping to meet him."

"Talks about him a lot, huh? What does she have to say?"

"Well, he's, uh, a real character, so I hear. Kinda wanted to see if the man measured up to the legend."

"Well, I'm afraid Fred and I got a divorce a few years back. Kaitlyn doesn't like to talk about it, but I think it was for the best, really. There was nothing wrong with him, we just weren't as good of a match as we thought when we were 25. He was just so...strict. He took most of his money with him, unfortunately, but we manage."

"I'm ready!" Came Kaitlyn's voice.

Cody looked. She looked amazing, in strappy sandal heels and a blue sundress that was just the right cut. He was comparatively underdressed in just jeans and a hoodie, but he figured it was alright; girls didn't like guys who looked too desperate on the first date. "My car's out front," he said. "Let's go."

"Bye, kids!" Mrs. Anderson said. "Have fun."

"So where are we going again?" Kaitlyn asked.

“Um, well, we’re going to that pizza place on 6th street first, and then I got us two tickets to see Ex-Quizzit,” Cody replied, referring to a popular local EDM musician. He paid through the nose for them, but it would be worth it. He hoped Kaitlyn kept asking questions. It was getting awkward trying to start his junker of a car, the engine sputtering and squealing like a dying animal.

“Nice ride,” Kaitlyn joked after it had gone on too long to ignore.

“Hey, I’ll be trading up soon,” he said. Finally, the dirty, rusty Honda he’d inherited from his cousin pattered into motion.

“Alright, let’s...wait, what’s that on your wrist?”

Cody felt the heaviness before he saw the glint of silver.

“That’s a...holy shit, that’s a nice watch. Is it like a Rolex or something? Where’d you get it?”

Cody didn’t know. He’d rarely even seen a watch like this, much less owned one. And why would he blow a thousand bucks on something that couldn’t do 1% of what his smartphone could? “My grandpa gave it to me,” he lied.

“You’ll probably want to take that off when we get to the concert,” Kaitlyn said. “Like, I wouldn’t want some big guy to beat you up to get it.”

“You know...I don’t think I want to. It means a lot to me.” Cody said. Internally, he was puzzled. Why would he think that?

Kaitlyn shrugged. “Your loss.”

One of the few good things about Cody’s scrawny frame was that it made cars, planes, and the like much easier. This was the only car he had available to him at the time; to buy even a used one would have required money he didn’t have, so he was glad there was plenty of legroom. At least, he thought there was. As he drove towards their dinner spot, he felt that the space in between his thighs was getting smaller and smaller, that his knees were getting closer and closer to the dashboard, and that his feet were getting tighter and tighter inside his shoes. Kaitlyn was trying to make small talk with him, and was growing increasingly perplexed by his grunts of discomfort. “Are you feeling OK? Do you want to pull over and get some air?”

“Mrgh...I’m fine. Just a little—“ before he could say what, he heard a ripping noise. He looked down to see that his left sneaker had split at a few of the seams, revealing a sock which wasn’t the stark white he remembered putting on. More of a gray. Was he sick? Some weird disease that caused lower body swelling and screwed with your vision? While he was contemplating this, he felt the same thing happen to his other shoe. Outside, he kept it cool, but inside he was panicking. What was he going to tell Kaitlyn?

Suddenly, the discomfort in his feet lessened. He looked down to see that the shoes were different; the fabric had turned to leather, and the color from red, gray, and white to a solid black. The laces grew small and tight, and all of a sudden, he found himself wearing a pair of wingtips. If this was a disease, apparently it also caused hallucinations.

By then, they had reached the pizza place. He parked on the street. Kaitlyn got out, and for a second, Cody caught a glimpse of her panties underneath the blue sundress fabric. It should have made him horny, or at least pleasantly surprised, but instead he felt...worried, and a little angry. Shouldn't she cover up more? Those high school boys must treat her like a piece of meat.

Cody angrily reminded himself that he was 'one of those high school boys', and was doing something that most of them had only dreamt of, going to a concert with Kaitlyn Anderson. He wasn't going to let a sudden crisis of conscience ruin it for him.

Papa Tony's pizza was as close to 'hip' as this neighborhood got. They had a lot of specialty recipes, often involving pineapple, bacon, and sushi. Cody had never been particularly adventurous when it came to eating out, usually sticking with classics like cheeseburgers and pepperoni pizza. He promised himself he'd be a little more inventive this time.

"I'm trying to study for next week's math test, but man, that stuff's a bitch. And Mr. Bennett is just an asshole."

"Yeah, he's..." Cody suddenly felt a strange gurgling in his stomach. It made it hard to think. "I mean...he's probably doing his best, you know? Cut him some slack. It can't be easy, teaching teenagers."

"Um, yeah...I guess not, but c'mon. Aren't you supposed to be on my side here?"

Cody rubbed his stomach. It felt...thicker, somehow. Fatter, but not just fatter. Bulkier and stronger too. "Yeah...so how are your other classes going?"

"Alright, I guess."

"History? Have you been studying?"

"Yeah, but—"

"How about chemistry?"

"Cody, what the hell?" Kaitlyn pounded the table. "We're on a date! Stop treating me like—" she trailed off.

“Like what?”

“Ugh, never mind. Look, here comes the waiter.”

The waiter approached with nervous apprehension. “So, uh...what’ll it be?”

Kaitlyn looked at the menu again. “I think we’re going to split the Bacon-Alia. Make it a medium, thin crust and how about extra hot sauce?”

“Actually...” Cody said. “I don’t know, I’m just not feeling it. I think I’ll just stick with a sausage. Thin crust.”

“Lame,” Kaitlyn teased.

“What? It’s nice and normal. I mean I don’t get all these weird specialty pizzas that you ki—that a lot of people are into.”

“Alright, fine,” she replied. “Two smalls,” she told the waiter.

Kaitlyn ended up not eating much. She kept looking at Cody out of the corner of her eye, like she didn’t think it was still him. And truth be told, Cody didn’t feel like himself anymore either. He felt stronger, and not just physically. More mature, and not just mentally. He almost felt like canceling the date, like it was somehow not right for him to be on a date with her.

As the feeling intensified, he felt a popping in his knuckles, one at a time. His hands shivered and shook, and it felt like they were growing. He watched with unease as each finger broadened, fingernails somehow looking cleaner and more well-trimmed. The silver watch, which previously had been dangling off his right wrist, now fit far more tightly.

When the pizzas arrived, Cody asked the waiter to see a list of beers. Kaitlyn gave him a puzzled look. “Are you twenty-one all of a sudden?”

“Well, actually, I...I guess I am.” Hold on. Was that right? It had to be, didn’t it? Well, there was one way to make sure. He reached into his pants for his wallet. When he pulled it out, it seemed thicker than he remembered. And the leather was a lot nicer too. When he opened it up his mind boggled. He saw at least three credit and debit cards, several more value cards, mostly for fairly high-end clothing stores, and most shockingly, what looked like several hundred dollars in cash. With a quick gasp, he shut it again, then opened it to see if it was still there. It was.

“Cody, how...where did you get so much fucking money?” Kaitlyn asked.

“Hey, language!” He said sharply. She sneered in response. But she had a point. Where did he get all that money? As if to respond, he developed a sudden and splitting headache. It felt like memories were pouring into his head out of nowhere. It lasted for a few moments, and he had to

put his head down on the table. When he lifted it back up he had regained composure. "I...I actually interned at a bank last summer. I mean it was non-paid, officially, but you know, they liked me and they said I had a future there, and they slipped me a little extra." He said it smoothly, as if it was the truth. In fact, he couldn't think why it wouldn't be.

After some more rifling through the wallet, he fished out a driver's license. His old license was probationary, the kind they gave to new drivers, but this one was different, and not just because it claimed he was twenty-five years old. He had his picture taken in a suit; he didn't even own a suit. And while he still looked young enough for high school, he could tell that he looked older. He stared back at the stoic expression on the card.

"I'll, uh, have a Miller Lite," he said, showing his ID.

After the waiter walked away, Kaitlyn gave him yet another odd look. "Miller Lite is for old dudes, come on. There's a million better beers out there."

"Well, maybe I'm just old-fashioned," Cody said grumpily. "You know what, let's just go to the show before tonight gets any weirder."

The show wasn't much better for Cody's tastes. He told Kaitlyn that he didn't feel much like dancing. He was too self-conscious among all these kids, who he suddenly felt so much older than. His back was also hurting. It had to be related to whatever was happening to his body. It felt like his own body was suddenly too big for him. He sat glumly on the sidelines, watching the other kids dance. Normally, he wouldn't be able to keep his eyes off the girls, but suddenly he was more disgusted with them than anything. It all looked so...cheap. And tawdry. He wanted to go over there and tell them to put some damn clothes on.

And the music! God, he'd never exactly been in love with this kind of stuff, but now it sounded like the dying groans of an old washing machine. He wished they would play some Springsteen or something. He'd never particularly liked it, but it somehow sounded appealing.

He felt a tightness around his neck and anxiously tugged at the hood of his sweatshirt. It didn't abate, so he decided to go to the bathroom. When he took a look into the mirror, he was shocked at how much he'd changed. His hair had grown a lot shorter, and had turned from a light, blondish brown to a much darker one, with greyish overtones. His face looked more creased, but not in an old-geezer way; more like a mature, boss-like way. And then there was his shirt. The blue had bleached into a bright white, and the strings were starting to change. They were twisting together, getting thicker. The hood was getting stiffer and thicker, turning into a collar. The strings tucked their way under it, forming a bright red necktie.

For a second he wondered why it was there. Then he re-adjusted it. Of course he was wearing it. He had to look professional in front of all these hoodlums. He wondered where Kaitlyn was. Messing around with one of them, no doubt.

Emerging from the bathroom, he noticed that the music sounded even louder and uglier than before. He saw Kaitlyn talking to another girl, along with a guy. He leaned in closer and listened.

“...so it's my first date with this guy. I thought he was cute and stuff, but it turns out he's a real weirdo, acting all possessive and creepy. It's like he thinks he's in charge of me or something.”

“Yeah, that's a bad sign,” her friend said.

“You know,” the boy said, “my buddy Eric is looking for a steady lay. If you're interested.”

“Eric, huh?” Kaitlyn said. “Yeah, he's kinda cute. How about you give him my number and—“

“No. Absolutely not,” Cody snapped. “We are leaving right now, and that's final.”

“Wait, what?!” Kaitlyn was still angry, but now there was something new creeping into her voice. Some sort of respect, or maybe humility. “You can't just...just tell me what to do!”

“Actually, I think I can, because I'm...” he paused. He didn't know. He could feel something forming in his mind, but it wasn't quite there yet. One thing was for sure, though, he and Kaitlyn had to get out of this wretched building.

Kaitlyn stormed out of the club, with Cody following close behind. “What the hell is your problem?” She was staring at him with a mix of anger, fear, and dawning recognition. “You're ruining my night!”

“D-don't...don't you take that tone with me, young...” Cody stopped. His throat was feeling tight, and it left him gasping for breath. As his neck thickened enough to fill the collar of his new shirt, he heard his own voice drop an octave, maybe two. It sounded deep and commanding, and hearing it seemed to awaken a memory in Kaitlyn. “Who are you? You're not Cody!”

“Cody? Who's Cody? Is that some boy I should know about?” He groaned. He had developed a sudden and splitting headache and couldn't concentrate. It felt like his brain was being cracked open, and new memories were being poured in. High school graduation, with everyone decked out in what looked like 80's fashion, him getting his undergrad degree from the Wharton School of Business, getting into Stanford for his MBA...the memories kept coming. Him shaking the hand of someone at a big oaken desk, that someone telling him he was the “youngest department head I can remember”. A new BMW, a box of imported cigars, a bottle of scotch...“I'm—I...”

“Fred Anderson? Is that you? What are you doing down here?”

Fred looked at his hands. Like the rest of his body, they were growing big and rugged, fingers getting thick and knobby. The silver watch that had started it all, which had been hanging

loosely around his wrist, was now a snug fit. On the ring finger of his left hand, he noticed something beginning to form. It was a gold ring, glinting in the streetlights.

Fred looked up. “Ernie? Hey bud, how’s it going? I was just taking my daughter out to dinner, but we were probably gonna head home for the night.”

Kaitlyn was looking at him, mouth gaping open. “You’re...” Then, she began to change to, her changes accelerating at a much quicker pace than Fred’s had. Her blue sundress split in two, the top half forming a white Oxford shirt that wrapped around snugly around her shoulders and arms, the bottom half morphing into a pleated plaid skirt that extended to the knees. The gladiator heels morphed into a pair of much more sensible flats, with long white socks to match. A ribbon began tying itself under her collar, brown and gold to match the skirt. Much of her makeup vanished, and her hair fell from it’s bleached, permed state into a simple ponytail. Fred and his new companion didn’t seem to register the changes, and Kaitlyn’s own shock seemed to fade quickly. She walked up to Fred and took him by the elbow. “Yes. Thanks, Daddy.” Fred recognized the uniform as that of Benbrook Academy—pricey, but the only sensible choice. He wouldn’t send his little girl to those awful public schools.

“Well, you know...” Ernie said, “Me and some other guys from the firm were going to go to La Vida. Care to join us?”

La Vida was an expensive pan-Mediterranean restaurant that had a magnificent wine cellar and a loophole in the law that allowed their customers to smoke freely. Within a few minutes, Fred went from not being able to picture the building to debating whether he would get the pan-grilled salmon or the crab legs.

“Yeah, sounds good. I just gotta drop Katie here off first.”

“Good. See you there.”

The two of them headed back to Fred’s car—it too had undergone a transformation, turning into a sleek BMW able to accommodate Fred’s sizeable frame. Katie’s backpack was still in the back seat—he had picked her up straight from school.

Fred fished around in his pocket for his keys and then started the ignition. The car was filled with an awkward silence, as if both of them knew they were supposed to say something, but they couldn’t remember about what. Fred finally broke the silence. “Listen, Katie...I know I can be a little strict with you sometimes, but I’m not trying to hurt you or make you feel bad. I’m trying to set you up for success. I work real hard for you. You know that, right?”

“Of course, Daddy.”

“It’s a scary world out there, lots of ways to trip up.” He looked back at the nightclub; he couldn’t recall how she’d duped him into even approaching this neighborhood, let alone a seedy joint like

that. Of course, he'd had a few wild nights himself back at Penn, but those days were long behind him, and he had to act his age. God forbid Katie's grades start falling or she start dating some scruffy punk from the public school district. Fred could almost picture him standing at the door, jeans and old stained hoodie...why did he look so familiar? Eh, probably not worth worrying about.

The road they took home was different than the one they left by. It took them into a much nicer neighborhood, with giant stone and brick semi-mansions dominating the wide, curving streets. Fred stopped the car in front of one with a particularly well-trimmed lawn; it was his pride and joy.

Katie, perhaps chastened by her father's description of the world's dangers, sprinted quickly back to the safety of her house. Fred's clomping footsteps followed. Joanne was there to greet him at the door; he appreciated how she always put some extra effort into her appearance and demeanor; it set a good example for Katie. She was wearing a black pencil skirt, hose, heels, and a red blouse. He gave her a quick peck on the cheek, taking off his suit coat and hanging it on a nearby hook. "I just needed to drop Katie off, I'm heading out with some guys from the bank. I'll be back late."

"Alright, sweetie, I'll leave a light on."

He waved goodbye as he approached his car. He figured—why not?—now was a good time to light up a cigar. He kept a few, along with a lighter, in the glove compartment. He inhaled the sweet-sour smoke deeply before blowing it out the open window and reflected on his life. He couldn't imagine it being any other way.