

*“ Did Sarah take you to Sturgis last year? ” Jack asks me, one hand on the wheel, and the other hand on a stress ball he’s crushing constantly. It’s giving nervous driver. But I swear he thinks it makes him look cool? I dunno.*

*“ Nah. She didn’t go last year. She said she hasn’t gone in about 3 years. ” I start looking around the van, heavily disappointed in it, for real. When they told me there was gonna be a van following us for like, emergency shit or wahtever, I thought it would be this big old custom thing with a bed in the back and some chairs and a table. Maybe even some lush carpet. This is just a white van. Might as well have some candy in it. Then it hit me I got in the van and without candy even being offered.*

*“ Yeah, her and Murph went every year like clockwork. They’d make a week out of it. Sometimes more. ”*

*“ ..who’s murph? ” I know exactly who Murphy is. She has an instagram that I found that she can’t get into for whatever reason. I know she doesn’t want to delete it because she vistits it from her newer one all the time. Must be so ass to just look at a life you can’t live anymore through pictures of times you’re starting to forget. I’ll take death please and thanks.*

*“ She never told you about Murphy!? ”*

*“ Nah, she did. I’m just messing. Her last boyfriend. ”*

*“ ..That’s the word she used? ”*

*“ Yah. They broke up because he wanted to be a regular dude and she wanted more. ”*

*“ Yes. That’s the reason. Anyway, Let’s not talk about her. She won’t like it. ”*

*“ Yeah, and with how mad she is about Collins being her first opp out the gate, she won’t take it lightly. ”*

*“ You’ll have to forgive me. I have no idea who that is. ”*

*“ You don’t watch wrestling? ”*

“ I don’t. I don’t care for it. I tried for years to get that business out from underneath the skin of this family. For it’s own good. But some people don’t see the things that are for their own good as anything but an insult. I’m related to quite a few of them, it turns out. ”

“ I mean, it’s their lives, right? Like you might think it’s good for them and that they should do what you think is best, but you can’t make that decision for them, you know? Like, what if, for some reason, they didn’t want you to be a doctor of the mind, you know? Would you have listened? ”

“ Seriously? Way different. No one is trying to kill me because I’m a psychologist. ”

“ Tell that to Bruce Willis in Sixth Sense, my guy. Marky Mark’s brother straight merc’ed his ass in his own house. Could be you. Straight facts. ”

“ Funny. My point is that there’s advice you give based on things like career paths, and then there’s advice you give about life and death issues. You’re a smart kid, you know the difference. ”

“ So like, what advice would you give Sarah, that isn’t life or death, that you think she’d take? ”

“ haha. Not a single thing comes to mind. ”

“ When she first met me, I thought she was insane. Then I found how she was insane. Then I found out HOW insane she was. Now I know why she’s insane, and I gotta say, she’s not nearly as crazy as she could be. ”

“ ...she burnt down an entire block in Brooklyn to get her school free publicity. A school she’s now decided not to open. That seem sane to you? ”

“ Spider and the Fly. ”

“ That does not fit here! The Spider is looking for food. It’s not costing millions in property damage. I’m just glad the tenants were open to a buy out rather than pressing charges. ”

“ ...what? ”

“ Nothing. ”

“ No. That was you? You’re the one who bought out the tenants? ”

“ Not just me. All of us. You can’t tell her. ”

“ Well I’m gonna. ”

“ Just, follow the thought through, ok. She finds out we did it, she burns it down again. Probably going so far as to admit to it and go to jail just to spite us for trying to protect her. Landing her in jail and you god knows where. ”

“ Yeah. Prolly end up with my mom. ”

“ Is that a bad thing? ”

“ It’s complicated. Umm. My mom wasn’t around much. Or at all. She had me, and my dad, who is a huge momma’s boy, started feeling competition between my mom and his. And like, he should have had her back, but from what I hear, she like, tried to pull something nasty. So he sent her away. I think for like, ever? She’s still alive, though. Sarah says she’s excited for me to go to college but I don’t know why because I’ve never even seen her face to face. ”

“ How old were you when they sent her away? ”

“ Like, Baby age. ”

“ That’s awful, Regina. I’m so sorry. ”

“ It is what it is. Can’t miss what you never had, right? ”

“ No. No you absolutely can. My mother left us, too. Sarah was 3 at the time and Kal and I were significantly older. I still missed her. ”

“ Yea but like you missed who she was before she left, right? Like she was cool with you before bouncing out? My mom was never even there, for real real. My grandma raised me, but even then... ”

“ I’m sure your mother would love the chance to get to know you. You’re a smart kid. ”

“ Yeah, she’d prolly just try to smother me again. ”

“ ..again!? ”

“ Yep. The reason why they sent her away is because she wanted a boy. In her mind having a girl is pointless. Males become heirs. Can take over the business. Giving my father a

daughter was like shitting in his hand in her eyes. She thought if she took me out god would see she was loyal and good and worthy of a boy. Fucked right? ”

“ I don’t even know what to say. ”

“ Could’ve been worse. ”

“ ...how? ”

“ My last name could’ve been Faggan. ”

“ ..that’s not funny. We got picked on a lot. ”

“ Rightfully so my dude. Rightfully so. ”

*I looked out the window and into the rear view mirror of the van. The road stretched out behind us while the convoy of bikers roared before us. I caught a view of Jack in the mirror and his face contorted from angry to emotional with one second intervals back and forth and over and over.*

*Hours later, we arrived at our next camp site. Vin B, who has told me to call him Vinnie, took me into this field in the distance with his wife, and showed me how to throw knives at trees. He’s really good at it and at one point he had me try to pull a knife he threw out and I couldn’t even budge it. No wonder this Vhodka lady loves him. He’s intense A-F.*

*I heard a commotion a few minutes later, and I could see Sarah, Jack and Kal all having what seemed to be an argument. Jack tried to calm Sarah down, but she was too far gone. The anger had overtaken her. Kal held up a hand to her face to try again, but like, in what world does that work? She grabbed his wrist and swept his leg, throwing him to the ground, leaving him in perfect stomping positch. He blocked the first two, but she started throwing them more randomly and connected time and time again. Jack was calling for someone to help, but Kal runs his mouth lots so they just let it happen.*

“ ..you gonna stop that? ”

“ ...nah. ” Vinnie said, smirking at how fast the brawl had escalated between them. Sarah had started biting Kal’s arm like a dog, with Kal trying to secure a choke hold that wasn’t gonna do nothing.

“ You’re turn, Roger. ” Vhodka said, turning my attention away from the fight. A knife placed into my hand. I held it by the blade just as Vinnie had shown me. I held it behind my head,

*and with the amount of force I could muster. I rotated at the elbow while thrusting forward with my shoulder. And sent the Knife directly into ~~my mother~~ The Tree.*