

*General small talk about SIL, her boyfriend, FIL's employment situation, Star Wars, etc. All of this is audio only so there's no body language. About thirty minutes into the dinner date, DH already paid the bill:*

FIL: You're doing good overall? I mean, you doing good overall?

DH: As good as we can be I suppose.

FIL: Well, I mean, you're not hurtin' are ya? I mean if you're hurtin' financially you need to come talk to me.

DH: I mean, we're fine. We've had to cut back on things because we don't have as much money coming in but that's to be expected.

FIL: We have too. I only bathe every other day now.

DH: Oh man! *Feigning concern and both laughing*

FIL: Goddamn. I've been *unclear with clinking of glasses* about random shit because we don't talk anymore. *Pause with taking a drink.*

*FIL complaining about SIL leaving her dog with FIL/HotWheels for them to babysit for a few days, how much the dog sheds. It's lighthearted.*

FIL: Well, got anything else? An in-depth conversation you wanna have? I'm trying to keep it light. I mean, I'm leaving it to you.

DH: I was leaving it to you. How's it going? What's happening, what's not happening?

FIL: I mean--

DH: I mean, it's all in your court.

FIL: Yeah, it is what it is. I've talked to your mom a couple of times. And... I mean I ... I...

Without forcing her to go--I'm just being honest--I don't think it's gonna happen.

DH: I didn't think so either.

FIL: I mean, that's just as brutally honest as I can put it.

DH: I know. And, that's what I was saying a couple weeks ago. But... she has to willingly do it.

FIL: Yes. I have talked to her--you know, nothing... Never using you guys as anything, you know? I've used it just from my perspective. I mean for me. When I've talked to her you know, you're always angry all the time and you're always... like here at Christmas, ok?

*FIL tells DH that HotWheels is getting involved with her mother's plans for Christmas and had bought presents for her sister's grandkids because HW insists that unless HW buys them for the kids, they won't get any.*

FIL: *continuing the above story* Ok so what kind of problem of that of mine? I said, and this is--and I've used it as an example--this is where I get upset with you, is that you're not responsible for everybody. Nobody **wants** you taking over everything. People want you to back off. You need to worry about you. You need to worry about [SIL], about us. Not all this other. You know? Your mother, if your mother chooses to do something, [HotWheels] then you need to let her do it. This is where the problem is. And I'm using, you know I'm never using you guys in any of these conversations. I'm just, this is just the most recent thing that turned into a blowout. You know is that it--

DH: I mean you can--

FIL: No, no. I just want you to know that I'm never gonna--

DH: I mean, it's fine. You can talk--because this situation that's happened with us is, it's part of it.

FIL: But you have to understand... The point I'm just continuously trying to get across to her is that, and I started using the term, you're a helicopter person. You are a helicopter parent and a helicopter person. I said, no one... and I tell her this *small chuckle* and it really ticks her off but uhm, if I don't just get brutal about it, just being honest, it--there's just no hope if I don't get brutal about it. And I said, [HW], what you think is important is not that important to everybody else. I said, what you think to me is not that important. All the time. I don't need your opinion about everything. I said, you are more than welcome, if we are discussing something, to voice your opinions. Don't care. That is fine. If I don't agree with you, that's the end of it. We don't need another thirty minute discussion about it. I don't agree with you. And that's where we are at. And I said, that's the problem. And then I have told her, I don't think you have the skills to understand how to do that. How to, in your mind, shut off and go "ok" and move on. Your whole point, whether you believe it or not, is, what I'm thinking is most important in this situation and is the most important, and should be put at the top and should be done.

DH: Right.

FIL: I mean, just as a point blank, this house (they are flipping a home) has been a prime example of it, you know. She has an opinion, I don't agree with her, I'm just doing my own thing.

DH: I think she's gotten to this point because we, all of us, we--

FIL: Oh yeah.

DH: We've let it

FIL: We've let it go

DH: I mean us as kids we couldn't do anything. As adults, we let it until this year. We've let it go. And the time we don't let it go, this whole nonsense happens.

FIL: yeah. And it was. Even when you guys were in school, I would make comments when you guys were in school and stuff. You know she was always in this and in that.

DH: I remember when she would used to--she'd immediately start crying over something.

FIL: Oh yeah.

DH: If anything was negative.

FIL: You're attacking her.

DH: Right.

FIL: And.. we've had several fights--and I've just told her, and there's been numerous times, *fake voice pretending to be HW* well if you just wanna leave me then leave me, and I'm just like, [HW], that's not the point. That's not what I'm telling ya.

DH: Yeah you both gotta work

FIL: Yes. And I'm telling you, this is the issue. And you'll roll back a lot of the time and just *same voice as earlier* well you're just, you're just mean about it.

DH: And that's when you go, ok, fine.

FIL: Well I haven't.

DH: I mean that's how we used to do it.

FIL: Right. We would just leave and go to the other room and just be done with it. I mean, I don't know--

DH: And that's sort of part of the problem is that none of us will be able to make her see it. None of us. Nobody will be able to.

FIL: No.

DH: She will only be able to see it if she wants to look for it.

FIL: mhm.

DH: And.... I still don't have a solution.

FIL: I know. I don't have a solution.

DH: I don't have a plan. I don't have a step forward. I mean, we've been living our life.

FIL: Well, your mother's plan is, well if we just got back together, it would just all work out. No it wouldn't. Because it might be ok for two weeks--

DH: Exactly.

FIL: But then--

*Both of them; something will happen*

DH: It'll all go back to the way it was and it'll be worse than it was--it'll be even worse than it is now.

FIL: Right.

DH: And that's what happened this time. We talked about it then we were going to move on from it. And then it started reverting back and we tried to move on from it, again. And it got to the point where...

FIL: right. The whole deal is the same. Rather than it have been, it was what it was and it was done, it turned into a month of every time she saw you or she saw [throwawayfamsquabble] or whatever--*back to HW voice* well what did I do wrong? What did--that wasn't what you guys were asking for. What you were asking for was, I am sorry and I made a mistake. Don't justify it. I understood--I'm sorry, I'm wrong, it won't happen again.

DH: right.

FIL: Ok. we're done. But it wasn't. It was the next time, *HW voice* well what did I do wrong? Do you think I did wrong? Do **you** think I did wrong? Did I just put her in life's, death's--and I'm sitting there at that time going, [HW]! That's not the point just drop it. They've told you it bothered them--

DH: It moves quickly into hyperbole. If the hyperbole is where your normal is, that's normal to you. And she... blows things out of proportion. I mean she always has--

FIL: mhm

DH: She always will. And, I mean you could argue that this whole situation is blown out of proportion. And it was, But...

FIL: This situation--I understand.

DH: It was absolutely one of those things where we were just trying to fix it and then she kept pushing it. And then she kept pushing it

FIL: yeah

DH: and the hyperbole got bigger, and bigger until the point where you're just like...

FIL: it wasn't a big thing, it was the straw.

DH: absolutely.

FIL: for you guys, it was the straw.

DH: Did you talk to [SIL]?

*He's only seen her once since DH and FIL last spoke and it was for just a couple hours. SIL will be coming home for Christmas for a couple weeks soon, and FIL will talk to her then about it more. He didn't talk about the situation about us with her, but he did approach the subject of HW a little with her.*

DH: I mean, it's gotta be a united front.

FIL: but that's also part of the deal. *Goes on about how SIL breathes easier being away, how she plans on staying away for her doctorate, how she isn't getting the intensity that FIL is with HW.*

FIL: I mean, it's gonna be a slow process. We're just gonna have to see if she wakes up. *HW is focused on getting Christmas stuff done and helping her mother with the house maternal grandmother has been trying to sell for almost ten years, but one of DH's cousins keeps moving away then coming back to rent it. It's a home in a **bad** neighborhood that requires more money than it's worth to fix it up.*

*They're now walking out to the cars.*

DH: keep me updated. Call me.

FIL: Ok. I mean, I wasn't sure whether I could text you or not. I'm trying--

DH: you are the only one, besides [maternal grandmother], I haven't blocked.

FIL: ok. I haven't been texting you or anything like that because *extremely muffled from wind blowing*

DH: You're fine.

*Can't decipher, wind blowing*

DH: Look, the only way we can come out of this hole *wind blowing*

FIL: I know. The ball is in my court. And that's what I'm trying to get at you. Is I'm working on it. But I can't force her

DH: It is all on her.

FIL: and if she doesn't.....

DH: if she doesn't, she doesn't

FIL: that's just what I'm trying to get across to you. I'm trying.

DH: I know.

FIL: But, if she doesn't... she doesn't.

*FIL is handing gifts from his truck over to DH.*

FIL: Again, you do not need to tell [DD] they are from us. *One of the gifts is for DH and I; they had ordered a stone thing for the front yard way back in July and it didn't get there until two weeks ago. General chit chat with FIL asking how DD is doing. DH shows him pictures of her, and they separate with plans to meet again mid-January.*