

With fall's arrival he didn't get to see his family as much. His brothers went back to school, even Aaron decided on another year, instead of enlisting.

They all got together every few weekends to play football or baseball at the park. Patrick tried to get his mother to join them, but she declined, using her job at the diner as an excuse.

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"Patrick?" His mother asked, knocking on his bedroom door. "can I talk to you for a moment?"

"Sure." Patrick turned off the display on his phone and set it on the bedside table.

She entered, looking around and shaking her head at the clutter before focusing on him. "It's about your father."

It had been a month and a half since the dinner, and she hadn't said a word about it. He hadn't pushed, he knew she wasn't comfortable with the subject.

"I've been thinking, and... I mean, I think we should invite him, well them, for thanksgiving."

"Their whole family?" Patrick was surprise she was making the offer.

"No, no. Just him, and his brother, of course. We couldn't fit all of them, how many children did they say they have?"

"Seven."

She shook her head. "Right, no, we definitely couldn't fit all of them."

"Are you sure it's a good idea? They should be celebrating Thanksgiving with their family."

"Yes, you're right, what was I thinking?" She turned to leave.

"Wait, I'll call and ask them." If she was inviting them, that was clear progress and he didn't want to discourage her outright.

She gave him a weak smile. "Alright." Then left his room.

Patrick wondered what had brought that on, she hadn't shown any interest in spending time with them before. he shrugged, just happy she did, and called his father.

"Hi dad."

"Hi son, what's up?"

"Well, my mom wanted to know if the two of you would be interested in having thanksgiving dinner with us."

"She invited us?"

"Yeah, I was surprised too."

"I'd like to, considering she's making the effort, but I'm going to have to check with the kids. We usually go all out as a family on that day."

"I understand."

"Let me call you back in an hour or so, they're all working on school work right now."

"Sure."

And hour later his father called back.

"Me and Donny are all good to go. The kids are insisting we go, they really want your mom to come to the birthday party and if that's what it takes to make her comfortable, they are all for it."

"I'll tell my mom, and we'll see you both on the 26th."

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The meal was simpler this time, since his mother had to work the noon shift at the dinner. Chicken with stuffing out of a box, store bought bread, but the cranberry sauce was home made. His fathers only brought one bottle of white wine, as he's asked. For dessert it was going to be a chocolate cake with a choice of maple walnut ice cream, his favorite, or vanilla.

The were in the middle of the meal, with his mother regaling them about a customer who demanded to have the whole thanksgiving experience at the dinner, when someone knocked at the door. She'd been telling them how He'd gotten into a shouting match with the cook because they couldn't do the stuffing to go with his turkey, cranberry sauce and mashed potatoes.

She stopped talking and looked down the hall.

"Did you invite anyone else Patrick?" she asked, then looked at Donald, how was wearing a purple button down shirt and Daniel, how had a plain white one.

"We didn't, promise." Daniel said.

Patrick went to stand but she waved him down. "I'll get it."

Donald chuckled bitterly. "I guess even here you aren't immune from the door to door sellers."

"Looks like it," Patrick replied.

"Maybe we should have a talk with Dam," Daniel said, "have him outlaw the act."

Patrick stared at his father, mouth open.

"He's kidding," Donald reassured Patrick. "Anyway it isn't something Damian is going make happen."

They exchanged a look that made Patrick question that statement. Okay, just who the...

"Father Durony! What are you doing here?"

Patrick cursed under his breath.

"Hello Margarett," The priest answered. "This year I decided to visit all my parishioner on this special day and help them give thanks."

"Ahh, that's very good of you, Father, but..."

"No need to thank me, Margarett, it's simply my duty to my flock."

Footsteps moved toward the kitchen, the hard sole shoes of Father Durony clacking on the old wooden floor in the hall.

"Patrick, how are you," the old man said as he entered the room. "Oh, you have guests, I had no idea."

"Yes," Margarett said, just behind him. "That is Donald, this is Daniel. They are, err, friends of the family."

"I am so glad to to meet you. Which church do you go to?"

"We're from the other side of the city," Daniel said amicably. "I doubt you've heard of it." He gave his brother a warning glance.

"I hope your pastor takes good care of you and your soul."

His mother pleaded with Patrick, mouthing 'I didn't know.'

Patrick gave her a small nod. He believed her, but he had trouble believing the priest was here by accident.

"And you Patrick," the priest continued, either unaware, of ignoring the looks being exchanged. "How have you been."

"I've been okay."

"I'm glad to hear it. Have you seen your father since we last talk? Have you been able to talk with him about his sins, and how to get back on the Path?"

Daniel gave Patrick a questioning look, but Patrick was looking at Donald, whose face was hardening.

It was his mother who spoke up. "Father, please. this isn't the place for such talk."

"Of course, please accept my apology."

His mother nodded. "Patrick, why don't you go get an extra chair for Father Durony."

Patrick stood out of reflex, even if he didn't want the priest to stay. They had a couple of old foldout chairs in the linen closet down the hall.

"Please Patrick, no need to bother, I won't be staying. How about I lead us in a short prayer to give thanks?"

His mother forced a smile, "of course."

Father Durony closed his eyes and brought his hands together. Donald opened his mouth, but closed it again at Daniel's glare.

"We thank you, our heavenly Father, for the food you give

us, for the time you allow us to spend with our family and friends and we ask that you give us the strength to withstand temptation. Amen."

"Amen," Patrick and his mother echoed.

Father Durony eyed Patrick's fathers. "I don't believe I heard you say Amen."

Daniel smiled at the priest. "We didn't feel it was needed."

It was clear to Patrick Donald was keeping his mouth shut through will power.

"At least please tell me you joined in the prayer. It was the Christian thing to do."

"Alright, why don't you shut up." Donald erupted.

"Donald!" his mother exclaimed.

"Dad," Patrick warned.

Even before the silence fell Patrick realized he'd made things worse.

Father Durony was the first one to find his voice. "So, you're the sinner." He turned to Daniel. "How can you let your brother carry on living in sin? don't you care at all for his soul?"

"Shut the fuck up." Donald growled. "What me and Danny chose to do behind closed door is none of your fucking business."

"Don't you dare take that tone of voice with me. I'm the voice of God. You will show me respect."

"Like Hell I will after you spoke to me that way. You get what you throw out, you can't swallow it you keep your muzzle shot."

"Can't you get it through your thick skull that I'm trying to save your immortal soul?" Father Durony screamed.

"Bullshit!" Donald was on his feet, fingers almost jabbing at the ram's muzzle. "You're just hoping to make yourself feel better by trying to make me feel bad. Well I got news for you. We're perfectly fine with who we are, so you're going to have to get your cheap kicks somewhere else."

Father Durony swatted the finger aside. "If you think I'm going to let your heathen ways infect Patrick's soul..."

"Silence!" Patrick's roar stunned everyone into it. "dad, sit down." Patrick stood.

"Patrick."

"Sit your ass the fuck down."

Donald's expression was pained as he sat. The priest smiled in victory, but that lasted only until Patrick grabbed him by the collar. "And you are getting the fuck out of my mother's house." He dragged him to the door and it was only

with effort that he didn't throw him out.

"Patrick, I implore that you listen to me."

"Shut up Durony. There's nothing you can say that I want to hear."

"But that man is a danger to your soul."

"No. He's my father. You're the danger here. I'm done listening to your bigoted opinions. I can't stop my mom from going to church, but I fucking hope that after your display she's going to know better than to think that anything you have to say comes from Gods."

"I am God's voice on Earth."

"Bullshit. God doesn't speak of intolerance and bigotry. He speaks of love and tolerance. You're the bigoted one, and you're hiding behind God."

"You are making a dangerous mistake young man, in letting that... person in your life. He will drag you off the Path."

Patrick wanted to scream at him to leave his family alone, but he found he didn't have the strength anymore. He didn't want to spend any more time arguing with this bigot.

He sighed. "You know what father? I'm going to pray for you and hope you eventually find God's love. Now go home."

The ram huffed as if what Patrick had said was an insult, turned and left. Patrick didn't watch him go he went back in and gently closed the door behind himself. He took his seat at the table and joined the others in the loud silence.

When his mother spoke he voice was tentative. "Patrick I swear I didn't know he was coming here."

"I know, mom. I'm guessing Old Dame Lambert saw we had guests and reported it to him."

They were silent for a moment again. Then she placed a hand on Donald's and Daniel's. "I am truly sorry you had to be subjected to such hate." She took a breath. "I don't know how I feel about you living in..." she stopped herself. "About you being gay, but I know you're a good person, and that you wouldn't do anything to hurt Patrick, our son."

Daniel nodded.

Donald sighed. "I'm sorry I lost my temper. I shouldn't have let him get to me like that."

His mother smiled. "Well, I have to say it wasn't entirely unexpected. Patrick does have your temper."

That made them chuckle, and they set about continuing the meal.