Daily Free-Write February 19, 2021: The Baby Patrol pt. 3

*Continued from January 10, 2021: “The Baby Patrol pt. 2”*

Ted led Brad by the hand to the kitchen where, to Brad’s dismay, there was a high chair waiting for him. Ted helped him into the chair, and secured his arms, hips, and legs in straps before sliding in the tray. No matter how Brad struggled and squirm, he was stuck in that chair until Ted was ready to let him out.

“Please, big bro! Don’t do this!” he cried, “At least let me feed myself!”

“That’s enough fussing from you,” said Ted, tying a bib around his brother. The bib was white with blue trim and a red car in the center. Quite adorable, though Brad wasn’t able to appreciate that from his position. “If you don’t shush and eat your breakfast, they’re gonna take away your speech too. Are you ready to only speak baby babble?”

Brad went pale and shook his head.

“Then open up for the airplane,” said Ted. Brad’s face contorted as he struggled with the humiliation of letting his brother feed him but he still opened his mouth, and the baby cereal still went in. Spoonful after spoonful, filling him up til he was beyond bloated. Ted’s breakfast was left uneaten at he rushed to feed his brother, creating plenty of mess on his cheeks, chin, and bib. All the while, he kept an eye on the time, checking his smart watch every other spoonful until he was scraping the bottom of the bowl.

“You’re so messy, little bro. Let’s clean you up and get out of here.”

Brad was still struggling to swallow the final mouthful as Ted wiped his face up with a washcloth. He spluttered as the wet cloth passed over his nose and mouth, spitting up the last of the cereal just like a real baby. He blushed as that was wiped up as well, feeling completely helpless compared to how he was less than 24 hours previous.

“No time to lose,” said Ted, tossing the cloth in the sink, and unsnapping the high chair tray. Brad felt 10 pounds heavier as he was helped down after his filling meal. He groaned, feeling overstuffed. It was like a brick in his stomach, and he could already feel his bowels shifting to make more room. If he had any foresight, he was sure to realize that the morning’s embarrassing poop was only the beginning.

“Come one, come on,” said Ted, pulling his little brother along by the mitt, out of their A.I. assigned living unit and into the waiting government-issued stroller waiting by the entrance. It had been left there the night before by the A.I. enforcers, and it was still there in the morning; no one dared steal anywhere A.I. was present. That was a sure-fire ticket straight to a daycare center for reconditioning, and an arduous struggle back to independence and adult privileges.

Brad’s wines were interrupted by a burp as he was shoved into the stroller and buckled in securely. With his bloated tummy and his puffy baby mitts, he hardly had a hope of getting anywhere on his own, much less escaping from the chair.

After a quick once-over to make sure Brad was strapped in, Ted stepped behind the stroller and pushed him off toward the elevators. Down down down they went, past floor after floor of apartments, coming finally to the ground floor, and a quick stroll out through the communal courtyard to the sidewalk. Brad blushed as they passed many of their neighbors strolling about. Being the rambunctious young man that he was, many of them knew him, and many heads turned as they saw him being pushed in a stroller, struggling, and dressed in nothing but a bright red T-shirt and a diaper.

Of course everyone knew right away what had happened. He had become what the authorities euphemistically called a ‘dependent citizen’ – an adult infant in layman’s terms. It was common enough, if unfortunate. No one was shocked, and no one laughed or made fun. They just shook their heads and clucked their tongues, or else, just pretended they didn’t know the boy as they greeted Ted and wished him a good day.

Things were much less awkward with newly dependent citizens once they had spent a few days in daycare. You could tell when they had completed their training because of their happy smiles and excited babble as they were carted around by their caretakers. A grumpy adult infant could only mean one of three things – either they needed a change, they needed a nap, or they were still new to babyhood. It would be a sore subject for Ted while he still had his adult life fresh in his memory, so out of common decency, he was given a wide berth by others who had known him as an independent citizen.

 “It’ll be okay, Brad,” said Ted, trying his best to be consoling as they rolled down the sidewalk toward the daycare center. “After a few days at daycare, you won’t even miss being a big boy.”

This was no comfort to Brad. “I don’t wanna *like* being a baby, Ted! I wanna be an adult!”

“Well, little guy, just between you and me, I’m planning to let you grow up as soon as I have the chance. I was putting on a show for the Baby Patrol. So just be the best baby you can be and don’t get any more time tacked onto your sentence, okay?”

But how long was Brad’s sentence? Only the A.I. knew, and the convoluted calculations were carried out in the dark, so to speak, so that number was anybody’s guess. Usually it was around two yards or so after all the extra penalties and infractions they may have incurred during their punishment period.

In less than 10 minutes they were at the neighborhood daycare, a gaily painted concrete building meant to house the sentenced safely and securely while they were trained back to infancy. Brad had butterflies in his stomach as they approached the massive building, passing through a series of automatic doors that he knew would only open for designated adults such as his brother.

Ted parked the stroller in one of the intake gates and gave the boy a kiss on the head.

“You be good now, Brad. I want a perfect behavior report, when I come to pick you up. If you behave, I’ll let you have a special treat tonight at home, okay?”

Brad’s lip quivered as he gave his brother the saddest look. “Don’t leave me here bro. I’ll be good from now on. Talk to the captain. Tell him I’ve learned my lesson. Tell him! Tell himmmmmm!” Brad called out as he was picked up and carried away by an assistant. No forms or lengthy introductions needed. All the information was there in his ID chip and the chip said he was exactly where he needed to be.

Ted just waved goodbye. It was hard to see his little bro go through this, but he knew that if he Brad off the hook, he’d just break another rule the next week. That would reflect poorly on *him*. No, his brother would have to learn, and while his brother went backward in years, his own status was on the rise. Maybe he *would* become an enforcer someday. He thought about it as he returned to the sidewalk and followed the directions back to the hub.

A voice came from his smart watch as a certain heroic pup appeared on the screen.

“You did the right thing, Ted. Dash is proud of you! Get to the transport terminal in the next 15 minutes and you’ll have no problem getting to the hub on time. You’ve even got time to pick up a coffee and bagel since you didn’t have time for your own breakfast this morning.”

“You noticed that?” asked Ted, blushing slightly.

“Hey, I know you were just putting your little bro first, and that’s just what good caretakers should do. You’re still new to this, but don’t fret. I’ve trained every caretaker there is, and I know you’ll get the hang of it in no time.”

*-Written by Champ*