

**IRONCLAD**  
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**Illustration by [SolidBone](#)**

Kirby floated back toward the ground carelessly, blown this way and that by the changing winds. Yards below, hopping on the balls of his feet, Falco waited for just the right moment to strike...for that fluffy little pink bastard to get close enough that a Fire Bird could yeet his ass into oblivion-

### *CONNECTION LOST*

“NO!” Instead of the colorful graphics of Smash Ultimate, Brodie Lambert was staring at his own eyes reflected back at him from his Switch’s dark screen.

“No data out here, right?” his father said from the driver’s seat.

“I was just about to WIN,” Brodie snarled, chucking his Switch into the empty seat next to him. It bounced off the cushions and onto the floor of the minivan, facedown.

His mother whirled around from the front passenger seat. “Don’t you EVER throw a \$300 piece of tech, Brodie,” she snapped.

Brodie glared at her, then stretched his leg outward to drag the Switch back to him. He would’ve unbuckled his seatbelt to get it, but she’d probably freak over that too. “I didn’t mean to,” he grumbled.

“Don’t lie,” she said as she turned back around.

Brodie’s knuckles turned white as they curled around his console. He wanted to snap the thing in two. “Why are we so far away from everything,” he whined, staring out at a limitless stretch of grass, the horizon dotted with hay bales. “The highway should have cell service.”

“It probably does, but we’re not on the highway,” his dad said. “GPS took us this way because of construction on the interstate.”

“It feels like we’re going further from where we need to go,” his mom said in the stage whisper all parents use, as if a slight lowering of the voice could render their child incapable of hearing from two feet away.

“Might be zig-zaggy, but it puts us right back out on the highway as long as we keep following it,” was Brodie’s father’s answer. “I saw the route before the service dropped, don’t worry.”

“We should stop and get a snack and stretch our legs,” Mom said. “He’s grouchy.”

“I’m not,” Brodie huffed.

“Sounds like you are, man,” Dad chuckled. “Looks like we can make a pit stop in a couple miles.”

The town in question was literally off the beaten path, reachable by a dirt road marked by a solitary sign. They drove through cornfields that were so close to the road they seemed to close around the car as it sped past. Brodie was just starting to wonder if they'd accidentally entered the driveway of a private farm when suddenly the road turned back to smooth asphalt and a small stretch of buildings came into view. There was a big sign that said "IRONCLAD, Pop. 9000," and the town slogan, or motto, or whatever: "Ever growing, ever changing."

Brodie was hoping to see a McDonald's or a Pizza Hut, but as his dad drove through Ironclad's downtown, it was clear this was not a fast food kind of place. The town looked like a postcard, with Victorian buildings in easter egg colors, every storefront a love letter to old fashioned Americana. There wasn't a single brand name to be seen.

"Oh it's so CUTE here," Mom said as she looked out the window. "Ooh, handmade soap! I should pick some up for Aunt Yvonne."

"Visitor's center seems like it'd have a public bathroom," Dad said as he parked the car.

Brodie looked at his phone and saw the data signal tap back in. It was weak, but it was there. He reached for his Switch. Maybe while his parents were inside he could get a quick-

"Inside, Brodie. I'm not leaving you out here," Dad said as he stepped out of the car.

Once his parents couldn't see, Brodie rolled his eyes and got out, trudging behind his parents. His dad looked so dorky in his cargo shorts, and his mom's haircut was shaggy and choppy like a teenage boy's. They were so embarrassing. There was no one around in this empty-ass town, but Brodie waited until his parents were at the top of the visitor center stairs before he started the walk up. He didn't want any onlooker thinking they were related.

This effort was thwarted by his parents waiting for him at the entrance, and Brodie slouched into the small visitor center behind them. More humiliation ensued as Dad wrote the family names in the guestbook: "Chris, Jenna, + Brodie Lambert."

Mom - Jenna - walked off to find the restroom, while Brodie found himself staring longingly at a Snickers bar in the vending machine. "Dad? Can I have two bucks?"

"Sure." Chris fished a couple singles out of his shorts and held them toward Brodie, but jerked his hand away as soon as Brodie reached for them. "IF you promise to be nicer to your mother."

"I'm not being mean!"

"No, but you *are* being rude. Don't talk to her like she's stupid. Okay?"

“Okay,” Brodie grumbled. He snatched the two dollars out of his dad’s hand and inserted them into the machine. The Snickers bar was a little stale once he bit into it, but it still tasted way better than the trail mix his parents brought, which didn’t have nearly the sweetness he needed from a snack.

He plopped down on a bench to eat his prize, purposely avoiding all the maps and placards around the visitor center detailing the history of Ironclad. The candy bar was half consumed when his bliss was interrupted by a booming voice and footsteps clomping like an approaching triceratops: “Ride’s workin’ great, Phyllis! You’ve got Mayor McGinn’s stamp of approval!”

Brodie gawked at the speaker. The man walking into the main lobby looked sort of like Colonel Sanders, if Colonel Sanders cloned himself, ate that clone, then went on a 10-year steroid regimen. His belly entered the room before he did, but despite its grand size, he looked as strong as an ox, with gigantic arms that rippled within his shirt sleeves and an even more gigantic chest that barely cleared the doorway. The open collar of his white dress shirt allowed for a bouquet of silvery chest hair to rustle from between his pecs, and his big square head was adorned with a matching silver goatee. With his white shirt, cream trousers, silver whiskers, and bald scalp, he appeared to glow as he moved.

To Brodie’s horror, the huge man turned and looked right at him. “Ah, and we got a visitor! You should go on the ride, young fella!”

Brodie mumbled a refusal and looked away, avoiding eye contact.

“Shy!” the massive man laughed.

“Yeah, he is shy sometimes,” Chris said of his son, extending his hand to the muscle man. “Chris Lambert.”

“Mayor Michael McGinn,” the man responded. His chest bounced hard enough to pop open the buttons over his chest as he shook Chris’ hand. “You folks visiting?”

“If you can call it that. Stretching our legs.”

“Well, no matter how long you stay, welcome to Ironclad,” the mayor smiled, with teeth as white as the rest of him. “This ride contraption we got really is quite the to-do. You get in a boat and it takes you through a tour of our town through the eyes of one of the residents - and there’s some fancy doohickey that switches things up so each time you go on it, it’s someone different. The first time I went on it, it told me I was the mayor! Ain’t that funny?”

“Self-fulfilling prophecy,” Chris said, “or something like that.”

“Exactly.” The mayor rubbed his palm over his belly. “Well, I have to head back to my office, but I hope you folks check it out if you’d like. Or you could buy some fudge at Danae’s down the

block - please do, so that I don't eat any more of it myself!" Mayor McGinn's booming laugh made Brodie jump. "Pleasure meeting you folks."

He was lumbering away as Jenna Lambert returned from the restroom. Brodie noticed his mother stop and stare in shock for a moment at the gigantic man, before regaining her composure and walking over to her husband and son. "He is...very big," she said under her breath.

Brodie, his mouth full of Snickers bar, simply nodded.

"Babe, they have some sort of ride here that takes you through the history of the town. We should check it out," Chris said to his wife. "I love this kind of kitschy Americana stuff."

"Do we have time for that?" Jenna asked.

"It can't take more than five minutes. Just a little adventure, then we'll go back on the road. It's nice to not be driving for a second."

"I can drive if you're tired, babe."

"No no, I'm fine, I just meant it's nice to not be in the car," Chris explained. "I bet Brodie is simply fascinated by small-town life, aren't you Bro?"

Brodie's mouth was still full. "Mmhm," he murmured dully, suppressing his disdain after his father's lecture. He was going to be bored no matter what, because this town was boring, and so was the car. Better to just eat the chocolate and be quiet.

"Feeling less grumpy now that you've had a snack?" his mom asked.

"I'm fine," Brodie mumbled.

Jenna turned to her husband. "Let's go on the ride. Maybe one more distraction will get rid of the rest of that attitude."

Brodie rolled his eyes at the dig and trudged over to the trash can to throw away his candy wrapper, then tailed behind his parents as they walked over to the ride queue. He thought it was funny the city built a queue into the building design, because he was sure no one ever stood in line for this thing.

"I'll go on my own," Brodie said as a cart rolled up on the track. He stepped in and pulled the safety bar down over his lap. "See ya on the other side!" He flashed a peace sign to match his blank stare as his dad took his picture. As his cart rolled forward, he turned around to see his parents squeezing into a cart of their own and talking to the lady who worked there.

“Dumb,” he chortled as he rolled into a black tunnel. There was a fork immediately at the start of the ride, and he got a glimpse of his parents going the other route. Whatever experience they got was going to be slightly different, he reasoned.

He was about to reach for his phone in his pocket when the actual ride experience started. His cart spun 360 degrees several times as lights strobed and a voice proclaimed, “Welcome to Ironclad!”

He could hear the gears groaning and heaving to run the cart on the track. Rickety-ass ride.

A screen in a wall lit up as Brodie’s cart rotated to face it. “Most folks around here have lived here a long time!” said a cartoon lady with a big gray beehive hairdo. She leaned in toward the screen and lowered her glasses. “Like you, for example! You’re a...don’t tell me, let me guess...you’re a Cassel!” Brodie noticed the word ‘Cassel’ sounded piped in. That must be the randomized part the Mayor mentioned.

“Oh, those Cassel boys,” the lady sighed like a schoolgirl, animated hearts popping over her head. “They’ve been here for generations and they’re always SO handsome. How exciting to meet their newest member!” She fluttered her eyelashes, and then the ride moved on, rolling around the corner to a dusty large-scale diorama of the town.

“This is Ironclad,” trumpeted a male voice through the speakers. “The best little town you could imagine. What we lack in size we make up for in friendliness, warmth, and community. You’re never without a friend when you live in Ironclad!”

“But you never have anything to do either,” tittered Brodie to himself.

A spotlight flashed on him from the darkness next to the illuminated diorama. “Is that young Tommy Cassel I see?” said another man’s voice from a speaker that seemed to be slightly malfunctioning - his words were staccato. “What a nice kid! He delivers my paper every weekend. That’s right, Ironclad still has a newspaper. It only publishes on the weekends, but that’s okay. Not enough happens around here to fill up a paper daily, and we like it that way!”

“So boring,” Brodie mumbled as his cart moved a few feet down the track.

“Ah, Mr. Tommy Cassel would probably find this interesting,” the voice continued, and a very old picture was illuminated, depicting a man with a big jaw and thick black hair. It was captioned ‘Wilbur Cassel.’ “Wilbur Cassel was the first mayor of Ironclad! Back then, the town was so small, no election was required. He just volunteered! The Cassel family has been here ever since, in one way or another. What a treat to see Tommy Cassel sitting right there, the latest in a long line! Why, I know his parents *and* his grandparents.”

Brodie expected the ride to move along from there, but the cart remained in its place. The light behind Wilbur Cassel’s picture went out and a spotlight shone on part of the diorama. “This is

the old post office. Its construction was what made Ironclad a town in the first place! Some folks say the town's name came from the iron-rich soil here. Others say it was from a man named William Hampton." A portrait of William Hampton was illuminated. He had a tidy white beard and looked like an army general. "He owned a lot of this land and whenever he sold some off, the story goes that he'd say, 'I want an ironclad agreement,' and the name stuck..."

The narrator's voice kept rambling on, but Brodie's attention drifted in and out. He thought about his games, and the boring road trip he was on, and girls at school. And what he wanted to do with the girls at school. Hold their hands, kiss them, and other stuff.

It was the 'other stuff' that got the mound in Brodie's lap stirring. He blushed, but when it dawned on him no one else was around, he tilted his hips upward and pressed his crotch against the safety bar of the cart. It felt good. So good that he began rubbing it back and forth.

"-those Cassel boys-" the narrator was saying, and Brodie's ears perked up. "Polite as could be, but always sowing their wild oats. Of course, that's not hard when you're a three-sport athlete like Tommy Cassel. Baseball, football, and basketball, he plays all three, and he's good at 'em too. But he really likes baseball the most, he says, and the girls like watching him play it too!"

Brodie felt a twinge of jealousy toward this made-up guy. It'd be a blast to be a star jock wearing a nice uniform, impressing girls and making your parents proud. He pushed his hips harder against the bar hugging his lap, imagining humping a girl after a good game. That was a much more stirring image than what the ride was showing him: an overview of the construction of Ironclad's baseball park and rec center, using Tommy's sports anecdote as a segue.

The cart swung around a corner to a new scene at the same Brodie decided to stop fantasizing. He was beginning to sweat, and he didn't want to risk rolling out of the ride all flushed and horny. He licked brine off his lips and was surprised to feel grit above his mouth. Had to be dirt or something.

"That boy is starting to really look like a Cassel," the narrator's voice said through the dark room. "And he's getting those big Cassel muscles, too! Better be careful or he'll get too bulky for baseball, and he won't be a Cassel boy anymore - he'll be a Cassel man!"

And then Brodie's shirt ripped.

The moment it happened, he knew. He felt the fabric strain, then heard the telltale sound, then felt the cart's cold plastic back pressing against his spine. Had his t-shirt gotten hooked on something inside the ride that tore the back open? Without considering how dark it was, he tried to turn back to inspect it - and his tee's side seam burst.

Brodie jerked back and reached for his exposed side, but his hand never got there. Instead it froze in front of him, illuminated by pulses of light in the dark room, looking bigger and thicker

with each strobe until it didn't look like his hand at all. It couldn't be. It had to just be a trick of the ride, like a hologram or something.

What worried Brodie was that it was his hand - between the flashes he could see the mole on the back of his index finger, and the scar from when he got scratched by the neighbor's cat - it was just...huge. Man-sized. He'd never seen a muscular hand before. He wriggled his fingers and the man-hand wriggled them too. Then his toes curled up in the fronts of his shoes, and he felt a tug and a pop and suddenly he felt air across his feet.

Had he...had his shoes burst open? There was no way...

"Da-AD?" Brodie said aloud, a voice crack splitting one syllable into two. He gulped and suddenly it felt like his whole body took a deep breath - not just his rib cage, but his chest, arms, back, shoulders, everything rounding and filling...rips shot across his shirt and shorts, exposing more skin. "I don't like this-" He said, but his voice sounded strange, not like his own.

"It's a special thing when a boy comes of age in a small town like Ironclad," the male voice narrating the ride drawled. "Our friend Tommy Cassel shot right up over a summer, so when he went back to school four inches taller, he was eating a lot more just to keep on weight. He ate steaks and corn and potatoes from nearby farms, places like the Goerke Farm that puts on the town's annual hayride and haunted corn maze!"

The ride narration continued to weave anecdotes about Tommy in and among the town highlights, but Brodie wasn't listening. All he could focus on was his ruined clothes. They'd exploded off him and left him in rags, and he felt so...large. His shoulders bumped into the sides of his cart, which they hadn't before, and his thighs were wedged so tightly under the safety bar he couldn't move them. He gripped the bar with his cinderblock hands and tried to loosen it, growling like a trapped animal. Veins bulged across his arms and out of his neck. He felt powerful, which got him fully erect once more, his crotch pressing painfully against the bar. "RRRGGGhhhh..."

"Most folks around here go to the state school for college, but Tommy got a baseball scholarship down in Texas, where he majored in criminal justice and played in the minor leagues-"

"GRRRRRAHHHH-" Brodie barked like he was on the bench press as he tried to move the bar, his underhand grip making the new peaks of his biceps pop out and swell. He looked down at his wider chest and whimpered as he watched it expand outward like a sun coming over the horizon, until his lap was fully blocked by a set of broad, bulging pecs that seemed to be a little bigger every time he looked at them. He released his hold on the safety bar and moved his hands up to his new rack, groaning as his palms traversed the heaving mass. He was hoping it was an illusion, a trick of light or a prop, but his hands smacked against his own body and triggered his own nerve endings. "Puh-please," he choked, "I d-don't get what's...happening, I...this isn't real-"



The chipper ride narration kept on talking. “Baseball can bang you up, so Tommy spent more time working out to cut down his risk of injury. Whenever he was back in Ironclad, you could always find him at Ironworks, our town’s only gym. Of course, that was if you could recognize him at all...all that muscle really changes the way a young man looks. And Tommy was gaining a lot of muscle. He was turning into more of a man every day.”

Brodie’s jaw popped like it sometimes did when he woke up in the morning, but this time it came with the inexplicable sensation of his teeth shifting and his chin pushing outward. He tried to look for some sort of emergency stop button, but found it difficult to swivel his head thanks to the big traps he now sported that were rapidly restructuring his shoulders. “Let me off!” he yelped, voice cracking one last time before it plunged to new manly depths. “Let me OFF!”

The last word came out in an entirely new voice, one as burly and thick as his chest. A large voice box bulged from the center of Brodie’s thick neck, emanating virile authority. “Hey! Somebody!” he thundered, telling himself it was some acoustic trick that was making him sound like a fully grown man. The feeling of bass reverberating in his throat insisted otherwise, but he ignored it.

Brodie’s cart pivoted to face a stylized map of Ironclad painted on a wall. “As Tommy neared his college graduation, all of us here in Ironclad wondered what path he’d take. His baseball days were coming to a close, and it was time for him to choose a career. Would he work at the Courthouse, perhaps as a lawyer?” A spotlight illuminated the courthouse on the map. “Or he could be the town postman!” The post office lit up, followed by the hardware store as the voice rambled about Tommy potentially being a handyman.

Brodie writhed in his seat, trying to wriggle free but more trapped than ever. He was panicking over how strange he felt, and his ruined clothes. How much trouble was he going to be in once the ride ended and he rolled back into the light damn near naked?

“...or he’d make a good personal trainer...”

God, the narrator was still talking. Disneyland, this place was not. A slow-moving cart through a history lecture was still a history lecture. In Brodie’s opinion, what the ride was ignoring was that if Tommy really existed, he’d never move back. No way a buff jock would stay in this boring town when he’d already gotten a taste of the real world elsewhere.

“But the choice was always clear to Tommy. He’d had a dream job in mind since he was a boy, and now that he was becoming such a strapping man, he was the perfect fit for it. Tommy Cassel wanted to be Ironclad’s-”

Something suddenly fell onto Brodie’s head.

In between the arm flailing and unmanly squeals that followed, he had a vision of what he was sure was happening: the ride was collapsing and raining ceiling tiles down on him. But after a

few seconds, as the mechanics proceeded normally, he relaxed. It wasn't dust or a piece of trash that hit him after all, he discovered - it was a hat, weirdly enough, that had impressively landed directly on him, as if he'd been wearing it the entire time. Brodie turned it over in his hands after removing it from his scalp. The hat was made of soft, clean felt and had a wide brim that turned slightly upward on the sides. Brodie held the hat up to the light so he could see it better. There was a glittery piece of metal pinned on the front of it, and he leaned forward to make out what it was.

"In 1912, Ironclad was designated as the county seat of Byron County. If Tommy won his election, he wouldn't just work in Ironclad - he'd be the sheriff for the whole county."

The word clanged around Brodie's head like it was Kirby in Smash Ultimate. 'Sheriff.' That was the metal on the front of the hat: a big, shiny, five-pointed sheriff star.

"Fuck this," Brodie sneered, and he Frisbeed the hat into the darkness.

It disappeared into the inky black void no sooner than he felt a new hat plop right onto his head.

"GAH!"

Brodie started to reach up, but his fingers stopped as they encountered something strange and pointy. His thumbs gripped onto collar points he wasn't supposed to have. He thought he was wearing a t-shirt, not a button-up shirt, but now there was a starched point collar around his neck, and under his thick thumbs grew something sharp and metallic - pins, it felt like, sprouting up out of the fabric like they'd always been there. A second later, he could tell they were stars, four of them on each side of his collar. Like on a sheriff's uniform.

"I th-think I need-" Brodie started to stammer, having forgotten that he now spoke in a deep, rumbling bass voice. His mouth clamped shut, and he told himself no, it was just a special effect on the ride changing his voice...and another special effect making it feel like the tears in his shirt were fusing back together across his back, even as his back resisted by getting wider...

"Tommy knew if he was going to be the sheriff, people needed to see a sheriff when they looked at him. So he cut his hair..."

A cavalcade of itches marched across Brodie's head. He wrenched his hat off and ran a trembling palm over his short, precise haircut. Clipped all over with just a little part on the side, the kind of haircut a guy can get every other week for six bucks downtown...

He put the sheriff hat back on his head, not because he wanted to, but so he could ignore the draft he felt on his now-naked ears. The narrator had said something else, but Brodie was distracted-

Then he sneezed so hard he nearly lost his hat again. His nostrils were plugged full of hair. Brodie wiped his nose on the back of his hand, and gasped when his skin came into contact with whiskers. "No way..." he groaned, eyes bugging as he prodded what *couldn't* be an epic mustache on his upper lip. It just felt like it was. Long whiskers that slightly covered the top half of his mouth, trimmed into a perfect Magnum PI homage. Thankfully his cheeks and chin were bare...it was just the mustache, a big ol' bushy chevron...

"And it was time to ditch the little kid name, he decided. He wasn't Tommy anymore, he was Tom. A manly name for a real man's man, the kind of fella who belongs in a town named Ironclad."

Two identical strips of fabric flopped down across the top of Brodie's broad shoulders. He reached to try to brush them off, but his bulging chest blocked the motion, allowing the new epaulets to complete. Instead, he was stuck staring at the outline of his arm in the dim light. It looked like a leg, or a person's head...not an arm...and he could still feel something shifting, a prickly feeling in his nerves...and was that a watch on his wrist? He didn't wear watches...

"It was a big change for some townspeople to get used to, that the little Tommy Cassel they'd all known since he was knee-high was now one of the biggest men in town and getting bigger every day. Tom went door-to-door and met with every single citizen of Ironclad to ask for their vote. He wanted to remind people he wasn't a boy anymore. Word got out, of course, like it always does in this town!"

"What does this have to do with anything?!" Brodie bellowed, his thunderous bass echoing through the ride. "This isn't even the town history! It's just to mess with me!"

He felt a burning through his whole jaw, starting at one earlobe and running clear to the other side, the same sort of indescribable swelling he was feeling in his muscles. Except now it was in his bone, as if the whole unit was growing outward in all directions. But that was impossible. This was all impossible. He didn't have a huge slab of granite for a jaw. "It's not real, Tom," he said to himself, immediately catching the slip-up. "It's not real, *Brodie*," he corrected, feeling the giant hunk of bone bob up and down as he talked. It wasn't real. It just felt real.

"And lookie there! It looks like those thousands of handshakes paid off!" A small spotlight shone directly in Brodie's eyes, then moved slightly down to his right pec. In the center of the golden beam, gleaming proudly, was a large gold star bearing the word 'SHERIFF.' A sound effect of applause emanated through the ride. "Tom Cassel is the Byron County Sheriff!"

"No I'm not! I mean...no HE'S not! I mean...rgghh..." Brodie noticed the new tan color of his shirt just before the spotlight went away. The star was only a projection, he prayed, until his fingernails scraped against the very real metal pinned to his shirt and dashed those hopes. Somehow he had a legitimate fucking sheriff badge on his shirt. And somehow his shirt wasn't really his shirt anymore. It was partly shredded in some places, intact in others, but the fabric was sturdy and heavy now - thick polyester instead of thin cotton.

Two flaps of fabric sprang out from his chest, flipping down to close over the new pockets that formed over each of his pecs. In between the flap pockets lurked a button in the center of his shirt. Brodie never wore shirts with buttons, he thought they looked dorky, but with a chest like this they were definitely his future. It was much easier to button a shirt up the front than it was to pull it over his pecs and shoulders, unless it was a polo shirt with all the buttons undone-

“Shut up!” Brodie said to his own thoughts. “Not real, not real...” He reached up to see if his mustache - no, not HIS, *the* mustache - was still there, but his hand smacked into the underside of his pecs.

*The underside?!*

“Holy shit...” he groaned, cupping his hands under his chest and pushing the mountainous muscles up toward his chin. They were heavy and solid, and they stuck out so far. He released them and felt them drop and bounce, the front of his shirt straining to support them as it continued mending together. He had *jugs*. His brain said it was gross to have such a big chest, but his crotch was saying something different. Especially when Brodie scratched his pecs and felt little bristles. He couldn't be growing chest hair. That'd be crazy. He was too young for that...

“Sheriff terms in Byron County are every four years, and Tom was re-elected unopposed. He was getting better at his job every year, and he was getting bigger too! It was as if his job performance was linked with the size of his muscles. It's hard to not feel safe when a man like Tom Cassel is around!”

Brodie wriggled under the pressure of the safety bar. It was painfully tight now, even after he shifted forward so that it was in his lap instead of over his thighs. He couldn't get comfortable. The cart's cushion was too big and it was propping him too high, but when he reached down to see if he could move it, his hand smacked into the plastic seat. Brodie moved his fingers around in the dark, trying to find the cushion, but his fingers only poked into his own butt. His glute muscles tensed when he touched them, pushing him harder into the safety bar.

He wasn't sitting on a cushion. He just had a big ass. And a thick waist with flat, rigid abs that made his shirt buttons strain. That was why the bar was so tight now, because he suddenly had a grown man's midsection. He heard the soft click of a buckle, and felt the attached belt digging into his 8-pack. The belt was tight, but he didn't know how to loosen it in the dark. In fact, everything felt tight...pants, belt, shoes, even his shirt as he felt the two sides yank together and button fully up the front. “Why's this happening...” Brodie said aloud, his deep voice quivering.

Sound effects of footsteps played through the ride, introducing a new character. “Say, does the ride need fixin'?” asked a reedy, aged voice.

“Oh! No, no, Fred,” the regular narrator voice chuckled.

"I just noticed that one's movin' real slow," the old-sounding voice - Fred - said, and a light shone onto Brodie's cart, as if Fred was looking at it with a flashlight.

"Of course it's moving slow! Don't you see who's sitting in it?" the narrator responded.

"Good gravy, that's a man!" Fred's voice responded comically. "I thought it was a ton of supplies piled up! Why that's...that's little Tommy Cassel, ain't it! Not so little anymore!"

"Remind him what you go by now, Sheriff," the narrator said.

"I'm not Tom Cassel!" Brodie boomed, his voice deeper and more powerful than ever.

"That's right! He's Tom now!" the narrator said. "The cart's just moving so slowly because it's hauling around the biggest man in the state."

"Is that true?" Fred's voice asked. "Biggest in the state?"

"Don't you remember?" the narrator said, as a painting of carnival rides lit up. "The State Fair was in Byron County this year, so Sheriff Cassel and his deputies helped with security and keeping the peace. Tom got called up onstage in front of everyone and was measured in his uniform. He had 22 inch arms..."

Brodie felt his short sleeves tighten, the fabric wedging up atop his monstrous biceps.

"...and a 60 inch chest! He popped half the buttons off his shirt while the tape measure was around him, the crowd went crazy!"

The sound of a crowd roared through the ride, and suddenly the top three buttons exploded off Brodie's uniform shirt as his chest swelled again, awesome pecs heaving out to become truly gargantuan. As the top of his shirt pulled proudly open, there was no missing the healthy amount of chest hair he'd grown.

"SHER-IFF! SHER-IFF! SHER-IFF!" the fake crowd cheered. They sounded just like the crowd in Smash Ultimate.

"I don't w-wanna be the sheriff!" Brodie's changed voice echoed back at him like a punch to the face. His reactive gasp filled his huge chest and made his hairy pecs inflate further. "You can't do this to me!"

"There's no man more admired in Ironclad than Sheriff Tom Cassel. Crime is almost non-existent here thanks to Sheriff Cassel's emphasis on building community and trust with one another. And he inspired such a rush to the weight room for the boys of Ironclad that the football and wrestling teams have both become viable title contenders year after year. You can often see

him in full uniform in the middle of Centurion Park, holding public workouts for anyone who wants to attend.”

“UNNNggghhh...” Brodie’s frustration was exacerbated by his horniness. His crotch was throbbing, and he was sweating once more. As they traveled, the droplets of perspiration conjured the body hair of a man Brodie’s new age. His underwear filled with his bush, which traveled up over his abs and connected to his chest hair. On his face, his granite jaw sprouted five o’clock shadow hours ahead of schedule. Sweat beaded along his heavier brow and he squeezed his eyelids shut to keep the salt out of his eyes, bringing attention to the new crow’s feet that were coming in as strong as the furrows on his brow. “Don’t wanna be the sheriff,” he kept mumbling pathetically, sliding a hand inside his unbuttoned shirt and stroking a nipple through his chest hair. The weight of his pec was heavy in his hand, even with a 22-inch bicep providing the strength. He was an enormous muscleman who commanded respect. The kind of man who’d make a great sheriff. “I can’t be sheriff...”

“Surrounding counties were big fans of Sheriff Cassel too. After all, he trained his deputies so well that they became perfect candidates for the head job elsewhere. Tom is a testament to how much one good man can improve the place around him. That’s what we have in Ironclad: good men and women who make the world better.”

“I’ll be a good man I promise,” Brodie blurted, “just not yet-”

The cart whirled around in several 360s as it lurched forward on the tracks, moving at a glacial pace thanks to the weight of its occupant. Brodie’s abs tensed to brace him for impact against the side of the cart, but no such shift came. His massive body was wedged so tightly into the ride that he had nowhere to slide; his neck was so fortified by muscle that his head defied whiplash. His erection pulsed from the sensation of indestructibility.

God, he was so fucking huge...

No, no he wasn’t, he was a shrimp with floppy hair who never got picked first for anything. He was only huge if he fell for what this ride kept telling him: that he was Tom Cassel, a small town sheriff, all-star athlete, and beloved son of Ironclad. The biggest man in town who everyone admired and respected.

Brodie flexed his melon-sized biceps and bounced his gigantic hairy tits up to his chiseled chin. “I’m not changing!” he roared defiantly. The sound of his voice made him moan with excitement. He turned himself on.

The spinning stopped and the cart hurtled into a dark room, where a voice announced:

“We’re proud to welcome Sheriff Tom Cassel to the Ironclad Hall of Fame!”

The room lit up, unveiling a portrait on the wall facing Brodie. He gasped.



“That’s...that’s...” he stuttered, staring at the hot hunk. The room was so bright that for the first time, Brodie could see himself if he looked down, which he did to avoid cumming in his pants at the sight of the bodybuilder in the sheriff’s uniform.

Unfortunately, when he looked down, what he still saw was a bodybuilder in a sheriff’s uniform.

“Oh...oh...”

Brodie ran his thick hands over his uniform pants, which strained to hold over his massive quads and hamstrings. He inspected his unwieldy forearms, big as clubs, then moved to his utility belt and finally, up to his shirt. Brodie thrust his right arm straight outward then curled it up at the elbow, watching his bicep peak shove his sleeve aside as it arced up toward the ceiling.

“During your time in Ironclad, keep your eyes peeled for Sheriff Tom Cassel! Be sure to say hi if you see him. He’s pretty hard to miss,” the narrator said.

Brodie flexed his other arm and flared his chest out. It felt as if his chest went on forever, vast and limitlessly broad, the biggest chest in town...in the state, even. He felt the bass of his voice reverberating through his cavernous ribcage. “What did this thing do to me?!” He looked down at his chest, like big pillows filled with cement and strapped to him. He splayed out his massive pecs like he was onstage at a bodybuilding show, the force nearly ripping the badges and pins off the front of his uniform. His sheriff badge went askew, so he reached down to fix it - but quickly caressed his monster pec before he did.

The sheriff star dangled over the precipice made by his big hairy chest. “Gotta shut this shit down,” he murmured, tidying up his pins and patches. “I was never that kid playing cops and robbers, I’m not s’posed to be the sheriff...”

The fake crowd was cheering once more as the ride rolled to the end of the tracks. “SHER-IFF! SHER-IFF! SHER-IFF!”

“Be quiet!” Brodie commanded, and when the automation didn’t obey, he yelled it louder. “Be QUIET!”

“SHER-IFF! SHER-IFF! SHER-IFF!”

“I’m...I...FUCK...shut up!” Brodie bent forward and put his hands over his ears. He could barely reach them with his biceps hitting his shoulders and his chest pressed into his thighs. He was the size of the Hulk. “Stop it!”

The sound bled through his fingers. “SHER-IFF! SHER-IFF! SHER-IFF!”

“I...rrrnnggg...I...I...” Brodie’s eyes flicked up for a moment and now, instead of the painting, he was in front of a big mirror. The sight of himself hunched and cowering shamed him, so he



immediately sat up, holding his neck high and locking his jaw. His immense chest and shoulders unfurled gloriously outward, revealing their astounding breadth, while his broad back peeked out from beneath his raised arms. There he was: a hinterland Hercules. And his face! He was the hottest 45-year-old he'd ever seen, rocking the perfect sheriff stache. A grin twitched across his chiseled visage. "Am I...is that the sheriff?"

"SHER-IFF! SHER-IFF! SHER-IFF!"

"This is crazy! This is so cool! I'm the sheriff!" Brodie said proudly, admiring the middle-aged hunk staring back at him. No one was going to believe it. He wasn't sure if *he* believed it. But a fully developed adult sexuality flipped on like a lightswitch within him, and he was suddenly aware of just how deeply he loved muscle, and every characteristic that made a man a man. "I'm a man!" The thought of being grown up was no longer scary. In fact, it was a dream come true. To have that body and face, wearing that uniform...oh fuck, he was gonna cum...oh *fuck*... "I look just like Tom Cassel! I'm a man! I th-think I *am* Tom Cassel!"

"TOM! TOM! TOM! TOM!"

"I'm Tom Cassel!" His fly was about to burst from the pressure of his crotch engorging with lust. Sweat rolled down like a waterfall between his cleavage, staining his shirt and pants. He moaned with ravenous joy, longing to experience the manliest feeling of all.

The ride shot forward, two gates opening with a surge of white light that replicated the blast happening in the sheriff's uniform pants.

And then, for a moment, silence, before...

"Now how'd you even fit in there, Sheriff?" Phyllis the front desk lady was standing over him, her big beehive wobbling like jello. "It's a wonder you didn't break it at your size."

"I think I almost did," Tom said proudly. The safety bar released and he stood up, feeling the cart bend beneath his weight as he hoisted himself out of the ride and back onto the safety of land. He turned his back to Phyllis and adjusted his junk in his pants. "Damn thing was crushin' my nuts," he grunted.

"Stamp of approval?" Phyllis asked.

"Yeah, I'd say it's safe," Tom said. "Might want to add a weight limit sign. I really do think I almost broke it. It was moving real slow."

"Noted," Phyllis smiled. "What else do you have going on today?"

Tom took his hat off and turned it around in his hands. "Not much. It's a slow day. But that means I'm good at my job," he smiled.

“You need a bigger uniform,” Phyllis said as she walked back to her desk. “I keep telling you I can tailor things!”

“I think this one fits me just fine,” Tom said, bouncing his giant pecs. “You have a nice day, Phyllis.” His boots clomped across the flooring as he strutted toward the exit toward his parked cruiser. One big hand wrapped around the door handle as he turned and happened to catch a glimpse of the guestbook.

Tom froze.

“Where’s my family?”

Phyllis looked up from her desk. “What?”

Heavy thuds echoed through the lobby as Tom stormed back. “My family! Where’s my family! They’re still on the ride! They must be stuck!” His panic was sudden and all-encompassing. They’d started the ride at the same time, why hadn’t they finished together? Something had to be wrong.

Phyllis looked confused as Tom jogged past her. “But you- I thought-”

“Where are the cameras!” Tom thundered, his size and intensity making Phyllis visibly flinch. “I have to go look at the security cameras-”

“Dad?”

Tom spun around and saw two teenagers making their way toward him. His huge shoulders lowered in relief. One kid ran right up to him. The other was still getting off the ride, walking strangely, like he was bowlegged. Finally, when they were all together, Tom hugged his children to his chest and kissed the tops of their heads. “Is everything okay? Did you get stuck?”

“It was just moving really slowly,” his son Deacon croaked, in a raspy pubescent voice that made Tom smile every time he heard it. “He’s acting weird, though.”

The ‘he’ in question was Tom’s other son, Dallas, Deacon’s identical twin. Tom brushed Dallas’ shaggy hair out of his eyes and looked right into them. “Are you hurt?”

“No, I’m fine, I think...” Dallas’ voice was identical to his brother’s, but tinged with confusion. He pulled his father away from his brother. “I just...I’m not used to walking with...something between my legs.”

Tom’s brow furrowed. “What? What do you mean?”

“You know.” Dallas avoided eye contact. His face was red as a tomato. “My thing.”

“Your...you mean your penis?”

“Daaaaadd...”

Tom laughed. He didn’t know if this was a teenage joke or something else. “Are you saying you’re not used to having a penis?”

“It feels weird. Did I always have one?”

Tom surveyed his son’s face. It was tinged with manhood in a way it hadn’t been even a year prior. Dallas always had those big, curious eyes, and now they were under a slightly heavier brow, offset by a stronger chin and sharper cheekbones. He was starting to look more grown up. And a lot more like Tom. “Of course you always had one,” Tom said. “It was just about the first thing we all saw when you came out of your mom.” He softly held Dallas’ beautiful face in his hands. “I was so happy you were a boy. I was so excited I got to raise two sons. Still am.”

Dallas smiled from ear to ear.

“I...I know, though, I felt strange coming off the ride too,” Tom continued. His voice lowered into a whisper. “I feel like, at some point, you and Deacon were taking care of me. I know that’s strange, because I’m your dad. I know it’s my job to take care of you. And I’m always gonna do that, okay? You can talk to me about anything. You know that right?”

Dallas nodded, but before he could speak, his brother interrupted. “What’re you two weirdos doing?” he teased.

“Be nice to each other,” Tom commanded. “C’mere.” He wrapped his kids up in a bear hug and squeezed them tightly, his biceps dwarfing their heads. At 14, they hadn’t had their growth spurts yet, but they were still so much bigger than he was used to them being. They were growing up so fast. “What was the ride like for you?”

“It was weird,” Deacon said. “It actually started with the town in the future and went backwards, and it told us what we do when we’re grown up and how we get there, basically.”

“That’s...not what it’s supposed to do,” Tom chuckled, figuring Deacon was making it up. The boy was prone to flights of fancy. “So what’s in the cards for you two?”

“Deacon gets rich opening hotels and running them!” Dallas chimed in. “It said he has a bunch of hotels across America, including one here.”

“I’m a hotelier and I wear a nice suit every day,” Deacon said proudly, mispronouncing ‘hotelier,’ a word he’d only just heard on the ride.

“And what about Dallas, since he spoke for you?” Tom asked.

Deacon looked at his brother, and his freckled face lit up in a mischievous grin. “Can I tell him?”

Dallas shrugged. “Sure. It’s probably not gonna happen.”

“Dallas becomes a professional bodybuilder and opens up his own gyms,” Deacon said, with just as much pride as he’d had talking about himself. “He gets really, really big. Like bigger than you, Dad.”

“I don’t think that’s even possible. No one’s bigger than me!” Tom teased, then he ruffled Dallas’ hair. “But if anyone can, I bet it’s my boy.”

“I grow a mustache like yours too,” Dallas said.

“And I grow a full beard!” Deacon chimed in. “You should see the suits I wear, Dad, they’re sooo nice.”

“I can’t wait to see ‘em. Get as big as me so I can borrow them sometime, okay?” Tom imagined an older version of Dallas with a sleek beard, his big muscles filling an expensive Italian suit. He hoped - if it was what Dallas really wanted - that it came to fruition.

As they walked out of the visitor center toward Tom’s cruiser, Dallas turned to his father. “What’s it like to grow up, Dad?”

“Still thinking about the ride?” Tom pondered Dallas’ question. “Well, it’s a lot of fun. Don’t be worried about it, because it happens fast. Feels like it was just this morning I was your age! And then I just started growin’...and growin’...” He bounced his pecs in his shirt and grinned when his sons blushed. “That’s going to happen to you both, too. It’s fun as hell turning into a man. But like I said, don’t wish it away. You’re only 14 once too.”

By this point they were in the car. Tom got situated in the front while the twins buckled up in the back. They were old enough for one of them to ride up front, but they liked sitting next to each other.

“Most of all,” Tom continued as he backed out of the parking space and drove down the main street, “Ironclad is a great place to grow up. I’m glad we live here.”