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It'll Be Fun

Most kids from my school, legally or not, were probably out partying their Saturday night away, kissing their best friend's boyfriend and probably their best friend too. I get it. I've had my share of fun. Or whatever you would like to call it. For me, that was high school. Now, from this new, some would say profound perspective, I'm in this strange world where, with the exception of athletes and anyone attractive enough to be a model, there are no cool kids. Looking back, it all seems so petty. Still, some of my best friends today were my best friends from high school and resisting the change of friends made me a rather lonely person in my first semester of college.

That night, you would have found me in my mom's living room, sitting on the couch, reading my Humanities textbook about Napoleon and the French Revolution. Hours went by and I found myself reading the same line over and over again. "A new form of the Republic was proclaimed with a constitution that established a bicameral legislative assembly elected indirectly..." Before I could fall asleep I decided to turn the TV on. It was nine thirty and I was 'Netflix and chilling' with rotisserie chicken and a bag of raw carrots at my mother's house. As you can tell, I'm a wild child.

I saw my mom earlier that day for less than an hour before she ran off to meet with her friends. By this time she would be at the Hairball concert with Jerry (her lover) and Stacy (his lover). I'm sure you are confused. I would love to explain it, but unfortunately I don't understand it myself. Earlier that afternoon she invited me to go to the concert with the three of them. Hairball performs locally in Iowa every year and I already went once before. At the time I was fourteen and hardly knew anyone there but my mom, who left me with her friend's son in a crowd of a couple thousand people. It was fun, but only because I met two girls that danced on me for most of the concert. When it was over and the lights came on I was forced to see the faces behind the butts I was holding. It turned out they were not exactly what I would have called "hot," but they were older than me and at that age, anytime I got the opportunity to grab a girl's butt, mission was a go.

My mom only invited me this time because she knew how lonely I was at college and she wanted me to get out and have some fun. Honestly, I would rather be alone and bored than out in a crowd full of old, sweaty, drunk people partying to music that was popular when they were my age.

I made it official that I wasn't going by ignoring Jerry's text inviting me to join them. I can only handle so much of those yahoos when they're drinking. They get stupid and childish. Their whole "love triangle" relationship gets old even when they're sober. I've been in between several of their quarrels and told Jerry, face to face, how I feel about what he's doing. Mostly because it's my mom's heart he's playing with here. I can't help but worry about Stacy's too. I've tried sleeping with two girls at once. It was part of my "fun" in high school. Hearts were broken and tears were shed. I know how it ends... Jerry is a grown man. You'd think he would

know better. You don't get to sleep with two different women, not at any age, especially when one of them is a mom and a wife of fifteen years. That's why it confuses me when he tries to be nice to my brother and me. Sure, he has money and can take us places and show us a good time, but that doesn't change the fact that he's the reason my parents split. "I just don't love your dad anymore." That's the crap I had to hear in a family meeting. My dad was sitting to the side, hiding his head in his lap, sobbing. I watched him do that often around that time. He would come to me for advice on how to win her back and how to impress her, like I knew something he didn't. I was thirteen, watching the strongest person I knew, my role model, drown in his own tears beside me. That was the hardest part. He always had the answers, he always knew everything. Not then. Then he was lost. The questions started coming when mommy started sleeping on the basement couch and daddy couldn't talk to us about it without losing it. Every day he had some surprise for her. Dresses, jewelry, candy... you name it. One time I helped him set one up. We hung a box of peeps (her favorite marshmallow candy) from the light in our garage so when she pulled her car in, the box would lay on her windshield, forcing her to notice it. Days went by and the peeps went untouched... Any candy she received ended up going to us kids. That's when I started telling my dad to get her my favorite candy instead. Jerry must have had something better at his house. That's where she would rather be.

Almost an hour into my movie, I was interrupted by the back door swinging open. I could see the shadow of my mom's curly hair as she stumbled through the doorway. She didn't say anything. That's how I knew she was drunk. It's like she feels the need to hide how drunk she is so she says the absolute minimum.

I shouted to her “Hi momma! You’re home early.” She hobbled around the corner so I could see her and rested her arm on the wall. I looked up to see a mop of blonde hair and mascara smeared around her glossy eyes.

“Hi honey.” she said, squeezing out a fake smile.

“What happened?” I asked, obviously concerned.

She came closer, clasping her hands together. “Oh... Stacy got kind of pissy and I didn’t want anything to do with it... so I left.” She shrugged her shoulders.

“You just left? How did you get here?”

“We got a taxi... She went a little crazy Chase.” she said, shaking her head.

“Well, was it because you were kissin’ on Jerry or what?” I asked, assuming it was.

She hesitated and looked around the room like a little kid when they get caught doing something naughty. “Well yeah, I was dancing with him and I kissed him a few times or whatever... but Stacy saw and wanted to get her grind on too, of course. So she did and then I said something to her, basically like... uh, Stacy... You’re not gonna win. Or something like that.”

I gasped.

She continued, “Oh she did NOT like that... She started hitting me right there in front of all those people.”

I paused the movie and sat up. “Oh my god mom, are you okay?” The image of my mother being in a fight was horrifying. She’s just like me. Shy and easily embarrassed from any attention. She’s strong, but Stacy is visibly stronger. My friends call Stacy the “Man-Woman.” She’s a nice girl and I almost don’t blame her. Try dating a guy for seventeen years just to watch

some pretty blonde girl dance with him, knowing that she's also sleeping with him. What do you expect? Mom looked like she was going to tear up.

“Awe mom... I'm sorry,” I sighed and stood up to hug her... She held me tight.

“I didn't know what to do. I didn't want to fight, so I just ran away.”

I tried imagining it. Hair pulling, screaming, a circle forming around them so everyone could see. In my vision, Jerry wasn't the one to break them up. In reality, I have no idea, but I can see my mom throwing Stacy off herself, creating enough space to escape through the crowd.

The back door opened again and Jerry walked in. “You wouldn't believe it, but she found me again through all of those people and started punching and screaming AGAIN! Oh yeah, we made a big scene honey.”

I felt a tear drop on my neck. “I didn't like it.” She said. I felt her pain in my chest. She was so sad. Jerry walked in past the TV without making eye contact with anyone, silently looked around and strutted back out. He looked like a lost child. I heard him close my mom's bedroom door behind him. I let her go and she sniffled and wiped her eyes.

“Jesus, it's like highschool all over again, huh,” I said shaking my head at her.

She chuckled. “We left her there... She has the car and I'm sure she'll try to come here.”

I plopped back down on the couch. “Well it wouldn't be the first time. Do I need to box Stacy when she gets here? I'm not afraid to hit a chick. I can handle it.”

She laughed. “No, I don't want you to even open the door. We are going to lock everything and if she shows up, I'm just going to call the cops.”

“Okay, whatever you say Momma.”

I resumed my movie after she went into her room. A couple minutes went by before she came running back out.

“I’m going to Jerry’s, I left my iPad there!” she shouted, getting dressed. “I can’t believe I forgot that,” she finished, somewhat quieter.

I jumped up, pausing my movie for the second time.

“Whoa, whoa, whoa! YOU’RE driving?”

“Yeah my iPad is at Jerry’s house. I have to go get it.”

She saw my facial expression and it must have showed exactly what I wanted it to, which was, *Are you stupid?* because she added, “Unless you want to drive me there. We have to hurry though.”

I was already slipping into my coat and shoes, walking out the door, chasing after her. *Of course I’m driving, you crazy chick. Are you trying to get yourself killed?*

“You’re freakin’ crazy Ma. Is Stacy on her way home or what?”

“Not yet, but she will be soon, I’m sure.” she said, getting into the passenger seat. “Lets go, lets go, lets go honey, please hurry.”

I started the car and sped off towards Jerry’s house. It’s only a five-minute drive, but enough to have a conversation quickly turning into me lecturing my mother on how she lives her life.

“I don’t know why you guys do this to yourselves. You act like teenagers. Why can’t you just... I don’t know...be normal?”

I'm not very good at this type of thing, but believe me, with all this practice, someday I'll be one helluva father. The only difference is the teenagers I currently babysit have much more developed bank accounts than most. And also a few more wrinkles on their foreheads.

"Why couldn't Jerry drive you?" I asked after thinking about it for a while.

"Well he's had quite a bit to drink tonight too."

"So he was going to let you risk your life instead? What a great guy."

She sat in silence.

"Okay NOW she is on her way home!" she exclaimed, looking at her phone.

"What the heck? You guys have a tracking device on Stacy?"

We got close to his house and I only knew where to turn because she told me seven times. For the last two I was already halfway up the lengthy driveway towards the garage. I parked outside the middle of the three garage doors, she hit the door opener above my head and hopped out. I met her in front of the car to pass her the keys. From there she took off in a dead sprint through the garage towards the house. She must not have seen the five steps leading up to the door because it looked like she tried running straight through them. Her mind was thinking "BEAST MODE," but her body was saying "Yo... you're super drunk right now... you should probably take a seat." And that's exactly what she did. She tripped over the first step, somehow caught her balance, twisted completely around, now facing me, and then crashed on her butt between the stairs and a crate of beer cans (which she dropped her keys into). I rushed over to help her up, laughing hysterically. It was one of those moments where everything you see, seems to go down a hair slower than normal. Which is brilliant if you ask me because then you can fully comprehend everything that just took place. At one point she was balancing on one foot

with all of her other limbs flailing wildly in the air, but smooth somehow, like a pissed-off, inflexible ballerina. A flip flop was flung through the air and luckily I was able to dodge the friendly fire. Through all of this commotion, for some reason, my eyes could really only fix themselves on her face. Her expression held the perfect mixture of focus and confusion, like she was trying so hard to fix what she did, but had no idea how she got there. She never said a word. There was no “Oh shit!” or “WHOA!” Nothing until she burst into laughter after hearing mine.

“Jesus Ma, be careful! You’re drunk!” I whispered loudly.

With my help back to her feet and climbing up the stairs she said, “Gosh, I’m sorry honey, I didn’t even think I was really even that drunk. Jeepers criminally.”

She climbed inside and started sprinting through the enormous house to find her iPad. Like a hall monitor, I shouted after her. “Slow down!” In a matter of forty seconds we were both running out to the car together. Soon we were driving and turning back out onto the road. We didn’t do much but laugh the rest of the ride home. I could argue that we passed Stacy’s vehicle on our way, but mom swore it wasn’t, so that was the end of that. When we got home we locked the doors again. She told me she loved me very much and thanked me a couple times for helping her and went to bed. I stayed there for a while to make sure Stacy didn’t show up, but mostly because I still hadn’t finished my movie.

On my way out, I made sure the door was locked behind me, then headed down the driveway to my car parked on the street. All it took was two steps before I heard a deep, gnarly growl coming from straight ahead. I froze, looking up to spot the beast it was coming from. The darkness did nothing but make matters worse. It looked like a black bear with its matted hair and

it's massive size. I could see the cloud of hot air forming around it's mouth. The growl was steady and convincing.

"What the fuuuck is this?" I squeaked in a high pitched voice.

As if it heard me, it barked furiously.

It's cool. It's just the neighbor's dog. They keep it tied up.

I took some very confident steps down the driveway, but the dogs' reaction sent me backpedaling behind my house with my hands up. It started charging in my direction and then backed off into the yard across the street from ours, keeping its eyes locked on me the whole way. *Okay, so obviously it's not chained up.... Cool. I'm going to be eaten by a crazy stray dog in the middle of the night and no one will even know.*

I reached for the door handle and tried to turn it. Starting to panic, I knocked and no one came. I couldn't expect anyone to hear me through four different doors. I peeked my head around the corner. *I wonder how stupid I look right now...* The dog was still in the yard across the street, now pacing. I remembered seeing it there before. That was it's home. *I know you. Why are you outside with no leash and no one watching you? Your owners are trying to get me killed!*

I took a deep breath. "Okay stop being a little bitch," I said.

I stepped out slowly. It saw me, of course, and continued to bark. It's pacing had sped up now. *It's a nice dog. A little golden retriever, my favorite.* I kept moving forward.

It lunged toward the street and I raised my clenched fists, still walking. It stopped at the edge of its yard.

"And if you're mean that's cool too, I'm not afraid to fight a dog what up, come at me bro."

That was a decent pep talk dude, thanks.

I reached the front yard and decided there was no way I was making it to my car.

RETREAT! I side stepped to the front door and rang the doorbell. Just incase that didn't work, I was already calling my mom's phone. She opened the door and I pushed my way inside.

"There's a dog out there, I can't get to my car, it wants to attack me," I rambled out, breathing heavily.

She barely poked her head outside, "I don't see anything."

I grabbed her arm and pulled her out of the house. "I'll show you."

I took off through the yard towards my car and the barking came back.

"Chase, that's just the neighbor's dog, it's a golden retriever, it's not going to do anything to you."

"Really mom? 'Cause that's not what I'm seein'."

The dog started to move more anxiously in the yard again, still watching my every move. I think she noticed this because she yelled, "Hurry up and get in your car!" like she was irritated with me.

I don't know why, but something about my mom being there to watch me get ripped to pieces by this vicious animal made me feel so much better about the situation, as if witnessing my death would give my life some kind of meaning. Or maybe it just made me look like a giant pussy. I crept up to the passenger side of my car, thinking I could open it and climb over the console once I was in. There was no keyhole. I wanted to cry. *This is how it ends. Is this really what my life has come to?* I walked around as discrete as possible with my back completely exposed. *He could take me at any moment.* I wrestled with the keys for a second. When I

unlocked the door my mom probably only heard me yelp “Bye mom, love...” because I was cut off by the door slamming behind me. Out of the corner of my eye I saw the dog leap into the street.

“Ha! Now what BITCH!” I yelled from inside. I didn’t wait long to start the car and get the hell out of there, keeping an eye on him to make sure I didn’t run him over. On the way home to my dorm I listened to my ‘feel good’ playlist, lit a cigarello because I was feeling “stressed” and read Jerry’s text one more time. It said, “Chase, come with us to Hairball tonight. It’ll be fun! This is Jerry.”

Ha! SO much fun... I grinned. That was my most recent visit to Momma’s house and sadly, it was the most fun I’ve had in weeks.