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My Baby Rexi

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My Baby Rexi

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Someone has stolen my Baby Rexi

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I'm not simple.

A lot of people here are at the Antioch Assisted Living Community are. They are either simple or just too old to take care of themselves. But according to Coach Clarence I don't belong in either group.

"I don't even know what you're doing here, kid." He'll say.

Coach Clarence always calls me kid, even though I'm eight years older than him. I don't mind though. He's much taller than me, and it would feel wrong for me to call him "kid". Once I asked him why he was called a coach, and he said that was a good question.

"I went to school a lot of years, and got a lot of titles, but they never called me coach until I showed up here at Antioch, kid."

I think Coach Clarence likes me. I help him carry the trays in after lunch. Most people here don't care to be helpful, but I figure the coaches do so much for us, that the least we can do is help out every once and a while. I don't blame the others though. They are simple after all.

I'm not simple.

*

Antioch is a good place. I've been here for 5 years, and already it's so much better than Fairmont. I have my own room, and it comes with a TV. I almost got my TV taken away once. I gave \$300 dollars to a man on a commercial who said he was doing God's work here on earth. But I only had \$300, and I guess it turned out I needed the money more than he did. The floors in the hall, outside my room, are carpeted. The cafeteria has a black and white checkered linoleum

floor. I try to only step in the black squares. I don't think anything would happen to me if I stepped in a white one, I just think it's a funny thing to try.

Everyone can talk here. Apparently that's very important.

"You know what dumb means, kid?"

"Yeah."

"It means you can't talk."

"Dumb?"

"Yes. It means you can't say a word. Nobody here is dumb."

I didn't call anybody dumb.

"At the other place I work there are plenty of people who can't talk. And there are plenty of people who can't stop talking. It's real different there. Antioch is a good place. Remember that, kid"

There is no violence at Antioch either. That's also important. We haven't had a case of violence in eight years, according to the black plaque with the golden letters outside the main entrance. I asked Coach Clarence once if the letters were made of real gold and he said no. Isn't it interesting that there are two things in the world that look just like real gold: Real gold being one of them, and the stuff they use to write on black plaques being the other.

I saw real gold at the beach once.

Jules was still here, which means it must have been a long time ago. But a big bus came. A black bus, with red seats. And every seat had a seatbelt, but for some reason no one concerned themselves with buckling up. I didn't either. We got to pick who we sat with that day, and I sat with Jules.

We were all waiting for Jason to put on his socks. The coaches had told him maybe twenty-five times to hurry, but Jason was real slow. And when I went to see what was going on, there was Jason, standing in the middle of the cafeteria in his bare feet. He looked like a chess piece, standing there in the center of a black square, on Antioch's black and white checkered floor.

I helped him put on his socks. I hated it, because Jason's feet smelled like old tomato soup. Plus his arches were real high, and his socks were real small, so it was hard to pull them over his feet. But Jules really wanted to go to the beach, so I helped. It was worth it even though my hands smelled like old tomato soup all day.

I remember Jules threw an old plastic water bottle into the ocean, time and time again. No matter how far she threw it, it would always return to her. A man with a metal detector walked by us, and found gold under the sand. I saw it for a second, but he scooped it up quickly and hurried away. So I just watched the bottle instead. It moved like a garden snake in quick sand, gliding along the surface just quick enough never to sink. Jules wasn't simple either.

I told Coach Clarence about the gold, and he said he'd never even seen real gold. I think he likes me. He's the one who told me to write this. He said if I wrote down my story maybe someone would read it, and then if they saw my Baby Rexi they would know to return him to me. He said I needed to write everything I remembered.

*

When I was very young, Mum taught me to help. She told me to always say please and to always say thank you. Jules and I taught Rexi the same thing. He is the most polite baby in the whole world.

40 years ago I was just a baby. And the first thing I remember is this blaring music. It filled my head. I don't remember the song. It might have been *Maxwell's Silver Hammer*. But it just filled my head, and Mum said she never should have played me that music.

*

Fifteen years ago I was in Alcoholics Anonymous. I don't think this is important, but Coach Clarence said I needed to include everything. I went every Thursday, and it was run by a man named Mr. Arnold Pet. He didn't like to be called Mr. Pet, but we couldn't just call him Arnold either, so we had to call him Mr. Arnold Pet.

Mr. Arnold Pet had been an alcoholic for 45 years, but hadn't had a drink in 30. He didn't seem much like an alcoholic to me, but he sat there every Thursday, just like the rest of us. He always wore a buttoned down shirt, underneath a sweatshirt, so you could just see the collar. It felt like he was tricking us in some way.

I met my best friend at AA. His name was Marcus, and he was much taller than me. He had long hair, and a beard, and looked sort of like a strange version of Jesus. He was thin too, but he always wore blue jeans and a white T-shirt.

"I've been sober for 30 years" Marcus impersonated Mr. Arnold Pet any time he left the room, to the delight of the whole crowd. "Can I freshen anyone's cucumber water during the break?"

My favorite part of AA was getting to see Marcus's impression. And most Thursday's after the meeting he and I would hang out and tell stories in the lobby.

"You know why I always wear close-toed shoes?" He asked me once.

"Why?"

“Because a little garden snake bit my dad. Right on his big toe. Those little bastards are fast, and you never can see them coming. And they could be anywhere.”

Marcus was right of course. There is no need to risk getting bit for no reason by a snake. I prefer walking in the grass though, even with my shoes on. There are fewer people walking in the grass.

When I first met Coach Clarence he would always say

“Show me your friends, and I’ll show you your future.”

So I showed him an old picture of Marcus. It’s strange I haven’t seen him in 15 years now. I hoped coach Clarence would notice his resemblance to Jesus.

“What’s this?”

“This is Marcus.”

“I mean why are you showing me this?”

“Because he is my friend.”

“Well that’s good, kid. It’s good to have friends.”

“You said to show you our friends.”

“Oh.” Coach Clarence laughed right out loud. It may be the only time I have ever seen his teeth. They were pure white. “That’s just a saying, kid. It just means to try and surround yourself with the right types of people”

“Well Marcus was a good guy.”

“Well, then you’ve probably got a bright future, kid”

Coach Clarence always calls me kid.

*

“**Rexi** wants seconds, please!”

“He can’t have seconds! He just ate dinner and dessert!”

“He just wants more dessert, he says!”

“He didn’t even eat his carrots!”

Carrots suck!

“Woah, did you hear that? Rexi said that carrots suck!”

“He shouldn’t know that word”

“He learnt it from YOU!”

“He did not.”

I learnt it from you mumma!

“See!”

Jules laughed. We all laughed.

*

“**H**e just wants attention.” Chuck told Mum.

Chuck’s my brother, and is a TV actor. He was visiting from Los Angeles at the time. He had already been in about five Television shows, and he would always get me a shirt from each show he was on. I know Mum loves me a lot, but I could tell she would listened to Chuck in a different way than she listened to me. For me she listens just to listen, but with Chuck, she listens to act. I’m all right with that, though. Chuck is real smart.

“But he’s been going every Thursday.”

Mum, me, Chuck, and Mr. Arnold Pet all sat in a small room together. This was an important day for me, because it was the day I went to Fairmont.

“Do you think your son is an Alchohauic, mam?” Mr. Arnold Pet seemed to have some strange satisfaction in his lips as he said these words. I felt like I was in trouble.

“No.” I have never seen my mother cry. I still haven’t, but she looked pretty close in that small room.

“He just wants attention.” Chuck said again.

“Are you an Alcoholic, dear?”

My mother’s eyes looked so blue that day. They were almost a different color. Usually they were light, like the sky, but they seemed almost royal that day. My mother had blue eyes and my father had brown eyes. But both me and chuck got blue eyes, which apparently is rare. If one of your parents has brown eyes, and the other has blue eyes, there is a $\frac{3}{4}$ chance you’ll have brown eyes. Both me and Chuck beat the odds. Although chuck does have one streak of brown through his left eye. Somewhere I read, you should never write about eyes. I don’t remember why.

“I don’t know Mum. I do drink.”

“Your not an Alcoholic.” Chuck seemed so sure

“I don’t know Mum. But that would be a good thing though, right? Wouldn’t it would be good if I wasn’t an alcoholic?”

Her eyes were almost an entirely different color that day.

*

I got Rexi for Jules.

We had been together a year, and I knew what I needed to get her.

The first time I ever slept in the same bed as Jules, we stayed up all night. I knew right away that I loved her. We told one another everything. We talked about our parents, and how we ended up at Antioch. I told her how Chuck was on TV. And she told me that her father had played minor league baseball. But after about 4 hours of talking, we got real sleepy. There was a

break in the conversation for about thirty minutes. I remember because I heard music playing off somewhere in the background. I couldn't place what song it was. Usually I can.

"You know what I always wanted when I was a girl?"

"What?"

"A baby Dinosaur."

He was sitting on my pillow the first time Jules saw him. She loved him instantly, and she hugged him. He was so little back then. He was our baby.

*

"I miss Jules."

"Jules just didn't need to be here anymore, kid."

"Do you think she'll ever come back?"

"I don't think so."

Jules moved to Maine, to live with her mother three years ago.

*

You should never live in the moment.

That's what Fairmont was like, for me. Well I guess that's what Olanzapine was like. All you had was the moment. There was no time really. I guess I was on it for ten years, but I really couldn't tell you. I smoked non-stop back then. I just liked watching the ember move down the cigarette. It was the only way I could tell time was passing.

Mum said she didn't like the way I was on the Olanzapine. She said I wasn't happy. Even Chuck said it was a mistake. Chuck always said I had a good memory, too.

“He’s got one of those freak memories. Like he’ll remember the name of the dog of the man who lived across the street when we were eight. Or the song that was playing in the car during some long drive on some nothing day.” He told my Mum.

But apparently on the Olanzapine it was like I couldn’t even remember what I had just said. Which would make sense, because I couldn’t even remember what I had just thought. Every thought was sort of endless, like a loop that kept going and going, and by the end of it you couldn’t even remember how the thought had started.

*

I would like you to stay please, mumma.

“Rexi. Stop.”

I would like you to stay please, mumma.

“Rexi. Can we just not talk about that for a second? I would like to just be with you two for a moment, and not think about that.”

I would like you to stay please.

*

Coach Clarence says he’s from Iowa. He played soccer all through high school, until he tore his ACL. Then he became a doctor. He went to college, and graduate school, all in Iowa. But when he was 30 he moved here. He’s lived here for 4 years, and he’s never once gone back to Iowa.

“Put a lot in the story, kid.”

“Why?”

“Because the more you put in the story, the more likely it will be that you can get Rexi back”

“Do you think Jason stole Rexi?”

“No kid.”

“But you do think Rexi was stolen, right?”

“I just think maybe if he was, and the person who took him knew how much you missed him, they might give him back.”

“Can’t I just say that I miss my baby Rexi?”

“Please, just trust me on this one, kid.”

Coach Clarence always called me kid.

*

If anyone has seen my baby Rexi, please return him to me. He is tiny. He has small arms, and sharp teeth. He will sometimes eat two or three helpings of food. He loves chocolate especially, but it keeps him up at night. He’s five years old, which is ten to us. But he is still tiny. Rexi never grew, because he’s still just a baby. He was given to me by Jules, who I love. He’s good natured and polite. But he’s young, so he doesn’t know everything yet. I miss him and I’d like him back please.