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The Perfect Babysitter

I WAS A NORMAL KID, my old man made sure of that. Boys will be boys, girls will be girls as far as he was concerned. The fact that Laurie liked girls, that was not something she could ever tell him. As far as he was concerned, Laurie was a career girl in the big city who had no time for marriage and kids.

The old man didn't know how to explain Jimmy so he never mentioned him. It was like he was never born. When Eddie came back from the Navy with a tattoo, my old man went after him with a kitchen knife, said he was gonna cut that fucking anchor off his arm if it was the last thing he ever did. Eddie stayed away a couple years and now when we get together for a funeral or whatever, he always wears a long sleeve shirt.

None of my brothers and sisters listened to the old man but I did, maybe because I was the runt of the litter, everybody's kid brother. After Mom left, it was just him and me so naturally I absorbed what you might call his philosophy. When he told me to quit hanging around with the Van Alstynes, I was pissed, sure. They were like my only friends. But he said they were child molesters or something, so that was it for them. Dad and me, we'd fish, go hunting, watch baseball on TV. Never football. He said they liked to huddle too much, whatever that meant.

I didn't tell him about Christine at first. How could I take a chance on that? She was a normal girl but I figured he'd find something wrong with her. The double shifts at the mill kept him busy so me and her had plenty of privacy. She was the one who had a car and we'd take off for these long rides into the country. It was thanks to her that I learned to love nature.

I was surprised my old man didn't make a big deal when Christine's mother came over and said I had to marry her. They were Catholic or whatever so she couldn't get rid of the kid. My Dad said sure enough. He even seemed a little bit proud of me. After he got busted up and couldn't hardly walk anymore, he offered to watch Junior and he's turned out to be the perfect babysitter. He's teaching the little guy right from wrong and even toilet trained him which was a big help since Christine didn't have time for things like that, working all the time at the Thruway restaurant like she does.