

If David had been born a dragon, the burn in his gut wouldn't bother him. Regretfully, he had not been born a dragon. Instead, he had the *wonderful* opportunity to be born in a dingy little trailer park that reeked of cigarette smoke and musty clothes.

His mother, Louise, who had barely been old enough to call herself an adult when she swelled with his life, never did confess to him who had sired him. David liked to think that it was better this way – *at least* he only had to bury one parent instead of two.

Burying one parent is how he ended up here, drinking the cheapest whiskey money could buy while holed up in some grimy motel room that looked as disheveled as he felt.

The chair squealed in protest as he pushed back against it. He slammed the whiskey tumbler on the fake wood top of the hotel room's desk. His eyes studied the glassware despite having known the look for his entire life. He weighed the object in his hand thoughtfully; the feel of it in his palm was second nature. The base of the glass had four corners which spiraled up and eventually turned into a perfect circle at the top of itself – the age shown by the number of scratches and chips adorning it. It looked like it had been to hell and back – David probably took it there himself.

He never knew his father, but he knew this whiskey glass well – too well. He knew it had been his father's – it was the only thing Louise had kept from him, aside from David himself. Its existence his only connection to the fabled father.

*"I reckon he didn't have the time to grab it."* Louise had said when David asked her about it. She was telling him about how his father practically bolted out of his skin, and the trailer park, when she told him that she was pregnant. She said it lovingly, her eyes taking on a faraway look like she was remembering a beautiful sunset. He was gone by the time she woke up the next morning.

Louise had not been gone for long though – six months. But six months without his mother might as well have been six months without sunlight. She usually brought a certain kind of brightness wherever she went – even that godforsaken trailer park he grew up in. Truthfully, David couldn't remember hating his hometown until she dropped dead one Thursday afternoon. He'd been at work and thought it was strange that she hadn't called him while she cooked dinner – that had always been their routine. So, when he'd come over to check on her but found her lifeless on the kitchen floor, the only thing he could think of was how horrendous it smelled in that neighborhood. Trash and debris lined the road like streetlights did in the better parts of town.

His lovely mother with her bubbly personality lying dead in an oversized ashtray of a place.

*Should've had her cremated.* He thought cynically but immediately regretted the thought.

If Louise could see him now, she would scold him. She'd confess her disappointment and sigh, lamenting about how if his father had been a better man and stuck around, maybe he wouldn't have ended up like this.

His warped reflection stared back at him though the whiskey glass. His sense of self as transparent as the version of himself that he saw in the cup. Had his father done this while holding the same vessel? Had he holed up in some cheap motel room and contemplated his decisions the same way David was now?

The thought made him shudder.

Up until recent events, David had prided himself of being a different man from the father he'd never met. The only thing they shared was their taste in liquor and the vessel they consumed it from. But this connection, this fragile thread that tied him to a father that didn't stay, was starting to unravel.

He poured himself another shot and downed it. His lip curled at the taste, and David found his head in his hand. He felt sorry enough as it was, he didn't need these self-pitying thoughts clouding his mind. After all, contemplating was not how he liked to spend his time, but for some reason he couldn't stop himself tonight. All roads seemed to lead here.

With his gaze fixed on the bottle that contained the antidote to his sleepless nights, David reached over to it as if he was in a dream. To his own surprise, he shoved the bottle off the desk, glass and whiskey splattering over the floor and his ankles.

"Shit," he muttered to himself as he sprang into action.

Glass cut his bare feet, and he gritted his teeth in response. Would he be charged for leaving the room bloodier than he found it?

David dabbed at the mess he created, feeling an odd clarity as he did so. Blood and liquor mixed to create a strange amber concoction. He felt like he was looking at his own lifeblood as he dabbed the contents off the ground and his legs.

Once he felt like it was clean *enough*, he found himself crawling into bed and slipping into unconsciousness easier than he had in a long time.

When he awoke the next morning and checked out, the whiskey glass sat on the motel room desk. David did not miss the weight of it in his overnight bag as he moved forward. Instead, he slung his bag into the passenger seat of his truck. He slid into the driver's seat easily; he was the only one to ever use this car after he fixed it up.

When he put the car in drive, his mind took a back seat. He was driving with no awareness of where he was going. Soon the trees began to look familiar. The bumps in the road eased his tumbling stomach with their familiarity. When he saw the cute little house at the end of the block, he knew he was in the right place. The wisteria was growing up the fence and he found himself smiling as he knocked on the door.

Maisy answered, like she always did. This time, her hand pressed itself to the gentle curve of her stomach and the life growing inside.

“You figure yourself out?” She asked, no accusation in her voice.

“I did,” David replied.

“Good,” Maisy stepped to the side and ushered David into her home. “Because I would’ve chased you down if you bolted.”

David smiled and kissed the top of her head. He was not his father. He would end any similarities they shared now.