

Becoming Gaby

Without a word, Bill walked into the kitchen and grabbed another beer.

“How was your day?” Gaby asked.

“Okay.” He sat down at the table as she rose to leave. “At least the loser isn’t drinking all my beers anymore,” he said, more to himself.

Gaby heard him and stopped in her tracks.

“What kind of father calls his own son a loser?”

“One who knows who he’s dealing with.”

Bill walked back to the TV.

He had become the worst version of himself over the past few years.

Where was the man who had once been full of ambition, fired up about starting his own business? The man who had promised to outshine his father’s junkyard, expanding beyond old furniture and antique nonsense to include car parts and real profit?

Back then, he would tease her, play with their sons, and take pride in putting money on the table, covering a solid half of the household expenses. Back when he still had confidence as a man.

But the moment her success started to surpass his, when she hired employees, took on more clients, something in him stalled. It was as if his own engine had died.

What was she supposed to do? Turn down opportunities just to protect his ego?

Gaby fixed a sandwich for Mark and walked to the barn. She found him busy cleaning another messy area.

“Hi, Mark.”

Mark didn’t even acknowledge her presence.

“I brought you something to eat.”

“Not hungry.”

“How are things going with your new courses?”

He took a moment before he answered, staying busy.

“Fine.”

A small box containing bolts and nuts, old and all dusty, sat on the counter. She put it in front of him. It surprised him. He looked at her for an explanation.

“Can you get me a gold necklace from that box?”

“What?”

“You heard me.”

“Mom, there ain’t any fancy gold necklace in that box or anywhere in that freakin’ barn.”

“Would you say I would be stupid to keep looking for it, day after day, even if every single day leaves me empty-handed?”

“What’s your point?”

“The point is, this is exactly what you’ve been doing for years, Mark. With your dad. You’re hoping he will eventually give you the compliments and recognition you deserve. But it’s not in his box, Mark. I’ve known him longer than you. It’s not in his box and never was. You need to look somewhere else to get the gold you deserve. Maybe your teachers will give it to you. And I certainly want you to know I am proud of you. I will be prouder the day you stand up to your dad and tell him what

you want to do with your life. This cleaning the barn thing is ridiculous, and you know it.”

Mark looked down.

Gaby walked out.