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## Waiting Up for Mom and Dad

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# Waiting up for Mom and Dad

by Susan Harrison

The recliner was pulled out as far as possible. He lay stretched across its length, his feet dangling over the footrest. His blonde hair curled around his long thin face. He was restless. I could tell by the way he played with the lever which adjusted the fuzzy blue chair. His body jerked slightly at the call of the chair, but his weight prevented any actual change in position.

"Waiting up for Mom and Dad."

"Do you wanta make popcorn?"

"No." He lay back in the chair and stared up at the ceiling. "Let's get drunk."

"Where'll we get the booze? Dad will kill us if we drink his."

"I already got some."

He stressed the "I" letting me know he was always on top

of things. He was laughing and his grin stretched from ear to ear. His blue eyes were wide and questioning. He looked very proud of himself.

"Why not."

I had never gotten drunk with my brother before.

"What kind of booze do you have?"

"Whiskey and rum."

"Great!"

He adjusted the lever one more time and let the chair snap into a sitting position. At the same time he jumped to his feet and landed awkwardly on just one foot.

"Goofus."

At that he took a leap, jumping high above my body as I lay stretched out across the scarlet family-room floor. I tensed and imagined the holes his size twelve feet would make in my back. He twisted his body so that one foot landed on either side of me.

"Fooled Ya."

"Thank God I'm skinny."

"Ha! That'll be the day."

"Go get the booze." I commanded.

Still laughing he stepped over me, skirted around the Christmas tree, and raced up the stairs three at a time. I sat up and went into the kitchen to find something to mix Nicky's treasure with. He rushed into the kitchen, out of breath, and grinning his baby grin. It was hard to believe that he was my older brother.

"We got coke, tab, orange juice, and bitter lemon," I

observed.

"You be barmaid."

He sat down on the round wood table in the far corner of the kitchen. He put his feet on the golden wood chair in front of it. I fumbled with the bottles, spilling bitter lemon in a cut on my left hand.

"Shit."

"Lady-like."

"What do you care?"

I succeeded in mixing the drinks in two tall frosty glasses.

"Remember when we were little? How we used to sneak and make popcorn every Saturday night when Mom and Dad went out?"

I looked at him, surprised, I was thinking the same thing.

"Yeah, we weren't supposed to turn on the stove and we had to open the windows and doors so they couldn't smell it."

"I think they knew."

"Yeah."

I handed him the drink and sat down on his feet on the chair. I rested my elbow on his knee.

"Mom and Dad are pretty cool, you think?"

"Yeah, I never knew 'till I went away to school."

"Me neither."

I looked up at him, noticing the Penn State emblem circling around his pocket. I took a sip of my drink. It was sour and very strong. I congratulated myself on finally learning to mix a good drink.

"How is school? I haven't heard you complaining about it this year."

"It's gotten better."

"Yeah, I thought it would. Who's the guy I heard you telling Mom about?"

"Oh, no-one special."

"I bet."

I really didn't want to tell Nicky about Joel. He was very good at helping me with my guy-troubles, but he was seldom very interested when I thought I was in love. We didn't talk for awhile, just sipped our drinks in silence.

"Let's go watch t.v.."

"Okay."

I jumped up and headed for the family room. He grabbed the glass out of my hand before I got too far.

"Same thing?"

"Okay."

I lay back down facing the t.v.. My feet hit the gold couch on the other side of the room I tried to push it back against the wall, but it was no use. The news paraded before me, but little of it sank in.

"Jackie."

His voice called me from the kitchen.

"What. I'm trying to hear the weather."

"Do you really want to get drunk?"

"Yeah."

"Let's do shots then."

"Okay."

He came into the room carrying our two glasses and holding the bottle under his arm. A shot glass was sticking out of his mouth.

"Gross me out. This isn't your fraternity."

He popped it out of his mouth with a sharp contraction of his jaw. It landed on my back and neatly rolled onto the floor. I got up and went to the kitchen to wash it.

"Okay, mom, let's hit the bottle."

Saturday Night Live came on the t.v., it's familiar players promising a good show. We both did a couple of shots, then picked up our drinks and laughed at the comedy before us. At the first commercial we drank a couple more shots.

"Nicky, remember when we were little and we used to hide all Dad's socks?"

"Yeah, and he used to get real pissed at Mom cause he thought she didn't do the laundry."

"And remember how we used to call Mom "Bomba"?"

We were laughing so hard he couldn't answer.

"And you used to burp real loud at dinner . . ."

He let out a huge belch. We rolled on the floor kicking our feet in the agony of laughing. We each drank two more shots. The brown liquor burned my throat and my stomach was complaining.

"I need another drink."

He picked up my glass and headed for the kitchen.

"You forgot the whiskey."

"I want rum."

"Then mix mine with tab."

"Gross, how about orange juice?"

"No. I want tab."

The room felt suddenly cold without him. I got up and stood by him in the kitchen. I watched my brother's long, thin fingers pouring the drinks into the now warm glasses.

"I'll get some ice."

I reached into the freezer, but of course there was none.

"Nicky, there isn't any."

"Well, the tab and juice are cold."

I closed the door, leaving two smudgy fingerprints on the shiny chrome surface. I turned to find Nicky sticking his fingers in my drink, mixing it up, then repeating the process.

"Tastey.."

"You're so foul."

I grabbed the drink from him.

"But I'm cute, just ask any of the girls at school."

"Spare me."

I looked at him, wondering how any girl could help falling in love with his charms. We raced into the family room, spilling our drinks and hitting the floor at the same instant. The house shook around us.

"I dare you to chug it."

"What?"

"Chug your drink."

"I'll get sick."

"And they call that place a party school!"

"Shit."

I chugged. The warm liquor and tab choked me. My head

felt very dizzy and my eyes watered. Nicky didn't say anything to me but I could feel him laughing.

"Never could pass up a dare, could you?"

"Shut-up."

I grabbed his foot and started tickling. I knew it was his weakest spot.

"Stop it."

Before I could build up my defense he grabbed me and I was tickled all over. I was laughing so hard I couldn't breathe. I tried to fight him off, but he was too strong.

"Nicky, I'm going to tell Mom," I gasped.

He just laughed and kept on tickling. I finally got hold of his hands and managed to wiggle out from under the weight of his arm.

"Jerk!"

He didn't say anything. We stared at each other for a minute. I wondered if it meant peace. Then, he kissed me. It was a long kiss, firm and yet gentle. He put his arms around me and held me very tight. His tongue caressed my mouth and I responded. I tried to open my eyes but something wouldn't let me break the embrace. The kiss ended as quickly as it began. I looked at his serious expression, his blue eyes filled with questions and his mouth set in a straight line. I started giggling. Then he started. We laughed and giggled and roared and shook until we had to stop from exhaustion. My face was swimming with tears and I felt an intense urge to go to the bathroom.

I got up and headed for the stairs catching sight of a car

entering the drive.

"Mom and Dad are home."

Nicky ran to the front door and flicked on the porch lights a couple of times. We stood at the window and watched the two people clamber out of the green sedan. They waved to us, as they had on countless Saturday nights in the past. I remembered the bottles then. I grabbed them up and shoved them behind the chair just as Mom and Dad entered the room.

"Did you kids have fun?"

We looked at each other, then at them.

Nicky said, "Sure did Mom. How about you?"