The Birthday Party

By C. Jade Wyton

It's Trent and Logan's ninth birthday, today. There is a lot for them to do, and a lot of people for them to meet— All of that, and their day starts with a literal BANG!

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Clang!

Trent awoke with a start to the sound of something metallic and heavy crashing down in the kitchen.

He paused, waiting a moment to hear if another crash sounded… but nothing followed.

Had he just dreamt that?

No, it seemed too loud and real…. His mother must have been awake and making breakfast.

Which was weird, because she usually woke him to help her….

Wiping his eyes, Trent looked to his clock and realised it was seven in the morning; late for a school day, but early for the weekend….

It must have been the weekend, then….

Oh— Oh! Wait!

Trent straightened up in his chair and stretched out the stiffness in his back (something his mother *constantly* warned him would happen if he kept sleeping at his desk instead of in bed) before fumbling for his phone and checking the date.

It was his birthday!

Trent leapt to his feet and quickly changed into a fresh set of clothes, abandoning his pyjamas on the back of the chair he had just risen from as he dipped a hand into his tub-shaped bed so he could wet his gills and clean his eyes of the dried-up gunk that had formed.

Really, he just wanted to go running through the house screaming about how excited he was— But he'd done that last year when he'd turned eight, and now that he was nine he was realising it was a pretty childish thing to do…. He couldn't be childish like that anymore, could he? He was nine. He was practically an adult!

Well. He thought so, anyway— Even if other people kept telling him he was still just a kid.

Like. If he *wasn't* almost an adult, then why was he almost as tall as his mum was?

It was just logical, right?

Trent gave a sniff, adjusting his clothes one last time, before heading out to see what his mother was making.

It smelt like eggs. And… it…. Hm.

It smelt like it was burning, actually….

Trent walked a little faster, hurrying to the kitchen to see what was going on.
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His heart sunk.

His mother was sitting on the floor, her face in her knees. And the cake they had made together yesterday was spattered across the floor, looking almost like a bird that had been hit by a car. The stove was on, the food on it barely smelling like food anymore. And B.B was pawing playfully at his mother's tail, acting like he *wasn't* covered in icing.

It was a lot to walk into. Almost overwhelming! So Trent did what his mother always told him to do:

He took a deep, deep breath, and slowly counted to ten.

What was most important, right now?

The cake? His mother? The cat?

Probably the eggs that smelt like they were about to set off the fire alarm….

Trent stepped over the mess on the floor, quickly turning off the stove and moving the eggs to a cold burner.

B.B immediately began weaving around under his feet and he had to shoo the cat away before he was able to sit down next to his mother and put a hand on her shoulder.

'Mum?' he asked. 'Are you alright?'

'*I tripped on the fucking cat,*' she sniffed, before finally lifting her gaze to meet his. 'God, I'm sorry…. I ruined your cake.'

'That's okay,' Trent comforted, leaning against his mother. 'We can get another.'

'But this one was—' Tiffany cut off with a sharp, broken inhale. 'This one— You—'

'I know, and it's okay,' said Trent.

'I ruined it,' Tiffany repeated. 'You put so much work into it and I— I ruined it!'

Trent pulled his mother tight into himself. 'It's okay. We can get another. I'm not mad.'

'You're— You're not?' Tiffany wiped her eyes and sniffed. 'Really?'

'Nuh. Really,' Trent reassured. 'I mean, there's been lots of times *I've* made mistakes and you didn't get mad at *me*. Even some times when you maybe *should* have gotten mad at me.'

Tiffany took a long and slow breath, looking very much like she was counting to ten herself, and let it out as a sigh.

'And even when you *do* get mad you're still nice about it,' Trent said. 'Like… when we went out with Paisley and Browyn. Or when we summoned Asmodeus. Or— Or when we talk to strangers or break rules and do things you've told us a hundred times not to do. You still always make sure we're okay before you get upset at us. And if we're not okay you don't get mad. And… and you don't really seem okay right now, so I don't want to get mad at you.'

Tiffany sniffed again, straightening up and wiping the last of the gunk from her face. 'No, hon I— I'm fine. I just…. You're allowed to be mad at me for this.'

'I know,' Trent answered. 'I'm not, though.'

'Oh, you're an angel…' Tiffany cleared her throat, and Trent had to bite back an instinctual joke about how he most definitely was *not* an *angel*. 'I'm… I'm glad you're not mad. Sorry. I don't know why it made me so upset like that. It was a bit

of an overreaction….'

'You have a lot going on,' Trent said simply, resting his head on his mother's shoulder.

He was glad she chuckled.

'Are you hurt?' he asked.

'Mm, no, not really.'

'Not really, or not at all?' Trent asked firmly, echoing something he thought he remembered her saying once. 'Even a little bit hurt is still hurt, Mum. That's what you say to us. So even if you're a little bit hurt you have to tell me.'

Tiffany gave a defeated sigh and pulled up a pant leg; rolling it to reveal a forming bruise on her knee. 'This is the worst of it, hon. I'm fine.'

Without thinking, Trent bent down and pecked a kiss on the bruise; which his mother responded to with a short-but-loud laugh.

'Thank you, hon,' she chuckled, ruffling Trent's facial fins lovingly before rising to her feet. 'Alright, I'll start cleaning up and—'

'I'll do it,' Trent told her, standing up himself. 'You go sit down and rest.'

'Trent, hon, I'm not leaving you to clean up *my* mess.'

'Yes you are,' Trent retorted. 'You have to. You're hurt!'

'I'm fine, hon,' she shook her head. 'It's just a bump.'

'You need to sit down,' Trent said, firmly.

'I *need* to clean up,' Tiffany corrected.

'Mhm…. So what you're saying is that the next time *I'm* hurt or sick, *I* don't have to sit down and rest?' Trent asked, putting his hands on his hips in the same exaggerated way his mother always did when scolding him.

'Trent, you know that's not—'

'Lead by example, Mum,' Trent interrupted, a cheeky grin spreading across his face. 'I'm only nine. I still learn how to behave by watching you.'

Tiffany stared at her son, silently, for a long moment. Then, a humorous look spread over her face and she crossed her arms. 'Oh, you little brat.'

Trent's smile only grew when it was clear he had cheered his mother up— And he gave her a little push towards the door. 'Couch!' he demanded. 'Sit down! I'm in charge of the kitchen!'

'Okay, okay, you win!' Tiffany raised her hands in defeat. 'I'll go sit down and you can be a little weirdo and steal all my chores from me.'

'Good! Get out of here!' Trent shooed his mother away playfully.

'Okay, okay…. *Oh, and as for you, you absolute bastard!*' she mumbled, picking up the cat and holding him firmly against her chest. '*That's strike two. One more strike and I sacrifice your nuts to Havatii.*'

Trent laughed at his mother's threat. Then, he rolled up his sleeves and looked around. 'Okay, time to clean up!'

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Logan awoke to the muffled sound of his alarm, and rose from his bed to turn it off.

He took a deep breath as his head breached the surface of the water and winced at the brief-but-loud sound of his clock blaring at him.
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Something smelt burnt, he noted, wiping the water from his face. *He should check on that….*

The boy quickly dried himself off and made for the kitchen; stopping briefly in the lounge to look over his mother who was asleep in her armchair with the cat in her lap.

'Trent?' Logan asked as he poked his head in. 'Did you burn breakfast?'

'Mum burnt breakfast,' Trent corrected; motioning to the stove before taking a bite out of a very sad looking handful of frosting. 'And dropped the cake. So I cut off all the parts of the cake that touched the ground and I'm eating the clean parts for breakfast.'

'Oh,' Logan replied, sliding up to his brother's side and poking at the plate of ruined cake. 'Should we get another cake for the party?'

'I called Paisley and she's gonna get one,' said Trent, before sliding the plate closer to his brother. 'Do you want some? I'll make you real food if you don't.'

'No, I like cake,' Logan said as he took his own handful and bit into it. 'Thanks though.'

'Mhm,' Trent grunted a reply and wiped his hands on a nearby dish towel. 'By the way, Paisley said she was gonna be here in ten minutes like. Twenty minutes ago? So she'll probably be here in another… ten? I dunno. Triple whatever she said.'

'Yeah, okay,' Logan replied, stuffing more cake into his mouth before wiping his own hands. 'Do you think we should take the stuff for the party to the car while Mum's asleep?'

'Good idea,' Trent gave a nod and hurried out of the kitchen.

Logan followed him, trailing close behind as his brother strolled past his mother to the four bags of things that had been put aside in preparation for today.

'You can take this one?' Trent asked, handing Logan the lightest of the bags and taking the heavier ones for himself. 'And get the keys from Mum's bag? I'll meet you at the car.'

'Yeah,' Logan answered, making his way to his mother's room to search for her bag.

He found it on her bedside table and, hooking it over his shoulder, began to rummage through it for her keys as he headed back to the lounge.

He was passing his mother when he heard her phone give a low *bzzt!* with a text tone he'd heard a few times before, but who he'd never actually gotten an answer on who it was….

Unable to control his curiosity, he stepped over to the coffee table and picked up the phone to look at the messages his mother had been receiving.

The newest text was from….

Logan scrunched up his nose.

Who the fuck was "Band Boy"?

And why did they want to meet his mother on Monday…?

Logan's brow furrowed, and he deleted the text before replacing his mother's phone on the coffee table.

Whoever it was, they weren't good enough for her.

Nobody was.

The only person who should be texting his mother was *him,* so he could check where she was when she went out with her friends.

Logan gave an annoyed sniff, waiting a moment to make sure *Band Boy* didn't send a second message, before he made for the front door and headed down to the building's car park to meet Trent.

'What took you so long?' Trent asked.

'Someone was texting Mum,' Logan explained.

'So?' Trent frowned and crossed his arms. 'That's *her* business.'

'Not when they want to meet up with her it's not!' Logan argued. 'Cos you know if she goes to meet up with them, *we* get stuck with Josie!'

'Yeah, well I *like* Josie,' Trent defended, snatching the keys from Logan and opening the boot of the car and throwing his bags inside. 'She's nice!'

'You like *everyone!*' Logan huffed, putting the bags he carried with Trent's. 'Look, I just don't want Mum meeting up with any more strangers! She always tells *us* not to talk to strangers, so she can't talk to them either!'

'It's different for mums, though!' Trent rolled his eyes. 'Mums are allowed to talk to strangers. That's what they *do!*'

'Did Mum tell you that?' Logan asked, his eyes tightening into sharp slits.

'Aunt Cleo did,' said Trent. 'She said that its okay for mums to talk to strangers, cos mums know which strangers are safe.'

'Oh, yeah, how do they know that?'

'I dunno!' Trent gave a big shrug, slamming his hands down against his sides in time with Logan slamming the car boot shut. 'How am *I* meant to know?! I'm not a mum!'

'Yeah, well, I think it's all crap!' Logan decided loudly. 'Mum's gonna do something stupid, cos she's stupid!'

'Mum's not stupid—'

'If Mum wasn't stupid she'd be able to help us with our math homework instead of asking Aunt Steph to come over!'

'To be fair,' Trent crossed his arms. 'Aunt Steph has a calculator app in her brain.'

'To be fair,' Logan crossed his arms back. 'Mum thought cavemen lived with dinosaurs until you told her that wasn't true!'

'Lots of adults think that!'

'Yeah, *stupid* ones.' Logan grumbled. 'Like *Mum*. I love her but it's true! She's stupid! So we *have* to protect her! She's just too dumb to look after herself—'

'Aw, now that's not very nice to say!' a voice interrupted, and Logan turned to see his mother's friend, Scarecrow, getting out of a car that had pulled up nearby.

'It's true, though,' Logan mumbled, shrugging his shoulders as Scarecrow's daughter climbed out of the back seat and retrieved the cake she'd brought. 'Hi, Paisley.'

'Hey! Happy Birthday!'

'Hey Paisley!' Trent chirped, sounding much more excited than Logan did. Then, he pointed to the driver of the car. 'Ooh! Who's that?'

'My girlfriend, Martinez,' Scarecrow answered.

'Is she a cop?' Logan asked as he noticed the woman's uniform, and his eyes narrowed as Scarecrow nodded. '*Gross*.'

Martinez gave an offended huff and threw up her hands. ‘Well, alright, damn kid! I haven’t even *done* anything!’

Scarecrow gave a chuckle and poked her head into the car window. She shared a few quiet words with Martinez as Paisley hurried over to talk with Trent and deposit the cake in the passenger seat of their car.

‘So, who else is coming to your party?’ Paisley asked. ‘Any friends?’

‘Yeah, uh, some of my friends from school!’ Trent gave a grin. ‘Angela, Arjan, and Zack!’

‘Cool! Can’t wait to meet them,’ Paisley said. Then, she nudged Logan. ‘And what about your friends?’

‘I don’t have friends,’ Logan answered.

‘Aw, what?’ Scarecrow turned to the boys, then, and gave a sympathetic look. ‘You don’t have friends?’

‘I don’t need friends,’ Logan told her. ‘Trent’s my friend. I’ve never needed any more friends than Trent.’

‘Yeah, he just hangs out with me and my friends,’ Trent said with a nod. ‘That’s why I can’t be friends with people who don’t like him.’

‘*We’re* friends though, right?’ Paisley asked, putting an arm around Logan— And immediately being shoved away.

‘Don’t hug me!’ Logan huffed. ‘I don’t like people hugging me! Not even my grandmas are allowed to do it!’

‘Mum hugs you all the time,’ Trent pointed out.

‘Yeah, but Mum doesn’t count as people!’ Logan argued. ‘She’s *different!*’

‘You don’t seem to think very highly of your mum, do you?’ Scarecrow asked, raising a brow.

Logan just rolled his eyes. *What kind of stupid question was that?*

‘Aw, no, Mum’s the best!’ Trent defended. ‘Logan thinks so, too! Right, Logan?’

‘Yeah,’ he agreed; though he didn’t say more than that as he turned for the stairs, leaving everyone else behind as he made his way back to the apartment.

He returned just as his mother was waking up from her nap, and hurried over so he could squeeze into the chair beside her.

‘Oh! Hey, hon,’ Tiffany greeted, pecking a kiss on the side of Logan’s head as he snuggled into her. ‘Happy Birthday.’

‘Mhm,’ Logan hummed in acknowledgement. ‘Did you know Scarecrow’s dating a cop? She said she had cop friends but she’s actually *dating* one!’

‘Ah,’ Tiffany gave a laugh. ‘Martinez…. Is Scarecrow *here?*’

‘Yeah. She’s downstairs,’ Logan explained. ‘Trent asked Paisley to get a new cake.’

‘Oh— *Shoot,*’ Tiffany sat up straighter and reached for her phone. ‘I had no idea he did that— I already asked Cleo if she could get another….’

Logan just shrugged. ‘I’m okay with having two cakes. One each.’

Tiffany seemed amused by his statement, and ruffled his headfin as she quickly typed something. Then, she took in a sharp breath of air and got to her feet. ‘Oh, jeez— Is that the time? We should go! Oh, gods, where are the bags—’

‘Trent and I put them in the car for you already,’ Logan said, standing up and taking his mother’s hand. ‘Your handbag, too. Everything’s ready so we can go.’

Tiffany shook her head, smiling as she did, and let her son lead her to the door. ‘Thanks, hon.’

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One thing Trent hadn’t considered, calling Paisley to come early, was that there was going to be very little room in the car for everyone.

Every seat was taken; and poor Paisley had been forced into the middle seat between her mother and Trent (not that she seemed to mind). Logan had taken the front seat so he didn’t have to touch anyone. Which Trent thought was fair.

What Trent *didn’t* think was fair, though, was Logan going through their mum’s phone while she drove, even though she told him *twice* not to!

Trent had lost his patience about halfway to the venue, when he saw Logan blocking one of her contacts, and snatched the phone away. And then Logan had turned in his seat and smacked him. And their mother had pulled over to scold them both; asking them what on *earth* they were fighting about… though Trent hadn’t told her Logan had blocked someone (he wasn’t a snitch) and his mother had just sighed and entrusted her phone to Scarecrow for the rest of the drive.

Somehow, they still managed to arrive to the restaurant on time.

Trent beamed at his mother’s friends as he climbed out of the car; greeting each of them with a tight hug.

‘Hey Aunt Cleo, Aunt Steph, Aunt Andi!’ he exclaimed. ‘Where’s Ruby—‘

‘Ayyy! Happy Birthday, you little cunts!’ Aunt Ruby shouted from the other side of the venue; causing many people to turn to her with annoyed looks. She ignored them, though, and hustled her way over to the front to ruffle Trent and Logan in turn. ‘They won’t let me in the ball pit! Can you *believe* that?!’

‘Yeah,’ Logan grumbled. ‘You’re a weird freaky adult. Of course you’re not allowed around random kids.’

‘Oh, boof!’ Ruby snorted, cuffing Logan around the ears and eliciting a giggle that Logan quickly covered up. ‘Naw! Look at you. You’re such a *grump!*’

Trent shook his head as Logan argued with Ruby (insisting he *wasn’t* a grump in the grumpiest way he possibly could have) and instead turned back to his mother and her other friends.

‘We dropped the cake off with the staff,’ Cleo told her. ‘I see you’ve ended up with a second one, though?’

‘Yeah,’ Scarecrow gave a grin. ‘Trent messaged us…. I’m Scarecrow, by the way.’

‘Oh, Cleo—‘

‘Trent!’ a familiar voice called, and Trent turned to see one of his friends —Angela, a bugbear— coming into the restaurant. ‘Happy Birthday!

‘Angela!’ he greeted, hugging the girl tightly as her mother joined his own at the tables. ‘Hey! How are you? Come meet Paisley!’

Angela barely had time to respond before Trent had dragged her over to the selkie girl.

‘Paisley, Angela! Angela, Paisley!’ Trent introduced. ‘I’ve told you about each other, right?’

‘Yeah,’ Paisley answered, grinning and shaking Angela’s hand. ‘Nice to meet
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you.'

Trent stepped back as the two girls began to talk, and glanced over to his mother again.

Her friends had helped her take the bags to the table they'd booked, and it looked like they were getting ready to leave.

Trent sighed, pursing his lips tight as he watched them hug his mother goodbye.

They never really stuck around very long, anymore.

There always seemed to be somewhere they needed to be…. Well. Except for Ruby.

Ruby *never* had anywhere to be. And always seemed to have all the free time in the world.

Trent wasn't even sure what she did for work anymore….

'Joey!' Logan gave a happy cry, and Trent glanced to the door again to see another pair of his mother's friends, Joey and Maria, had shown up.

Oh! Oh! And they'd brought Dexter, just like Trent had asked them to!

'Dexter!' Trent exclaimed, crouching down and patting his legs. 'Here, boy! C'mere!'

'GREETINGS, CHILD!' Dexter beamed, his magical collar translating his barks as he trot over and licked Trent's now-outstretched hand. 'I HEAR THAT TODAY IS A CELEBRATORY GATHERING FOR THE ANNIVERSARY OF YOUR BIRTH. CONGRATULATIONS!'

'Thanks,' Trent chuckled, scratching Dexter down his back. 'I'm glad you could come.'

'BUT OF COURSE,' Dexter barked. 'I WOULD NOT MISS SUCH AN AFFAIR OF A FELLOW DEMON.'

Trent just laughed and scratched at the top of the hellhound's head; and then he felt someone scratch at the top of his own, and turned to see his mother's friends behind him.

'Hey,' he grinned at them.

'Hey,' Andi greeted, back, ruffling the boy's fins. 'We've finished helping your mum set up, so we're going to head off.'

'Have a good party!' Steph beeped, poking playfully at Logan as she passed him.

'We will!' Trent promised. 'Bye!'

'Bye!' Logan responded, barely looking away from Joey— And barely taking a breath before he continued barraging her with weird music facts.

Trent thought it was nice to see Logan getting excited about things again (or at least, things that weren't going to set the apartment on fire) but then, just as he thought it, he saw Logan look to their mother's friends as they left and frown.

Then, he gave a frustrated-looking grunt and turned to glare in the direction of the one remaining member of the clique.

Ruby.

Trent winced.

Logan had *not* been happy with Aunt Ruby, lately.

'Oi, what's that look for?' Ruby asked.

Logan just stuck out his tongue before turning back to Joey— Which seemed

to entertain Ruby greatly, as she strut over and forced her way into the conversation.

'Hey! I said: *what's that look for?*'

Trent shook his head as Ruby loudly engaged with his brother against his will, and hefted Dexter up into his arms. 'Come on, I want to show you to my friend Angela— Oh! Zack! Arjan! Over here!'

Trent waved at his other two friends as they came inside, and motioned for them to follow him as carried Dexter over to the girls.

'Hey, Dexter!' Paisley greeted, petting the hellhound between the ears before taking him from Trent. 'C'mere!'

'HELLO, MY BRAVEST COMPANION!' Dexter greeted happily. 'IT IS GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN. SHALL WE SHARE A MEAL OFF THE BATTLEFIELD, THIS FINE DAY?'

'Sure,' Paisley chuckled, before looking to Trent's other friends. 'Hey. I'm Paisley.'

'Arjan.'

'Zack!'

Trent grinned as his friends all began to talk amongst each other, and stood on his toes so he could crane his gaze over to his mother; who was now speaking to all of their parents (and Maria— Though… she was technically Dexter's mother, wasn't she?) and seemed to be having a good time. She caught his eye and gave him a warm, loving smile and wave, and he waved back.

There were only a few more people to arrive, wasn't there?

His grandparents, and….

And….

His father.

Creedence.

He still wasn't sure if Creedence was going to show up.

He'd asked his mother to invite him, and she said that she had— But he wasn't sure if Creedence was going to bother coming. He'd apparently moved back to… wherever it was avarcians lived.

Hell, probably.

And Trent wasn't exactly sure what the travel times were like for public transport between hell and Los Diablos— Or what Creedence's opinion on birthdays was.

Or even what Creedence's opinion on *him* was….

But… he couldn't be that bad a person, could he? If he *was* that bad, his mother wouldn't still be friends with him. She'd probably have left him dead in the desert, just like Logan said she'd done with the other guy who tried to be their father.

Maybe he should ask if he'd said anything….

Quickly excusing himself from his friends, Trent made his way over to his mother; who wrapped an arm around him and pecked him on the cheek.

'Hey, hon, what's up?' she asked.

'Um…' Trent gently pulled his mother aside, away from the other women, and dropped his voice. '*Did Creedence say he was coming or not?*'

'Yeah, he said he's coming,' Tiffany answered, pecking another kiss on Trent's

cheek. ‘Don’t you worry.’

‘Cool… and uh… what about… Grandma and Grandma..,?’

‘Yes, I told them they can come,’ Tiffany chuckled. ‘They’re still allowed to see you; just not babysit you.’

‘Cool,’ Trent felt his grin return.

Then, before he could say anything else, Ruby loudly announced that she was going to the bathroom and ruffled him on her way past.

Tiffany just shook her head and rolled her eyes as Ruby punched her shoulder. ‘Behave yourself!’

‘Yeah, yeah, I am!’

‘I don’t want to get kicked out because of you!’

‘I ain’t gonna get us kicked out, calm down!’ Ruby chuckled.

Tiffany shook her head again, and Trent copied her; pulling his lips into a tight line and furrowing his brow just like she did.

Then, he felt Logan huff behind him, and glanced back to his brother as he and Joey approached.

Joey gave Tiffany a *look* that Trent didn’t quite understand, though he thought she looked ruffled.

‘Ah don’t mean to be rude, Tiffany,’ Joey cleared her throat. ‘But Ah gotta ask…. That Ruby woman… is she alright? Cos, if Ah’m being honest… she don’t seem alright.’

‘*Uuuh…*’ Tiffany looked like she wasn’t sure how to answer the question.

‘She’s *not* alright!’ Logan huffed, loudly. ‘She’s a *weirdo!*’

Tiffany snorted a laugh. ‘Be nice to Aunt Ruby—‘

‘Eugh! I’m not calling her my aunt anymore!’ Logan complained. ‘She made it *weird* to call her “Aunt” Ruby.’

‘What?’ Trent frowned. ‘How?’

Logan took a deep breath, clearly preparing to explain, and Tiffany quickly threw her hand over his mouth.

‘Okay, no! We don’t talk about what Ruby says when she’s drunk. Not in front of people—‘

‘She tried to have *sex* with Mum!’ Logan exclaimed, tugging his mother’s hand off his mouth and raising his voice so Trent could hear him over Tiffany’s attempts to shush him. ‘RUBY TRIED TO HAVE *SEX* WITH MUM!’

‘*Oh my god,*’ Tiffany wheezed, blush creeping along her cheeks as she buried her face in a hand and looked to the floor; refusing to meet the gaze of any of the adults who turned to stare at her. ‘*Oh, please no….*’

‘Oi, no!’ Ruby exclaimed from across the restaurant, pausing at the bathroom door she had been halfway through entering. ‘I didn’t try to have *sex* with her! I offered to *get her pregnant!* There’s a difference, champ!’

‘THAT’S *WEIRDER!*’ Logan shouted back. ‘DO YOU NOT SEE HOW THAT’S EVEN *WEIRDER?!*’

‘You do what you have to for your friends, kid!’ Ruby retorted before disappearing into the bathroom.

‘I HOPE YOU FALL IN AND DROWN!’

‘Logan, please stop yelling,’ Tiffany sighed, taking her son by the arm and leading him towards the table that had been set up. ‘We’re gonna get kicked out if

you yell like that….'

'*Hmp!*' Logan pouted as he was sat down at the table, and crossed his arms furiously.

'You know, I'm somehow not surprised hearing all that…' Scarecrow's voice mumbled, and Trent glanced back to see her leaning close to Joey.

Trent's brow furrowed as he approached the women. 'Is Mum having a baby?'

'Uh…' Joey looked mildly panicked, and glanced between Trent and Scarecrow. 'Ah'm not… sure? She ain't spoken 'bout it to me.'

'Hm. She *might* have mentioned it to us at *some* point,' Scarecrow shrugged. 'But I think it was more in passing than anything…. One of those things you don't really take note of.'

Trent wasn't sure what to think about that… so he didn't bother, and instead headed back to his friends.

He could worry about it later.

For now, he had more important things to do.

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Trent had gone off to hang out with his friends, but Logan had more important things to worry about.

He had to keep his mother out of trouble.

In a public space like this, surrounded by strangers (at least half of who were *MEN!*) who could even *guess* what would happen if she was left alone!

He was glad he'd managed to block that "Band Boy" person in her phone; he'd looked back at a couple of their conversations and just *knew* he was trouble— So he'd sent a message saying never to contact his mother again (threatening to beat him up if he tried!) and then deleted the conversation and his number from the contacts app.

It was a fifty-fifty chance his mother would ever find out what he had done, so he thought it was worth the risk of getting in trouble.

After all, she'd always, *always* gone on about how bad talking to strangers was. And now, since moving apartments, she couldn't seem to *stop* talking to strangers.

It was clear that she couldn't look after herself right now. So he would have to keep an eye on her until she came back to her senses and started being normal again.

So he had been shadowing her all day; all but clinging onto her arm as she spoke to the other adults and ordered food for everyone at the front of the restaurant.

The only time he *hadn't* been at his mother's side was when he'd gotten distracted talking to Joey and Tiffany had used the opportunity to sneak away. She'd *said* it was to use the bathroom, but Logan didn't believe her. The way she thumbed at her phone and whispered to her own mothers, he knew she'd been trying to contact *someone*….

And his suspicions were only confirmed when Creedence showed up and anxiously apologised for being late and said he left his phone at the office by mistake and hadn't gotten Tiffany's call.
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Of course he was late, Logan thought bitterly as his grandmothers poked playfully at the man (talking about how excited they were to meet him "in the flesh"). *Because being late made Mum anxious— And upsetting his mother seemed to be all Creedence was good for!*

'Logan, hon,' Tiffany spoke gently as she wiggled her arm in Logan's grip. 'Not so tight. You're hurting me.'

Reluctantly, Logan loosened his grip on his mother; though he didn't let her go. He didn't want to, now that both Creedence *and* Ruby were in the same room as her!

'Thank you,' Tiffany chuckled, pecking a kiss on Logan's cheek. 'Could you do me a *massive* favour, hon?'

'Mm…?'

'Could you tell Trent that Creedence is here?' she asked, and Logan gripped her tighter again. '*Ow*— Hon. Please? It would be a really big help.'

Logan frowned as big as he could, trying to show his mother how much he didn't want to leave her side— But then she said "*please?*" again in a firmer tone and he knew it wasn't really a request, but a gentler way of making him let go of her arm, and he knew he didn't *actually* have a choice.

So he slowly released her and backed away a few steps before turning to the table where Trent and his friends were sitting and making his way over.

He tapped Trent on the shoulder politely, then blurted; 'Mum says to tell you Creedence is here.'

'Oh!' Trent exclaimed, jumping to his feet.

'Creedence?' Paisley asked. 'Who's that?'

'Our dad!' Trent beamed.

'*Unfortunately,*' Logan mumbled.

'What, is he not nice?' Paisley scrunched up her nose.

'No, he's cool!' Trent said.

'*No,* he's a weenie!' Logan corrected.

'Come meet him!' Trent offered, ignoring Logan's comment. 'I've only seen him a couple of times in person but Mum's let me text him and he's nice!'

Nice except that he and Constance upset Mum so much she moved apartments, Logan thought with a bitter huff as his brother ushered all his friends up out of their seats.

Trent corralled everyone, including Logan, towards the avarcian man who had shuffled awkwardly to Maria's side in an attempt to hide from Tiffany's mothers.

Logan dragged his feet as he was pushed along; the opposite of the hellhound that bolted forward and began dancing around Creedence's feet.

'AH! MY OLD COMPANION!' Dexter greeted. 'IT HAS BEEN A LONG WHILE SINCE WE HAVE CONVERSED, MY COMRADE. HOW DO YOU FAIR?'

'Oh. He… talks now?' Creedence managed. 'That's… unexpected.'

'Yeah, he talks now!' Maria beamed, nudging Creedence playfully.

'MY COMRADE,' Dexter repeated, forcefully. 'I ASKED: HOW DO YOU FAIR?'

'Hah, uh,' a grin spread over Creedence's face. 'I'm good! Very good, actually. What about you?'

'GOOD. I AM ENJOYING MY TIME WITH YOUR PUPS,' Dexter barked.

‘OH— MY APOLOGIES. YOUR *SPAWN*. THE LARGE ONE WISHES TO INTRODUCE YOU TO HIS FRIENDS.’

‘Oh, yes I, uh…’ Creedence turned a different shade of crimson as he looked up at the group of children that were almost upon him— And he immediately cast an anxious-looking glance to Tiffany (who was distracted by her mothers) and swallowed. ‘I see them.’

Logan’s eyes narrowed as he came to a stop in front of Creedence.

Why had he cast that look towards his mother? Was he scared of her? Or was it some *other* reason…?

He didn’t trust Creedence. Not even after his mother told him that he could— That Creedence was her friend and that he had good intentions.

He had also been Constance’s friend, hadn’t he? And Constance had scared his mother so bad she’d basically turned into a different person…. And not in a good way.

But he wasn’t Constance’s friend *anymore*…. It was hard to know what to think of him.

‘This is our dad!’ Trent beamed, hurrying to Creedence’s side and motioning at him. ‘He’s *really* cool!’

A mix of surprise and pride flashed on Creedence’s face; but only for a moment before Logan scoffed and it was replaced by a nervous-but-entertained look.

‘He’s *not* cool!’ Logan argued. ‘He’s a weenie!’

Maria covered her mouth to hide her giggle as Creedence gave a small chuckle and pushed back his hair.

‘Nuh-uh! He’s *cool!*’ Trent pushed. ‘Mum told me he’s an assistant archivist!’

‘Yeah and archivists are lame,’ Logan huffed; ignoring as Maria shook her head at him and mouthed that he was wrong. ‘They wear stupid clothes and smell like old paper and dust— And he’s not even a *full* archivist! He’s just the *assistant!*’

Trent’s friends all nodded, quietly agreeing that archivists weren’t cool.

‘*LOOK* at him!’ Trent exclaimed, motioning widely to Creedence. ‘He’s not one of the lame archivists! And— And he doesn’t even *smell* like dust! See— Look!’

Creedence flinched, looking uncomfortable, as the boy buried his face into his side and loudly sniffed him.

‘He smells like a barbecue, not books!’ Trent declared loudly.

‘Yeah. A *lame* barbecue!’ Logan argued. ‘A lame barbecue with a lame job working for a lame boss!’

‘*My boss isn’t lame,*‘ Creedence mumbled.

‘*I know*,’ Maria whispered back. ‘Logan—‘

‘His boss *isn’t* lame!’ Trent argued. ‘Mum said he works for Sugat! That means he— He helps— He helps keep track of people’s *souls* that they’ve sold to demons! That’s *hardcore!*’

All of Trent’s friends *oohed* at this knowledge, agreeing that looking after souls that had been sold to demons was cool.

Logan wanted to argue that it was *lame* even though he knew Trent was right. But he couldn’t think of a way to argue, so he just crossed his arms and rolled his eyes and grumbled; ‘He’s still a weenie!’

‘Logan,’ Maria crossed her own arms. ‘I think your mother would want you to be nice.’

‘So? What, are you gonna snitch on me?’ Logan asked, putting his hands on his hips. ‘Are you a snitch?’

Maria opened her mouth to respond, but Trent cut her off.

‘She’s *not* a snitch, Logan!’ Trent huffed, rolling his eyes. ‘You’re just being a jerk because you don’t want to share Mum.’

‘So?’ Logan side-eyed his brother, then turned his gaze to Creedence. ‘Being greedy is in my nature.’

Trent’s friends all snickered at Logan’s wit; nudging each other and mumbling as Creedence gave a short, sharp laugh.

‘He’s not wrong,’ said Creedence.

Logan’s frown deepened as Creedence agreed with him; he was the *last* person he wanted agreeing with him. Even if it helped his point!

And then, like she could read his mind and tell how ridiculous he was being, Maria stifled a laugh. She cast Creedence a humoured look and, with a quick pet on Logan’s head, turned and headed over to where Joey and Tiffany were talking (arguing?) with Tiffany’s mothers.

So she was *a snitch!* Logan thought as Maria whispered to Tiffany and motioned to him.

Though, when his mother giggled back and shook her head playfully at him, Logan wondered if maybe she was leaving out just *how* rude he was trying to be.

‘Yeah!’ Trent’s joyful exclamation caught Logan’s attention again. ‘And in his free time, he collects butterflies! Right, Creedence?’

‘Yes,’ Creedence answered. ‘I have a greenhouse just up—‘

‘Butterflies are for girls!’ Logan interrupted; standing up as tall as he could to try and look Creedence in the eye. ‘It’s something that grandmas do— And not *cool* grandmas like our grandmas! *Loser* grandmas like Mrs Mac from history class! Are you a *loser grandma,* Creedence?’

Creedence didn’t have time to respond as Trent gave Logan a mighty shove, pushing him off balance and knocking him to the floor.

‘I didn’t want to do this, Logan! But if you’re gonna be a jerk then *I’m* gonna be an even *bigger* jerk back!’

Then, before Logan could even open his mouth to ask what he meant, Trent was upon him; grabbing the back of his head and stuffing his face into his armpit.

‘Get his arse!’ Paisley cackled.

‘Oh— Uh—‘ Creedence gave an anxious cry. ‘T-Tiffany?!’

Logan struggled, throwing out his hands to try and break himself free of his brother’s grip, but Trent was just too strong.

‘This is what you get for being a *jerk!*’ Trent told him, stuffing Logan deeper into his armpit. ‘Are you gonna say you’re sorry? Huh? Or am I never gonna let you go—‘

‘*Trent!*’ Tiffany snapped. ‘Let him go *now!*’

Logan crumpled to the floor in a heap, wheezing and sputtering in an exaggerated way before he aimed a harmless swipe at Trent’s leg with his tail.

‘*What* are you boys arguing about *now?*’ Tiffany sighed, making her way over and checking on Logan as he got up.

‘He called Creedence a loser grandma,’ Trent shrugged. ‘And he’s been a really big jerk all day! So I was being a jerk back to show him how it feels. Wasn’t funny, was it?’

Logan frowned at his brother for a moment, crossing his arms and pouting, before his eyes softened and he mumbled in defeat; ‘*Actually, it was a* little *bit funny*….’

‘Well I can do it again,’ Trent offered, lifting up his arm and stepping forward.

Logan leapt back with a sharp cry of fear and hid behind his mother.

‘*Okay*….’ Tiffany let out a deep, long breath and shooed Trent back a step. ‘Logan, hon, how about we go for a walk? Just you and me. You can tell me what’s bothering you and Trent can spend some more time with his friends. How’s that sound?’

‘Yeah!’ Trent nodded. ‘And maybe you’ll come back with some manners!’

‘*Trent,*’ Tiffany said; clearly trying to hide the note of humour in her voice. ‘Logan? What do you think?’

Logan shrugged widely, but didn’t argue as Tiffany put an arm around him and led him towards the door.

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Trent had been glad that Tiffany had taken Logan out for a while to calm down; it had given him time to talk to Creedence *without* his brother acting like an arse, and he and his friends had been able to ask the man many, *many* questions about his father and his work.

He wasn’t sure why Logan didn’t like Creedence. He seemed so nice! And he was even friends with Maria and Joey and… Scarecrow?

Actually, Scarecrow and Creedence didn’t seem to get along, much. But then again, Scarecrow didn’t seem to get along with many people. Just his mother and their mutual friends— And that Martinez woman.

Or more, he *assumed* she got along with Martinez, what with being her girlfriend.

Paisley hadn’t mentioned them fighting or anything, at least. Not like she’d said Scarecrow and Browyn did.

It made him wonder what would happen if his mother ever got in a relationship. Which had led to him wondering *who* would possibly be able to date her.

There was that guy *Lonnie* that he’d heard Joey mention earlier. Lonnie was apparently the person that Logan had blocked in his mother’s phone (after sending him a *very* rude message, that Lonnie had then sent to Joey in confusion), and they apparently met up a lot. Or tried to meet up? Something about Lonnie’s job or his manager or something always stopping them from hanging out.

Trent didn’t understand it, but from what Joey and his mother talked about earlier, it sounded like a weird Romeo and Juliet story where instead of killing themselves they just sent each other selfies and links to music videos.

From what he could tell, meeting up with Lonnie was probably the most effort his mother had ever actually put into a guy. And even then, that wasn’t actually
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all that much. Especially not when he compared it to the effort his mother put into, say, *Ruby*.

Ruby was probably the closest friend his mother had ever had, and with the way they hung out (they practically went on *dates* together sometimes), he wondered how much more it might take for his mother to actually find someone she could call a *partner*….

Not that Trent *wanted* her to date anyone. He didn't really like the idea of sharing her. Though, unlike Logan, he'd do it if it made her happy.

Especially if it was with someone he already knew and liked, like Ruby or Creedence; which his grandmothers were currently arguing about which of the two they thought Tiffany was going to end up with.

'I don't see why she and Creedence don't just get together,' Ripley chuckled, 'They're both such lonely souls. And they already have the boys together! Is he just not going to take responsibility for them?'

'Naw, no! He's here, isn't he? You think he's not *trying* to take responsibility?' Delilah retorted. 'He keeps looking at Tiff like he thinks she's gonna smack him one! There— There, look now.'

Trent followed his grandmother's gaze to where Tiffany was sitting with Logan and Paisley, and saw Creedence hovering nervously nearby like he wanted to approach— Until Tiffany cast him a glance and he flinched and retreated to Maria's side.

'See? Tiff's got the poor bloke at arm's length,' Delilah confirmed. 'He knows what happened to Constance, after all. Probs thinks she's gonna do the same to him if he's not careful.'

Trent didn't agree; he thought Creedence was just being respectful of the fact his mother didn't like to share. Not that he was scared of her. If they *really* didn't like each other, then they wouldn't keep in contact!

'Nah, look. I'm sure she'll end up with Ruby,' Ripley said, waving a dismissive hand. 'Have you *seen* those two? They couldn't live without each other!'

'If she and Ruby wanted to date they'd already be dating,' Delilah argued. 'They're close enough that they would just ask each other— Creedence, though. They ain't talked all that much, but they definitely have something between them.'

'Yeah, it's called a wall,' Ripley retorted. 'They don't talk much because she's not interested in him.'

'I disagree—'

'I don't think Mum wants to date *either* of them,' Trent piped up. 'If anything, I think she's interested in Lonnie.'

Both his grandmothers looked to him with curious looks.

'*Lonnie?*' Ripley asked, slowly. 'I haven't heard of a *Lonnie* before….'

'Yeah, no, he's a friend of Joey's, and Mum meets up with him a lot,' Trent explained. 'He's in a band and Mum's shown us his music— But you can't tell Logan that him and Mum meet up, cos then he'll be stubborn and never listen to his music again, and he actually really likes his music.'

'I see….'

'But even then, I'm not sure she *like likes* Lonnie,' Trent shrugged. 'She hasn't even taken us to meet him or brought him over or anything. So I dunno. If she

was interested in dating someone I feel like she'd ask me and Logan, first.'

'Hm, maybe,' Delilah gave a shrug. 'That said, though, she'd have to realise she likes someone before she could talk to you bout it, and I just ain't sure that she'd realise she has a crush. She's never realised she's liked someone before in all her life!'

'Maybe she just *hasn't* liked anyone before in all her life,' Trent returned the shrug. 'She can't realise she's had a crush if she's just not had one.'

'You can't tell me you don't think she ain't liked *one* person in her whole thirty years!'

'Mum's picky about a lot of things,' Trent shot back, putting his hands on his hips. 'She still hasn't found a gynaecologist she likes, either, and she's actually been *looking* for one of those!'

Ripley choked on her drink; trying to cover her mouth but failing to stop herself from shooting out a spray of wine from her snout.

'How d'you know about that sort of thing?' Delilah chuckled. 'Your mum been telling you about her doctors visits now?'

'I heard her talking about it with Aunt Ruby,' Trent said. 'And I googled what it meant, too.... I didn't know there was a whole doctor just for *that!*'

Another laugh from Ripley, this time into the napkin she had been wiping her face with, and the woman shook her head and motioned behind Trent. 'Looks like they're getting ready to bring out the cake and gifts,' she said. 'How about we head on over, hm?'

'Oh, alright,' Trent glanced to his mother and brother again, and saw they were clearing the table in a way that was *definitely* preparing for something; so he hurried over to help, stacking up a small pile of dishes and handing them to a passing server. 'Getting ready for the cake?' he asked his mother.

'Yep,' Tiffany gave Trent a tired smile. 'Logan's feeling like he'll want to go home soon, so I thought it might be best to finish up.... You're okay if we do that?'

'Yeah, no worries. I'm getting tired, too,' Trent lied.

He actually really *didn't* want to go home; he was having a lot of fun! But he could see, just by looking at Logan, that his brother was at his limit.... And it wasn't like Logan hadn't cut things short for his comfort before. Trent figured it was only fair.

Tiffany didn't seem to realise Trent had lied as she pecked him on the cheek and was immediately distracted with gathering up everyone's used cups; but Logan had definitely noticed, because he looked to his feet and shuffled uncomfortably for a moment, before mumbling something that vaguely sounded like "thank you" and "bathroom" and wandering off.

By the time Logan came back, everything had been cleaned up and people had gathered at the table to sit and talk.

Trent watched as Logan sat himself firmly between Ruby and their mother; giving her a very dirty look that made Creedence whisper to Maria that he was relieved he hadn't taken that seat when it was available.

Tiffany had then shooed Logan off to sit next to Trent at the end of the table so they could be together to blow out the cake and open gifts.

'Hey, you good?' Trent asked as Logan sat next to him.

'Yeah, I'm fine,' Logan told him. 'Just tired.'

‘Yeah it’s been a long party,’ Trent agreed. ‘We can go home after this and watch TV.’

Logan nodded, scratching at his gills without another word as the venue staff stepped out of the kitchen, carrying two cakes between them and singing.

The rest of the table joined in, and Trent couldn’t help but grin and giggle. He gave his brother an affectionate nudge, earning a small grin as the cakes were put down in front of them, and then blew out the candles on one of the cakes.

He sat back as Logan blew out his own candles, and had to resist the urge to take his brother by the back of the head and smash his face into the food.

It would have been funny, but Logan seemed too tired for that kind of prank….

So, instead, he raised a hand and cast Prestidigitation; relighting Logan’s candles.

‘*Hey!*’ Logan snapped, turning to Trent and giving him an incredulous look as the rest of the table laughed. ‘Oh yeah? Mage Hand!’

Logan made a swiping motion with his hand, and Trent felt it smack him in the back of the head.

Tiffany gasped, but Trent giggled and shoved at his brother; who playfully shoved him back.

‘Arsehole!’ Trent teased.

‘Loser!’ Logan laughed back, before he turned back to his candles and blew them out again— Only for them to spring back to life. ‘*Trent!*’

‘Okay, okay!’ Trent raised his hands in a submissive gesture. ‘I’m done. Go ahead.’

Logan cast Trent a very suspicious-looking glare before blowing out his candles one last time.

‘Woo! Alright,’ Tiffany gave a chuckle and, reluctantly, slid a knife towards the boys. ‘Be careful cutting it, okay?’

‘Yeah, we will!’ Trent promised. ‘Logan, you wanna…?’

Logan shook his head.

‘Cool! I’ll cut them up, then!’ Trent said, adjusting the angle of his cake so he could safely press the knife into it.

It went in easily, cutting through the spongy surface like a knife through… cake.

‘It came out dirty!’ Ruby teased as Trent pulled the knife back out. ‘Now you have to kiss the closest girl!’

‘I’m *not* doing that,’ Trent said, flatly.

‘Naw, why not?’ Ruby asked, earning a smack in the arm from Tiffany. ‘You’d rather kiss the closest boy?’

‘Don’t you *dare* kiss me,’ Logan mumbled, shifting over a couple of inches from his brother.

‘I’m not gonna kiss the closest girl cos the closest girl to me is *Paisley,*’ Trent argued, pointing to his friend and making a disgusted face. ‘And I’m not kissing Paisley. I don’t know where she’s been!’

‘Yeah, he doesn’t know where I’ve been!’ Paisley joked. Then, she grabbed a pair of boxes and them it towards the boys. ‘Open my gifts first! Mum and I spent *ages* picking them out!’

Trent took his box happily and, after making Logan was able to reach his, tore into it with excitement.

'Oh, *shit!*' he exclaimed, pulling out a bright orange onesie and unfolding it. 'Goldfish onesie!'

'Yeah, I thought you'd like it!' Paisley grinned. 'You seem like a onesie kinda guy.... What do you think of you jacket, Logan? Does it fit right?'

Trent glanced to Logan to see him putting on a black leather jacket.

'It's kinda big,' said Logan, adjusting it awkwardly.

'Means it'll last you longer,' Scarecrow offered.

'Yeah,' Logan agreed with a small grin. 'Thanks, Paisley.'

'Yeah! Thanks!' Trent beamed. 'This is neat!'

'Who's gift are you gonna open next?' Paisley asked, looking around the table. 'Oh! What about Creedence's? I saw him giving stuff to your Mum when he got here!'

'Yeah! Creedence!' Trent exclaimed, leaning forward and ignoring as his brother gave a childish huff. 'Creedence's gifts!'

'Oh, yes, um...' Creedence gave a sheepish cough, casting a glance to Tiffany as she retrieved two gift bags from under the table. 'I uh. I'm not very good at giving things away, I'm afraid. It's not really something arvacians... really *do*.... But I hope you like them.'

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It took all of Logan's effort not to fall asleep in the car ride home.

He was exhausted. He'd never really been a huge fan of going out for parties; but Trent *loved* them! So he always agreed to them so Trent could have fun. Because Trent was always doing things for him, too, and it was only fair that he made sure he did things for Trent, back.

Even though looking after his mother on top of going to a loud restaurant filled with lots of people all had been a *lot*.

He was just glad Paisley and Scarecrow had gotten their own ride home, so he could let Trent have the front seat instead of taking it both on the way there *and* the way back (which would have been *very* unfair).

Trent had spent the entire ride playfully fighting with their mother over her music choices; every time she settled on a song to listen to, Trent would skip it and she'd have to bat his hand away from the radio as she picked out another.

It was funny, Logan thought. If not a little annoying.

Speaking of music....

Logan turned to the gifts that had been strapped into the car beside him, and reached out a hand to touch the guitar he'd gotten from Joey.

He twanged at the strings, feeling the texture of the metal between his fingers as he half-played a tune that Joey had taught him a few weeks before.

'SMACK!' Trent exclaimed; and Logan immediately felt the snap-bracelet that his brother had received from Dexter (and Maria) twist awkwardly around his arm before being yanked back away. 'Take *that!*'

'Trent!' Tiffany snapped. 'Don't hit your brother!'

'It's funny, though.' Trent chuckled, lifting his hand and aiming another blow
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at his brother.

'Trent, *don't!*' Logan whined, smacking his brother away. 'It's *not* funny, it hurts!'

'No it doesn't!' Trent snorted, smacking his own arm with the band as if to show it was harmless. 'See?'

'Trent, Logan's skin is more sensitive than yours, remember?' Tiffany said, her tone soft but warning. 'And even if it wasn't, you can't hit people when they ask you not to.'

'What if they say it's okay?' Trent asked.

Tiffany let out a weak chuckle, and shook her head. 'Don't be cheeky.'

Trent stuck out his tongue, and as he did Logan went back to twanging his guitar.

He really appreciated it. And all the gifts he'd gotten.

Even the book from Creedence....

Actually, he *really* liked Creedence's gift. It was well thought out and just the sort of thing he wanted— And that made him angry.

He hated that Creedence's gifts were so thoughtful. It made it harder to be angry and mean to him.

He let out a sigh, as his mother pulled into their apartment's parking lot, and fiddled with his seatbelt.

As soon as the engine was off, Logan had unclipped the buckle and lent forward.

'Is it okay if I go upstairs instead of helping bring things in?' he asked. 'I'm *really* tired.'

'That's alright,' Tiffany told him, taking the keys out of the car and giving them to him. 'But if would be a big help if you could carry at least one thing with you as you go up.'

'Sure,' Logan agreed as he took the keys, and turned to unbuckle the guitar. 'I can take this.'

'Perfect, thanks hon.'

'Mhm,' Logan gave a hum, and slipped out of the car.

He made his way towards the stairs, chuckling as he heard his brother slam his own door shut and shout;

'Alright! Load me up, Mum!'

—END—

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