Making Dinner

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Abstract
In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.


The clock in the living room tolled four. It was the middle of December and was beginning to get dark already. Margaret sat in the kitchen peeling potatoes for dinner, while Oprah dragged on about some book that she had read over the weekend in the background."

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Making Dinner

Dong... Dong... Dong... Dong.

The clock in the living room tolled four. It was the middle of December and was beginning to get dark already. Margaret sat in the kitchen peeling potatoes for dinner, while Oprah dragged on about some book that she had read over the weekend in the background.

Margaret was in her fifties. Her face showed years of turmoil and hardship. She never knew her parents. They had left her on the doorstep of a local church when she was three. Raised in a Roman Catholic orphanage, she had never felt like she had a home. Her days were constantly spent dreaming about a better life. A life with a home and a family... a loving family.

It took her almost forty years to make that dream a reality. Ten years spent in the orphanage. Another five out on the streets. She joined the Navy at the age of eighteen for a tour of duty that lasted fifteen years. After the Navy, she worked in a factory, sometimes ten to twelve hours a day, to save up enough money for that dream of hers. She met Dad in 1976, got married in ’77 and bought her first house in 1978. She was 39 at the time. The house, just a pile of bricks and wood, so I hear, was her pride and joy.

Fourteen years later, that pile of bricks and wood is the most wonderful house, inside and out, on the block where we live. Every piece of the house, from the fuscia baseboard to the green shaded lamps, is my mother’s creation. Her dream became a reality, but not before it took a toll on her. Dad, before he died, always said that she was the most beautiful woman he had ever laid his eyes upon, hardships and all.

“Hi Mom.” I said quickly as I entered the kitchen.

“Where have you been young man?” She called me young man when I was in trouble. I guess it was better than my first and middle names thrown together in anger.

“I was out sledding with Jason.” I answered in a respectful tone. My sarcasm and smart-ass remarks have gotten me in trouble too many times before.

“I told you three o’clock. When I say three o’clock, I mean three o’clock.”

“I lost track of time Mom.” I replied. “I’m sorry.” That should do the trick I thought to myself.

“You’re sorry are you. I had no idea where you were. You know that it gets dark earlier now. This neighborhood is no place for a thirteen year old after dark.”
I started inching my way to the door so that I could have a quick exit.

"Come over here when I talk to you!" She started forcefully. She wasn't yelling, but I knew that I better do what she said. "You are all I have young man. If anything . . . . " Choked up, a tear began to run down her cheek. "If anything ever happened to you, I don't know what I would do."

I couldn't say anything. I wanted to say I was sorry again, but it didn't seem appropriate.

"I want the best for you young man." She continued. "I want to do what's right for you. I don't you to go through all that I had to go through."

The tears were flowing quite quickly now. I would like to tell you that she had moved on the peeling onions, but she was still peeling the same potato she was peeling when I came through the door.

I didn't know exactly what to do or say until I heard Oprah say, "See you tomorrow." I leaned over to my fragile mother and gave her a huge hug. It was a hug like one a four year old would give his or her preschool teacher. As innocently as the hug was intended, I whispered "I love you, Mom."


Embracing my mother, I hear the newscaster on the television say, "Here are the news stories for the fifteenth of December, 1992." It was then that my mother's sadness and melancholy made complete sense. It had been exactly ten years to the day of my father's death.

Pulling away from my mother, I grabbed a knife from the sink board. "Let me help you peel these potatoes."

--Jeremy Peters