

Two men sat across a table from each other, one significantly older than the other. The outside balcony they were on was paired with a hotel room, on the other end of an open glass sliding door. The elder pulls his final cigarette from the pack on the table, taking a moment to fumble with his lighter, before he was able to light it.

“That stuff’s going to be the death of you, Pops,” the younger teased, to which his father laughed.

“Eh, I’m not too worried, Jax. Been smoking since before you were born, and look at me. Healthy as a horse,” he started, taking his first drag of the cigarette, though being careful to blow the smoke away from his son.

Lowering his head with a resigned smile, Jax collected himself, and then sat up straight a moment later.

“There was... Something I needed to talk to you about. Something important, and I needed some advice around it.”

The father gave a soft nod, a smile crept onto his face, as though the direction of the conversation was already clear as day.

“Bailey and I are expecting,” the son continued, unable to keep a smile from crossing his lips. “She’s a few months along, and the doctor says it’s a boy. I’m going to have a son, and-”

“I’m going to have a grandson,” Pops mumbled, taking a moment to watch his cigarette burn as the information processed. “Jax... Can you grab something to celebrate? I have an old bottle of scotch in the kitchen that I haven’t opened yet. Grab that, and two glasses.”

Without another word, Jax excitedly went to do as his father requested. Upon entering the suite, the smell of air freshener quickly masked the scent of smoke from outside. A welcome change, but he was undistracted by that as he made his way into the kitchen. As opposed to bringing the bottle out, he filled the two glasses halfway with liquid, and brought those outside to his father, placing one in front of him.

After taking another long puff of the cigarette, Pops spoke up again.

“Always the safe one, eh?”

“I reckon one of us has to be, or else we’d both be in trouble.”

At that, the father let out a quiet laugh, which quickly shifted into a couple of coughs. His son looked at him worriedly, but Pops quickly waved it off.

“I’m fine, I’m fine. Just the perks of aging,” he noted, looking to his half-smoked cigarette with dismay. “Though, maybe you’re right. This stuff isn’t the best for me, is it?”

“Glad you’re finally starting to see that. Though, I know it isn’t easy to quit.”

Pops looked to his son, and gave a weak smile. After another long drag, he sighed.

“Last time I tried quitting was when you were born. It lasted all of a couple months, before I was caught back into it,” he explained quietly. “Never had another reason to quit, until now.”

“Why’d you go back to it?”

“I was young. Well, younger. It hadn’t caused any harm yet, so I figured why not go back, if it’s something that helps me focus.”

Jax’s eyes met his father’s, before shifting to the cigarette between his fingers. It was near its completion.

“Finally want to work on helping yourself?”

“I want to be there to watch my grandson grow up,” Pops answered quickly, catching the eye of his son once more.

“Hey, you don’t have to do that. Like you said, you’re healthy, right? Don’t push yourself just for our sake.”

“Jax, come on. You know I shouldn’t be doing anything to bring the end any closer,” Pops beckoned. “Just let your old man enjoy his last smoke.”

A moment of silence passed, and three more puffs of smoke in the air. As cigarette smoke goes, it smelled sweeter than any other to both men. Then, as quick as the silence started, it was cut short by the dragging of a plastic ashtray across the table. The depleted cigarette was dropped in, and the two men looked at each other.

“Alright, let’s get the mushy stuff out of the way,” Pops suggested, taking the glass in front of him, and raising it to his son. “To family. Old and new.”

Without a word, Jax clinked his glass against his father’s, and they both took their time with their drinks. Savoring the moment, and preparing for the rest to come.