

I glanced around and my eyes widened. Of course I had forgotten my Bible. It was probably still in my backpack— that I didn't have with me.

Griffon nudged me and I looked up at him. He had his Bible and gave me a small smile.

“Forgot yours?”

“Yep..”

Griffon smiled, scooted over, and set set his on both of our laps. I gave a slight smile and looked up at Mr Connors.

“So, I figured since I haven't been here in a while I'd share about myself. I only recognize...” He said scanning the juniors. “Austin, Ashlyn, Nicky, and my son.”

“Good.” Griffon mumbled.

I held in a laugh as I looked back up.

“Anyways let's get a family photo... yes.”

A photo appeared over the projector as Mr Conner's looked up. He put his hands on his hips and looked back over and locked eyes with Griffon.

“Guess we need a new family photo huh?” He asked.

I looked at Griffon who gave a shrug, and looked at the photo longingly. In the photo he was standing with one leg out like he was trying to kick Kevin's calf before the photo was taken.

“Well, let's go oldest to youngest shall we? The big tall guy with muscle is my son Kevin. He was a valedictorian from here. He went on to get a football and other scholarships for Ole' Miss. He's doing an extra year and about to graduate with some sort of engineering thing.” Mr Conner's said firmly.

“Diploma?” I asked Griffon.

He shrugged. “I don't know. Kevin said someth'n. Dad stared at him for a second like he had no clue what he said in English, and I wasn't listen'n.”

“Of course you weren't.”

Griffon rolled his eyes and leaned close to my ear and whispered, “It ain't like I ever pay attention. I just was plott'n someth'n.”

I rolled my eyes and he sat up again.

“The girl next to Kevin his is fiancé Katie Scot.” He said with a smile.

I looked at the picture of Katie. She gave a small smile and Kevin had an arm wrapped around her. Katie had just under shoulder length blonde hair and bright blue eyes. She was pale and was a bit shorter than Kevin. She was wearing bright blue shorts, a dark t-shirt, one of Kevin's Ole 'Miss jackets, and a beanie.

“They are getting married this June.”

I looked at Griffon who looked up at me.

“Are you going to be at the wedding?” I asked sarcastically.

“Yep, and only because I like Katie.” Griffon said with a smirk. “I dislike my brother. It's not his wedding, it's Katie's.”

I gave a small snicker as Mr Connors talked about Madison and José. Apparently José was more recently saved by God— Mr Connors had said he led was the one who José asked about it. Madison was also a valedictorian, but was going to New York University with José.

“That right there is my son Griffon. He's unsuccessful and is not a good kid.”

I burst out laughing, as did Austin and Ashlyn. Mr Connors gave a smirk, and I looked up at Griffon. His eyes were narrowed as he stared at his father.

“I hope you know that we live in the same home.” Griffon said firmly.

“I hope you know I'm the reason why your in my home.” His father snapped with a smirk.

The whole place exploded in ‘OOOOOOH’ as Griffon folded his arms with a smirk.

“You better not say what I think your going to say.” I said firmly.

“I won't.” Griffon muttered. “Not in church.” He added with a smirk.

Mr Connors heard him and rolled his eyes. He went to say something but shook his head, looking down with a laugh.

“I'm kidding, Griffon's a good kid. Good grades, and trying his best.”

Griffon gave a smirk. “See, I'm a good kid.”

I rolled my eyes and smiled. “Good for you good boy.”

“I know.”

Griffon gave me a small smile and grabbed my hand. I gave a small smile and put my head on his shoulder.

“Anyways,” Mr Conner’s said brining everyone’s attention back. “We’ve all been through hard times. For example, I’m a Jewish immigrant. I had to learn English. Did I when I was supposed to? No. I was a stupid teenager, but I clearly did learn English.” He said firmly. He looked up and gave a smile. “That was actually a huge problem when I was invited to my first American sleepover.”

I looked at Griffon who arched an eyebrow. He looked confused, and Me Connors looked at his son.

“I haven’t told anyone in our family this except your mother.” He said with a smile. “Tell Kevin and Madison for me.”

Griffon nodded and we all looked up.

“When I was fourteen I came here to the US. I didn’t start learning English till I realized I had to learn English.” He said softly. “So, I started my lessons and got a book to help me out. About midway through the school year I had made a few friends who helped me out. One was Mathew Graves.”

“Mathew— who we all called ‘Matty’ was the most popular guy.” Mr Connors said with a grin. “And he invited me to his house! Now, I had no clue that, that night we’d be stupid.”

Griffon nodded his head and payed attention more. I think it was the fact he was getting dirt on his dad that happened more than thirty years ago.

“So, every guy in the grade is there right? Im talking to Matty and I have my little book to help me out. We all end up somehow in the basement where a huge stack of scented toilet paper is. Matty looked at us and said ‘Let’s go tepee houses!’.”

Griffon’s jaw dropped and he immediately started taking notes. I snickered and Mr Connors rolled his eyes at the sight of Griffon’s notepad.

“Anyways, I didn’t know what that meant so they told me to keep watch and make sure nobody sees.” He continued. “And I thought, ‘I’m going to be in a con boy gang! This is a reason why we left Israel!’, but you know I wasn’t going to say anything. Little Jewish boy isn’t going to ruin the fun.”

“We go outside in the dark and we’re walking around Matty’s neighborhood and I’m terrified. We go to a house and right as we’re about to throw the toilet paper, we hear a car.”

‘Oo’s were heard and the seventh grade boys got wide smiles. Some of the seniors snickered like they knew what was happening.

“We book it, and I mean book it!” Mr Conner’s said smacking his hands to one side. “We make it in one of those drain fields and we are running. Next thing I know, everybody drops to the ground and I’m standing there. Then a light shines on me.” He said softly. “All twenty of us crazy boys jump up and run again. It was probably the poor owner of the house wondering what the heck was happening!”

I put my hands to my face and Griffon shakes my back around.

“This story is get’n good Nicky!”

I rolled my eyes and looked up as Mr Connors continued.

“We make it back to Matty’s house and we all hide in the basement. A kid names Drew Dervs locked the door and sat in front of it— he was a pretty big guy.” Mr Connors explained.

“We waited there for about two hours before we all went to Matty’s room. Now, Matty was a pretty rich kid— forgot to mention his house was a flat out mansion.” Mr Connors said with wide eyes.

“We all ended up playing video games and Matty fell asleep at his own sleepover party. Most of us knows what happens when you fall asleep first at the sleepover.”

“Oh my gosh.” I muttered putting my face in my hands again.

Griffon started giggling like a maniac and I heard him click his pen to write down what his father was about to say.

“Anyways we’re all fourteen year olds stuck with hundred of scented toilet paper, so we wrap the scented toilet paper around Matty’ bed and it looks like a cocoon. But as always, there was a problem. Matty had asthma.”

I looked up with wide eyes and blinked as Griffon stared at his father with wide eyes too.

“So a few minutes pass when we heard a yell for help and we laugh.” Mr Conner’s said shaking his head. “We were stupid and thought it was funny— until his yell sounded scratchy and like a demon.” Griffon put the pen down and closed the notebook and his eyes narrowed with surprise.

“We all panic and we break the toilet paper— but we can’t break the scented toilet paper because we used ALL of it around his bed. We do eventually get him out and... he’s like... breathing but not.”

“So Drew looks at me and goes, ‘Get his Dad! Your the lookout!’.”

Mr Connors paused and blinked. “That was for over an hour ago when we ran for our lives!”

Small laughter was heard as Griffon put his hand over his mouth and leaned back.

“So, I run to his dad’s room and start banging on the door right? All I have to do is tell him ‘your son is having an asthma attack’! And I didn’t do that. I panicked.”

Mr Connors took a pause and pushed his greying brown hair up. “ינודא, רב, ינוסוג!” He yelled at the top of his lungs.

We all blinked as he gave a smile. “In translation I told him, ‘YOUR SON IS DYING SIR’, and of course he didn’t know what I said. The poor guy just stared at me and I went off again.” He said softly.

“That’s when Drew sprints over. Like I said, he was a big guy. To this day I’ve never seen such a big guy run so fast! He came up and explained then Matty’s father took off.” Mr Connors said. “Back then I thought he had superpowers till I became a dad. I have the three little nutters... only one of them is a nutter actually.”

I nudged Griffon as he rolled his eyes. He gave me a small smirk and grabbed my hand again.

“Anyways that is one of my many examples of hardships.” Mr Connors said firmly. “I hope you all didn’t put those Bibles away. Now, I’m going to be skipping around Job, so keep up.” He said opening his Bible.

He put on his glasses and began.

“ ‘In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil. He had seven sons and three daughters, and he owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred donkeys, and had a large number of servants. He was the greatest man among all the people of the East.’.” Mr Connors read. He looked up and nodded saying, “Clearly this guy is all that. He have everything he wants and or needs. Let’s jump form Job 1-3 to Job 8-12.”

“ ‘Then the Lord said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.”

‘ “Does Job fear God for nothing?” Satan replied. “Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. But now stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face.”

“ ‘The Lord said to Satan, “Very well, then, everything he has is in your power, but on the man himself do not lay a finger.” Then Satan went out from the presence of the Lord.’.”

Mr Connors took a step back and took a deep breath. “Basically, Satan is having a bet with God and is telling him that Job won’t curse his name if God let’s bad things happen. God is making a bet in a way saying that Job will not curse His name. Get what I’m saying?”

We all gave a small nod as Mr Connors nodded. “So, the devil does his thing and takes everything from Job. His kids, wealth, land, everything.” Mr Connors said with a nod.

“Everything. When I was born through when I was fourteen I lived in Bethlehem, Israel. My family was a Jewish-Christian family and people didn’t like it. It got dangerous when a gang started and came through with guns and everything. My dad got shot in the shoulder and my mom in the hip.” He said firmly. “That was hard. We left everything and came here to America. We stayed in Savanna, Georgia till I graduated and I got married to my wife and blah blah blah.” He muttered. “It was hard.”

Mr Connors looked down and took his glasses off. “More recently, I lost my son.”

He locked eyes with Griffon who gave a small shudder next to me.

“You were gone.”

Griffon looked down and Mr Connors bit his lip. “It’s one thing for your kid to be taken when you

aren't around, but when he's sitting right in front of you? Twice!" He said firmly. "Twice he was taken from me in front of my eyes. Got into a Dirt Bike accident and his heart stopped on that field. Doctors brought him back in the ambulance, but he had died."

I looked up at Griffon who stared blankly.

"As most people know, that accident paralyzed him. It's been a struggle, especially as a parent." He said firmly. "My sixteen, now seventeen year old son can't take showers. He has to figure out how to get in and out of a bathtub."

Griffon's face fell as his eyes drifted down.

"He can't get out of bed easily, or get changed. His bathroom situation is terrible, and he can't ride his dirt bike or a actual bike. Can't drive, walk, or run." Mr Connors muttered. "It's hard to watch and know I can't help him. I want to, and try my best but can't."

"Then things start getting okay." He said softly. "But I didn't know it was the quite before the storm. On his birthday he got heart attack."

Mr Connors took a deep breath and looked down. "That happened about almost six days ago."

Everyone turned and looked at Griffon as he bit his lip and looked down more.

"Hey... are you good?" I asked softly.

"Yeah... I-I'm... fine." He forced out.

I looked at him carefully and filed my head. "Wanna talk later?"

He nodded his head and sat up some. He grabbed my hand again and looked up again at his dad.

"Everything can be taken from us like that." Mr Connors said snapping his fingers. "Everything. I'm lucky my boy is still here, especially because it took over seven hundred volts to bring him back. Seven hundred." He muttered.

"I don't want to scare you, so let me finish with Job 42. "Then Job answered the Lord, and said, I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee. Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

" 'And it was so, that after the Lord had spoken these words unto Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath.' "

Mr Connors looked up and gave a sigh. "These... things, hardships, even storms Job has gone through has... how would you kids word this? It sucked. Look, life can suck, but how you react to it is what makes a difference." He said firmly. "Life can suck, but how you react to it is what makes a difference." He repeated.

"It's that simply. Job went through hell on earth, but what did he do? He worshiped God." Mr Connors said spreading his hands out. "He thanked God during this whole mess in his life.

Sometimes that's hard. For me, I've been through stuff I don't want to go through again— and God wants us to still worship him? How? Well, it's simple." He said softly.

"Take a look around. The trees, the blue sky. The air in your lungs and the beating in your heart. Your still alive. You can still make that difference in someone's life even when it feels like nothing can change in yours. It will change, but how you let it change is hard. You could make life worse by moping around like a wounded animal. Or, just say thanks for life even if you don't want it. There are always brighter days ahead. The storms in our lives make us better people. They make us stringer physical and spiritual. In the end God gave Job twice as much as everything he had owned before. Twice!"

"God may boy give us all that, but he has rewards set in heaven." He said with a soft smile. "I can't promise that whatever your going through will be eased, because it never is. It's only going to get harder, but it's worth it in the end." He said softly. He gave a small smile and shrugged. "I know this seems like an inspirational speech, but you guys need that sometimes. For the good Lord's sake, I need it sometimes."

He took a pause and nodded his head. "Let's pray."

We all bowed our heads and — well, don't be all like 'Nicky! That's not good!', but I looked to Griffon. He put a hand to his chin and scratched it uncontrollably as he stared down. I squeezed his hand and kept my eyes barely open for him to see me. He looked up and gave a small smile of comfort before he closed his eyes. I closed mine too, and Mr Connors prayed.