

BRADFORD WRITES!
Fall 2023

Daddy's Boy

By Austin Reese

My dad demanded squatters' rights to my soul and brought his clutter with him. After losing his driver's license, I have been awarded the honor of being his personal chauffeur. It is my responsibility to drop what I am doing and provide for him. For example, last Tuesday during my class, I received a persistent vibration in my left pocket. I excuse myself into the hallway. My screen was proliferated with texts and missed calls from my dad.

"If you do not answer, do not think of coming home...Never in my life would I treat someone like this...I have to be there soon!"

Reluctantly, I called him back. He answers immediately in a huff.

"I need a ride to the legion, now."

"Can you wait until my class is over in thirty minutes?"

"You could've taken me before your class if you answered. Come here, now."

"Fine."

I left Swarts with tears welling in my eyes like an old faucet that had started to rust. I arrived at my home and texted my dad. Ten minutes went by, and I texted him again. After another five minutes, I turned off the car and stomped into the house.

My gaze met my dad's comatose body on the couch. Rage arrogated my body as I jolted him awake. "I have been waiting over twenty minutes for you!"

"They cancelled, so I took a nap."

I slammed the door and didn't look back.

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Another instance occurred last Sunday. I did the dishes, took out the garbage, and washed our laundry. Our home was clean as a new penny out of the press. Around midnight, I headed into town to pick my dad up from his friend's house. I arrived to meet his irate words on my tardiness. When we got home, I went straight to my room—hoping my labor will make up for the disappointment I caused him.

After I got ready for school the next day, I was greeted by fruit flies fornicating on his abandoned dishes, garbage tracing a map back to his bedroom, and his clothes emanating a mushroom cloud of body odor. I could not believe all my hard work was for nothing. In a burst of courage, I confronted my father. “Did you not see that I cleaned the house?” After a disproportionate amount of time, he let out a short grumble. “Are you hungover?” I asked. I received a similar response. Now making eye contact, I noticed the jaundice of his skin, the dreariness of his eyes, and the balminess of his face. I thought any further conversation would be futile, so left for school.

Through these experiences I have been left a difficult choice. Do I allow my dad's clutter to affect my academic performance and mental health? Or do I place a boundary that could drive an eternal stake between us? These questions are also a form of clutter that I have no idea what to do with. When is divisiveness necessary?