

## Coffee

by

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The father stood in the dining area with the percolator in his right hand. He wore a plaid shirt and weary jeans; bedroom slippers cupped his feet. Early winter light spilled through the east-facing window, touching the pot's silver-toned metal.

“Do you want more coffee?” he asked.

“No, thanks.” The son looked up at his father, seeing the combed-over white hair and the washed-out blue eyes with their heavy pouches.

“I've got the pot right here. If you want more coffee...” His hand trembled, gently shaking the percolator.

“No, Dad, I've had enough coffee,” the son said. He gave his father a small tight smile.

“Well, if you change your mind, there's more coffee.” The elderly man sat down carefully on the captain's chair, making himself comfortable on the faded green corduroy cushion. The two men, thirty years apart in age, sat across from each other at the scarred wooden table, the newspaper between them, a pen lying next to the filled-in crossword puzzle.

“I always buy a big can of coffee when it's on sale. I made extra for you,” the father said, sipping slowly from the brown chipped mug.

The son, brandishing a toothpick to pluck the bacon stuck between two teeth, stopped and said, “No, I don't want any more. I've had enough.”

“Well, I just wanted you to know that there's plenty of coffee.”

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Dust motes in the midday sun floated against the built-in corner buffet. The father gazed at his son, seeing a lean rugged man who favored the maternal side of the family.

“The sandwich is pretty good,” the father said, wiping his mouth with the paper napkin.

“It’s fine,” the son responded, stretching his legs under the table.

“Do you want more potato chips? I bought two bags the last time I was at the store. There was a two-for-one sale.” He crunched a potato chip, crumbs falling.

“No, I don’t want any more potato chips.”

“These potato chips are good. Not too greasy. Why don’t I get you some more?”

“I don’t want any more potato chips.”

“How about if I make you some coffee? I’ve got a big can of coffee. Got it on sale. There’s plenty of coffee.”

“No, Dad, I’m done. I’m going to go out and shovel the snow off the shed roof.” The son stood up, reached for his well-used ski jacket draped on the chair at the end of the table, and left.

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Outside it was black as old brewed grounds.

“How do you like the salmon? It was on sale. There was wild salmon, too, but that was too expensive. So I got this salmon. Do you like it?”

“The salmon’s fine, Dad.”

“Do you want some more? There’s an extra piece. You worked hard all afternoon. Why don’t I get you the extra piece?” He got up and walked slowly into the adjoining kitchen.

“Okay, Dad, I’ll take the extra piece of salmon.”

“And what about a cup of coffee?”

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