

Adrift

I need to go get the girls up. My wife could, but she's too nice about it, lets them take too long and then they have to skip out on their morning chores because otherwise they'll be late for "school". Get the dogs and horses out, livestock fed, crops watered. We're selling beef today, which means a steak for everyone to come home to. My wife cooks steak so well, even though she says she hates it. Someone's grabbing me, putting me back in bed. They don't get it, there's so much to do, the kids ain't big enough to deal with horses themselves yet, so I have to be the one

Back. Apparently, I made it out into the hallway again, but they were talking outside of it, so they caught me faster than usual. They console me and I ask myself why, and I never have an answer aside from some feeling that I shouldn't be here. I have to stay quarantined. You ask me, when we had an animal that was too sick to have near the others, we'd just shoot it. This quarantine is apparently also why no one can visit me. Like they would anyway. They've all moved on, to the big city, to boyfriends and children and other jobs. They remember me every Christmas, though, and I have to come to them and pretend I don't hate their fake lights and prebuilt houses and "smartphones" and lives.

The nurse is saying something to me as if I'm some naughty child that she doesn't know how to raise. I hate her. She's the representation of everything wrong with young people. This whole thing is just a job to her, a way to make money while she gossips and makes dinner plans with other nurses. Apparently, today is Friday. She hates me too. I don't know if it's because I'm old or if it's because I'm a man, but she only comes in here when she absolutely has to, and every time she does she can barely hide her disgust. She wishes she'd been assigned to someone else, like a little kid or some man her age she could throw herself at. No respect.

I hate that damn beeping. I ask her to turn it off, but she says she can't. I think she can. I think I could too if I knew what any of these machines were for, but whenever I ask she just says "oh, it's pretty complicated sir" with a fake voice and I can't tell if that's because she's stupid or if it's because she

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thinks I am. When I first got here there was a real doctor that explained things to me, but he was busy and put too much trust in his nurses to fill me in on “the basic stuff.”

She asks me if I want to call anyone, or have her call anyone’s number, and every time looks at me with this expression I hate because I say that I don’t know any of them. Like she can’t tell if I’m the dog or the one kicking it. My daughters say I should get a phone, like the ones they and their kids all have. I say I’m too busy managing the farm, that they’d forgotten what it was like to do real work. They roll their eyes, one of them says I’m going to break my back one day and no one will be there to help me. Now we’re talking about me “retiring” and sitting on my ass waiting to die, just like this, and their husbands are all sitting nervously waiting for us to talk about something else while my grandkids stare at screens.