Mister Fix-It

by Linda Simoni-Wastila

She found him in the pantry, fly unzipped, tilting over the recycle bin.

“Oh Dad,” she said and led him to the bathroom. She hosed down the urine-soaked container, then returned to the bathroom with a clean pair of boxers. He sobbed into a terry towel. She rubbed small circles between his shoulder blades. Skinny like bird's wings, she thought.

“For Cripe's sake, I built this house,” he said. “You'd think I'd know where I put the goddamn can.”

She waited behind the closed door while he changed. He'd installed the second bathroom twelve years ago, during his one week of vacation. Lined up like ghosts on the front lawn, the second-hand porcelain fixtures had embarrassed her. Her father whistled the whole week, annoying Gershwin tunes between his teeth, happier than a hog in poop because he was banging away on a ‘project'. She could barely hem her surgical scrubs.

A string of obscenities punctuated the burbling water. She opened the door. The face cloth dripped in his shaking hand, spattering his tee shirt.

“What the hell is wrong with me?”

“It's the Parkinson's,” she said. “The neurotransmitters aren't quite connecting in your brain.”

“Harrumph.” He tilted his head at her, then shuffled down the hall. “My head's just fine.”

At dinner time, she found him in the basement. Back to the door, he didn't notice her as he plowed through the toolbox.

“Loose screws, my ass,” he muttered. “Now where's the goddamn Phillips?”

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