

*This is a scene of tight non-attributed dialogue between the two 16-year-old identical twins. Can the narrator ensure that listeners can distinguish between the two twins' voices?*

“Race you!” Gavin called out and bounded forward, for once getting a few steps ahead of his brother. Even carrying the bat and balls, his long legs conditioned by running cross-country easily outmatched Devon, who had channeled his energy into wrestling. Whenever Gavin ran, he felt distinct and unique, not just the other half of a set of twins. He became larger, better, stronger with each stride, each breath. He wanted to run forever. Some day he would.

“Hey, wait! You cheated,” Devon yelled. “We had to start at the same time!”

Gavin arrived home first, followed by his panting brother nearly fifty yards behind. While he enjoyed a brief sense of victory, Devon disregarded the evidence of that gap and objected, “I’d have kicked your ass if you hadn’t cheated.”

Gavin had already taken the stairs two at a time to the second floor of the house and jumped into the shower. He was in the middle of shampooing when he was startled by muscled arms circling him from behind.

“You’re a real wuss, Gav,” Devon hissed into his twin’s ear, simultaneously grabbing Gavin’s genitals.

Gavin yelled and jumped away, swung his arm around but missed his target, with shampoo stinging his eyes. But Devon was gone, leaving him enraged and frozen in disbelief.

After Gavin finished his shower, still seething, he stomped down the hall to their bedroom and confronted his brother. “Why’d you do that, Dev?”

“Do what?”

“Your sick little joke in the shower.”

“What’re you talking about?”

“You know, asshole. You grabbed my balls, pulled on my dick—”

“Wow, you’re imagining things, baby brother,” Devon laughed.

“No I’m not, cocksucker, and it isn’t funny!”

“I think you’re having some wishful fantasies, Gav.”

“Don’t ever do anything like that again,” Gavin spat, while some invisible force restrained his twitching arms from flailing at his tormentor. He stormed out of the room and slammed the door behind him. Devon’s mocking guffaw echoed down the hall in his wake.

*Tony is the twins’ father. He’s a lower-middle-class Italian-American with Mob roots who grew up in the Italian North End of Boston, but later moved to upscale Wellesley (where the gathering in the scene below is) to attempt “class”, which he tries to project to others (but reverts to that “voice” with his birth family, who still live in the “Italian ghetto”):*

Tony’s older brother Joey, whose slightly hunched back evidenced an old injury, poured himself a second scotch from the bar in the corner of the family room just as Tony arrived to mix

another drink for their father. “Hey, Antony,” Joey drew out his words haltingly between gulps, “how’s business?”

“Couldn’t be better, Man,” Tony crowed. “I’m rakin’ it in with all my new stores, and I’m gonna be opening more pretty soon. Can’t wait for Devon to get old enough to take over some of it.”

“Devon?” Joey stammered and downed his drink. “And what about Gavin?”

“Devon’s the one with balls. His brother’s a nerd, like Colleen.”

“Yeah, but he can usually keep Devon from doing crazy stuff,” Joey nodded, then lowered his voice. “You better watch your wonder boy; he’ll be wantin’ to flirt with Salemme or ‘Cue Ball’.”

Tony whipped an angry face around to his brother. “Shut your trap on the mob shit, Joey. You know how that turned out.”

Joey smirked ruefully and changed the subject. “You comin’ tomorrow night for cards? We got some new girls lined up. Real hot.”

“Nah, I gotta chaperone the boys’ birthday party at the arcade,” Tony rolled his eyes. “But you keep ‘em warmed up and I’ll check ‘em out next week,” he muttered with a wink.

“I told you before, you never should’a married that snooty little bitch.” He paused. “Just because you knocked her up didn’t mean —”

“Hey, can it,” Tony broke in. “That’s my wife you’re talking about. Look, she was sixteen — that’s old enough.” Tony flicked his hand dismissively.

“May be legal age, but she don’t know nothing about what’s real. Then she went and got that stupid-ass degree. Ivory tower twit.”

“She’s the boys’ mother, good enough,” Tony growled, visibly annoyed at being cornered by his brother. He walked away and called out to the crowd in the family room. “Before we go out to the patio for dinner, I’d like to propose a toast to our birthday boys.”

*The scene below includes dialogue between the MC and his mother (a 35-year-old upper class PhD):*

Colleen was bent over the stove in her oversized pink terrycloth robe, poking at the pan in front of her.

“Mom, what are you doing up so early?” Gavin said as he walked toward her and grabbed a banana from the basket on the kitchen island.

“Oh, Gavin, I’m sorry if I woke you,” she mumbled and hunched her shoulders over the pan.

Gavin approached to get a piece of bacon and put his hand on his mother’s back. But Colleen turned away. He thought that was strange; his mother usually greeted him in the morning with a smile and a pat.

“Mom, is something wrong?”

“No, of course not,” she said and walked away from him. “You should go back to bed and get some sleep. Or shower and get dressed. Your breakfast will be here when you’re ready.” She busied herself with something in the sink.

Gavin jumped forward and stuck his face in front of hers. Tear tracks creased her cheeks. There was a welt on her upper lip and a purple bulge below one eye. “Oh no,” he groaned, recalling the arguing he’d heard the night before from his parents’ room. He rushed to the freezer to get ice. His dread turned to anger.

“Oh, honey,” Colleen whispered. Her head shook and her voice cracked.

Gavin brought over the ice in a plastic bag wrapped in a cloth napkin, and steered his mother to a stool next to the island counter. “Here, Mom,” he said as he put the ice on her face and placed her hand to hold it. Words failed him. He set his jaw and clenched his fists. Then he turned off the burner under the bacon pan and ran to open the door into the garage. His father’s car was gone.

He came back and pulled another stool next to his mother and sat. “I’m so sorry, Mom. You want to talk about it?”

“No. Your father just lost his temper.” She kept looking down, her eyes averted.

“Do you still want to go to graduation today? It’s okay if you don’t feel like it.”

“I don’t know. Maybe the ice will help. Then with makeup and sunglasses, ...” She trailed off and shrugged hopelessly.

“Do you think Dad will come?” he asked. “I hope not.”

“Oh, he wouldn’t miss it. I can’t guarantee his condition though ...”

“Mom, is there anything we can do?” Gavin pleaded. “Like maybe ask Father Decker to talk to him?”

“Oh, that won’t help,” Colleen almost laughed. “Father Decker is a *Jesuit*,” (she drew out the word with drama) “Your father prefers Franciscans. You know he grew up in the North End, right? The Franciscans *own* St. Leonard’s there.”

“So what’s the difference? A priest is a priest.”

“Well, no. Jesuits are more intellectual. And Tony thinks Father Decker, and most of Wellesley, look down on him.”

Gavin suspected the reasons. But he wanted his mother to talk about it. “Why? Dad has a really successful business.”

“A liquor business. Without a college degree. And he’s from a working-class neighborhood in the North End.”

“So why did Dad decide to move here, to Wellesley?”

Colleen coughed a sarcastic chortle again. “I don’t know for sure. Part of it was wanting what was best for you and Devon, but I suspect he also hoped his money might warrant respect, that he could become part of the ‘upper class’.”

“Oh,” Gavin grunted. He thought about how his father sometimes acted like a bully, sort of tough-guy gangster style. Which would probably give the lie to any respect he might hope for from Wellesley-ites.

“But of course that hasn’t really happened, despite his big donations to Wellesley institutions,” Colleen smirked. “The hospital, the church, Rotary, ...”

It occurred to Gavin that his father’s thwarted desire to be “upper class” could be why he often seemed resentful toward his mother’s PhD and professional career.

As always, Colleen read Gavin’s mind. “He’s never forgiven me for getting my degree and a job.”

“But he doesn’t have to beat you up about it,” Gavin growled, pounding his fist on the counter.

His mother dropped her head and fidgeted with the tie on her robe. “Gavin, despite what your father thinks, it isn’t your job to save everyone. Not your brother, not me. You just need to be responsible for yourself and allow others to do the same for themselves.”

“But Mom, I can’t stand by and watch Dad hurt you!”

“Your father isn’t a bad man, Gavin. I know he’ll be remorseful about this later. It’s just ... well, the model for manhood in the Italian North End where your father grew up was different than what you see here in Wellesley,” she muttered, then smiled. “I remember the first time I met your dad’s family and friends at a party in the North End. It was so obvious ... all the men were tough, macho, swaggering and boasting, the undisputed boss of their women, who all just got in line with what was expected of them. It’s like all their roles were predetermined, pre-programmed.”

“That’s crazy!” Gavin snapped. “And what’s that pre-programmed bullshit? So Dad can’t help himself?”

“Sort of,” Colleen nodded. “But he eventually came to understand that I wasn’t going to accept those models in our family. And to his credit, I know he wanted to distance himself — and you two boys — from what was going on in the North End.”

“What was going on? You mean the forced role model thing?”

“Well, I guess that could be at the heart of it all. Have you ever heard names like Frank Saleme or Raymond Patriarca?”

“No. Who are they, and what do they have to do with Dad?”

“Some guys from your dad’s old neighborhood. Like I said, it’s complicated. Did you ever wonder why your grandfather DiMasi gave his business to your father instead of your Uncle Joey, the oldest son?”

“I never really thought about it. Maybe Uncle Joey didn’t want it?”

“You should ask your father, Sweetie. It’s not my story to tell.”

“But I think it’s a story you have to live with, not in a good way, right, Mom?”

Colleen was silent.

Gavin felt like he’d been granted only one lick from the lollipop, not enough to even determine what flavor it was. Or what was the truth.

*Part of the challenging über-intense scene below might benefit from acting skills: It's a meeting of the twins with their father in a restaurant in the Italian North End of Boston:*

Devon looked up at the guy who'd arrived beside the table. "Ah, our drinks are finally here."

The man in a brown hat with its brim shading his face dropped the white tablecloth draped over his right arm, unveiling a black Glock in his hand. He took only a split second to point it, but Gavin would forever remember it all, frame-by-frame, in slow motion.

Tony emerged from the men's room just in time to lunge between that gun and his sons. Gavin vaulted over the table and caught his father as he fell.

Devon ran.

The man turned toward Devon's back and shot again. Splatters of blood erupted from Devon as he ran. The guy tripped as he began the chase. But his target had already disappeared. And then so did he.

Gavin held his father, shouting for help.

Dom leaned against the opposite wall. Arms crossed, watching.

Gavin loosened his father's tie and collar. The red stain spread over his white shirt in a demented Rorschach pattern despite Gavin's fist pushing to staunch the flow. He looked into his father's eyes, under the drooping lids. "Dad, please don't die." He saw his father's lips moving.

Gavin put his ear close. Tony's whispers were nearly inaudible. Soft, mumbled, halting. Painful pauses between struggling words. "... always loved her. ... so beautiful. ... so damn smart ... hate myself for hitting her ... didn't mean to ... make her fall ..."

Gavin felt himself being sucked into a dark tunnel, but clawed his way back. He didn't want his father to die absent grace. "I forgive you, Dad," he whispered.

"... save yourself, son ..." Tony gasped one last breath.

Gavin touched his father's vacant eyes and closed his lids. Angry red tentacles crawled across Tony's shirt, exposing a twisted tale, one locked inside him for generations. In that pattern Gavin saw the shape of his father's past and that of *his* fathers, the model of truculent dominance and captious misogyny that maimed human dignity, destroyed his mother, warped and defiled Devon's identity, distorted and crippled his own self-determination, polluting the lives of every DiMasi. Including his father, who lay before him a martyr to the expectations of his ancestors and to the legacy he imposed on his twins.

Gavin vowed to break the chain of macho toughness, reverse the cultural expectations that had perverted his childhood and his identity. He stood, hearing banging downstairs. Boston police officers couldn't get in. The door was locked. Dom went to open it. When the first officer saw Gavin, he growled, "Red, what'd you do this time?"