

Monday, May 14 2068, 1.30pm, the gym, Tracy Island.

Melancholy. That word about summed it up. And this type had nothing to do with black bile. Bloody Medieval people... Dominic arched his back and slipped into another pose, concentrating on his breathing. In...and out...in...and out... He held it for quite some time, willing the built-up tension to evaporate. In...and out...

"AAAAAAAAAAAAAH!"

Dom fell out of the pose with a strangled yelp and looked across the room to the source of the cry.

"AHH AHH AHH AHH!"

Apparently, Joshua was no longer asleep. He was wrenching the bars of the spacious play pen Dom had erected in an attempt to get some peace to practice his yoga without handing the child off to someone else. At first it had worked well -- Josh had even gone to sleep! The novelty had worn off now, and Dom clambered to his feet and across the room. Maybe it would work again in future.

"OUT! WANT OUT!"

"Yes, yes Joshua, you'll get out. Now please stop shoutin'."

"NOOO! OUT!"

"Joshua, stop that right now."

"NOOO!"

Red-faced, Joshua threw himself onto the floor of the playpen and beat his heels on the floor. Dominic took a deep breath and stepped over the low gate. Give me strength...

In the past month or so, Joshua had become increasingly bad-tempered. The frustration the child faced every day pained Dominic, but there was nothing he could do. It was a part of growing and learning. Unfortunately, it brought with it tantrums. The phrase 'terrible twos' didn't quite cover it. Dominic grabbed Joshua's soft nap blanket and sat cross-legged on the floor, holding his hands out to the child.

"Come on Josh, that's enough." More wailing. "Josh." Still more crying. "I can sit here longer than you can, you know."

As expected, eventually Joshua gave up -- Dom knew that he would rejoice on the day that he stopped the tantrums for good -- and clambered into his father's lap. Dominic wrapped the blanket around him and stroked his son's blond hair.

"See? There was no reason for that now, was there?"

Joshua snivelled and buried himself further into the blanket. Dom let out a long breath and inhaled deeply. Someone up there is makin' fun of me. He turned Josh around and stood up, surveying the gym. He would come back and clean up later. He pushed his mat and Joshua's things into an out of the way corner with his foot before heading towards the monorail. He didn't really feel like going back to the apartment, however, so he changed course and headed for the pool. Joshua was complacent now. He wondered how long it would last.

Brandon, Alan, and Gordon were sitting at the poolside, the latter two engaged in an unenthusiastic game of chess. Brandon waved as Dom approached, and shot him a questioning glance when he sat down on the recliner with the air of a man who had just run a marathon.

"What's up?" He asked.

Dom attempted to settle Joshua on his lap, but one glimpse of red hair had set his mind afire again, and he jumped off and went straight to Gordon, who hoisted him up into his lap and cast a grin at Dom.

"I dunno. I'm just feelin' a bit out-of-sorts, I 'spose."

"Is the little guy giving you trouble?"

"Aye, but it's to be expected. He's two years and five months old exactly tomorrow." Dom let out a sigh that could only have been described as melancholy, and folded his arms.

"I get the feeling there's something else here, though," Brandon said.

"Hmm. I guess the mother's day stuff kinda threw me, yesterday. I should have been making breakfast and writing cards from Josh. I doubt if he can even remember his mother at all."

"Short-term girlfriend?"

"More like short-term wife."

"Wife?" Brandon asked. "Man, that must have hurt."

"More than you can know."

The conversation tapered off from there, before eventually Dom stood up and stretched.

"Could you keep a wee eye on him for me, Gordon?" He asked. "I've to go do some tidying up."

"Sure thing, Dom," Gordon said.

Brandon watched Dominic's retreating back with a small frown. There always seemed to be things that you didn't know about your friends.

From: ArtisticRainey Sent: 9/24/2005

---