

## The Archimedes Problem

By Eddy Rivas

My dad is bleeding all over the carpet, and all I can think about is how I'm going to get yelled at for it in the morning.

"Dad...Dad, get up."

"I'm fine. Just let me lay here."

He says that now, when the claw marks are fresh, but he's not the one scrubbing at sunrise. He's also not the one-hundred-forty-pound kid struggling to drag his ass down the hall. I try to pull him by his jacket, which looks like it's recently been put through a paper shredder, but the guy won't budge.

"You're going to have to help me," I say, slapping his face to keep him conscious. My bloody fingertips color his cheeks. "You're huge, and I don't have enough...*torque*." Is it torque? Is that the right word?

God, I really need to study for that physics AP.

Dad groans, his breath saturated with alcohol.

"Seriously? Did you get drunk before or after you got mauled?"

You never know with Dad. There's always a bottle within arm's

reach, and probably a couple of daggers too.

He smacks his lips, and his face puckers like he's eaten something sour. "Judith?"

"Mom's not here, Dad."

It takes us almost half an hour to make it to his bed, leaving a trail of blood behind us like a Hollywood red carpet. I roll him onto his stomach so I can pull his jacket off, and that's when I notice the goo; a clear sort of mucus that makes my skin itch when I touch it. I flick it off my fingers in long, syrupy strings. At least it's not vampire ashes—those are harder to get rid of than Cheetos dust.

I run through the motions to patch Dad up. I visit each wound one by one, casting irritated glances at the already depleted roll of bandages and near-empty bottle of rubbing alcohol. Didn't I just buy all this stuff? I make a mental note to check Amazon for bulk discounts on first aid supplies and maybe a self-defense book while I'm at it.

My breath catches when I come across a nasty wound that splits his side like a fillet... This is more serious than I first thought.

"I've got to call the imp."

"Gabe," he grunts.

He's always chatty when he thinks he's on his deathbed. "Save your strength, Dad."

"I tried. You know I tried."

"I know you think so."

He shudders like an out of balance washing machine and slips into unconsciousness. That might be the longest conversation we've had in a month.

I light the earwax-colored candles on Dad's desk. Black flames fill the air with the stink of rotten eggs. On the other side of Kindling, the torch will light in the imp's quarters, summoning him like the supernatural equivalent of the Bat Signal.

I slip out of the room before the imp arrives. I don't feel like having my bandaging technique critiqued again.

It's a while before I fall asleep. Between Dad's rattling bed, his howls of pain, and the imp shouting his healing magic, I can't help but wonder if this might be the time Logan Decker finally got himself killed for good.

It's not that I'm worried about losing my Dad. It's just that I don't want his monster hunter life. The one I'm going to inherit when he dies.

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