

A Rigatoni and Pesto Life... Please?

My life is a mess! I don't know how I was born into such a life.

Ever since my mom and dad divorced, my world has been messy like spaghetti. Way less. messy.

But pasta preferences don't really have anything to do with the fact that my mom works for the United Nations and I hardly ever get to see her. She lives and works somewhere in Europe. Whenever we have our weekly calls every Saturday, she always seems so happy living away in some European country away from her daughter.

She doesn't seem to care that I am stuck at home with my dad—a reckless, restless hippie who's always moving from one place to another. Just a few weeks ago, we lived in Idaho, and just a few weeks before *that*, we lived in California. Now, we “live” in Florida, but Dad is already talking about moving us back up to Michigan to live with Grandma. She lives in a cozy little cabin on the skirts of Lake Superior.

He's always going from one job to the next. He's a skilled carpenter, but his problem isn't skills, it's keeping his job.

That's also why we live in a van. A dirt-covered, crusty old van that seems like it's going to fall apart on us any minute now.

I love my dad, I really do, but sometimes I think to myself, does he really care about *me* and *my feelings*, or just himself? Those words seem to play over and over in my head all the time.

I've made many friends along the way, but I always leave them behind every time. *Every time.*

If we decide to move up to Michigan to live with Grandma, that would be great. But our only problem is getting Grandma to *let* us live with her. Grandma adores *me*, but she has never really had a fondness for my dad. He also doesn't really have a fondness for *her*. He is determined to believe that Grandma convinced my mom to leave him—us— and go off to work in Europe. Of course, that is only an assumption.

Well, here we are. Sitting in our old living room/kitchen/Dad's bedroom that is probably only about 40 square feet. Dad has a worried expression on his face. I've seen that look before. I saw it before we moved from Idaho, California, Oregon, Vermont, and all the other places we left behind. I can't keep track anymore.

“Pumpkin pie, we've gotta be headin' up north tomorrow mornin'. We're gonna go live with Grandma Ida in Mich'gan,” He said, rubbing his auburn hair. I also have that same shade of auburn hair.

“Okay,” I said, not surprised at all. “Did you get fired?”

“Just some greedy ol' fools that run that place. My goodness, I couldn't last there one second, so I quit! These guys are all the same and they ain't deserve any work from a fine carpent—”

I cut him off, a stern expression rising to my face. “Wait! I thought you got *fired* all these times, I didn’t know you just *quit*?!” It’s not like me to yell or throw tantrums, but at that very moment, my temper got the better of me. “You only care about *yourself*! Not the girl standing in front of you! No! We’re always jumping from one place to another. Always building and breaking down! Breaking down friendships, history—”

“Pumpkin Pie—”

“Don’t call me that! I’m nothing to you but this girl who follows you around the United States. You wouldn’t care if I went and... fell off a cliff!” I stopped myself. “Oh Daddy, I know that’s not true. I know you love me, I love you too. But, that’s how I feel sometimes. I wish we lived in one place. One town. Same stores, buildings, friends, schools. Dad, please?” I paused and cleared my throat. I continued. “And well, I don’t think the whole thing about living with Grandma is going to work. You and her have never really liked each other... What if she doesn’t let us live with her? What are we going to do then?”

Dad shuffled his feet. “Oh Allegra,” He said, finally using my full name instead of calling me some fruit pie. “I didn’t know you felt this way... I—I never meant to do this to you and well... I thought you liked—oh never mind. Also, Grandma doesn’t exactly have a say in any of this living with her stuff...”

I raised an eyebrow. “Did you send the gypsies to her house and have them tie her up and throw her some ditch or cell somewhere?”

“Of course not!” Dad chuckled. “We’re not going to give her a notice. We’re just going to show up at her house and sort of surprise her! She can’t turn us down in our ‘hour of need’. Right?”

A mischievous grin spread across my face. What a great idea!

“But, it will only be a temporary situation. ‘Til I can find a solid job and we can find a house. Not a house on wheels, but a house built into the solid Michigan dirt, kay?”

We were off the next morning at the crack of dawn, driving down the highway still in our pajamas. Dad had promised that we would settle down somewhere. *Somewhere* in the Michigan dirt. No more breaking down. That was behind us now.

It took a few days to get to Michigan from Florida, but I could see my future fading into view as we approached the Michigan sign.

My life was becoming more like rigatoni and pesto. No more spaghetti mess!