Kids That Go Bump in the Night

by squidgie

Summary

In the more than 25 years that John had lived on the farm, he'd managed to catalog just about every noise that broke the stillness of night, be it the tick-tick-tick of the cranky water heater that would invariably run cold when John was short on time, or the thrum of a diesel combine slowly making its way toward a field of corn or soy.

Notes

If you're not familiar with Iowa 'verse, it's a wonderful SGA AU written by sheafrotherdon where John inherits a farm in Iowa from his grandfather, and meets Rodney a few years later. Cate is a wonder, and lets people play in her 'verse. This is a little glimpse into their lives after the kids have gone off to college.

John woke up from a sound sleep, bright light from a full moon reflecting off heavy, snow-laden clouds illuminating the bedroom. As his brain started to push away the blanket of sleep, the brightness that chipped away at the pitch of night brought forth a memory of the darkened rooms of the farmhouse illuminated by nightlights picked out at Target by tiny fingers. But those days were gone, the nightlights tucked away after the kids both left for college. John reached for Rodney, currently plastered against his side, both a comfort from the cold of another the heavy Iowa winter and the solace of being together in a house that missed the giggles of childhood, the stomps of a teenager that sometimes shouted, "You just don't understand!" Finn was away, speeding through his last year of college, Merri her first. Without the kids bustling underfoot, the house felt almost as empty as it had that hot August day when John had first crossed the threshold decades before. And while neither he nor Rodney rarely said the words out loud, both men missed their kids, the silence often filled in with the television left on too long or the tinny broadcast of a
John closed his eyes, letting Rodney burrow even closer when he heard it again - the thing that he figured woke him up before. In the more than 25 years that John had lived on the farm, he'd managed to catalog just about every noise that broke the stillness of night, be it the tick-tick-tick of the cranky water heater that would invariably run cold when John was short on time, or the thrum of a diesel combine slowly making its way toward a field of corn or soy. When he heard it again, he realized that the noises that dragged him out of a sound sleep were familiar, just muffled. And by the time he stretched and pulled himself from Rodney's grip, he was pretty sure what was going on downstairs.

Standing, John put on a pair of sweatpants and stepped toward the window. He glanced down and smiled as he heard the creak of the screen door opening, seeing fresh footsteps in newly fallen snow and a new-ish looking car parked next to John's SUV. Seeing a rental car in his drive brought back memories of Rodney's first visit, though John was glad that this car was parked, and not in the ditch like Rodney's had been.

After slipping on a pair of heavy socks, John stepped lightly out into the hallway and stood in the shadow. He looked down the stairs to the brightly lit kitchen, and his heart pinched at the sight. It took a few moments, but eventually, there was another clunking sound, probably a box or maybe a bag being set down on the kitchen table, followed by a "Shh," that was unmistakably from his daughter.

"Oh please," came Finn's barely muted reply - and when did his voice get so deep? It seemed like just yesterday John and Rodney were having to deal with squished bugs, rocks, and all sorts of trouble that a four-year-old could get into while growing up on a farm. "Like Baffa's not already awake."

Merrie didn't reply, but instead peeked around the corner of the kitchen, hazel eyes instantly connecting with John's, a smile on her face. John winked at her, then stretched his old bones, back cracking, before taking the stairs.

"Baff? Can you get the stand?" Merrie asked as John stepped into the kitchen.

John pulled her to him, enveloping her in a hug as he dropped a kiss to her forehead. "Not without waking your dad," John said, not lowering his voice. Rodney could sleep through pretty much anything, though the kids had the coffeepot ready; that just might do the trick. He pulled Finn into a hug, but soon his attention was dragged to the small tree that stood in the corner of the kitchen, bits of snow slowly dripping from the branches. "Where'd you get a tree? Don't tell me you guys got in yesterday."

"No, Baffa. We got in a little after midnight. Merrie and I walked out to the creek and cut it down." Just as John gave him a look, Finn added, "And yes, I put the saw back."

John just smiled at his little family as his heart pinched. "I'd best be getting the stand, then, huh?" he said. "But do me a favor and flip on the coffee. We should wake your dad up before I go rummaging up there."

The fancy coffee pot churned to life as John clung on his kid's every word, and within minutes, Rodney stood in the doorway to the kitchen. John smiled at his husband's confused expression, but also at what little hair Rodney still had. It pointed in angles that seemed geometrically impossible like each tuft would abandon ship come first chance. "Bwaa?"
"Kids're home," John said with a beam as big as all Iowa. He handed Rodney a cup of coffee, then led him to the table with a gentle hand to his back. "I'm gonna go get the tree stand, okay?" He kissed Rodney, then double-timed it up the stairs, coming back a few minutes later to the sounds of family, of home.

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