Stepping Forward

by Infiniteleft

Summary

This was something entirely new, and Daina felt afraid.

Her footsteps echoed throughout the halls, leaving Daina standing alone. Not even the nails were left in the walls - she'd taken them down that afternoon. It was empty. Her heart ached at the sight.

Don't get her wrong, she was excited for the new life she was ready to lead, but... the door was still closing on this part of it. Seven years she'd spent here. What a long time.

All the things she wanted to take with her were now packed away tightly, waiting to be shipped to Japan. She wouldn't live here anymore, and wasn't that a little frightening? It was exciting, for sure, but knowing she wouldn't live in this dusty old town anymore...

She heard the front door shut - it was so loud, now. Dex must be back from the dinner run. Without bothering to look, she could track him moving across the vacant house.

"You're not napping in here on the floor somewhere, are you, Daina?" He called, setting something on the counter.

"No, I'm in here." Just in time, her head turned to spot him peeking around the corner. He wore a lopsided smile, seemingly knowing of her melancholy mood.

An arm was slung over her shoulders as he drew near enough to touch. "It's getting to you, isn't it?" She didn't say anything, just looked at where she'd once hung a painting of her childhood home. It'd
been a Christmas present from Dex.

Was it a betrayal to ache for the past when both of them were looking forward to the future? She knew it was a normal feeling, though, and tried to set it aside.

"Yeah," she finally answered. "I guess it is."

The arm tightened a fraction. "I'd be scared out of my wits if I were you. Then again, you were always the braver one of us." The corners of his lips twitched.

"Yeah." Daina tried to smile, but it fled shortly. "... I'm gonna miss you."

"We'll still talk to each other, you know," he reminded her, "and see each other during the year."

"I know, but…"

"It won't be the same, huh." Not a question, and it got her that Dex might be feeling the same way she did.

She sighed and looped an arm around his waist. They stood like that in the quiet walkway for a while.

They had long since stopped being lover's, but they still remained good friends since… well, as long as Daina could remember. Not having him, or anyone else she grew up with within driving distance was new and terrifying. What if something went wrong while she was gone?

Oh, get a grip on yourself, she scolded. This wasn't some trip that wouldn't allow her any contact with her family - looking at you, cruise liners - but the next step of her life. This was something exciting!

"I stashed a bottle of wine in the pantry," she said at last. The silence couldn't go on.

"Russian?"

"No, Jewish. It's the stuff Prima brought one year." That had been an… interesting party, but that, she remembered.

"I thought we finished it that night?"

"I got another one."

"Think it'll go with the Japanese I brought?" It was hard to tell if he was being serious. She pulled away to stare at him.

"You did not!"

"Well, they only have the authentic stuff over there, so- ouch!" He broke off laughing as she punched him in the side. "Easy, easy, I helped you out all that stuff away!"

"You deserve that, and you volunteered." She couldn't help but join him in laughing, falling back against him. He held her close as she laughed and laughed, and cried, and went back to laughing.

She locked the door that night when they left feeling far more at peace than when she'd gone in. Maybe it was time to let go, but she'd enjoy what was left in this chapter of hers while she could.
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