

Just Like Him

By F.R. Southerland

2004

Andy was fourteen now. No longer a little girl. She felt wise beyond her years. She knew a lot of things, a lot of spells and magic—much more than her six year old sister did. So when Vinnie asked her how Andy got so smart, the older redhead beamed. “I got it from my daddy.”

Victor Foster had been dead for five years, give or take, and talking about him was still painful for Andy, but she couldn’t deny the statement. It was absolutely true. Her daddy had been the smartest man she knew, maybe even smarter than Mason and that was saying something. So, in this case, she didn’t mind bringing him up and she hoped the answer would be enough to satisfy her sister’s curiosity.

Of course it wasn’t. Vinnie had grown up never knowing their father. All she had was photographs, not even a dim memory. She’d only been a baby when he was murdered. Just the mention of Victor stirred a longing within her young self. She wanted to know more about him. And while their mother sometimes mentioned him in passing, she never talked in depth about him. Andy was her only option. “Why was he so smart?” she wanted to know.

Andy sighed and rolled her eyes. “Because he was.”

That answer wasn’t enough. A pout set on the young witch’s face. “But you’re smarter than me and he was my daddy too.”

“Yeah, but you’re also a baby.”

“I’m not a baby.”

“Vin, you’re always gonna be the baby.”

Vinnie’s lip jutted out even more and Andy saw the glimmer of tears. If Vinnie started crying, it would be all her fault and their mom would blame her. Not wanting to get in trouble, Andy quickly tried to think of some easy way to prevent the tantrum. “You’ll be smart just like him one day. I’m pretty sure.”

“Really?” Vinnie sniffled.

Andy nodded and glanced toward her bookshelf. Nestled among her magic volumes, Babysitter Club books, her comics, was one of her father’s spellbooks. It was mostly about herbs and their magical properties, but it was something she could part with. After all, there were tons more of his books in the trunk in the attic. “Here.” She passed the book to her sister.

Vinnie, still just getting the hang of reading, stared at the thin, leather-bound book. “Daddy’s book?”

“Yeah. I figure, you read this and you can get really smart. It has pictures too.”

The younger girl flipped through the pages, eyeing the illustrations of plants with wide eyes. Her tears forgotten, a bright smile spread over her face. “I’m gonna be smarter than you one day,” she told her, proudly, then bounded out.

Andy rolled her eyes. “Fat chance,” she muttered, but glad to have diffused the situation and to have gotten her sister to leave her alone. Smirking at herself, she turned the pages of the spellbook in her lap and continued studying.

© 2019 F.R. Southerland