

# Chapter 4

## Saturday Mornings at Splinter Street

Cody Overture woke up to a booming explosion from the other room. He groggily rolled out of his tangled sheets and fell off his rickety bed. Stretching his arm out from the floor, he slapped his alarm clock to silence. It tumbled to the floorboards as well. With the clock on the ground, he glanced at it and realized he had been asleep for eleven hours!

Shortly after, another fiery boom went off. It came from the kitchen, likely thanks to Olive Overture, Cody's ambitious 12-year old sister who had a brain too big for her small head. She wore her mom's apron, her dad's old baseball cap (backwards), and Cody's new sweater.

Cody stepped into his family's small, homely kitchen and saw his sister making waffles with a chemistry lab set. While Cody was thankful to eat something vegetarian after witnessing the slaughter of a creature, he was still curious on why his little sister would attempt to cook. She never made anything, not even burnt toast.

"What's with the batter bomb?" Cody asked.

"The first batch I had came out flat. It looked like a sad, plaid pancake." said Olive before blowing a lock of front hair from her face. It just instantly flopped back to where it was. "Anyway, for the second batch, I thought I'd use science and test out some air-expansion methods for fluffier dough."

"There's tried and true methods *in the cook book*."

"Yeah, but those are boring. Now be a good brother and help clean up." said Olive, returning to stirring.

"It's your mess. You clean it up."

"Hey! I didn't have to make breakfast, ya know. Dad went to work early, and Mom's not back from the night shift yet."

Cody shook his head with a grin. He then grabbed a wet towel and started wiping up splattered batter from the walls. "They've been like that all week. Why're you complaining now?"

"Because it wasn't Saturday all those other days! We already skipped the healthy Saturday Waffles last week, and I refuse to skip it again this week."

Olive reached out her chemistry kit and pulled out a bright green test tube. Before she could pour even a drop into the batter, Cody blocked her with his towel.

“Ol, if you really want pancakes, sit down. I’ll make ‘em for you. I know the way dad actually makes them.

“With cinnamon and bananas?” said Olive, arching an eyebrow.

“And a little bit of vanilla yogurt. Those are the easy ones to remember. Come on, Ol. Cody winked.

Olive smiled and yanked the towel from her brother’s hand. “I’ll clean my mess then. One day, I’ll be smart enough to run a company that can pay assistants. But until then, I’m stuck doing my grunt work.”

“Dream big, ya goof,” said Cody as he began a new batch of batter. “Hmm. Speaking of dreams, I had a strange one.”

“Did it involve a super intelligent politician-bear who solved the unemployment crisis in our country?”

“What? No! Was that your dream?”

“Maybe.”

“Well, mine involved a giant squirrel who ate a whole village.”

“Sounds boring.” Said Olive.

“It was horrifying!”

“And then... um.... Nevermind.”

Olive’s eyes perked up. “Oh?”

“Yeah. Uh. I thought other stuff happened in the dream, but then I remembered nothing else happened.”

“Yeah, that sounds believable, alright.”

“Yeah, because it’s true.” Said Cody as he gingerly grabbed the first waffle out of the iron.

“Penny showed up. Didn’t she?”

Cody nearly spilled batter all over the counter after attempting to start the next waffle.

“What! No. Ew.” He said.

“And then she KISSED YOU. Didn’t she?”

“What books did mom let you start reading?”

“Was it all slobbery and gooey?”

“Okay, you know what, Olive, you got your wish. Breakfast is all yours. Feel free to make all the explosive healthy waffles you want.”

Cody slammed shut the waffle iron and marched out of the kitchen.

“Where are you going, huh?” asked Olive.

“To work! There’s no politician-bear solving the work crisis, so I can’t afford to lose my job.”

Olive shook her head as Cody booked it out of their small home. The slam from the front door seemingly shook every room. As the snarky, little genius poured some batter onto the waffle iron, she smiled and giggled to herself, “That boy is out of control.”

Cody stepped out to greet his ramshackle neighborhood, Splinter Street. It was a suburb that didn’t resemble many other towns from the United States. The cabin-styled houses decorated the narrow street that zigzagged its way up a forest hillside. Going from one house to another felt like traversing a camp-themed mini golf course.

From not even a mile away, you could see two great roads on the lower levels of the valley. These were the famous I70 highway and the not-so-famous Timber Lake Trail (the same dirt path Cody took yesterday). If you were on one of these roads, Cody’s neighborhood street would’ve looked like log cabins decorating a mountain — like ornaments to a Christmas tree.

From inside a dark van, a tall lady wearing all black watched Cody split off from Splinter Street and trot downhill towards the Timber Lake Trail. How Abigail Simmons, the leader of the Home Owners Association loathed Cody and his whole family! With spiteful determination and an expensive pair of binoculars, she watched him disappear behind the trees.

“There he goes, the prodigal son of Max and Nessa Overture.”

Abigail’s short, jittery assistant, Todd sat beside her while eating a breakfast sandwich.

Can you please explain why you’re so interested in that teenager?”

“Not just the boy, dear Todd!” said Abigail as she raised her hand up to his sandwich, nearly knocking it out of place. “It’s that whole family that drives me nuts.”

“Because they can potentially lower down the property rates?”

“Not just the rates, dear Todd. They’re actively RUINING the reputation of our quaint rest stop town. You heard the explosions coming from their house earlier? It’s no doubt in my mind that’s the handiwork of the little Olive kid. She’s too smart for her own good. For all we know, she could be building unauthorized weapons in the basement.”

“But. But. But she’s a child.”

“And the apple doesn’t fall far from the tree. You know the father, Max Overture?”

“Not personally-”

“-Shh, don’t interrupt my rhetorical questions, Todd dear.” said Abigail as she swiped the breakfast sandwich out of his grasp. She held it in front of him like it was ransom for his silence. “That man is unhinged. He may look like he’s 23, but he’s actually 49.”

“Really?”

“My theory is that he was in some big mafia conspiracy, which resulted in him getting plastic surgery to change his identity. It’s only a matter of time before trouble finds him– Oh, and speaking of trouble... I’m onto that Cody. He disappears into the woods multiple times a week. And recently, I heard he made a cheap move on one of our best delivery drivers.”

“How long have you been following this boy?” Todd reached for his sandwich. Abigail pulled it away from him further.

“He’s nowhere near as flaky as his mother. She’s up to no good either. Nessa’s always flying around for business, never free to tend to a mother’s duties. If I didn’t know better, I’d have half a mind to assume she has another family.”

“Uh, Miss Abigail,” said Todd, “With all d-due respect, do you have any proof for these things you’re saying?”

“Of course not. That’s why we’re doing a stakeout! We’re the HOA, Toddydear. Act like it.”

Abigail smacked the breakfast sandwich back into Todd’s palms. He nearly dropped it.

“Yeah, about that. Um. Can you not call me ‘dear.’ It’s not professional. And also, my wife doesn’t like it.”

“Well, Todd, I don’t like your wife.”

“But is there anyone you DO even like?” Todd blurted and then immediately covered his mouth.

Abigail glared at him for a few seconds before calming down and saying “Why yes, Todd. I like EVERY home owner on this street EXCEPT for those weirdo’s. All I need is something to use against them. I swear, if I get a single noise complaint or catch their lawns being an inch too long, I’ll rid the whole Overture family from this town forever.”