

"Rue, I want a hot dog," Tai grumbled. Sat in a chair and flicking through his phone, he'd grown bored, and suddenly had a craving.

"We have, um... sausages, dear," Rue replied, from the bedroom.

"I don't want sausages, I want a hot dog," Tai insisted. "The kind where it says 'mechanically separated pork' on the package and the bun is like, fluffy glue, and they're only like two dollars but you get 'em at the stadium for like ten bucks."

"Oh." Rue came out of the bedroom with two decks of Tarot cards in hand. "You mean junk food."

Tai nodded. "The shittiest you got."

Rue sighed, smiling. She glided over to him and bent to press a kiss to his forehead, one which he leaned into. "Shopping, then?"

"I can go, too."

"Are- are you sure?"

"I'm *fine*, I keep saying."

"I just-"

"I *know*, but seriously, baby," he said, pushing himself up. "It ain't even that far. An' you *said* exercise is good for me."

Rue quieted, and from that, Tai knew that he'd won. He patted her hand. "Look, I'll fuckin'... get one of those plug-in carts or something if I get tired. But I'm not tired right now, I wanna go too. And I know you like it better when I do."

He turned, patting her hand again, and went to take his jacket from the hall closet. Rue followed after a moment, shrugging on her own large sweater and slipping her sandals on.

She did offer her arm almost immediately. Tai took it just so she wouldn't fret, but let go so he could slide into the car himself.

The grocery store wasn't particularly busy. It was early evening, the time when most people would be getting home from work and doing anything but shopping, so it was perfect for Rue, who still wasn't too fond of anyone, really. Honestly, Tai wouldn't have minded if she wanted to stay in the car, but she wouldn't let him be on his own anyway and followed meekly in.

While there, not only did they find a package of cheap hot dogs and buns, but Tai suddenly felt like he needed a caesar salad kit and some macaroni and cheese, so he added that to the handbasket. He reached for a box of hamburger helper too, which let him catch a lady staring at him out of the corner of his eye. When he turned, she abruptly moved her cart and went down the next aisle.

He snorted at her. Rude.

By the time he and Rue made it to the checkout, he'd also added a seltzer water to the handbasket, alongside some potato wedges from the deli. He didn't even particularly *like* deli potatoes, he just *wanted* them.

Rue, bless her, played along, unquestioning of his purchases.

"Hello!" The cashier greeted them with a smile, her eyes flicking briefly between Tai and Rue, and down, but all that happened was that her smile grew. "How are you today?"

"We're good," Tai said. He rubbed his knuckles into his hip a little, moving out of the way so Rue could pay.

"That's great." The cashier paused. "Sorry, um. I just wanted to say, you look nice. Are you- um- pregnant? I don't want to assume..."

"Oh," Tai said, looking down at himself and his rounded belly. "Uh... yeah. It's, what, twenty-five weeks?"

Rue entered her pin, then glanced up and nodded.

"Aww," the cashier cooed. "Well congratulations. I hope it goes well."

"Um, thanks?"

Tai took the lighter of their two bags, Rue grabbing the other. He absently rubbed the side of his belly and felt one slight movement in response. "It's still weird," he finally said.

"Um, people asking?" Rue asked. "It's- well, it's only been a little since... since they started noticing."

"Well, yeah, but like... in general. Feels like ages, but- aw, man, you're right. They're gonna keep wanting to yammer on about babies for *months*, huh?"

She chuckled. "Probably."

"Fuck. Maybe this was a bad idea."

"Oh, was it?"

Tai paused. Rue's tone didn't imply anything like regret or concern- she knew Tai wanted this. And Tai knew he wanted it too, he was just...

"It's a little scary," he said, opening the car door. "Like, not this part, this is old hat. But like... what comes after."

He sighed, levering himself into the seat. Rue put her bag in the back and then got in.

"It is," she admitted. "But... I think- it's okay."

"Yeah... even if I'm a fuckup, you'll be a good mom."

"You won't be a fuckup." She reached, brushing his hair back. "You're good just like you are."

"Oh, like this, huh? You just want me knocked up all the time? You know that can be arranged." He smirked.

"Tai- you know what I mean-"

"Yeah, I know, I know." He sat, and slowly ran his hands over his taut belly, watching them and trying to imagine what was beneath, trying to feel the movement of the two little bodies inside.

"Sides," he continued, smiling, "Twins is a whole other ball game."



