

## Mama Milly's

Mama Milly was a hard-working woman, though she never held a job. She raised a family instead. Two boys, one girl. Every evening they ate dinner around the tiny oak wood table. Mama Milly had set it with placemats, of course, a folded napkin (just like they do at the restaurants) , one fork, one knife, a spoon, and a lovely vase of flowers placed right in the center. Five chairs circled the tiny table, one for each member of the family. It was crowded, but all were pleased. Mama Milly had herself quite the cozy family. The afternoon sun peaked through the front window every evening as the family ate together.

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Tom dialed the phone in his pickup truck as he put the last standing cigarette of his pack to his cracked lips. "She's dead," He exhaled with a breath of smoke. "I don't know, the nurse came on into her bedroom and found her dead. She said we have to call the funeral home to pick her up"

It was finally occasion again to crowd around the tiny oak wood table. Two boys, including Tom, and one girl. Joe, the oldest of the three, thought it'd be just swell to eat dinner while they conversed.

"Where the fuck is he at?" asked Tom. "I called him about an hour ago."

"I don't know," Said Liz. "Why don't you try calling him again?"

"If I'm gonna have to get on the phone with him again, I'll need another cigarette... and I don't have one... Shit, I just remembered something."

"What's wrong?"

"I forgot to call the funeral home to pick up mama."

"Well do that now, or will you need another cigarette for that too?"

Tom furrowed his brow as he picked up his phone and peeked out the dusty blinds.

When he saw Joe approaching, he quickly put the phone down.

"Here comes that mother-fucker now... and what's he got in his hands?"

Joe walked through the door with a big greasy brown bag.

"Now, what is that?" asked Liz.

"Some fried chicken. I'm hungry."

When Joe approached the old oak table, he tried to wipe the dust and grime off of it.

To his dismay, it was there to stay. He hocked a wad of saliva to the back of his throat, then launched it onto the palm of his hand. Without hesitation, he washed away the grime in front of the spot where he intended to feast.

"Good," he said as he took a seat. "Now let's get down to business"

"I say it ain't worth more than 130," said Liz.

"130!" exclaimed Joe. "That's only 40- something each!"

"But look at this dirt. I ain't cleaning it up," said Tom as he peered nosely into Tom's bag of chicken wings. "Ain't there any breasts in here?"

"I only like the wings... Plus, get your hands off them, they're mine! Liz will clean the dirt, she's the woman."

"I'm not cleaning nothing, I said 130!"

"Beside the dirt, what makes you think it's worth 130?" Joe asked as he swallowed the buttermilk fried chicken.

"Look up at the ceiling," said Liz. "Nobody wants a popcorn ceiling, that's too old."

“We can change the ceiling,” said Joe as he smacked the grease off his lips.

*A small, salty piece of chicken skin fell from the scruff of his chin onto the table, and Tom’s stomach growled as he thought of the taste of tender buttermilk chicken breasts.*

“And who’s changing the ceiling now, Joe?”

“Ain’t your husband a contractor? Can’t he change the ceiling for God’s sake?”

“That’ll cost you. We need money to live.”

“Ain’t I not your damn brother? Ain’t this not your dam family? Can’t he just fix the ceiling?”

“Fixing mama’s ceiling will take two days. That’s two days Billy misses out on work.”

“How much you want to fix the ceiling?”

*At this point, Tom was fixated on Joe’s wings... If only he had breasts.*

“About 10 grand.”

“You’re trying to rip off your own damn family.”

*What was the number to Bubba’s Chicken Barn again...? Maybe Tom had stored the number in his cell phone. He stepped outside for just a minute.*

“I am not trying to rip off this family! I said just sell it for 130 and be done with it!”

“That’s too little for mama’s house! It’s worth at least 150 in the condition it’s in right now, if we fix it up a bit, it’ll be worth 170... 175 I bet you!”

“I said Billy will fix it up... But that means I get an extra 10 grand out of the deal.”

“Fuck you and your 10 grand!”

Joe’s eyes bulged. His face turned red... It could have been because he ordered the buffalo wings.

*Speaking of wings, Tom was disappointed when he realized he didn't have the number to Bubba's in his contact list. He'd look it up online if Mama's house had wifi.*

*Tom stepped back inside.*

"Now, where did you go?"

"Liz is right, Joe. It's only worth 130... There ain't no wifi," said Tom.

"That don't mean shit! Are you dumb?!" Joe stood up in anger, and banged his chair into the wall behind it.

"Mother fucker!" he exclaimed as he stood up. "I banged my fucking knee! This house is too damn small!"

"You see what I mean?" shouted Liz. "130!"

*Tom could take a quick ride to Bubba's. After all, it was only three blocks away... and his pickup truck had a quarter tank left.*

"Fine, 130... but it's gotta be cash, mother fucker, paid in cash by the buyer."

"I'll be back," said Tom.

"Where you going now?"

"Bubba's Chicken Barn. I'm hungry."

"I'll come with you," proclaimed Liz. "I could use some potato wedges with that dipping sauce they have there."

"If you're going to Bubba's, can you drop me off at home? I don't want to walk again," said Joe.

Tom picked up his keys.

"I only got a quarter of a tank... You'll have to throw me at least a Lincoln."

"You all are some cheap ass bastards."

Joe reached into his pocket for his wallet as they walked out of the door and jumped up into the pickup truck.

Mama Milly just lay in bed. She would have cleaned off the tiny oak table. Perhaps she'd put out the napkins, the knives, the spoons, the forks, and even the vase of flowers if she'd still been alive.

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