

Distilled

by

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Ryan sits with his mother Sally in the kitchen of her remote cottage. The atmosphere is cold, the coffee and cake on the table remain untouched.

RYAN

You seem very calm, given what's happened.

SALLY

Nothing happened, it was a simple misunderstanding.

RYAN

Enough happened that you called me, earlier, in a panic. The police were here. There was a patrol car in the driveway when I arrived.

SALLY

Don't be dramatic, Ryan... You know who was driving it? Ben Soper—your old best friend from under-eights soccer.

RYAN

He wears a badge these days.

SALLY

I can't think of poor Ben without picturing him crying by a goalpost.

RYAN

This isn't funny. You chose to retire two hours from the city, meaning that any time something goes wrong, I lose out on a whole evening with the girls.

SALLY

Bring them along. God forbid they visit their grandmother-

RYAN

Getting arrested in the front garden? *(Pause. Ryan composes himself.)* What was Ben putting in the boot as I pulled up? Looked like a- I don't know- coffee machine, or something.

SALLY

It was an essential oil extractor.

RYAN

You got arrested for making essential oils?

SALLY

Not arrested, cautioned. And I was making ... schnapps. And whisky.

Beat.

RYAN

You're making liquor?

SALLY

Just for me. And I trade a few bottles with neighbours and friends- I'm on a pension-

RYAN

(Talking over her.) You are a bootlegger. You're breaking bad!

SALLY

That show was too violent for me.

RYAN

You complain that we don't visit enough, but this, right here, is part of it. Yeah? This kind of selfishness that, you know, you think you're afforded at a certain age. It's embarrassing. It's not you being empowered, it's you telling us that we need to tow the line if we want a relationship with you. Or you'll cut us all loose.

SALLY

Yes.

RYAN

Yes?

SALLY

Why not? I think I've earned that by now. Forty-one years I was married to your father. I watched him rise in his career, watched you all grow up and start families of your own. I kept the house tidy, and worked when I had to. I hosted, supported, listened, smiled, held my tongue. I said goodbye to my friends and my children once my husband decided we should retire to the country. So now that he's gone, I've decided that it's my turn. I get to have the friends, make the plans and be the one that others work around. You don't like me selling liquor? Then don't be a customer.

A long silence. Sally produces a bottle and pours two shots in the empty coffee mugs.

Try the schnapps.