

What does the Fish tell me?

“Dad?”

Marin turned her head from the drawing book she had been working on. It was an empty void of blank paper, expecting the hand of an imaginative girl to trace a pencil over its cover.

It never would be.

The only thing that had been drawn in that book was one tiny drawing of many stick figures. A man stick figure was crying, walking away from the other woman stick figure, who didn't look sad at all. The male stick figure was holding hands with a small girl, who was looking back at the woman, arm stretched wide, waiting for her to reach back. The woman stick figure coldly had her back turned to the male stick figure, never going to look back at the people she was leaving. She was only focused on the man in front of her, not the one she was leaving behind.

“Yes, Marin? What do you need? Dinners gonna be ready in a few minutes if that's what you're asking.” He knew that wasn't what Marin was going to ask, but pain had surrounded that house for months now. When would it be a good time to move on? Cooking was Arthur's way of distracting himself. It was calming, controlled, and even if you messed up it would only leave a bitter taste in your mouth...

After all, it's not like bad food could crush your soul.

“When was the last time you were truly happy?” Marin asked. Arthur set aside his spatula

“...The last time I was happy? Um, right now! Knowing I'm going to have a great meal with my daughter!”

Marin's face showed distaste in his answer

“Listen, Marin, please. Things in our past will hurt us for a long time ok? They don't heal easily... Mom hurt both of us badly.” Marin turned away, her eyes beginning to water. She felt like ripping the drawing she had made. It infuriated her, just to look at a simple stick figure, turning her back on Marin...

It broke her.

“But that shouldn’t let us stay sad forever! That’s the best way we can heal, and stop feeling really bad. Please, Marin, your life shouldn’t be led by someone else’s mistake. Live your own life! Try to show to me that you can be awesome!” Arthur sat down next to her, coming to embrace Marin.

“Prove to everyone that you can do awesome things. I know you can...”

“*Snif* Za Shalmuns Boornin” Marin muttered underneath the sloppiness of her tears and crying.

“Hm? What’d you say?” Arthur asked her with a smile, hoping that by maintaining his calm demeanor towards his daughter she wouldn’t try to ask any more questions. If she did Arthur would be the one crying.

“Our salmons burning!” Marin pointed to the growing smoke surrounding the stove.

Arthur snapped his neck to see his precious protein turning to ash. The smoke detector did not recognize the smoke right in front of its dumb metal face, making Arthur ponder if the thing needed to be trashed into a garbage dump. If another one of his meals burned because the detector failed to identify the smoke, Arthur would be the one to personally dump it. He raced from his seat straight to the kitchen, where his glorious craftwork was being destroyed in front of his very eyes. A rag was kept underneath the utensil cabinet in case fire’s did occur, which were rarely. Arthur was too good of a chef to let a fire occur in his kitchen, but today was an exception. He rushed over to lower the heat, and slowly the temperature cooled, letting the salmon return to its natural cook, with hot steam surrounding the fish; making it impossible to see the damage done to the delicacy. The garlic was a bit charred, but that simply gave the salmon an extra crunch, so not the biggest issue in the world. Arthur’s main concern was the salmon itself. With the fire subsided, and the steam lifted, the frantic cook gazed to see if his fish had been transformed into burning charcoal; a humiliating thing for him to imagine. Only there was no burn on the salmon, solely a golden brown sear blending into the hint of pink on the other side of the salmon.

A perfect cook.

Dinner that night was fantastic, everything in the dish blended together perfectly. The salmon, the garlic, the rice, which thankfully was not overcooked, had all been just as good as Arthur's other creations. It was careful preparation that made a cook successful. Rice needed to be washed enough times, or it would be unpleasant to eat with all the starches still intact. Salmon needed its bones plucked with accuracy and with a gentle touch. A slight mishap would damage the muscle and make the fish's smooth nature destroyed. However, the most crucial part of being a great cook was the ability to improvise. Making sure that no matter what, even through failure, a successful outcome was still a possibility.

"Dad... Thanks for the food today. It was really good!" Marin wiped her chin with the napkin she had carefully folded in three. She only cleaned her face with one of the folds, the other two stayed perfectly clean, never to touch a messy face, but to stay pure.

"Heh yeah, Marin. No problem! I don't know why you like this one so much, is there something special about this dish?"

"No not really, but I feel like this salmon is special." Marin blushed as she spoke those words. Hearing them made her sound corny, and made her wish she never said them. Her middle school would make fun of her for weeks if she said that at lunch.

Arthur smiled "Really? I thought so too. Even though it went through a lot of heat, it still ended up being delicious!"

"I think that's what I want to do. Be... delicious even though we both are overcooked!" Marin laughed once that last word escaped her mouth. She looked to Arthur, who nodded in understanding. The phrasing she used was ridiculous to both of them, and they chuckled as they finished their dinner together, ready to be the most delicious people they possibly could be.