

Sometimes it's hard for Dave to remember that he's only been on the move for four years, and not his entire life. The months spent making a paper trail for Dirk in America, then more months spent planning for the flight, months finding a job, months finding a *car*...

It's worth it all, but God is it tiring.

But finally it seems something like an end is in sight. The house looked promising online, and it's in his price range, so the next and (hopefully) last step is seeing it in person and getting Dirk's approval. Unfortunately this means a long drive out from central Sydney to the small town it's in, but if everything goes well, there'll be no need for a return trip.

"Are we there yet, daddy?" Dirk asks for the *n*th time, kicking his legs listlessly in the booster seat he's strapped into. "M'legs hurt... and my head's itchy." He reaches up towards the beanie his blond curls are stuffed into, only remembering not to touch it at the last second.

Thankfully this time, Dave can give a helpful answer. "Almost, lil man. Two more minutes and we'll be at the house. Hell, you can probably see it from here, wanna give it a try?"

Predictably, Dirk turns his full attention towards the window, leaning as close as he can get and squinting at the horizon for something he's only seen on Dave's phone so far. His little face of concentration is adorable, and Dave has to remind himself to keep his eyes on the road, even if there's literally no traffic.

A blessed minute of silence follows, almost to the second, before... "I can see it!" He gasps, pointing to the squat white house revealing itself behind a row of trees. "Is that where we're gonna stay? For really?"

Dave smiles at the road, turning them down the dirt driveway leading to the property. "For really, kiddo. It's another hotel tonight either way, but if you like it, we can come back tomorrow and start puttin' down roots."

Maybe that's the wrong thing to say, for how energetic Dirk gets at the news, but Dave can't begrudge him the excitement. Kid's had precious little to be genuinely happy about so far, the least Dave can give him is some hope for settling down.

Soon enough the car's stopped and parked, and Dave unbuckles to get out. "Stay there for a second, kay, bud? I'll make sure the coast's clear, then you can get comfy." Dirk just nods firmly, so he shuts the car door behind him and quickly surveys the area.

The property's not large, but it's large enough for privacy, with a tree wall and a half-mile of Crown land between them and the nearest neighbours. The street he's just turned off is silent behind him, and the house is set far enough back from it that nothing should be visible from there anyway, so...

"Alright, looks safe." Dave announces, opening Dirk's door and undoing the seatbelt for him. "You gotta stay close still, but we can get rid of most of your costume. How's that sound?"

Dirk's eyes are wide, almost disbelieving as he looks at Dave. "Really?" It's understandable; Dave rarely lets him take most of his precautionary clothes off when they're out anywhere, and the last time has to have been at least a month ago, when he took a day off to take him to a national park. Still, his excitement is clear.

"Really." Dave nods, almost gleeful himself at getting to pass on the good news. "Here, we can get rid of this..." Crouching down by the door, he unlaces Dirk's shoes, slipping them off easily once there's nothing constricting the sleek hooves inside. He pockets a stray scrap of newspaper that

slipped out of the shoe, setting the sneakers in Dirk's legroom before examining his son's hooves for problems. "Feel okay now, Dirky?"

"Mm-hmm..." Dirk nods, stretching his legs out in front of him for a moment before letting them flop back down. "Hurts a lil, but just the shoe hurt."

"If we settle down here, you won't have to wear shoes to go out. Doesn't that sound fun?" He smiles, trying not to feel bad that Dirk's feeling any pain often enough to consider it something normal.

"It does!" Dirk nods quickly, and Dave would worry about him flinging his beanie off if he weren't already reaching up to take it off entirely. Dirk's hair is a mess from being compressed, but he doesn't complain about aches the way he does when it's been pressing too tight on his horn, or for too long, so it seems fine. Dave still gives it a quick check, but the front-facing point is as sturdy as it should be, and nothing seems amiss.

"Well, fingers crossed for it, then." One final thing to do, and Dave undoes the zippers just above Dirk's knees to let him kick off the bottom half of his pants legs. The digitigrade limbs sit a bit funny without the cotton keeping them looking like normal legs, but Dave's been around him long enough to see how Dirk's face relaxes in comfort once they're not being pushed into a more human position. "Alright, out'cha get, let's see the place."

Dirk hops out of his carseat and takes off like a shot, yelling and cheering at the feeling of grass under his hooves. It's enough to make Dave sag against the car – he knows he's doing the best he can, doing everything to give Dirk a life, but sometimes it still floors him that his kid can be happy after everything he's gone through.

After he's finished with the sudden emotions, he gets up away from the car and heads to the house. Let Dirk 'explore' the yard while he checks out inside. He steps up onto the veranda, tapping his feet on the floorboards until he finds the loose plank the realtor left the keys under. One for the screen door, one for the wooden door, and he's properly inside.

It's a relief the further he gets into the house without seeing any problems. It's big enough for the two of them, has all the amenities in order, not to mention looking nice, with the outback décor and furnishings. By the time he's swept through all the rooms, trying out taps and light switches, he can already imagine himself chilling on the back veranda while Dirk runs rampant on the wide lawn.

"Daddy, daddy!" Dave's barely stepped outside again before Dirk's charging at his leg, colliding with him with a soft 'oof' before fixing those big orange eyes on him. "The grass is so soft here! We should stay here forever, pleeeeee!"

Dave chuckles, kneeling down to make sure Dirk's steady and dust some grass stains off his shorts. "Well, we can definitely see about it, yeah? How about I get the picnic basket outta the car and we have some lunch, then you can check out where you want your bedroom to be."

"Okay!" Dirk nods easily, scrunching his nose a bit as Dave wipes dirt off his face. "Can I run s'more too?"

"Course you can, kiddo." Dave stretches upright with a sigh, looking over the open yard appreciatively. "Think you've been shut in long enough."