

Chapter 8.

In the chapter titled "The Last One at the Wedding," we follow Frank as he experiences a pivotal evening at his niece Abigail's debut performance in her elementary school's musical, *Beauty and the Beast*. Despite her small role as a spoon, Abigail had been intensely focused during weeks of rehearsals, while Frank, acting as her caretaker and guardian, felt the pressure to ensure the night went perfectly. Set against the backdrop of a challenging family dynamic involving Abigail's birth mother, Frank reflects on their current situation and the commitment he and his sister, Tammy, made to adopt Abigail to provide her stability and support.

On opening night, Frank finds himself backstage, where he anxiously awaits the show's success. He has invested deeply in this moment, memorizing all the songs and actively helping with set changes. The performance turns out to be a resounding success, culminating with a standing ovation for the cast and crew, although Frank misses the curtain call due to his responsibilities. After the show, the celebration in the school parking lot buzzes with excitement as children enjoy homemade treats under the warm spring sky. Frank shares a humorous moment with Abigail while waiting for ice cream and shows his affectionate nature by offering her his ice cream cone after she accidentally drops hers.

As the evening draws to a close, Frank interacts with Abigail's school principal, who mistakenly identifies him as Abigail's father. The misunderstanding highlights Frank's unique position as her uncle rather than a traditional father figure, stemming from Tammy's adoption of Abigail. The principal later shows Frank an essay Abigail wrote about him, titled "#1 Dad Frank Szatowski," which highlights his role in her life, not just as an uncle but as a significant father figure. The moment is emotional for Frank, who is clearly touched by Abigail's sentiments and the recognition from her school.

In the end, Frank appreciates Abigail's achievements and reflects on the importance of their family bond while contemplating future conversations about their unusual family structure. The principal's concern about potential confusion for Abigail is addressed, and they establish a plan for Frank to communicate openly with her, indicating a hopeful future for the vibrant family they are building together.