

1

“What do you feel like?” Myra asked as she they walked through the foodcourt at the mall. It was a Friday night, so things were pretty busy.

After leaving the Clinic from seeing his mother, Bastion had not really been in the mood to go home and hang by himself. So, he had texted his friend taking her up on her offer.

Bastion shrugged, “Dunno. But, probably another other than Maccas.”

“How about Japanese?”

“Sounds good.”

They wandered over, manoeuvring their way through the date-night crowds. It was just after six, and the foodcourt was starting to fill up. They ordered their food, two Bento bowls of mixed veggies and meat, and then found a spare table.

Bastion rubbed his eyes, trying to rub away the headache that had been growing all day.

“You still look tired. You know you didn’t have to come out tonight.”

“Nah, I think I need the socialising. Didn’t really wanna hang in my room smelling like Chinese takeaways again.”

“Seriously Bastion, I’ve been telling you for ages, you should move out of that place. That smell would do anyone’s head in.”

“You get used to it.”

“Right, which is why you’re avoiding going home.”

Bastion shovelled some food in his mouth and nodded. “Yeah, you’re probably right” he said around a mouthful.

“I’m always right.”

Bastion rolled his eyes.

He took a swig of Coke, hoping that the caffeine would ease the pressure behind his eyes.

"Well," he said, "I might just be able to now."

"What do you mean?" Myra asked, as she poked around in her rice looking for another piece of Teriyaki chicken. One thing that had always amazed Bastion about her was the speed with which she consumed food. "You gonna eat all that?" She asked, eyeing his chicken.

Bastion slid his plate across to her not feeling that hungry and, as he did so, he wondered how much he should tell her. If there was anyone in the world that he trusted it was her, but trust was one thing. Believing him was a totally different story. So, he decided to just tell her the believable parts.

"Well, outta nowhere some guy shows up the other day, says he represents a law firm."

Myra nodded as she chowed down on his food.

"So, apparently he's from a law firm that represents my father's estate?"

Myra paused mid-chew. "Serious? As in, your dead father?" Myra was not one for subtlety.

Bastion nodded. "Yeah. Apparently my father left me a bit of an inheritance. A bit of money. And a book shop."

This was enough for Myra to put down her fork and stare at him. "Serious?"

"Serious."

"Is that where you got the ring?" She asked, pointing to the thick band on his finger.

Bastion looked down at it. "Yeah. It apparently belonged to my father."

"Can I have a look?" She was leaning across the table, peering at it.

For some reason, Bastion felt a hesitancy to hand it over, but that would look weird. She was his best friend. "Sure."

She took it from him and inspected it, her eyes fixed to the words inscribed around the diamond. For a moment there was silence between them. Then, as if coming out of a daze, she handed it back. "That's some hefty bling."

Relieved, Bastion took it back. "Yeah, not something I'd normally wear." He felt slightly embarrassed by it now.

"It's cool though. To have something from your dad."

"Yeah," Bastion said, looking down at it on his finger, where it seemed to sit comfortably.

"So, how much?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean how much did he leave you? Are you like super-rich now?"

Bastion laughed. "Well, I wouldn't say super-rich, but there's a nice little bit there."

"Tell me, how much?"

"All up, a little over half-a million."

"Are you serious!" Myra leaned back, hands on her head in shock. "You are rich! So, why the hell did I pay for dinner?"

Bastion laughed, "Yeah, I'll get it next time."

"Damn right you will. Bastion, seriously this is massive. This means you could move out of that crappy little apartment finally. You don't even need to work at the Theatre anymore! This is huge!"

Bastion laughed. He hadn't really focused on that side of things, with everything else that had happened. But, yeah, it would make things a bit easier from now on.

"I dunno, I kinda like the theatre."

"Yeah, but you don't *need* to, you know? There's a big difference between *having* to work somewhere, and working there only because you like it but you don't need it." She paused for a second. "You know, Suzanne would be totally lost without you."

"Yeah, she would."

They laughed over it and talked about what he could do with all the money, and as they did, just as with his mother, Bastion felt some of the tensions of the last two days start to ease away.

"So, you also said there was a bookshop?"

Bastion nodded. "Yeah, just a little one. I didn't even know he owned one."

"That's weird. You don't remember it from when you were younger?"

Bastion shook his head. Myra nodded and left it there.

"So, did you go check it out?"

"The bookshop?"

"No, the Arse-Side of the the Moon. Of course the bookshop!"

"I did a brief drive-by," Bastion lied.

"We have to check it out. Who knows what could be in there! Seriously, we could go tonight."

Again, Bastion laughed at his friends enthusiasm, but waved her off.

“Nah, not tonight I’m a bit hammered.”

Her face dropped so Bastion added “But maybe tomorrow, or later this week.” She smiled at that, and got back into finishing his food off as Bastion downed some more of the coke. It seemed to be doing something because the headache had worn off a bit.

“Is that why you looked a bit wasted this morning? Couldn’t sleep?”

“Yeah, that was part of it.”

Myra peered at his face. “What else?”

Bastion sighed. “I went to visit mum today.”

Myra nodded. She knew what it was like for Bastion to visit his mother in that place, and how little he got from it. She didn’t say anything, content to let him speak.

“I only went a few days ago, but.. I dunno. After getting that information fro-” Bastion coughed to cover the mix-up, “information about my Dad, I just wanted to ask some things. Get some answers or something. It was stupid.”

Myra leaned forward. “Doesn’t sound stupid to me.”

“It’s not like I expected anything to happen. But, you know, I just maybe thought that if I told her what happened I might get something from her. An explanation. Anything.”

They hadn’t talked much about Bastion’s past and his father. Myra knew the basic details, which was kind of the same as Bastion, but it was something he had always been content to let be unspoken. He had a crappy family situation, and that was that. No more discussion needed.

Except for now.

“And did you?”

“What?”

“Get anything?”

Bastion shook his head. “No. There was a moment, just a moment where I thought she was going to say something. She looked at me as though she understood what I was saying. She even reached out and touched my hand but then... nothing. Same as always.” Bastion leaned back in his chair. “I dunno what I was expecting. It sounds dumb now.”

“Bastion, it’s not dumb. I think anyone would want the same.”

“Yeah, but... I dunno. Coming away from her I kinda wonder if it’s worth trying to find out more about my family. It’s messed up. My mum’s crazy. She did what she did. My life has long moved on. Why bother going and trying to stir things up and get some kind of

answers?"

The questions were left hanging in the air between them for a while. Myra frowned, deep in thought and Bastion almost regretted telling her these things. But, he was also grateful that he had her to talk to.

"You know, I think it's a good thing," Myra said, breaking the silence.

"What?"

"I think it's good for you to try get answers. I reckon everyone needs to know who they are, where they came from."

Bastion let out a bitter little snort. "Yeah, except most people don't have a mother locked up in an insane asylum for murdering their father."

"Even so, you don't know the whole story because you've never really gone looking and whatever that story is, it's part of you. There's no point denying it or ignoring it. I reckon anyone who doesn't come to accept who they are and where they came from..." Myra shrugged, "they're gonna only live half a life and probably gonna come to regret it down the line. You can't run away from who you are."

Bastion swirled the Coke around in the bottle, watching as the dark liquid swirled.

"Sheesh. This got heavy quick. When did you become full of such wisdom?" Bastion asked, trying to lighten the mood.

Myra shrugged. "It's what I get for hanging around with such a sad-sack like you. Now, how about you shout me to the movies Mr Super-rich."

Bastion laughed and agreed.

Later that night, after Myra had dropped him off outside his flat amid protestations that he needed buy himself a car with all his newfound wealth, Bastion sat on his bed thinking about what she had said.

'whatever that story is, it's part of you... You can't run away from who you are.'

"Easy for you to say," he said to himself. "You don't even know the half of it."

But, Bastion knew she was telling the truth. It *was* his story, and yet he didn't even know what that story was. All his life, he had skirted around the truth of what his mother had done. Never really asking too many question, never digging into his past, or his parents. All he had were his memories and the little his old aunty had told him, which wasn't much. And, he had never dug further because he didn't really

want to know. Which, if he was honest with himself, wasn't totally true. He did want to know, but he was too scared to find out. He had always suspected there was more to the story, but he was worried the story could only get worse. And when that story started with your mother murdering your father, it didn't seem headed in the right direction. Which was why, as the years had gone on Bastion had stopped pining for his parents and instead settled into a quiet life, with not much going on, ignoring the fact that he didn't know much about himself or where he came from.

Which had all changed with the arrival of Mr Grieve the lawyer.

He rubbed at his face in the mirror above the small sink next to his bed. He had bags under his eyes, and he had to agree with Myra. He wasn't looking too great. Thinking about it all made Bastion quite tired, and the headache was back, a steady pounding behind his eyes that was making him just want to lie down and pass out.

As he walked over to his bed, he resolved that tomorrow he was going back to the bookshop and to his father. However crazy things sounded, he was going to find out more about who he was.

He lay back and eased his eyes closed, hoping that the pounding would recede.

Which was when the spasms began.