

# 1

Did he believe it all?

That was the question that had been going through his head all morning, since he had fled the scene last night.

Could any of this be real? Magic. His father coming back from the dead. Spells. Rings that glowed.

“Shit!”

Bastion cursed as he burnt his hand on the steamer from the cappuccino machine. Turning he ran his hand under some cold water to ease the pain.

“Hey mate, sorry I’m in a rush here.” The guy at the counter was bald with piggy little eyes. Bastion was tempted to tell him to piss off. He opted for a quiet ‘yeah, yeah’ under his breath instead.

He quickly finished making the guy’s flat white and handed it over.

None of it was really making much sense. People didn’t just come back from the dead, did they? That was all just make believe. Bastion didn’t even really believe in God, not that he’d given in much thought. Life was hard enough as it was without worrying about what would happen after it all ended.

But, then he couldn’t deny what he had seen. Or could he? His mind flicked to his mother and the vacant stare she gave him every time he sat across from her. Occasionally he thought he saw something coming to life in her eyes, something swimming up from the depth of her mind to meet him. In those rare moments she would reach across and hold his hands for a brief moment and smile. Those were the worst moments for him because they never lasted long, only teasers of what could have been.

For years he had wished that it all wasn’t true. For years, as a ten

year old, then an eleven year old, then a twelve year old, lying in the musty smelling bed in his ageing aunt's spare room, he had dreamed of his father and mother coming to collect him, to tell him that this was all just a bad dream. That none of it was true.

Which was, he supposed, why he was really angry. This was all coming about ten years too late. He would have given anything then to hear his father's voice, to get some kind of explanation. Anything to help him feel not so alone.

But, nothing had happened. Life moved on. His aunt was nice and all, but she was old and struggled to know what to do with a growing teenage boy. And Bastion had largely grown up with many hours to wonder why he was alone, with no answers to fill the silent gaps.

And then, when he'd finally grown up and found some kind of peace with his life, *then* the answers decided to arrive.

Bastion heard a customer tap on the counter behind him.

"Yeah?", he said as he turned around.

"Whoa! Someone woke up on the wrong side of the bed."

"Oh hey Myra." Bastion rubbed his eyes trying to clear away the fog that seemed to have settled over his brain. He could feel a headache growing. "Sorry, yeah just a bit tired."

"Yeah, you look it man." Myra had been his friend for the past few years, having met through the theatre scene. She often did lights and sound for many of their productions, and over the years they had developed a close friendship. One of Bastion's few.

"I just thought I'd come by before work. See if you wanted to hang out tonight." She scratched the blue streak of dyed hair that wove through her naturally jet black hair. This week was blue. Last week was green. It seemed to change with her moods.

"Tonight?" Bastion thought to himself. Some company might be great. He wasn't that excited about going back to the bookshop, even though a part of him wanted to ask more questions, wanted to know more. Solar, and lunar, and illumination, and magic.... All words that had been swirling through his mind since whatever it was that had happened yesterday.

"You don't have to. You look like you might need an early night." Myra looked up at him, peering at his face in a way that made Bastion uncomfortable. Maybe she could tell what he was thinking. Maybe she could see him turning made like his mother.

"Oh, yeah, I'm not sure aye. Just a bit of a headache this morning. I might be coming down with the flu or something."

Myra just kept looking at him, then said "Are you all right? Anything else going on?"

Bastion faked a laugh as he dreamed up some rational excuse for being weird. "Nah, nah, I'm good. I decided to binge The Matrix last night which probably wasn't a good idea."

"And you didn't even invite me! Mate!"

Bastion laughed, "Yeah sorry. Can I text you later, see how I'm feeling?"

Myra shrugged, her eyes still watching his face. "All good. Let me know. I better head off. By the way, nice ring."

Bastion glanced down at the ring on his finger. He didn't remember grabbing off the desk as he had left, which brought all the events of yesterday back into focus.

"You sure you're all right?"

Bastion waved his friend off, "Yeah, yeah, I'm good. Just tired. I'll text you later."

Myra nodded, glancing back at his ring. "Sweet. Well, catch you later loser."

Bastion smiled at her familiar farewell as she walked down the road, and felt bad for brushing her off. If there was anyone that Bastion could talk to, it would have been Myra. His other two friends, Mike and Jason were great, but not the kind of friends he'd have a heart to heart with.

Sighing Bastion wiped at the counter.

He just wanted some answers, to clear this all up. And, of course, he could go back to the bookshop to try get some, but that was all just a bit too crazy for him right now. He didn't really want to believe all that stuff about him being the son of some kind of wizard, or whatever his father claimed to be. Heck, he wasn't even sure he believed that he had been talking to his father.

As he wandered through the theatre, giving things a quick check, his mind turned to places much more concerning.

What if he really had imagined everything yesterday. The ring on his finger told him that it wasn't all a lie, and he absently turned it on his finger. But, what about the rest of it. Sure, there might be a bookshop, there might even be a basement, but the rest? Could that really happen, or was it a sign that his brain was starting to loosen its hold on reality, starting to create things that weren't there.

He stopped at the next thought that he had been fluttering at the edge of his consciousness since yesterday, the thought he had been

ignoring.

What if what had happened to his mother was now happening to him?

Some mental illnesses run in families right? Perhaps whatever had made her go crazy had now also started happening to him, some malformed gene in his blood that was, even now, working its magic upon his brain, getting him to see things that weren't there.

The headache that had been threatening all morning gave a solid pulse at the back of his brain.

"Get a grip Bastion. You're not going crazy. You just need some answers."

Which was when he thought of something to do, something more than just sitting around here wondering. Someone who he knew who was real who would be able to confirm or deny his fears.

Bastion pulled out his phone and sent of a quick text to his boss.

*Hey Suzanne. I'm feeling quite sick today. Think I might need to head home.*

He didn't bother waiting for a response before locking down the theatre and summoning another Uber.