

Prologue

It wasn't particularly the fact that they had got caught that was bothering him - it was the look of disgust on his father's face that he had found really hurtful. It had been happening for a while - both were university students; he had tried to ignore it, but he had always been there and it had felt so right, until, at last he had succumbed and one thing had led to another - this was how they had ended up in this situation - except, going by his father's expression, that was all going to change - and not for the better...

Chapter One

Sixteen years later

He sat on the bench, waiting, just waiting. He had rehearsed this moment over and over again in his head at least a dozen times and it *still* didn't make sense, still, this was what he wanted...wasn't it? He still wasn't sure; he closed his eyes and thought about his wife and child at home - he loved them, of course he did - but every time he thought of them, he just felt miserable and cursed himself for putting them through this and being so weak.'

'I got your text!'

He blinked and looked up at Adam, four years younger - he had chestnut hair and was very good looking. 'Hi!'

'Hi! You alright?'

Richard shook his head. 'Yes...fine just sit down for a minute will you?'

'Alright! What's up?'

'Adam...you know what day it is?'

'Oh god! No!'

'I'm afraid so.'

'Rich no!'

'You know what we said!'

'You mean what *you* said!'

'Look - most guys would give up after they got married, I said I would end it when my daughter was old enough to be able to figure out what was going on.'

'How do you know she does?'

'She's fifteen Adam!'

'So that's it?'

'Adam-'

'Seriously?'

'You know what we agreed!'

He stood up. 'I still can't believe you *married* her! You were just a kid!'

‘I was twenty!’

‘Yes! What a coincidence that it happened *after* your father had caught us.’

Richard stroke his cheek. ‘I’m sorry.’

‘So am I!’

‘Don’t let’s leave it like this.’

Adam looked him straight in the face. ‘Then tell me you don’t love me.’

‘That is not the issue.’

‘Fine! Message received *and* understood! You will *never* hear from me again.’

...

‘Hello?’ He got in and took of his jacket.

‘Hi Dad!’

He smiled as his daughter greeted him. ‘Hey Saffy! Where’s your mother?’

‘We’re clearing out the attic!’

‘God! Really?’

She grinned. ‘I know!’

Suddenly, his wife called out. ‘I heard that!’

Richard grinned. ‘Right!’

‘Dad - can I go round Selene’s? I’ve done my homework.’

‘Saff- you know the rules - not on a school night.’

‘Please?’

‘No - at the weekend maybe.’

‘Fine! I’ll just get ready for dinner.’

‘Good girl! Take your clothes with you please!’ She smiled. ‘Are you alright?’

‘Of course! Why?’

‘Oh - you just seem a bit distracted.’

‘Rache - I’m fine - honestly.’

Rachel bit her lip. ‘Look - don’t you think we should talk about-’

‘About what?’

‘You know!’

‘Oh Rache! For goodness sake!’

‘Well - it’s important!’

‘We do!’

‘Hardly! I mean - it’s like you don’t want to touch me.’

‘It’s not that.’

‘Then what is it?’

He stared at her. ‘I do- I’m going to get ready for dinner.’ He walked away and ignored the uncomfortable silence.

...

He was busy typing on his laptop when Richard entered the Cafe, he watched him, even when he was studiously working he was easy on the eye.

‘Hi!’

‘Hi’

‘Coffee?’

He smiled slightly. ‘Maybe if you looked up - you’d see that I have one.’

‘Oh yes!’

‘So...How are you?’

‘Fine.’

Adam grinned. ‘You haven’t changed you know, since we were young, I was just thinking about it-’

‘I can’t see you anymore.’

‘What?’

Richard forced himself to look at him. ‘I said I can’t see you anymore.’

‘Yes - so you keep saying.’

‘Well, I’m just enforcing it.’

‘Are you? Or are you trying to convince yourself?’ Adam shook his head. ‘Still trying to please your father? Bit pathetic isn’t it?’

‘People could get hurt.’

‘And whose fault is that?’

‘Don’t make this difficult.’

Adam reached for his hand. ‘It doesn’t have to be.’

Richard withdrew his hand sharpish. ‘Are you mad?!’

‘What? Did we magically get transported pre-nineteen sixty-seven?’

‘Compromise then?’

‘Meaning?’

‘We meet up.’

‘No - I don’t think so...’

‘Oh for goodness sake! Not like that - I said - platonic.’

‘I don’t know.’

Richard sighed. ‘Look - I know I’m partly to blame - but I don’t want to lose you altogether.’

Adam scraped his nail against his hand. ‘Come over later?’

‘No.’

‘Please?’

‘*No* Adam.’

He said no and he meant it.

Chapter Two

‘Are you sure that you don’t want to come with us? Might do you good to get out.’

He smiled. ‘No, I’m fine; I’ve got work to do anyway.’

‘Well...If you’re sure...’

‘I’m sure.’

‘See you later then, come on Saff.’

‘Bye Dad!’

‘Bye!’ He breathed out slowly as he heard the door go. He stared into the distance; thinking about himself and his identity, for years he had identified himself as gay but now he knew that he must be bisexual, he was beginning to slowly crack under his current situation he realised; he needed to feel...comfortable; nearly every Sunday, bracing himself and showing his parents, particularly his father how committed he was. What he hated most was how confused he felt about his feelings - it was as if he had recovered from an illness yet still felt sick. He knew that he had intentionally put himself back ten years when he was still coming to terms with it. He could still remember the look of disgust on his father’s face. He stopped and massaged his temples - this was giving him a headache. He went out to the kitchen and turned on the kettle - he could never follow through; story of his life, when he was younger he was tip-toeing round the idea of contemplating suicide; *contemplating* suicide - not *actual* suicide; now look at the mess he was in. His mobile rang; Adam. His first incentive was to ignore it, he put it on the table and on silent - but then it went again, he could hear it vibrate. For God’s sake stop calling me, he thought angrily. Suddenly, as if by magic - it stopped, he stared at it - but it didn’t ring anymore, it was over.

A few months later

He *still* hadn’t called, Richard stared at his phone, what the *hell* was he playing at? First he badgered him relentlessly, now, nothing. Not that he minded, it made things a whole lot simpler. For the next few days or so, he just got on with life as normal. Then, one day, they all went out for lunch, Richard was working but they had decided to meet up.

‘This makes a nice change!’ Said Rachael happily.

‘Yes!’

Suddenly, their daughter appeared with a tray of drinks. ‘Here.’

‘Oh thanks darling!’

‘Oh my god! Richard?’

He froze. ‘Adam!’

‘Hi!’

‘Hi!’

‘Fancy seeing you here!’

‘Yes!’ He was on edge.

He turned and smiled, holding out his hand. ‘How do you do? I’m Adam, I was at school with Richard.’

Rachael beamed. ‘How do you do? This is Saffy.’

‘Hello!’

‘Hi! Dad’s never mentioned you before.’

‘Oh well...we haven’t really seen each other since school.’

‘So you *have* seen each other again.’ Rachael turned to her husband. ‘You never said!’

‘Well - only briefly...’

‘Well...It was nice meeting you.’

‘You too!’

Richard smiled. ‘Take care.’

‘Thanks.’

As he walked off, Richard couldn’t help but breathe a sigh of relief.

‘He seemed nice.’

Richard smiled. ‘Yes - he is.’

Saffron smiled. ‘So what was he like?’

‘I barely mixed with him to be honest - he was four years younger.’

...

For the next few weeks or so, Richard was determined to freeze him out - whenever he saw him coming towards him, he crossed over. If he said hello, he pretended that he hadn’t heard him - he was completely determined to cut him out of his life for good. Yet - if this was what he wanted - why did he feel so angry that he wasn’t fighting back? What the *hell* was wrong with him? Was he a *complete* doormat??!! *Why* was he feeling like this. It was time to sort this out once and for all.

...

Adam was watching TV when the bell went.

‘What the *hell* is wrong with you?’

‘Hello Richard! *Do* come in!’

‘I’m not stopping!’

‘Clearly!’

‘Are you a *complete* doormat?’

Adam closed the door. ‘Okay - what have I done now?’

‘You mean what *haven’t* you done?!’

‘Right!’

‘I mean where the *hell* have you been?! Haven’t seen or hear hair nor hide of you!’

‘Well...that’s what you wanted isn’t it?’

‘Oh for *god’s* sake!’

‘I don’t know.’

Richard sighed. ‘Look - I know I’m partly to blame - but I don’t want to lose you altogether.’

Adam scraped his nail against his hand. ‘Come over later?’

‘No.’

‘Please?’

‘*No* Adam.’

He said no and he meant it.

Chapter Three

He was seriously beginning to feel claustrophobic, it was ironic that, although he had his father's approval - he found that he no longer wanted or needed it - he had spent so long trying to please those around him that he had forgotten exactly what *he* wanted; now he was in a position where he could hurt others. It was too late for that now. The anger rose up within him, for years he had managed to quash this part of him and all for what? Grabbing his jacket, he strolled out into the evening air, Rachel and Saffron had gone out with friends, they had invited him but he had declined to go, preferring to stay behind and clear his head, in actual fact - he didn't need to clear his head; there was only one place he knew that he truly wanted to be.

...

'Richard!'

'Hi!'

'Well...This *is* a surprise!'

'I-I was just passing.'

'Oh yes?'

'Yes and-and I...'

'You..?'

Unable to hold it in any longer - he collapsed into his arms. Adam rubbed his back. 'Hey! Hey! It's Okay - come in.'

...

Richard watched him as he poured them both a drink. 'Do you remember my dad catching us?'

'Oh god! *Do* I?!'

'Yeah - he left a lasting impression.'

Adam handed him a glass. 'Did you get into a lot of trouble after I'd left?'

'That's putting it mildly,'

'What happened?'

'Nothing much - just glared at me for a few days and wouldn't speak.'

'You got off lightly then?'

‘You could say that.’

‘He’s proud of you now though?’

‘Yeah - like I care!’

‘Don’t you care?’

‘No - not really. I shouldn’t have to seek his approval.’

‘Your daughter seems nice.’

‘Yeah - yeah she’s a good girl.’

‘So is your wife.’

He laughed bitterly. ‘Oh yes! Never puts a foot wrong. Pour us another would you?’

Adam’s eyes widened. ‘It’s whiskey!’

‘Yes I know!’

‘Well...You’re driving aren’t you?’

‘Just poured it will you? God! It’s the first bit of freedom I’ve had for years!’

‘You can’t blame your wife for that!’

‘I’m not! That’s why I’m drinking! I blame myself, blame myself for giving into my father’s stupid, homophobic, picture perfect, nuclear family life! I’ve dug myself a hole and I don’t know how to get out.’

Adam handed him his glass. ‘You don’t have to feel like this - you’re not trapped - there’s always a way!’

Richard looked at him and slowly pushed a hand through his hair. ‘I-I snap at you don’t I?’

‘That’s alright!’

‘No! No, I don’t mean to - I just - I just - my feelings...’

‘It’s alright.’

‘No - it-it’s not alright! I-I’m sorry!’

‘It’s fine!’

‘You know I said that whatever happened would be on my terms?’

‘Yes?’

‘Well - I was an idiot!’

‘What?’

‘I was an idiot!’

Adam’s heart fluttered. ‘Really?’

‘Yes.’ He clumsily pushed a hand through his hair. ‘Adam I...I’m quite drunk at the moment.’

He laughed. ‘I know you are!’

‘Right!’

‘You need to get some sleep.’

‘Yeah! I’d best get going...’

‘Whoa! No way! You can’t drive like that!’

‘Well...I can’t stay here!’

‘Well tough! You’ll have to - you can sleep in the spare room.’

‘What about Rachel?’

‘I’ll ring and tell her.’

‘You don’t have to!’

‘Well...I don’t have much choice do I?’

‘Just don’t tell her-’

‘You can trust me.’

...

‘Okay! Thanks for letting me know Adam, bye!’ Rachel hung up, slightly worried - she had never really known her husband to drink like that she guessed that they had gone out on the razzle but it sounded more like he had been drowning his sorrows what was all that about?

‘Everything alright? Where’s Dad?’

She forced herself to smile. ‘He’s just had a good time that’s all.’

Saffy grinned. ‘You mean he’s pissed?’

‘Something like that, he’s staying at a friend’s’

‘Well good, he rarely gets a chance to relax.’

Rachel smiled, but she could help but think there was something more serious behind her husband’s strange behaviour.