

### Chapter 3: A Young Visitor

Milk arrived home, it was 7pm, Saturday Night. The neighbours were playing Elton John's 'I'm still standing' at top volume clearly preparing for a night out. The rain had stopped now but Milk was wet, a little cold and really hungry. She decided a hot shower would be best and throwing off her clothes she stepped into the shower. The strains of Elton John came through the walls ...

'Don't you know I'm still standing better than I ever did  
Looking like a true survivor, feeling like a little kid  
I'm still standing after all this time  
Picking up the pieces of my life without you on my mind'

Milk tried to block it out by putting her head further under the shower so the water ran over her ears. She really felt the whole day had been odd and wanted to wash every bit of it off her. After getting dressed in her comfariest clothes, a pink pair of jogging bottoms and a sloppy grey t-shirt that hung off one shoulder (not in a fashionable way - it was just old and stretched). She had thrown a frozen baked potato in the oven and now she was sitting eating a baked potato and some sad looking salad that she had cobbled together from whatever she could find in the fridge. She had taken the St Jude out her bag and was staring at it darkly whilst poking her food around on the plate. Suddenly, she wasn't hungry and had an urge to go and find the letter her parents had sent her, when she was at university.

She found it sitting in the drawer with oher personal items - she knew why she kept it, because it was almost like evidence of her parents absolute selfishness, so she could justify the days she sat curled up indoors, not speaking to anyone for days.

Dear Milky

We are writing to you, as you have settled into university now and I am sure that you are enjoying the freedom of university life and learning new things. As we have no more reason to stay here, we will be travelling again. I think you know that after bringing you up, we both deserve it. You don't need us now and we need our last hurrah before it is too late for us. We sold the house and everything in it. You already took what you needed so you had no need for anything here. We don't know where we will go first, we haven't decided yet, but probably South America and who knows where that may lead. We don't know when we will be in touch again so do look after yourself, we are sure you will manage, we have faith in you. We closed all our bank accounts and we needed your university fund for cash for the trip. It is okay though you can get a loan and you are capable enough and can work so we are not concerned.

I am sure we will catch up with you down the line

Love

Mum & Dad

x

Milk felt the usual tears welling up, but underneath the tears she was just angry at how they could just leave her like that. She had not heard from them since and it had been about 14 years now, the letter had come in the middle of her first year at university. She had not told anyone and

had just had to work on every holiday, weekends and get a student maintenance loan to support herself. She got her degree in English Lit and Media and though she did have a passion for photography, she knew probably would not earn enough to do this as a real job so she just got an admin job at the council which eventually led to the job she had now. God, what a boring and bloody pathetic life she had, Milk was getting angrier now, she didn't know why she punished herself looking at her parents letter.

To snap herself out of it Milk went through the events of the days and kept thinking about Matt the Monk and what he had said to her. What if he really could change her life? What harm could it do to give it a try? Milk had not tried anything new for years and was bored and alone. She needed to do something. Her thoughts were again interrupted by Elton John

'Don't let the sun go down on me  
Although I search myself, it's always someone else I see  
I'd just allow a fragment of your life to wander free  
But losing everything is like the sun going down on me'

The neighbours had obviously decided to stay in, God, an entire night of this.

An urgent rapping on the door snapped her out of thoughts. She hurriedly got up and opened the door. Standing on the doorstep was a very dishevelled, dirty and crying child. It was the other neighbour's boy. Milk knelt down concerned and said gently; 'Where is your mummy?', The child, still crying blubbered, 'Mummy gone, gone mummy'. Milk quickly picked the child up and marched next door, she banged loudly on the front door, when no one answered she went to look through the front windows but could see nothing but a very messy sitting room with child's toys scattered over the carpet. She banged again.

'Oi', a head popped out from the next house, 'what are you making that racket for, she ain't in, is she?'

'Well, this is her boy, he came to my door' Milk hesitated 'do you know where she is?' The woman then looked concerned and shouted 'wait there'

The woman had a housecoat that older women of the estate seem to favour and a mess of curly brown hair, when she was not looking angry, Milk thought she could even be quite pretty under the mess. The woman stared at the boy and then said; 'Tommy, where did mummy go?'

'Mummy gone, mummy said she was coming back' The boy whimpered.

Okay, Tommy, when was mummy coming back?'

'Mummy come back 'morrow'

'Tomorrow'

'Yes 'morrow, I had to wait inside, it was scary' Tommy was still whimpering. The woman patted him on the head, '

Oi Sheila, what yer doing? You need to get to work' a man's voice came from inside ; 'and I need my shirt ironed'. 'Alright I am coming' . The woman, Sheila looked me up and down and said - well you can look after him tonight can't yer?'

Milk looked at the boy and back at the woman; 'I don't know the boy, I don't know about children' 'You'll be fine - just leave a note and she'll come and get him when she's back, she probably just had other business to attend to, she always comes back'

Then the woman promptly slammed the door and left Milk and Tommy standing helplessly on the doorstep. Well this was ridiculous she couldn't look after the boy, she didn't know what to do.

Milk went back inside her own house and deposited the boy on the doormat. His big brown eyes looked up at her from his tear stained, dirt streaked face. 'Well, looks like we have both been abandoned'.