

The Cartographers Son

When I saw the crisp sunflower yellow envelope with my dead father's neat handwriting on the table, I should have known it was meant for me. I believe in miracles like the time I found Binky my toy (I loved that rabbit) but this? This was straining it way too much. It was too much for me to wait. I dived onto it and I ripped it open. The pieces of the envelope lay shredded on the desolate floor adding to the pile of KFC boxes, soft drinks and the odd boot with its tip poking out. But I ignored it. I was way too busy staring dumbfounded at the map I now held in my hands for once acting like my dad. This was a breakthrough I thought. The clean crisp paper was a map of our town but in my father's eyes. It had intricate drawings on it, little footnotes hastily screwed and an occasional ink smudge but otherwise it was beautiful. A dragon was coiled around the compass. The legend had swirls of waves around it and a dolphin jumping over it. Then I saw the pictures and the small titles underneath it. The river where mum had met dad had become The Stream of Joy. The street where mum died became The Boulevard of Depression. The school became The Academy of Doom. When I read the last one, I let out a bitter grin. At least we had something in common. I traced the way from The Stream of Joy to The Academy of Doom almost absent mindedly thinking of the way I went, laughing and joking with my friends. All my life I had thought of my father as an old misery guts, but now I saw the world through his eyes, understanding how he had felt. I was a reminder to my mum. When he saw me, he felt sadness and depression. Then I saw a group of letters inscribed below an ink smudge. It was an apology. I felt tears come to my eyes when my dad signed at the end, "To my son and that his last wish was for me to be happy." I now understood how he felt. I would cherish his final gift. The gift of hope.