

## Some Fiction

by

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*MASON sits at a cafe with their single parent AUGUST. A long, awkward silence passes.*

MASON

You look good.

AUGUST

I'm on a new diet. Low sodium. Still eating what I like. Just not so much.  
(Pause.) I'm also doing pilates.

MASON

You? You're doing pilates?

AUGUST

Doctor's orders. Like the diet. *(They read Mason's face.)* Nothing wrong, no need to worry. Just some course correction.

*AUGUST pats their stomach. MASON manages a small chuckle.*

MASON

I can't imagine you doing pilates...

AUGUST

You could join me some time. I know you're busy, but ... doctor's going to make you do it some day anyway, right? May as well get a head start.

MASON

Is everything all right?

*AUGUST nods. They pull a book out of their jacket: a slim volume, filled with post-it note bookmarks. The book is placed between the two of them. A small, paper elephant in the room.*

AUGUST

I read your book. Saw it on sale. Probably should have bought it at full price.

MASON

You've never read my work.

AUGUST

That's not true. I read your short stories, some of your stories when you first started publishing. Butt you left me behind very quickly, mentally speaking.

MASON

You don't really count college stuff.

AUGUST

You should! They were fine. “Youthful”, maybe, but-

MASON

What's “youthful”?

AUGUST

Well. *(August touches the book on the table.)* You've come a long way since then. It was good, Mason. Your book is really good.

MASON

From “fine”, to “good”?

AUGUST

You know what? This is one of the reasons I don't like talking about your writing. Not everyone's a fan, or a critic-

MASON

*(Talking over AUGUST.)* I'm not asking you to be a fan or a critic.

AUGUST

*(Powering over MASON.)* Some of us are civilians. I could never give you what you wanted to hear from me when it came to your writing.

MASON

Just that you've read it. That's all I want to hear. “Mason, I read your book. Good job. Guess I raised you right.”

AUGUST

I just said that, more or less. Don't be glib.

*MASON picks up the book, flips their fingers through the various bookmarks and dog-eared pages.*

MASON

Are you writing a book report?

*AUGUST picks up the book, leafs through it and points to a page.*

AUGUST

I need to ask you something. Is this me? This- this “Aubrey”, this failing-forward parent? Because I recognised things. Manners. Things I said, some events—although if it is me, you've taken some liberties.

*AUGUST taps a particular page, hands it over to MASON to inspect.*

I remember this. I remember this day, and it was not like how you wrote it. I didn't say any of that. And when I left, I came back! I went to a bar, I sat on my own for a while. I didn't even drink that night! I ate peanuts. I did half a crossword in a paper I found. And I drove home. Where's that part in the story?

MASON

What do you want to hear?

AUGUST

I want to hear you made this up. I want you to tell me it's a coincidence. Please.

MASON

I am sorry you saw yourself in Aubrey.

AUGUST

Why did you write this?

MASON

I never thought you'd see it.

AUGUST

When you were young, one of your teachers at school told me that stories were how you were working out your place in the world. And if I ever found myself wondering who you were, or what was wrong, or how you were going, I should ask you to write me something.

MASON

And did you do ever that?

AUGUST

I thought it was personal! I respected the boundary. I still do. That's why I don't like reading your books. It's like looking through your diary.

MASON

It wasn't that you were afraid of what you'd out find about yourself?

AUGUST

It was exactly that.

*Pause.*

MASON

Why'd you read this one?

AUGUST

I read about ... myself ... in one of your reviews. Recognised me right away

MASON

I'm sorry.

AUGUST

It's your life, I guess. You've got every right.

MASON

You know ... they're still just stories. Some truth, some fiction. Aubrey's as much me as they are you. And sometimes I don't like myself in these things, either.

AUGUST

You don't have to say that.

MASON

I'm sorry it was rough for you.

AUGUST

No, no. I'm sorry that ... I'm sorry.

MASON

It's okay.

AUGUST

Not much else to say.

MASON

It's okay.

AUGUST

There were good parts, right? Good times as well?

MASON

Yeah. But they're all in the other books.

*AUGUST laughs, taking themselves by surprise.*

You're not a "failing-forward parent".

AUGUST

Thanks.

MASON

It's a nice phrase, that one.

AUGUST

It's yours if you want it. But it'll cost you lunch.