

Brian's New Life

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Brian's life is about to change in a way his wife could never imagine. His secret life is being exposed.

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To Brian it was just another day. Driving home from work, he followed traffic as he always did. Rain was spattering his windshield, his earphones were in and he was listening to some silly parody song. Just like millions of other people, his life was not special; he had a wife and kids, a suburban house, and a run of the mill job. He pulled into his neighborhood and made the requisite turns to get to his house. It was one of those things, almost muscle memory, go for twenty seconds and turn right, go for another twenty and turn left, follow the little curves past the other cul-de-sacs and then pull into his driveway. He pulled his decade old truck up to the garage and put it in park. Looking out the rearview mirror he noticed the car in the cul-de-sac across from the house and thought nothing of it. The neighbors always had someone visiting them, it was just this car looked a little out of place there, it was too new. He grabbed his lunchbox and coffee cup and hopping out of the truck hit the locking knob with his elbow and then elbowed the door closed. He opened the door to the house and just as every other day in his life, said "hello my Love," to his wife sitting there in her chair reading another book, watching some re-run on the television. Leaning over he kissed her and took his lunchbox into the kitchen. He put the empty plastic container that had held leftovers from the previous night's dinner in the sink then poured a cup of coffee. Taking his coat off, he went down the stairs beside the counter to his office, put the coat and his hat on the chair, kicked his shoes off and emptied his pockets onto the desk. He then went back out and up the stairs. The knock on the door startled him, his wife as usual when he was home just looked at him, knowing she would not get up and answer the door, he walked over to it and opened it to find two men standing there. The men were dressed in nice looking suits and both carried briefcases in their hands.

"May I help you," he asked

"Mister Darling, Brian Darling," one of the men asked.

"Yes," he replied, his eyes narrowed a little as some sense of concern hit him.

"I am Marcus Dupont, and this is Justin Finch, may we speak with you?" The first man asked.

"What is this about?"

"We are from the law offices of Sonder and Mayes," he replied. "May we come in?"

"Why," He asked, "You still haven't told me what this is about."

"It's about the estate of your late father, Robert Darling." The second man said.

The words hit him hard, his father was dead, he hadn't spoken to him for over twenty years. He pushed open the screen door and the two men entered his house. He led them over to the kitchen table where both men put their briefcases down and took a seat. He sat down and then it hit him, he was being rude. "May I offer you some coffee?" he asked them.

"No, thank you," Marcus said. Justin just shook his head in the negative.

"Alright what is this all about?" He asked the men.

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Marcus reached down and brought his briefcase up sitting it on the table; he opened it and pulled a folder and an envelope out. "Before we go any further, do you have an ID we can check?" he asked.

"Just a moment," Brian said and got up; he went down to his office and grabbed his wallet. He sat back down at the table and pulled his driver's license out, handing it to Marcus.

He looked at it, then handed it back. "Thank you, Mister Darling," he opened the folder and looked at the papers in it.

His wife came over and sat down next to him. He was amazed that she had not spoken at all since the men entered the house. She was one of those people that always questioned everything. "I'm sorry, this is my wife Susan," he said almost apologetically. Both men just nodded at her.

"Mister Darling with your father's passing; we have been charged with taking care of his estate and are to some extent interested in his will and the way it was written," Marcus said.

"Why, what is the problem with it?" He asked.

"Well apparently, everything that your father owned is yours. That is, you are legally the owner of everything he possessed," Justin said.

"And the problem with that is what?" Brian asked.

"Well, his wife doesn't understand, and neither do we," Marcus said.

"I can explain it to a certain degree," Brian smiled at the men. "I owned everything before he did. We made a deal, he helped me with a problem that I had, and in return he was given control of everything, upon his death it returns to me. He was basically a caretaker; his only responsibility was to pay the taxes on the property."

"What property?" His wife asked.

"I'll explain it later," Brian told her, then turning back to Marcus, "So is his wife, Nancy, still there?"

"Yes, she is," Marcus said.

"May I ask you a question, Mister Darling?" Justin said. "Was this just a way to get out of paying Estate taxes?"

"No," Brian laughed. "I was in a pretty tight jam about thirty years ago; my dad spent almost his entire retirement pension to help me out. This was how I repaid him, I literally had to give up everything I had and left my entire life behind. In return he looked over it, and when he died it comes back to me."

They spent the next half hour signing a stack of papers reverting ownership of everything in his father's name back to him.

After Justin and Marcus left, his wife started in on him, asking questions about what had just happened.

"We'll go up and visit Nancy this weekend," He told her. "As to what this is all about, I've tried to tell you over the years. You always turn the conversation back to you though, just as you always do. I

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may love you, but you always take over conversations and turn them to what you have done or what you think. My past is never as important as yours is. I need a cigarette.â He stood and picking up the stack of copies and the envelope the lawyerâs had left for him, he walked down to his office.

He sat down at his desk and lit up a cigarette, Susan had followed him into his office. She was just standing there looking at him. â Iâm sorry,â he said, â What do you want me to say, your ex-husband cheated on you, your mother made you do this or that, her husbandâs beat her, your kids are better than everyone elseâs, theyâre better at sports, or smarter, or can do no wrong. Everything I say, you know different, or Iâm wrong. Your childhood sucked, you grew up in the projects, and you had to do this or that. No matter who it is, or what it is about, you have to take over the conversation.â

â I do not,â she told him.

â Really, who were my best friends growing up, I know all of yours, I hear about them all the time.â He replied. â Anytime I start talking about my friends, you turn the conversation to your friends, and what you used to do.â

As usual she turned and walked out of his office. A little while later he went back upstairs and got his coffee, she was back engrossed in a book again. He knew that once again the conversation they just had was gone from her mind. â What do you want for dinner?â she asked.

â I thought we were having Pork chops,â He replied.

â What do you want with them? I was thinking about that noodle salad again and some tater-tots for the kids.â She said.

â Thatâs fine,â He said as he headed back down to his office. He sat back down at his desk, â yes,â he thought to himself, â once again we have a boring dinner.â

Twenty years ago they had met when he was going through a rough patch. His first wife had left him and after months of trying he had finally gotten custody of his son. He was living in a trailer of a co-worker. He had lost his house when they came and foreclosed on it, his ex-wife, just as his current wife, took care of the bills. He didnât know that she had been saving the house payments into a separate account and failed to pay the mortgage for almost two years. All of the notices were intercepted by her and gotten rid of by the time he got off work. After she had left and he was struggling to figure it out he found the notice on the door of eviction. He asked a friend at work if he could stay in the trailer until he could find an apartment. His son would stay at friendâs houses until he got off work. Susan was the mother of one of those friends. He had felt sorry for the woman, raising three children alone, on welfare, unable to find work because of the kids. She had asked him once if he could bring her a pack of cigarettes and a half case of coke. She said she would pay him back when she got her welfare check. He said no, he didnât want any money, and she was watching his son after school, so he considered it a fair trade. That was the beginning of their relationship. She had told him about an apartment that was opening up at the complex she was living in, so he took a chance and got it. They were married a couple of years later. It was the beginning of his mundane little life. That was all about to change though. With his fatherâs death, Brian was once again in possession of what had been for him, a whole different life. A life he had lived before he had married his first wife.

That weekend they drove for over an hour out into the countryside away from their home, his wife and their daughter looking around and commenting on all of the different houses as they passed them. They finally turned onto an old paved road and drove up into the hills, passing an old Victorian house; both his wife and daughter commented that it was a beautiful house as they passed it. He said that he had always liked it too. They turned down a gravel road ending up at a fairly large double wide mobile home. He parked the truck and

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they got out. An older woman came out onto the porch and Brian walked up to her.

“You must be Nancy.” He said walking up on the porch. “I’m Brian, Bob’s son. I’m truly sorry for your loss.” And in a move that was uncharacteristic for him, he hugged her. He stepped back, “This is my wife, Susan, and our daughter, Marie.”

“Well, I’m pleased to finally meet you. You look just like him you know.” Nancy replied. “My kids are driving up from Arizona next weekend; I hope to be able to move by then.”

“Why, you don’t have to if you don’t want to.” He replied. “You are more than welcome to stay as long as you want.”

“I’m sorry, I thought you would want me gone, now that your dad has passed away.” The look on her face was of disbelief. “I can’t afford to stay here without him.”

“Who said I wanted money from you, you took care of him until the end. For that alone I owe you more than you can imagine.” He said. “The house is paid off, so as long as you can afford the essentials, I can’t see a reason why you would have to leave.”

“Thank you,” Nancy said with a little sob, then threw her arms around him and hugged him.

“Well, I think I have a few things to do now, but I’ll come back down in a little while and we can talk more.” He smiled at her and hugged her again. Turning back to his wife and daughter he smiled. “Shall we see what’s left of the old girl?”

He walked past them and hopped back in the truck, Susan said a quick goodbye to Nancy, and they hopped back in the truck.

“What old girl?” Susan asked.

“You’ll see in a minute.” He smiled as they turned and headed back up the road from his father’s home. A few minutes later they pulled into the driveway of the Victorian house on the hill that they had passed coming in. “Well, what do you think of my house.” He grinned at them.

Both of their mouths had dropped open. “What do you mean Your House?” Susan said.

“I mean it’s my house. So is all of the property since we left the highway.” He said as he parked the truck and got out. His wife and daughter both got out and followed him up the stairs to the house in front of them with a dumbfounded look on their faces. He fumbled with a key ring that neither of them had seen before and finally found the one he was looking for. Opening the large door he walked into the large foyer of the house. Neither his wife nor daughter had moved since stepping up on the porch. He stepped back out and walked to the railing on the porch, “What do you think of the view, is it something you could get used to?” he asked looking at them with a little smile. The house looked over a valley with the mountains as a backdrop. There was a lake down in the Valley, and they could just see the roof of his father’s place nestled in some trees. He walked back into the house and flipped a couple of switches, when nothing happened he walked back out on the porch and around the corner then down some stairs to a large grey box with a padlock on it. Flipping through the key ring he found the key and unlocked the padlock, opening the box he threw the large breaker at the top and a light on the porch came on. He closed the box and relocked the padlock. He went back up the stairs to the porch to find his wife and daughter still where he left them. Putting his arm around his daughter he led her into the house and then walked over to a row of switches on the wall. He flipped them and this time the lights in the hallway came on, revealing a large foyer. As he continued

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down the row of switches, storm shutters started to rise up on the windows of the house, letting light in that showed dust on almost everything, sheets covered all the tables and furniture in the rooms they could see. He looked over at his wife standing there in the foyer looking up at the large chandelier. "Well could you live in a place like this?"

"What in the hell is this place, who's is it?" She asked him again.

"I told you it's mine. I own it, or rather now we own it, since your my wife." He smiled again.

"Why didn't you tell me about this before, I mean we've been struggling to make ends meet for all this time and you had this." She said and he could see the anger starting in her.

"Well, for one thing, I couldn't tell you about it. It was part of the deal I made with my dad. And for another thing until he died, it wasn't mine.

"So now what, you just want us to move out here in the middle of nowhere?" She said.

"Not really, I was thinking after Marie graduates we could, that way she wouldn't have to change schools or anything. It's only another few months, we could get the roof of the house fixed and put it up for sale. I mean we still have to find out about the cable and phone service out here. The house isn't set up for cable and it might be easier to have a satellite system installed. None of that stuff was around when I had the house built."

"What do you mean you had the house built?" She asked.

"Well back then the land was pretty cheap, I bought these 100 acres for 25,000, and the house cost another 20 thousand. But if you would rather I could go ahead and just sell it. I could probably get a good price for it."

"Like hell, show me the rest of it." She said. "I don't know if I'll like being stranded out here but at least I can see the rest of it."

He showed them the dining room, which had a large table with a dozen chairs around it, and another large chandelier hanging over it, then the kitchen with a large double door refrigerator and professional gas range, a huge island and walk-in pantry. Then the large living room and the library, next he took them upstairs to the Master bedroom, with a large walk-in closet, a sitting area and full bathroom with a shower and a soaking tub; it took up most of the second floor of the house. Then they went up to the third floor with another three bedrooms on it.

"This room is mine," Marie said. The room she staked her claim on was in the corner that had a view of the mountains and the valley. It had its own bathroom and in one corner was a spiral staircase that led up to the turret on the house. Going up there gave a 360 degree view of the whole area.

After they got back downstairs, Susan said "No, we stay I like this place. I don't know how much I'll like being stranded out here, but I think I can adjust."

"Well, I need to get the gas tanks tested and filled back up, there's the phone and TV to take care of, but otherwise we could move out here when Marie's graduated then. As for you being stranded, I don't really think that is a problem, as long as you don't mind driving an old piece of crap car, you can always take one of the cars in the garage." Brian said.

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“What garage, I didn’t see a garage.” She said.

“It’s under the house is why you didn’t see it.” He smiled again, “Want to see it?”

“Ok,” she said with a little skepticism in her voice.

He led them back out to the kitchen and unlocked another door with stairs down. They went down and he unlocked another door, one of three at the bottom of the stairway, he turned on a switch revealing a room almost the same size as the house. It was filled with cars that were all covered so you couldn’t tell what they actually were.

They walked down one row of cars and stopped about half-way down.

“I think this one is about your speed dear,” He smiled and pulled the cover off, revealing a 1956 red and white Chevy Nomad. The car looked like it had come off a dealers lot, it was immaculate, even the interior was in pristine condition. “Of course, I’ll have to get it licensed before you can drive it.”

“Where’s mine then?” Marie said. “I can’t stay out here and leave all my friends.”

“Well, you just got your license; you can’t drive a stick so I think the second car over in that row would probably be your best bet.” Brian chuckled as he turned and pointed at a car in another row.

When he turned back around his wife was walking down the row pulling covers off the cars as she went by. The cars she was revealing were all from the 50’s, 60’s and 70’s, they were the cream of the crop as far as early muscle cars went. Mustangs, Barracuda’s, GTO’s, and more, she turned back to him at the end of the row. “Do you realize how much some of these are worth?” she asked with an astonished look on her face.

“Yes, actually I do. There are probably a couple of Million just in this row alone, twice that in the row on the far wall, and maybe the same in the row Marie is looking at.” He smiled.

Marie was sitting with a grin ear to ear in a 1979 Red Mustang convertible, also in factory condition. “No, she’s not driving that.” Susan said. “I don’t want her driving a convertible.”

“Marie, your mom says no to the convertible.” Brian said, “So try the fourth car, that’s a hardtop.”

Marie had a completely disappointed look on her face as she got out of the Mustang. She walked down and uncovered a Mercedes 450SL and her face lit up again. “Ok, I can drive this.” She had the grin on her face again. The Mercedes was a deep blue color and like the rest of the cars they had seen was in showroom condition.

Susan walked up to Brian and quietly asked “Just how much is that worth?”

“Probably around one million if I remember right, it’s the second one they produced that year. I got really lucky when they told me I had it.” He smiled at her.

“Ok, just when are you going to tell me about all of this.”

“I don’t know,” he smiled. “I think it’s time to go see Nancy and chat for a little while and then head home, we can talk about all of this later. For the moment though, we have stuff at home to take care

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of first.

“We’ll stay here while you do that, I don’t know her.” Susan said.

“Come on Marie, we’re leaving,” he called to their daughter, and the look on her face was evident.

“Do we have to? Can’t we stay here, you said it was your house?” she asked.

“There’s power to the house, but I haven’t checked the well so there’s no water yet, no gas for the stove and there isn’t a microwave here, so we can’t cook; besides there’s no food either.” He said with another smile.

They left the basement after putting the covers back on the cars and locking the doors. He went out to get in the truck while his wife and daughter were wondering the house pulling sheets off of the furniture as they looked at everything. He smiled to himself, as he stared up at the house. “It’s mine again,” he thought as he backed down the driveway and drove the short distance to Nancy’s. He spent the next hour with her, finding out about his dad’s life over the past years since they had talked. His dad had never told her about what was in the house just that they had to take care of the outside of it and pay taxes when they became due. Brian made sure that she had enough money in her bank account to get by until he could arrange things then went back up to the house and his family. Their drive home in the evening was quiet, each of them in their own little world.

When they reached their house, he looked at it almost disappointed to have to leave it. It was a nice house, filled with years of memories. A typical suburban home not very large but big enough for their family to grow up in. Their other children were grown and living in different parts of the country, all except for their youngest son who was still at home but rarely there. He was always gone by the time Brian got off work. He was the one dark part of their life, always getting in trouble for something or other. Brian knew most of the police in the area by name; they had been to the house so many times over the years. James was in his late twenties, but had no aspirations other than to hang with his friends. A high school drop-out with enough legal problems that getting a job was difficult. He was the main reason they only had one vehicle at the moment. His wife’s car was in such bad shape that getting it running would cost more than the car was worth. Before losing his license, James had been in multiple accidents in it, broken the window mechanisms somehow, the lights didn’t work right either. Every time Brian had fixed it, his wife would let James use it and a couple months later it would be broken down again. He had pretty much given up on fixing it; it was just putting money into something that wouldn’t last for long. With just his job to rely on, money was always tight so he couldn’t justify spending the money on a losing battle.

Brian hit the alarm button and got up in the darkness. Getting dressed he walked to the door and told his wife he loved her, just as every other morning. Going down the stairs to the kitchen he made a pot of coffee and then went down to his office. He turned on the TV, sat down and lit a cigarette. Leaning back in his chair he smiled, looking at the cardboard box containing his father’s ashes, it had been delivered the day before, “if only it was real and not a dream.” So began another day in Brian’s dreary little life.

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