Professor Tyrell was eating a hastily prepared sandwich when what remained of the front door was prised open with a creak and someone entered. He put down his food and followed clunky footsteps upstairs.

The door to Jake’s room was shut but not locked and the professor pushed it open slowly, his eyes searching for who might be there.

Jake was standing in front of the window, staring out at the street lamps which now bathed the road in a blanket of orange neon. There was dirt on his clothes and his face which held no expression at all.

“Jake?” asked his father quietly, “Where have you….er, there’s a sandwich if you want it.”

Jake responded with only a slight nod of the head.

 “Jake? You are alright aren’t you?”

There was silence and the two stood there, still as statues until the boy answered and when he did it was far from his usual arrogance, it was a tiny voice, sounding confused and hesitant.

“Did… Mum…..say…..”

His father coughed nervously, “She probably did! She said everything I think, sometimes I used to think she’d never stop talking…it was if she knew how little time she had and wanted to make sure she said everything…”

“Did she say anything….at the end…..about… me?”

“Of course she did… you were too young to see her at the very end. We thought it was better for you to remember her when she was well…”

“I thought she’d forgotten about me...”

“Jake; you were the most important thing in her life.”

“It’s just that it seems ages ago…and sometimes… I think I can hear her or see her but it’s stupid because I can’t…. and sometimes I don’t know what she thinks….thought…. and I want to ask her about stuff.”

“So do I but, you know, we can’t. I would do anything to hear her voice again..”

“You would?”

“It’s just a figure of speech. What’s brought all this on; it’s been three years. I thought you were coping….”

“No, Dad, *you’re* coping. I don’t know what to do and we never talk about it or anything. We just pretend things are normal.”

“You certainly seem to do a lot, most of it getting into trouble…”

“What else is there Dad? It’s not like you want me here, getting in the way of your labelling and rocks and everything. The gang are cretins, I hate every one of them, the way they do what I say and follow me and talk about rubbish. When I was with Amber, just for a bit, I thought there was someone I could talk too...but then Jade disappeared and I couldn’t deal with that sort of thing again..”

The professor touched him lightly on the shoulder,

“Jake, do you know what your mum would have said? She’d say there’s nothing more important than your family and she used to wonder how you’d grow up and what you’d be like. She wanted to be proud of you.”

“It doesn’t matter now cos she’s not here to see it is she?”

“What difference does that make? People shouldn’t just behave a certain way because they’re being checked up on. You have to respect some of the values that are passed down- that’s how all civilisations work. Do you honestly think that she would have wanted you to spend your time bullying and vandalising and causing trouble, hmm? She hated that sort of behaviour.”

 “I suppose.”

“Look, come downstairs and we’ll have something to eat, yes?”

Jake nodded and his father left the room, pulling the door over. Jake turned to open a drawer, sifting through various items until he found what he was looking for. It was a small, folded photograph of his younger self sitting between his parents. He stared at it for a few moments before sliding it into his pocket and heading downstairs.