*26 December 2015* | **Indifferent Sons**

**Jerome**

*Oh captain, my captain*

*Our fearful trip is done.*

*The ship has weathered very wrack,*

*The prize we sought is won.*

“For me, and I think for many others in this room, James Manning was our Captain. The man who set us on the path that we would go on and steered each one of us into the direction that our lives would take. The one who protected us from the storms and the one who steered the family into the port in which we now live. He made sacrifices, yes, but he made them for us and at every stage we knew that we could reach out to him for help. I will miss him and his determination which had come to be a source of strength to each of us that knew him.”

Jerome Murchison had to stop himself from cracking a smirk as he delivered the last part of his speech. He’d meant the thing as a discreet insult that only him and his siblings, and maybe his first step-mother (the only former wife to show up), would understand.

He had always found it remarkably easy to fake sentiment. A few beautiful words here and a well-placed snivel there often worked wonders to coax out emotion for those willing participants that wanted to share his burden. He supposed that was the one thing he had in common with his late father, especially since Jerome went by mother’s maiden surname now.

Honestly, Jerome didn’t give a damn about the speech. The emotional manipulation came so naturally to him and it helped garner sympathy while he appeared to be doing exactly what the outside world expected of him. As far as he was concerned it was all bullshit, though. All that really mattered was furthering his own agenda. If he had learned one thing from his father’s dogged pursuit of the status that he had enjoyed by his untimely end, it was that the goal was all that mattered and the means of achieving that goal were irrelevant.

Jerome’s current goal was to sit through this wankfest of a funeral - he swore he could hear the old man laughing at each word he said - and then the reading of the will before going out to get drunk off his ass and high out of his mind. Maybe he’d chat up Tay Jacobson before he did that.

He hadn’t spoken to James Manning in ten years and still didn’t want to. He rejected the old man’s money once he had obtained it – there was no way to buy his love, not this late in the game. Jerome’s speech hadn’t been worth the Pizza Hut napkin that he’d written it on once he recovered from last night. He still smelled of Listerine and cigarettes but his little sister had kindly seen to it that his suit for the occasion was cleaned and pressed.

As he stepped down from the podium he could see several member of his extended family in tears and several more with the unmistakable silvery glint in their eyes.

He allowed himself half a smirk as his sister stepped up to give her address. He clapped her on the shoulder and walked out of the hall. Screw it. He wasn’t going to waste any more of his life on the old man. The money wasn’t worth sitting through this. Dorie could invest his cut or TK could spend it all on video games for all he cared. Fuck what everyone else thought about him and what they expected from him. He’d been a fool to think that he should stand up there and lie for someone who was as much of a shit person as James Manning. He’d done as Dorie had asked but no more. The rest was her problem now. Jerome was done here.

**Pandora**

Pandora Manning was the type of person who planned every nanosecond of everyday. She had given her older brother a tribute slot with a full 15 minutes to manipulate the hearts and minds of everyone else with a vagina in the room, all in the name of mourning their father. So when her big brother had walked out after just 4, she was panicked.

Come to think of it Pandora was more surprised that he hadn’t grabbed the Jacobsen girl on the way out, given the way he was eyeing her, than she was about the walkout itself. Jerome had always been a degenerate but normally he was a predictable degenerate. Even though she knew that his relationship with their father was worse than her own, she had just thought that the promise of this many targets, and their attractive daughters, would offset his anger.

She had taken a gamble in asking him to do this and she had understood that Jerome would be upset but not so upset so as to walk out. It was just like her older brother to make her miscalculate.

Now she had to clean up after him. Again. This was exactly like the incident with that 18 year old from Rosewood Girls’. He was blackening his name and, in turn, blackening Pandora’s name by association. Great. How was she going to explain this to the press? The perfect children angle was out now.

Jerome may have been the oldest but he wasn’t the wisest and, incidentally, not the only one who remembered James Manning’s rampant mistreatment of them and their mother. Pandora had loved him after a fashion. Well, ‘love’ was a bit strong. Her relationship with their father was better than her older brother’s in that she actually called him on occasion and tolerated his presence when they did see each other and more honest than her little brother’s because Pandora didn’t want or need a cent from him. No, she needed him for other purposes.

She wasn’t happy that he was dead but she wouldn’t miss him either. She would give her address and then figure out what to do with the last ten minutes.

**Terence-Kelvin**

When Jem stormed out, TK Manning had thought about stopping him but sat still when his sister shot him an angry look. He never got the full extent of the hatred that the two of them had for their father. Well for Jem it was hate, Dorie was as close to not giving as damn as you could get. And for Dorie, that was saying something. She treated people like dirt if they weren’t of use and worse if they got in her way.

The thing about TK was that he had been born after dad left to ‘make his fortune’ and could never really summon any hate. He would definitely side with his mom 100% but she had gotten on comfortably enough without him, though if anyone should do the hating it was her and her alone.

For TK, his relationship with James was largely strategic. He took the summer jobs that the man offered and used it to get ahead of the game, he took the money and put it in his pocket - well some of it, he wasn’t as bad as Jem was with money but also not as good as Dorie - and he took the love that James Manning offered and tried to take it heart. It wasn’t that he hated the guy, he understood that his dad was trying to make things right. He respected that the man was out for forgiveness but he was looking in the wrong place.

Terence-Kelvin Manning had already forgiven his dad, whatever that was worth, but that didn’t mean that he hadn’t let the guy pay for his schooling and textbooks and video games - TK was way, way, way too much like his big sister to let a good opportunity go begging.

He looked up at the stage and read his sister’s face. She was still in planning mode. TK wondered whether he could take out his phone and have a go at level 4 of *Secret Hunters II: Ancient Worlds*. Nope, scratch that. She was looking straight at him.

Dorie called him up to the podium and whispered in his ear to play a song for her on the piano. They probably looked like the two remaining perfect children. An objective observer would never have known the depth of their indifference towards the man in the coffin and his legacy.

**Pandora**

As her little brother sat down to play, Pandora Manning got ready to sing the lost time away. Once this was done she would do the thanks and mingle for a bit before assembling the inner circle for the reading of the will. She’d have to send one of her step-nephews to go find Jerome. But alas, she was getting ahead of herself.

Paul Cupido