

The Prodigal Surfer

Croyde is the top surfing beach in Devon and on a good day you can get a 10ft swell -that's waves twice your height! One time there was a canoeist that went head on into the wave and the drop was so big the other side he snapped the front off his boat. Jake was quite a surfer. He didn't really get into it until he was 14 but as there was nothing else to do he gave it go. When I say there was nothing else to do I mean it; no buses in winter, no cinema, no video shop, no pool table or swimming pool. Jake's dad ran the local hotel, The Dorchester, and to say it was posh is a bit of an understatement.

By the time Jake was 16 he was bored out of his skull. He just wanted to leave home and go to London, the place where he thought everything was happening. His dad's hotel was shaped like a H. H for hotel, clever eh? After a couple of months of being sixteen Jake was arguing with his dad more or less every day. Finally Jake managed to talk his old man into letting him have his share of the hotel. Jake turned his half of the hotel into holiday flats and because of the view of the sea flogged the lot in no time and was off.

London was the place he wanted to be. He travelled first class on the train, which included a free breakfast, the full works. On arrival he thought "Hotel, then clubbing." After a few weeks of this he moved to the coolest flat he could find, bought an excellent soft-top car and tried it on with every good looking girl he met. Life was a laugh with parties and drinking - this was where it was at; loads of people would pile round his flat. His music system wasn't a midi or a stack but a massive set of decks and speakers that pumped out the sounds so loud it shook the plaster off the ceiling in the flat below.

After a while the bills started to come red; first a grand here and there, then a couple and so on. Eventually he had to sell the car and got a council tax demand he couldn't pay. Soon even the interest on loans he took out was too much and everything was gone. Almost a year and a half after getting to London he was skint. He thought "Never mind I'll get a job". But once he was chucked out the flat he couldn't carry his clothes around, so he dumped them. Jake missed the high life and wanted to feel popular again, but every time he called on his so-called mates and ex-girlfriends no one wanted to know. He was down and soon out of it, as he got wasted on cheap cider. Too proud to go home he would sleep rough or try and get in a hostel, and if the begging went badly had to eat scraps from the bin outside MacDonald's.

After a while of going round the hostels he finally was offered a job as a cleaner in one of the few hostels that took in homeless and their dogs. Here he was cleaning up the puke and mess from all the animals and people. He didn't get paid but got a bed for the night. On more than one day he slipped on a pile of dog mess and got covered in it.

"Enough's enough", he thought. "I'm going home; if I'm lucky Dad will give me a job as a kitchen cleaner which is better than this". He tried to thumb it, but no one would give him a lift in London, so he had to walk 20 miles to the M4. Eventually he got a few lifts but it took him three days before he was close to home. This was plenty of time for the doubts to set in; Dad would laugh in his face and tell him to get lost but his brother might be okay. He would like the idea of Jake working for him and be pleased to push him around. He decided to walk the last two miles, the fresh air might make him smell better. He was passed by a couple of cars he vaguely recognised.

As he rounded the corner his dad was running towards him, shouting his name. Jake's dad flung his arms round him and explained a porter on his way to work had seen him and how pleased he was to see him home. When he got back to the hotel his dad put him in the presidential suite, a room with a bed so soft and bath with a built-in jacuzzi. There was the best food; steak, fish, wine, beers, and on the table in the corner a document that made Jake and his brother equal partners in the rest of the hotel. Jake couldn't believe it, or understand it; his brother was mad as hell, but his dad simply told him "Jake and you are my kids and nothing you can do can make me love you any less. No matter how bad it gets I am always here for you".