



BOBBY AND SUN LI

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Bobby and Sun Li met the day the supermarket exploded. Or rather, they collided. Bobby was walking across the car park, thumbing a text message into his mobile, telling his parents that he had dropped out of college that morning. He had just written *im suffoc8ing* when a loud bang came from the store, followed by a boom that shook the ground and caused Bobby to stumble. Smoke and fire belched through the electronic doors and shot out of small ventilation pipes on the side of the corrugated steel cube. And then his vision was filled with Sun Li. She was walking away from the supermarket with a can of green beans in her hand. Her feet were small and perfect in sandals. She was looking back towards the store when the explosion hit her.

The shock wave moved through the car park, popping windscreens on its way, picking up till receipts from the ground and firing them outwards. When it caught up with Sun Li, it lifted her feet from the ground and hurled her forwards, into Bobby. He didn't feel any pain at first. Her head was almost soft as it hit his chest. Even the

tin of green beans hitting his hand, breaking two fingers and shattering the screen of his mobile, was painless. He felt himself falling backwards, his feet losing the ground, and then he blacked out.

The sun was bright in his eyes when he awoke. He felt a weight on him, and looked down to see Sun Li lying on his chest. They looked like two lovers, waking up in an embrace, but they were dishevelled, with spots of blood on their clothes. It hurt his neck to move, so he rested his head on the tarmac. His heartbeat throbbed in his broken fingers. Sun Li's long black hair was fanned over his body, as if gripping him. The sun was hot where her hair touched his white t-shirt. He could feel the pattern of it, like a sunburst on his chest, warm and smooth. Her chest moved up and down on his stomach. She wasn't dead, just sleeping. He closed his eyes and lay there, trying to ignore the pain, to focus instead on the delicious weight of her body laying on him.

White gulls flapped overhead, moving through the column of smoke. Sirens blared from close by, and there was a roar, which sounded like a waterfall, but was the sound of fire devouring the supermarket. These sounds were beautiful, helping Bobby to feel at peace, making the tarmac feel comfortable. He'd been in turmoil for weeks, wondering whether he should drop out of college, worrying about how his parents would react. That morning, he'd lain in bed watching a butterfly struggling in a spider's web. When it escaped, he took it as an omen, and went to tell the Dean that he was leaving to open up his own record store. He felt a great release once he'd done it, but then his stomach cramped when he imagined how his parents would react. The exploding supermarket had taken all that away. He wasn't worried about what they thought at all anymore. For the first

time in his life, he was in charge of his own destiny.

Sun Li stirred on his chest.

‘Don’t try to move,’ he said. ‘I think we’re both injured. I can hear ambulances coming.’

Sun Li groaned and let her weight relax into him again. ‘I’m sorry,’ she said.

‘You don’t need to be sorry. It’s not your fault.’

She began to cry. The shaking of her body as she sobbed made Bobby’s injuries ache, and he stroked her hair and made soothing noises to keep her still and relaxed.

‘What’s your name?’ Bobby asked.

‘Sun Li.’

‘I’m Bobby. So do you come here often?’

‘I used to work here,’ Sun Li said. ‘But I got fired last week.’

‘Why’d they fire you?’

‘I put leaflets about animal testing in the cosmetics section.’

‘Hey, that’s great. I’m vegetarian too.’

‘You are? I’ve been vegetarian my whole life. I never ate a single piece of animal.’

‘I’ve only been vegetarian for two years, since I left home. My parents are pretty strict. They wouldn’t buy separate food to cook different meals for me. They don’t believe in vegetarianism. They’re pretty old-fashioned. So, the supermarket wouldn’t let you put your leaflets out, huh? Fascists.’

‘That’s what I thought. That’s why I came back today.’

‘Did you put more leaflets out?’

Sun Li lifted her head. She had dried blood on her forehead, and it cracked as she frowned.

‘No,’ she said. ‘I came back to blow this place up.’

Bobby stared at her for a moment. She was so beautiful. He wanted to push the tip of his nose against hers.

‘Wow,’ he said. ‘You know how to make a bomb?’

‘Sure. I looked it up on the Internet. It’s not hard at all. I didn’t think it would be that big though. I didn’t think I’d hurt anybody,’ and she began to sob again.

‘Hey, it’s okay. You were standing up for what you believe in and that’s okay.’

‘Do you think so?’

‘I do,’ Bobby said. ‘Hey listen, if you got fired, are you looking for a job? Because I just quit college to open up a record store.’

‘You did? Wow, that’s cool.’

‘You could come and work with me, if you like.’

‘I’d love it,’ Sun Li said.

‘Cool.’

Bobby watched the gulls wheeling through the smoke. The sirens were coming nearer. The fire was still raging, and there was another small explosion, and a tinkling of glass as windows burst. Sun Li placed her hands on Bobby’s chest and adjusted her head until she was comfortable. Bobby put his good hand behind his head and watched the smoke column rising. His body was a map of cuts and bruises, aches moving along the contours, but he didn’t mind. Everything was just perfect.

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