

Life

It would be fair to describe Our Boy as a nervous boy. It would be rather unfair, however, to call him a mommy's boy, especially if you were to shout it at him abusively like his classmates used to do. It would, again, be fair to assume that Our Boy took it personally, maybe even extremely personally, that is to say maybe more so than he ought to have done.

It is true that the boys' assaults were very much personal in the way that they were directed at Our Boy. But it is equally true that if, by some miraculously simple incident of possibility Our Boy lived in another similar town on the other side of the country, meaning that Our Boy just wasn't here, well, some other unfortunate boy would fill Our Boy's shoes. As the simple economic model of supply and demand would teach us, the reason we find so many shouting "mommy's boy" isn't because there are so many mommy's boys, but

because there is so much demand for them.

But that is a group thing, you see. To have a common ground for dislike. A symbol of solidarity. Like disliking Hitler, Thatcher or Simon Cowell. All beings of great repute. Not necessarily good repute. But definitely great. And it's not so personal at all, since you can modify the villain according to popular demand. Don't believe me? Just try it.

So. You a good person, then? Not a Nazi, I hope. They do some nasty stuff, you know. Well. Are you? A Nazi? No? Good. Then you're one of us. The good guys. Now try reading that bit again, only instead of Nazi, put in lawyer. Like this.

So. You a good person, then? Not a lawyer, I hope. They do some nasty stuff, you know. Well. Are you? A lawyer? No? Good. Then you're one of us. The good guys.

What's that? Do you happen to know a nice lawyer? Oh, sorry about that. Just take another definition and exchange. Take your pick. Banker. Murderer. The French.

Whatever suits your whim.

So you see, as far as group cohesion goes, it didn't matter one bit whether the symbol of solidarity was Our Boy or one of the other boys, or even the principal. Every good story has a villain and the same goes for a good group. If you take away the villain there is chaos. No means to define the parameters of the group as being "not that". And people seem to dislike that kind of chaos. But I'm afraid Our Boy didn't really see it this way.

And he didn't live on the other side of the country either. You know, some place with likeminded folks where he would have been accepted for what he was. Where he would have been happy. No. Our Boy lived in Dover, which happens to be a very lovely place, yet every day he had to tolerate the snickering and teasing and other general abuse that comes with the position of being a mommy's boy. That is why Our Boy spent a lot of his time feeling hopeless and nervous.

It should probably be noted here, just so there is no misunderstanding, that bullying is of course by

no standard acceptable behaviour. Also, the act of shouting “mommy’s boy” after someone and the act of stealing their shoes so that they have to walk home in their socks are clearly different degrees of bullyism. If I were to say, for example, that Bullyboy had stopped Our Boy outside school one day on their way home and held him down by sitting on his chest so that Our Boy could hardly breathe it would definitely colour your opinion of Bullyboy. Just picture it, there Our Boy struggles, sweat forming on his face. Frantic fear in his eyes. A sudden spasm of energy as he tries to push Bullyboy off. Bullyboy’s minions scurry by, some trying not to notice in fear of having to participate, others snicker or cheer him on, even the teacher tiptoes by, terrified as he is of Bullyboy’s father and maybe even secretly or subconsciously delighted by the sight of Our Boy punished feeling that it serves the boy right for not listening in class. Well, not Our Boy per say, it is very likely that any boy would do in the teacher’s case, according to the stereotype. Or maybe the teacher merely feels it isn’t his business what happens outside the classroom. And imagine the

hopelessness spreading throughout Our Boy's body upon seeing one possible aid after another show up only to ignore his dire necessity and walk by coldheartedly, a paralysing feeling numbing every muscle. This sort of experience would follow any boy well into adulthood. Surfacing almost every time he was in a tight spot, like say in a crowded elevator or in the middle of a deep swimming pool or relaxing in bed on a Sunday morning with his infant child climbing over him and innocently poking his eyes out.

So yes. As I said, this sort of incident would definitely colour your opinion of Bullyboy. He didn't do that though. Or, I mean, maybe he did and maybe he didn't. It's not an important part of our story. What is important is that Our Boy told his mother all about how abusive he felt Bullyboy acted towards him. Feeling being the concept to note here. She in turn organised a playdate for Our Boy with Bullyboy, convinced as she was that it would lead to everlasting friendship thus solving everything. Like pressing a magic button. A quick fix. Because, let's face it, we all crave that.

That's why industries like the Lottery and Anti-Depressant Manufacturers thrive, in spite of all logic.

And on such a playdate Bullyboy would as a matter of course not alter his behaviour, except for the brief moments when Mrs. Paige, Our Boy's mother, was present. The boys would naturally end up alone in Our Boy's room where Bullyboy would inevitably shake Our Boy's boat in a bottle, his prized possession, a little too roughly. Funnily enough, that was what Mrs. Paige often had to gently ask Our Boy to stop doing, but it was different to watch someone else do the shaking. To Our Boy it felt more severe when Bullyboy did it, although to be fair, an impartial outsider might not observe much of a difference between Our Boy's shaking and Bullyboy's shaking. If anything, it was a perception issue like the Doppler effect, sounding more loud when it's coming at you than when it's going away, just with shaking. The shaking feeling more rough when you are not the shaker.

Maybe Bullyboy did this on purpose. Maybe he revelled in the sight of anguish on Our Boy's face,

laughing menacingly out of pride from a mission accomplished. Or maybe he was just as nervous as Our Boy, shaking the boat too roughly because he was tense, laughing nervously because he felt a little ashamed for having sat on Our Boy's chest or for some other mischievous thing he'd done. It's up to you, really, depending on how wicked you require Bullyboy to be.

What is unshakable is the avalanche of feelings rushing through Our Boy. He, being an 8 year old boy, wouldn't be able to explain any of them, but be assured he felt them. He felt the intrusion of privacy, watching his foe rummaging through his stuff. His stuff. So he felt the selfishness that haunts every hoarder and the fear of losing that which is rightfully his, as it belongs to his room, his thoughts, his world. And shortly following fear there was anger, for we humans are no different from the wounded tiger fighting for survival, finding that backup supply of energy boozt hidden within our anger. And how could anyone forget the righteousness? No wrath is complete without the might of someone who feels that he is in the right, that he is correcting a horrible injustice. And it is with that

righteousness that Our Boy went to his mother to make a complaint.

There she was, elegant and calm as ever. There he bursted forth towards her, not only his face distorted with anger but also his voice, his temper and his sense of reason. You can definitely imagine how that meeting went.

'Moom! He took my bottleship!' She was, as we've established, of the faith that giving way and being the gracious pushover, turning the other cheek and all that, was the sure fire way to be liked and make friends. Well, it is a way of existing in relative peace. So yes, her reply would have been something along the lines of:

'Come now, dear boy, you'll get it back. Now it is his turn.' and

'Which do you prefer, lending your stuff for a moment and gain a friend or keeping your stuff without a friend in the world?' It wasn't a very effective way to persuade Our Boy of a change of heart.

And after a bit of whining, Our Boy would go off to sulk. So, it turns out that a playdate is a fickle thing. Like so many things in life, it's not about what you do but the way you do it. If orchestrated beautifully playdates can build fine friendships, whereas an out of sync orchestra only produces more mess. In Our Boy's case, it provided Bullyboy with more ammo. Our Boy wasn't known as mommy's boy until after that playdate, you see. A lot of things changed after that playdate. Mrs. Paige wasn't as content with how Our Boy spent his time, for one thing. That is how it came about that Our Boy grew accustomed to lying at such a young age. Not as a game. Not for fun. Not in malice. It had been out of necessity. You could say it began when his mother approached him with a simple query.

'I notice that you have no one to play with today, dear son. Do you want me to call Bullyboy's mother? You played so nicely with him the other day.'

'There is no need, thank you mom. I'm meeting him at the playground.' This seemed to relax his mother.

Our Boy promptly put on his shoes and left the house before his mother had the chance to ask him any more about it. He wasn't a very good liar and felt a bit uneasy about the whole thing. Our Boy didn't really know where to go. He didn't dare go to the playground in case Bullyboy was there. Or the beach or any fun place at all. He couldn't go near any grownup place either like the main shopping street, in case his mother went there. He took the only option he could think of. He headed for the forested hills. He felt a sudden rush of delight upon solving his little problem. Then he remembered. He wasn't particularly fond of hills. Or forests. But it did make sense, so he kept walking. And walking. He couldn't find any solution. As far as he was concerned he didn't have any options, so he just did the only thing he could. And kept on walking. I'd like to say that as he walked he thought to himself that it served him right, having to go wander through the forested hills, for lying to his mother. It is more likely that he harboured the notion that 'This is all Bullyboy's fault'. It wasn't too bad though. Our Boy soon learnt that forests are nice

enough places and he enjoyed spending time there. At peace. So he started telling his mother more often than not that he was meeting up with Bullyboy when in fact he went exploring the forest. He climbed trees. Watched birds and bunnies and squirrels. Followed walking trails. Played with sticks and stones.

Most importantly, he had found a place where he could be alone. Safe. Albeit dreadfully lonely.

The Treasure Map

And the story may well have ended here, uneventful as his life would probably have been, had his mother not happened upon the most rarest of finds. She had wrapped it up ever so nicely for his birthday. Or as neatly as was possible given their means. She had recycled a brown paper bag because it would have been too costly

to buy fancy wrapping paper. And still the parcel looked like it belonged on the cover of a style magazine. The cake was also very simple, covered in thick chocolate cream. It was simple yet elegant, much like Mrs. Paige. The same could not be said about the boys sitting around the cake. Their faces changed from greed to chocolate covered madness in the span of 10 minutes.

When Mrs. Paige was slicing the cake she had handed the slices out clockwise around the table, leaving Our Boy till last. She was used to serving the guests first. She had sliced each piece of cake evenly, but as she came to the last piece, she realised that it was noticeably bigger than the others. She paused and stared, contemplating whether she should slice it up further, to give him an even slice, or to let him have that little extra bit.

'Ah well, it is his birthday, after all.' she thought to herself and lifted the slice over to Our Boy's plate. And it would have been just fine. Had it not been for the other boys. Children have an uncanny

way of sensing any sort of discrepancy like that. Bullyboy, who had gotten a slice next to last, was quickest to notice it this time and bluntly remarked upon it.

'Hey! His slice is bigger than mine! That's not fair!'. This put Mrs. Paige in a right state. She didn't know how to respond because she cared too much about responding the right way. And because she cared too much she of course ended up doing the completely wrong thing.

'Oh, I see. Let's just swap, then shall we?'. And just like that she swapped Our Boy's plate for Bullyboy's plate.

'You are ok with that, aren't you, dear?' she asked Our Boy afterwards. Of course he wasn't ok with it, feeling the stab of betrayal with full force.

'No, I want the big slice.'

'Now dear, don't be rude.' was her only reply. Our Boy may or may not have acted out, as a result of that, but he definitely felt something akin to that

which a resident of Jerusalem might feel upon being thrown out of his country. Maybe a resident of Jerusalem might feel offended by that comparison, but righteousness is a strong feeling. It's not a feeling easily measured by the extent of the crime. It's not easily measured by anything at all, really. It's a feeling. And a person feeling wronged in any way can easily feel more righteous than other people might judge normal considering the circumstances. Just like one person can easily be more happy with a journey to Disneyland than another. It's a perspective thing. Anyway. After the boys had smeared themselves in the sinful chocolate from the battlefield of the uneven slices they proceeded to the ritual of opening up the presents. Mrs. Paige had piled them charmingly on the floor, given that they only had that one table in the living room around which the boys had dined. Not that we'd really call that manner of eating dining. If anyone had bothered to take a proper look they'd have noted the graceful style with which the presents had been organised. Not only size and colour but also texture and depth blended beautifully. But no one

appreciated that sort of thing around here. The boys were restless upon having to watch Our Boy open his presents. He decided to save his mother's till last, half hoping he'd be able to appreciate it in private. He didn't want Bullyboy to put his filthy chocolate smudged fingers on it. Our Boy looked around the nine presents, thinking strategically. He noticed a round package. Clearly a ball, he could tell. He was going to open that next to last, then, maybe, the boys would go off into a football game.

Now he finally started opening the presents, one by one. A toy car. A block of paper and a charcoal pencil. A flashlight. A pack of cards. A book about a lion. Another pack of cards. A toy sword. Right. This was it. The football. It was working. It worked. Well, it was destined to, a ball and a group of boys fit together like a glove with a hand. Except. It was only a bit of his plan which worked. Our Boy hadn't taken into account how his mother would react. She knew nothing of Our Boy's fear. She felt quite hurt that he were to forget her present like that. As if her present

didn't matter. She wouldn't stand for it. That elegant woman, who treated her son with so much respect, who organised everything neatly around his needs. Bowing down before others she could do all day long if need be. But she demanded recognition from her own son. Her only child. She didn't get all huffy puffy or high and mighty about it. She just calmly stopped the stampede of boys heading outside.

'One moment please, boys. There is one gift to be opened before you rush out for football.' And she handed Our Boy his parcel. He reluctantly took hold of it. It had been so close, they were at the door and all. He removed the wrapping to reveal a delicate and frail old thing. It was a book and it had the word pirate in the title.

'Oh, a pirate book! Thank you mother!' Our Boy's excitement did not go unnoticed by the other boys.

'Let me see!' Bullyboy said as he grabbed the book forcefully. Our Boy wasn't about to let go. They both stood their ground. Eventually it was the book that gave way. It ripped at the spine.

'My Book!'

Our Boy's mother, true to form, reprimanded her son feeling she had the right to because of blood being thicker than water, and the bond between mother and son stronger than having to respect each others boundaries. But no bond is strong enough for that. Boundaries are there for a reason.

'I don't believe it. I've always taught you to share your things nicely, haven't I?'

'Yes, mother. ' Our Boy uttered softly as he clutched the book in his arms. Bullyboy had let go, perhaps in the hope that by abandoning his direct touch with the damaged object he somehow could forsake responsibility in the matter.

'I think it's best that I take that for the time being,' Mrs. Paige said and held out her hand. Our Boy handed the book swiftly over.

'Now, boys. I think it's best you all headed out for that game of football. And let us not fret any more over this incident.'

'Yes, Mrs. Paige.' She carried Our Boy's gifts into his room and stacked them neatly on his table, so that he could look at them later. And it was later that day, after the football match and after the boys had gone home and after dinner, that Our Boy went to his room and looked at his book. After a few moments he went searching for his mother.

'Mother? Where did you find that book?'

'The one I gave you for your birthday?'

'Yes.'

'Why, I got it at the second hand book store. Why do you ask?'

'No reason. Does that mean that it used to belong to someone else?'

'Yes. Does that bother you?'

'No. Just curious.' The reason Our Boy was so curious was in fact that he had discovered a map which had been hidden within the book's spine. The map was written on fragile, yellowish paper. It was clearly very old. Our Boy was dead certain it was a pirate map.

It was after all hidden in a book about pirates. There was even one of those riddle-ish poems on top of the map.

In the count of 1,2,3
are hidden directions only I can see
No one else is this clever
My treasure is mine alone for now and ever.

Our Boy didn't think much of the poem, though. It was too strange. It didn't make any sense. Hidden directions in counting? What rubbish! Our Boy thought the map itself was a lot more interesting. The map clearly depicted a forested park but the park's name wasn't mentioned. As luck would have it, Our Boy knew it nonetheless. It was his park. Connaught park. He knew it because he had spent such a godawful lot of time there. He could make out the park entrance and the little pond and that must then be that little drinking fountain. Next to the fountain was written 123. One,

two, three? Three steps? Then there was an X. A pirate X! This was just too good to be true! Our Boy had quite some difficulty with falling asleep that night. He grabbed the next opportunity he could to go roaming through the park, holding firmly onto his map, as if the firmer he held the more likely the map was to lead him to a pirate treasure. He followed the directions to the Astley Drinking Fountain by the duchess of Connaught Tree. He took three steps in the direction of the X. Then he stared. He stared all around him and he stared at the map. It was quite a while before he tried to take one hundred and twenty three steps, but once he did, he discovered it. It was a little circular door hidden in the earth, decorated in grassy patches. Almost impossible to see unless one were harbouring the notion of finding something in particular. It had a bit of a twisting mechanism. Probably to keep it closed. It took him a few attempts but he managed to open it in the end. He climbed down the stairs and held his breath. The darkness was unbearable. His visit ended there. Our Boy hurried home to fetch his flashlight so that he could investigate the shelter properly. It was

small, very small, but there was enough room for a simple bed and a wooden table. Not enough for a chair. There was however a rustic or crude looking cabinet to the side and some boxes under the bed. Our Boy sat down on the bed. He felt a little disappointed. No treasure, then. His gaze drifted over to a letter on the middle of the table. It was a bit difficult for him to read the handwriting, even though it was a very neat and clear one, as far as handwritings go.

My dear son,

I am getting old, too old to venture here by myself, so this is my last visit to my shelter. If you are reading this, then that means that you have found my map in your old pirate book. I'm glad you did. I hope that it also means that you have found it in your heart to forgive me, the old fool that I am, for my misgivings.

Sincerely,

Your remorseful father.

There was no name on the letter and no means for Our Boy to locate either the owner or the owner's son. He figured they'd both be long dead by now, anyway. After all, they had been pirates, and pirates lived a long time ago, in the murky past, as far as he was concerned. If he had bothered to read up on the history of Connaught park he would quickly modify his theory accordingly, given that it was highly unlikely for a pirate treasure to be hidden amongst park features that clearly dated from the Victorian era. But he was not a history enthusiast. So pirates it was. And so it seems a rather natural course of action that he were to keep the shelter hidden. It was his. It was private. He could take shelter there if the weather was bad. Once the winter had passed he had clearly made it his own. And again, the story might well have ended here, were it not for the fateful event of the nasty struggle.

Something or another

Bullyboy and his minions had decided to play football at Connaught park. I say decided, but it was actually out of sheer necessity. The big boys had come along and driven Bullyboy and his minions away from the football field. They would just have done the same as usual, that is watch the older boys play or go for a game of tag, but it just so happened that one of the minions had spent the previous Sunday at the park with his family and remembered seeing a football field.

Therefore Bullyboy and his minions went to Connaught park. When they entered the park they saw Our Boy walk off the path ahead of them and into the web of trees. Curiosity drove them to investigate further. They followed Our Boy. He in turn quickened his step. They saw him climb down into his shelter and close the door behind him.

Up until now Bullyboy has been a bit of an ambiguous figure. Here you'll come across a defining moment. He

did do the following. As for why he did, it is not really for me to divulge. I suppose, what I can say is that it happened in the way that any sibling who has fought for the right to exist would recognise. It just happened. Bereft of reason and logic it had happened before anyone fully realised anything at all had happened, really. To be absolutely fair, it is also possible that Bullyboy might merely have suggested it as a joke and lost control to the mob mentality of the minions. Whatever the cause was, Bullyboy and the minions moved a huge rock on top of the shelter door. Our Boy was stuck. He did not come home that night. Mrs. Paige came unhinged.

The old Police Sergeant felt rather awkward upon hearing this calm and respectful woman suddenly fraught with panic and fear.

'Don't worry, Mrs. Paige. I'll send Johnny on the lookout for him.' he said on the phone.

'I'm sure your boy will be home soon.'

Even though the Sergeant's response seemed to calm Mrs. Paige a bit it didn't alter the fact that Our

Boy didn't come home soon. Our Boy didn't come home at all that night. He spent it alone, stuck down that shelter feeling very miserable for himself. Mostly he felt boredom, though. He had browsed through everything in the shelter ten times already. It didn't help that he was uncomfortably hungry. He fetched one of the boxes from under the bed. It had old biscuits and tinned food in it. He didn't like it. It tasted funny. But he was too hungry not to eat it. Then he fetched another box. It had, amongst other things, old money and coins. He had played with that the most out of all the things in the shelter. It was his pirate treasure. He didn't care much for a lot of the other stuff. Stamps, books with tiny fonts, some itchy clothes, old posters and so on. Eventually he grew tired of his treasure and fell asleep. He slept remarkably well, considering his circumstances. Mrs. Paige, on the other hand, didn't sleep a wink, exactly as one would expect. By morning she had plagued the Police Sergeant enough for him to organise a search party. Everywhere in town was abuzz with the news. Especially the school. Mrs. Paige had naturally called the parents of every child

in Our Boy's class, in case they knew anything. The minions were too afraid of Bullyboy to say anything. So they didn't. The day passed. And another. And another. Our Boy had set up a primitive chamber pot in the corner and was godawfully sick of those foul expired biscuits. It was one of the minions who finally caved and informed the teacher of Our Boy's whereabouts. Of course in Tattletale minion's version of events it was all Bullyboy's fault. It's a very human thing to shy away from responsibility. The police, a medical team and Our Boy's mother all hurried to Connaught's park. The Tattletale minion's description had been rather vague, in the way that children's descriptions often are, but thankfully it was clear enough so that they managed to stumble upon the shelter. Once they had removed the rock and opened the door Our Boy's mother burst forth and climbed down before anyone else had the chance to, much to the Police Sergeant's dismay.

'Mrs. Paige, that is not proper procedure! Mrs. Paige!' But she paid no heed. Down she went, clearly all jittery, and felt overwhelmingly relieved to find

her boy alive and well, if maybe a tad pale. It was a long hug.

The Police Sergeant, still a little touchy after Mrs. Paige's disregard for proper procedure, did not have much patience for all the hugging. He stood next to the door opening and looked grimly down upon them.

'If you don't mind, Mrs. Paige, then I need a formal statement from the boy.'

'Statement?'

'Yes. We are going to have to investigate this as a criminal offence.'

'Criminal... but... why?' Mrs. Paige felt rather uneasy at the thought of her child being under inspection like a criminal. Especially now that she had just reclaimed him from a sheltered grave, so to speak.

'Because of the rock.'

'The rock?'

'Yes, the rock,' the Sergeant replied, getting marginally more short tempered at having to state the obvious.

'What about the rock, Sergeant?'

'Here we have a child which was stuck in an underground shelter. Here we also have a rock which had been placed on top, to imprison the child. Then there is the matter of the other child's testimony that we need to verify.'

'Oh, I see,' replied Mrs. Paige, feeling a little relieved to hear that the sergeant didn't mean her child any harm.

'So, if you would, please Mrs. Paige.'

'Oh, you mean right now?'

'That would be preferable, yes.' There followed a thorough examination, the outcome of which did somewhat verify Tattletale Minion's story.

'What happened?' Implored the Sergeant.

'The door was shut and I couldn't get out.'

'Who put the rock on the door?'

'Rock? I don't know. There was no rock.' The frustrated Sergeant emitted a loud sigh.

'What else happened. Did you see anyone?' At this point Our Boy hesitated. He had seen Bullyboy with his minions follow him off the trail but if he admitted that then his mother would know that he had lied about being friends with Bullyboy. Possibly making her prone to organise another playdate. There was something in the Police Sergeant's tone, however, that reassured him that Bullyboy had been in the wrong. And he did want Bullyboy punished.

'Yes. Bullyboy and the minions. It was all Bullyboy's fault!!' Our Boy needn't have worried. There was something primal in Mrs. Paige reactions, possibly brought on due to her lack of sleep and anxious days fearing for her son's safety. Instead of her usual stoic expression she clung to the righteousness of the situation. A playdate was the last thing on her mind. When the Sergeant had heard enough he finally allowed the medical team to check up on Our Boy. After that his mother could take him home.

The whole thing got a huge interest in the media, especially the local paper, maybe not least because the

old items were auctioned off and somewhat surprisingly fetched quite a fortune, out of which Our Boy and his mother received a considerable amount. Partly because all attempts at discovering the identity of the shelter's owner or locating an heir had been unsuccessful. The people in charge also felt that it was somehow the right thing to do, considering the boy's terrible ordeal and all the emotional trauma he must have been exposed to. They weren't just giving money though, they were also giving a justification. And those old coins and bills the boy was so fond of. They were worthless anyway.

Then came the powershift.

There is this saying. Money is Power. And it's true, to an extent. But power is't always about money. The saying should be Money is a form of power, but not the only kind of power. It just doesn't have the same ringt to it. It's simply not as catchy.

And sure, the money did have an impact. Suddenly Our Boy and his mother were rich. Filthy rich. Mrs. Paige, true to form, was all sensible about it. Our Boy, also

true to form, was a little less sensible about it. He had become quite the sensation in his class at school. And just as the justification would suggest, Bullyboy was not a very trustworthy leader anymore. The minion's parents stopped praising their children for having such a respectable friend, for despite the influence Bullyboy's father had it simply wasn't enough to erase the scandal of the shelter incident. Our Boy had become a martyr. It did help that he was now rich.

'Do you want to see my Pirate treasure?' Our Boy would ask the minions. Then there followed an event strikingly similar to an auction but instead of money the minions were offering their services, their belongings and even their loyalty. Our Boy neglected to choose carefully. Instead he followed his whim and egged the minions on in a battle to emotional bankruptcy. And when all the minions had bid far above their means, Tattletale minion brought his secret weapon into play.

'Let me see the treasure. I was the one that told the teacher so that they could rescue you.' And you'd think

that such a statement would be just cause for Our Boy to pause. You would think he'd snap righteously that it was all the minons' fault that he had been stuck there at all. It is a strange thing, how easily we overlook these sort of things when we have more to gain from ignoring it. Our Boy liked the attention. He relished the sudden power. He did not want it to stop. After a while Our Boy had filled Bullyboy's shoes.

As for Bullyboy, he had gotten his comeuppance. He had lost his position of power, just like he deserved, right? It had, after all, been a terrible thing that he did. Everybody said so. It could have cost a life.

It was Bullyboy's mother who organised a playdate this time. Her son's behaviour worried her. He seemed to have lost all his friends and was noticeably lonely all the time. Our Boy's mother had agreed, albeit reluctantly. Our Boy did not take the news gracefully.

'I need to play with that... that... criminal!?' His frustration grew as he watched Bullyboy mistreat the ship in the bottle. Again. And it grew even more

upon watching Bullyboy accidentally drop some pirate coins under the desk. But Our Boy did not go to his mother. He waited. Now he had power and he knew how to use it. And the next day at school he told the minions all about how rude and inconsiderate Bullyboy had been. The minions in turn shared their stories of Bullyboy. Many of them were not very nice stories at all.

You could say that Our Boy was having the time of his life. He was finally accepted socially. He finally had some friends. If only... If only he hadn't let his past get the better of him. Despite Bullyboy being powerless, Our Boy was still afraid of him. Maybe it had something to do with the occasional remark from a minion or two about how Bullyboy would do something differently. Or maybe it was nothing other than Our Boy's ingrained insecurities. It could be that Our Boy didn't have enough belief in his sudden prosperity. Whatever the reason, Our Boy went out of his way to use every possible occasion to point out his new social status to Bullyboy. If the Our Boy you met at the beginning of this story were to meet the Our Boy he had

evolved into by this point in time, he wouldn't have liked himself one bit. Whereas you do. A bit at the very least. The poor kid had been through so much, hadn't he?

Our Boy's behaviour did not go unnoticed. It's not so much that Bullyboy missed being the centre of attention or centre of power. Sure, he might have missed it a bit. But the main thing was the identity loss. Bullyboy's self image was all about being the rich boy. All his friends always said so. Even his parents said so. And now that they weren't saying it anymore, well, he felt misplaced. And he did want things to go back to the way that they were.

The thing that annoyed Our Boy the most however, was that Bullyboy had never apologised. That he had never admitted in front of others all his wrongdoings. Once Our Boy started thinking about it he couldn't let go. He went over this in his head again and again. And the more Our Boy thought about it, the more determined he was to rectify the situation. Maybe something happened while he was stuck in the shelter. It does no

man, woman or child any good to be secluded for too long. Then again, Our Boy had been secluded such a huge part of his childhood that it made perhaps no difference to him whether he endured his seclusion in a shelter or not.

It happened at recess. It was no Spanish Inquisition. Our Boy walked up to Bullyboy. The minions gathered in a sort of circle around them, the way a group of tourists gather around the tourguide.

'Why didn't you say sorry?' Our Boy said bluntly.

'What for?'

'For locking me up. You never said you were sorry.' Bullyboy didn't say anything.

'Say you're sorry.' Our Boy demanded.

'Why should I?'

'If you don't say you're sorry I'll...'

'You'll what?' Bullyboy smiled tauntingly, knowing full well that Our Boy didn't have anything on him. Our Boy stamped his foot down in anger, then turned to the minions.

'Let's go. I'll tell you all about my pirate treasure.' Our Boy said. Bullyboy laughed.

'It's not even a real pirate treasure, you fool! It's from the war. My father told me so.' Our Boy was shocked. He backed away from Bullyboy, then regained his posture.

'That's not true! You're just saying that because you're jealous!' Then before Bullyboy could insult him further, he looked over to the minions.

'Aren't you coming?' Our Boy asked.

'No. We don't want to listen to you talk about your boring fake treasure again.' And with that, it was all gone. His short regime had collapsed.

It felt like a huge defeat. It wasn't until Our Boy got old that he realised the folly of his struggle. He had spent the majority of his life far away from Dover, first to seek further education then later for his career prospects. Had he been running away? He was not sure. When he met Bullyboy by chance, upon a visit to his childhood town, it finally struck him. It hadn't

mattered. None of it. It was all in the past.

'Why, if it isn't Mommy's boy!' Bullyboy had said surprised.

'Yup.' Our Boy had said. You might think that made Our Boy feel angry or distraught, to be called a Mommy's boy. It didn't. He even smirked a little upon hearing that old nickname.

'I hardly recognised you.' And understandably so. Our Boy had grown up. Our Boy had lived his life. He was wearing an old man's clothes and an old man's expression. He might have been weary but he was not frightened or shy anymore. He even sat down with Bullyboy over a cup of coffee and they talked about old times and the times that keep changing. This is where our story ends, saying farewell to an old man who at last reached the position to be able to let go. Sometimes it takes old age before we can.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if everyone agreed that our real common enemy, binding humankind together, is time?

About the Author

Eydís wishes she could write down something exciting in her author bio. Unfortunately, she lives a rather mundane life in Reykjavik, Iceland.

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