

MATILDA POASA

## The Retrieval

It was supposed to be a simple retrieval job. In and out. I was supposed to recover a necklace from the house of some rich dude who, to be honest, probably wouldn't even have noticed that it'd been taken. Fucking rich people. I knew the house would be empty tonight because it was the night of the big gala. Every local and national newspaper hadn't shut up about it for the past two weeks. Everybody who was anybody in New Zealand would be there. A "celebration of the spirit of generosity" the New Zealand Gazette had dubbed it. Philanthropist and all round rich guy, Edward Monay was donating millions of dollars to the poor and underprivileged of New Zealand. Whopty fuckin' doo. Why do rich people always have to tell the world they're gonna donate money? Why not just do it and then feel good about it in private? *I* don't make a song and dance every time I give a dollar to a homeless person who shakes their cup at me on the street. I laughed. A dollar compared to Monay's millions. Monay. Geez, even his fucking name sounded wealthy. "Fuckin' rich people," I said, lightly shaking my head and chuckling as I crept along the outside wall of Mr Monay's estate.

All week I had cased this house to make sure I knew the easiest entrance and exit points and I had the logistics down to a T. For a millionaire, his house had pretty shit security. I knew from observation that once I was over the outside wall and inside the house, it would be like stealing candy from a baby. I took my backpack off and double checked I had everything in there that I needed. I did this before I left home, but when you're down to the wire in situations like the ones I always got myself in; I've learnt it's far better to be safe than sorry. That's what separated me from your everyday burglar. Although, stealing isn't really what I would call what I was doing tonight. Everything in my backpack that was essential was accounted for; so I threw it over the back wall, lifted myself up, only just pausing to look

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down and make sure I was good to land before I followed my backpack into the dark.

Getting over the wall was one thing but getting into the house was going to be the tough part. I used to pick locks for fun and could easily do it with my eyes closed and hands tied behind my back. I hadn't done that in a long time though and tonight's job was different. This place was the bees knees of houses. Security Lights? Check. Cameras? Check. Alarm system? Fucking check. I knew I had to be quick but also careful because if that alarm sounded, I was done for. I reached out for the door handle just to twist it a bit before I inserted my door picking tool and got a shock when it opened. "Well, I'll be damned," I exclaimed. It was like somebody knew I was coming.

My first reaction was to get the hell out of there. Good intentions or not, the necklace was not worth me being chucked back into jail again. I went to chuck my tools back into my bag so I could leave but I was distracted by the sound or lack thereof. It was silent. The alarm hadn't rung. "Huh, funny," I whispered and I stood there for about a minute longer. It was like someone knew I needed to get in so they purposely hadn't set it. I took that as a sign of luck from the universe, and pushed the door wide open.

Shit this house was flash. I had only just stepped into what I think rich people called a grand foyer and already felt like the poorest person in New Zealand. I started to take my shoes off then laughed. I was actually worried about dirtying the floor. "Poor people problems," I muttered under my breath; then picked up my bag and went in search of the necklace.

This house was huge and every door I opened was either a dining room, a gallery, a theatre, or another living room. Seriously, what the hell would you need more than one living room for? I was getting annoyed at the amount of walking I had done and then noticed I was standing in front of the last room on this floor. "Please, be in here," I whispered.

I pushed the door open and smiled. There it was. My nan's pounamu pikorua necklace. Just like I saw two weeks ago on the front page of the Gazette. While everyone else reading the newspaper that day saw a rich guy sitting in his office, at his desk, holding up a cheque for the underprivileged; I saw what was on top of his desk. It was one of those necklace display stands, the kind that you see in jewellery stores; except this one had *my* necklace on it. Or what looked like my necklace.

At first I thought it was a coincidence and Mr Monay had a pounamu pikorua necklace that looked similar to mine. I mean this was New Zealand and he could've easily had one made; but it was way too similar to the one I'd heard about every day since I was a boy. The one that was stolen from our home almost thirty years earlier and broke my koro's heart.

The one my koro had given me before he passed away last month was made by my nan and my koro wore it his entire life. I knew it couldn't have been that one because that hadn't left my neck since the day he put it on, but I also knew that it was only one half of a pair. That's why this job was different. It was about reuniting the two halves. The half my koro had made for my nan all those years ago. The one that symbolised his eternal love for her. The one that my koro told my nan would bond them in this life and the next, across time and space. I knew my nan's necklace like the back of my hand. I knew the exact shade of green that pounamu was. I knew where every fleck of gold shone, where every curve twisted. I knew there was a little chip right at the bottom of it where my nan had dropped it on account of her hands shaking after my koro had used it to propose to her. I knew that necklace as if I had carved it myself. I didn't know how Mr Monay came to possess it but it wasn't his to have.

I thought I was being careful when I lifted the necklace off the stand, but I guess I wasn't careful enough. Or my luck had run out. I mean, I knew there had to be a point where the smooth sailing stopped. This was that point. The point when the necklace left the stand and the alarm sounded; scaring the living shit out of me, and informing anybody within of a five mile radius of an intruder.

I quickly but gently put my nan's necklace round my neck and felt it fall right on top of my koro's. It was as if it had recognised its home and this made me smile. I hadn't noticed when but I was crying. What the hell? I laughed, wiped my tears, and then grabbing both necklaces, I kissed them. Their love story was etched on my heart forever, and I never felt as close to my nan and my koro as I did in that moment.

I don't know how, but I managed to get back over the wall in record time. I had no idea where I was going right now, I just knew I had to get away. Fast. Breathe, you idiot, just breathe, I kept telling myself; but my lungs seemed not to register my desperation for air. My hands were trembling, my whole body was sweating and my feet weren't bloody moving fast enough. I needed a place to sit for a bit before my legs

gave way but I couldn't see it was so dark. But dark was good. Dark meant maybe nobody saw me. Dark meant maybe I still had time to get home and pretend I had been there the whole time. Dark meant it would be a while before anybody discovered it missing. We would be long gone by then. The thought made me smile.

It was in the news for a whole week. Philanthropist and all round rich guy, Edward Monay's house had been burgled and a priceless artifact had been taken. They interviewed Monay and he spoke of how he was going to increase security on his home and upgrade his home alarm system. Fuckin' rich people.