

## Mother's Words

by Richard Lewis

As a child, Jacob tried to do the right thing, as his mother had taught but somehow he often managed to get it wrong, landing himself in trouble. A dark part of him seemed determined to self-destruct, though he never understood why. He was twenty four, tall with gentle eyes and a mane of curls that buzzed around his head like swarming bees. The olive complexion, he'd inherited from his Spanish father, Carlos.

Jacob was one of those young men who appeared to have it all, looks, talent and a great personality. Yet he felt bad about himself and tended to be secretive. He'd grown up on the sun washed shores of the Costa Del Sol, until his parents split when he was nine. His mother brought him back to the UK, to live in the cramped confines of his grandmother's third floor flat in East London. To Jacob it felt like prison, after the outdoor life in Spain; with his grandmother, a strict disciplinarian, the prison warden. It was as if he was also being punished for what his father had done.

Carlos, didn't believe in rules and had allowed Jacob free reign when his mother was not around. Thinking of himself as a Latin lover, he was a heavy drinker, well known around the bars and night clubs of Malaga for being good fun but someone frequently in trouble with the law. He'd done time for drug dealing and having recently been released, was now living temporarily with his son in London.

Jacob was enjoying getting to know his father again after years of separation and had been assured that this time there'd be no more drug dealing. Yet one morning his father announced excitedly,

"I need your help."

"What's happened?" Jacob asked.

"Something's come up, an amazing opportunity for both of us. There'd be no risk, you could set yourself up in business in Spain and I could retire."

"Dad, I can't believe what I'm hearing, I'm not getting involved in any of your mad schemes."

"The thing is, I can't do it on my own, please Jacob, I really need your help."

Jacob felt torn. On the one hand he knew he couldn't trust his father, yet on the other he didn't want to disappoint him and break the bond forming between them.

Also the attraction of moving back to Spain and escaping his boring desk job sounded irresistible.

The plan was to fly to Tangier, borrow a friend's boat, pick up the stash of cocaine and sail back to a remote beach on the Kent coast. There they would be met by members of an eastern European gang that Carlos had met in prison, where they would split the proceeds.

Jacob had heard it said that, 'your family is never in your past, you carry it around everywhere.' For the first time this was beginning to make sense to him. He could hear the two conflicting voices. His mother telling him to have nothing to do with his father, then the other, urging him to take a risk and get something for nothing.

Jacob felt that life owed him something and with great trepidation agreed. Two weeks later they were on the plane to North Africa. However, when it came to picking up the stash of drugs at the port, on seeing the unseaworthy condition of the old fishing vessel, he realised his father had been economical with the truth.

Raising his hands in disbelief he said,

"I was a fool to listen to you, I'm not going anywhere in that old scuttle bucket."

Carlos, who as usual had been drinking, flew into a rage, lashing out wildly at his son, shouting in slurred tones,

"You promised me, you double crossing swine."

Jacob stepped back to dodge the angry fists, then ducking his head pushed his father away.

"Stop it for god's sake, I should've known you couldn't be trusted." Jacob yelled. They were standing on a narrow pontoon with yachts moored on either side and Carlos stumbled, falling backwards, his arms waving wildly as he tried to right himself. But to no avail; he went down heavily, striking the side of his head on an anchor attached to the bow of one of the yachts. As flesh and bone met hardened steel, there was a sickening crunch. Knocked unconscious, Carlos collapsed into the water.

It was almost impossible to haul Carlos out but when Jacob did finally manage to drag his limp body onto the pontoon, on seeing the damage to his skull, he gave out a gasp. Carlos was dead.

Now his mother's words echoed inside.

"I told you so,

I told you so,

I told you so."