Chapter Thirteen



MOVIE MENU

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Pat Flynn

Later that day I'm called to the office. I'm surprised to see Mum waiting. 'Doctor's appointment,' she says.

I forgot about it.

Mum and I don't talk in the car; we just listen to music. As she pulls into the carpark her mobile rings, but for the first time ever she doesn't answer it. She turns to me instead. 'Let's be honest in there, okay?'

I nod.

She looks in the rear-view mirror and smooths down her hair. There's still a bare patch, but it's not quite as big as it was. Mum has been letting the new hair grow.

'So how'd the first week of the rest of your life go, Matthew?' Doctor Morrison asks.

'Pretty good. Just one slip-up. A big one.'

He looks serious. 'Mmm, I see.' He turns to my mum. 'And how about your week, Lorraine?'

'One slip-up as well.' She looks at me. 'Change is hard.'

'You're dead right,' Doctor Morrison says.

I hate it when a doctor uses the D word.

I get weighed and doc's happy because I've lost a kilogram, though I reckon it'd be at least two if it hadn't been for last night.

We sit down again. 'Good news, Matthew. While the tests last week indicate impaired glucose tolerance, it looks like a fully blown case of type 2 diabetes hasn't yet developed.'

'Huh?' I say.

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Pat Flynn

'You don't have diabetes. Though if you're not careful you'll get it.'

I sigh with relief. So does Mum.

We're all quiet for a few seconds.

'Do you know what a cycle is, Matthew?' the doc asks.

'Something you ride to the park?'

He smiles. 'True. It's also a way of explaining why things happen. When you eat well and exercise you feel better, which makes you want to keep eating well and exercising even more. That's what's called a positive cycle.'

I notice the jellybeans on his desk. Though I don't have to have one, I wouldn't say no if he offered.

He continues: 'When you eat poorly you don't have much energy, so you don't want to exercise. And when people tease you about being overweight you feel bad about yourself, so you eat more. That's a negative cycle.'

I'd probably choose red if I could, followed by yellow, then green.

'By the sounds of it you're starting to get into a positive cycle, but it's easy to slip back because it's what you're used to. You're lucky 'cause you have your mum to help you. How about friends?'

Mum gives a quick shake of the head, trying to tell the doctor that I don't have any.

But I do. 'I've got a girlfriend,' I say. 'She's real nice. We're seeing a movie tonight. Well, if it's all right with you, Mum?'

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Mum looks shocked.

'That's great,' Doctor Morrison says. 'Give people a chance to like you. I'm sure lots of them will. But if some people are mean to you, it's their problem, not yours. Okay?'

He shakes my hand.

Damn! No jellybeans.



While waiting to buy movie tickets I get punched in the gut. Not from Kayla – she's gone to buy us a Slush Puppy to share (the doc said it was better than popcorn) – but from Eric.

'Do you know that guy over there?' he asks, pointing.

I can't answer. I'm still winded.

'It's my brother,' Eric continues. 'He delivers pizza.'

I look closer now, and come to think of it the guy does seem familiar. I recognise his sweaty armpits.

'Pizza isn't fried,' I say. 'It's baked.'

He punches me again. 'I don't care.'

He walks away, stops, and then turns. I get ready to run. 'You know, you and Kayla look good together,' he says. 'Enjoy the movie.'

I'm too nervous to enjoy anything, but it's a good kind of nervous. It makes me hungry.

Not for food, though.

For life.

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