

Victoria Park

Samson McDougall

I've got the best Dad. He lets me do what I want now that Mum's pissed off. I can stay up late, watch telly as much as I like and never go outside if I don't want to. He even reckons I don't have to go to school any more. He says Mrs Bartlett's just a stuck-up bitch anyway; what am I gonna learn from her?

My only rule now is that I don't make too much racket at home. Dad's a bit sick sometimes so I've gotta let him rest. Also, when his mates come round I've gotta get outta the way. That's OK though because Dennis is a mean old bugger anyway and I don't like it how Scotty's so nice to me and his breath smells bad.

Anyway, sometimes when they all go out I pour all the half drunk VB's into a tumbler and drink it. It tastes a bit dirty sometimes, especially if there's a bit of ash or a smoke butt in there, but if it's not too warm I can lay back with a beer and spark up a smoke or

sometimes a bit of a leftover joint. When they come back though, I get the hell outta the way cos Dad can be a bit pissy and give me a hiding. Or Scotty'll try and come and find me in my room so I hide under my bed and keep quiet.

Sometimes Dad'll take me down Victoria Street when he visits the chinks. He makes me wait on the corner and whistle real loud if the coppers come by. It's good, cos we might go to Macca's on the way or get sausage rolls and Big Ms from the servo—my favourite's banana but Dad's is strawberry.

When Dad gets real sick I keep outta the way but sometimes he needs me around. When he falls asleep in his chair sometimes his smoke butt falls on the carpet or his pants and I stub it out or finish it for him cos he's not paying attention.

One time Dad had a win on the dogs and we took the tram to St Kilda and got ice creams on the beach. But then we had to go to Scotty's house and Dad and Dennis took off and left me with Scotty. The dirty old prick tried to make me take my shorts off so I kicked him in the knee and piss-bolted outside and hid in the park. When Dad got back he was sick so we went home and I didn't say anything cos I didn't want him to get mad.

The next time Dad tries to make me go back to St Kilda I tell him that Scotty's a dirty old perve and he gives me a clip round the ear and tells me not to make up stories. And besides, he has to get his medicine from St Kilda and he's my father, so I'll do whatever he bloody well tells me to.

On the way to Victoria Park, Dad finds a computer in the back seat of a car. He says 'I'll have that!' and he lugs it up to the station. He tries to sell it to the men and ladies on the platform but they all

ignore him. Maybe it's too expensive? He wants a hundred bucks. Then we see Marlene over the other side of the tracks and she says, 'You fuckin' dog! You're nothing but a thief!' to my Dad. And he tells her to shut her fuckin' mouth if she knows what's good for her. And all the people at the station are quiet and this one lady is lookin' at me and so I give her the fingers and say 'Wadda you lookin' at!'

And my Dad says 'Why don't you fuck off you dried up old cunt!'

Then the lady looking says, 'How old are you?' And I think 'Wouldn't you like to know you nosey old cow', but I say, 'Ten!' Which is bullshit, cos I'm only eight. And she shakes her head and walks away. Then my Dad flings the computer over his shoulder and smashes it onto the ground. You can hear it break inside but it's still in its bag so you can't see it.

Dad sees Dennis and his mate Steve on the bench but they're so wasted they can't even talk and Dad shakes them and tells them to swap some of their gear for his computer. Steve pukes on the platform and all the other people are walking up to the other end and then he falls over on the ground and money falls out of his pockets. I help Dad pick up all the money and we get on the train.

We pour all the coins onto the floor of the train and Dad starts counting. He counts up sixteen bucks! It's all in twenty and fifty cent pieces so it looks like there's heaps more than there is. None of the people on the train look at my Dad—I think they're a bit scared cos he's being loud.

At North Richmond, there's coppers at the station and the train waits for the nosey lady to point at us and my Dad piffs the computer onto the tracks and piss-bolts down the platform and over the fence.

Two of the coppers follow him and I try to trip one of them up when he runs past but he dodges me and then a lady copper comes up to me and asks me my name. I tell her she's a sow—that's what my Dad calls lady coppers—and she can fuck off and where the hell is my Dad.

She tells me that I have to come with her and this big ugly lookin' man in a brown suit and I say 'Like Hell!' and they drag me off anyway. But I drag my feet and they have to pick me up and carry me by the shoulders and everybody on the train is gawking at me and I see Sally Cooper from school and her Mum's shaking her head and she's holding on to Sally and I turn away cos I don't want her to see that I'm crying.