



**BORN UNDER A
DEAD STAR**

NEURALSPLYCE

Born Under A Dead Star

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"Susan, thank you for coming to brunch on short notice."

"You sounded so worried on the phone, Barbara. What's wrong?"

"I'm worried sick about Jason."

Susan shook her head. "What trouble has your youngest son gotten into now?"

"No trouble. Trouble would be normal. This is...different. He's practically a stranger."

"Oh dear. Practically a stranger does sound worrisome. To think he could be any worse." Susan extended a liver-spotted hand to clasp Barbara's frail, blue-veined hand.

Barbara wrung her hands. "That's just it. He's become nicer. Even considerate of others." She sipped her coffee and gathered her thoughts while the steam fog on her bifocals evaporated. "I know I should be happy, but I'm worried about what's caused the sudden change."

Susan whispered, "Do you think he's...doing drugs again?"

"That was my first thought, but there aren't emotional highs and lows like before."

"Could he have experienced a stroke? Remember how Francine's husband changed after his stroke in the months before he died?"

Barbara stared into her coffee. "No. He doesn't show any physical symptoms or have slurred speech. I'm terrified he's behaving like his cousin Lisa, God rest her soul, before she..." A fat tear rolled down her cheek.

"Oh Susan, surely his self-destructive streak hasn't turned suicidal."

The two women sat in silence. A lady's voice from another table interrupted their sorrowful contemplation.

"Sorry to barge into your conversation, but I've seen the same changes in a close friend. Has your son been in an accident or fallen lately? My friend fell down the stairs and hit his head a week ago. The doctors said he got a concussion and will be back to his old self once it heals."

"He has been doing part-time construction work helping remodel some apartments."

"That's probably it," Barbara stated. "Something fell on his head."

From another table, a male customer chimed in. "Hi. I didn't mean to eavesdrop, but I've experienced the same changes in a co-worker recently. Really chipper and a constant smile on his face. It sounds like your son has a new girlfriend or mistress."

"He's unmarried and hasn't had a girlfriend for a year."

Barbara's eyes sparkled and her voice pitched up. "Ooh, maybe he met someone nice recently."

Their waitress emerged onto the terrace with a fresh pot of coffee. "Well, what's going on out here? Sounds like you're starting a party. What did I miss?" She moved to the young gentleman's table and filled his cup.

He took a sip and replied, "We're talking about all the people we know whose personality has changed this week."

"Personality changes? Have these people had, or about to have, a birthday recently?"

To everyone's surprise, these people did share recent birthdays.

"I've heard of this from my roommate, Britney. She's an astrologist and does private readings for people if you're interested. Anyway, she's convinced it's because a star that's in the current zodiac sign exploded a week ago. According to her, people all over the world with birthdays this month are acting different."

"Is that possible?" asked the man.

"Britney's been a wreck all week. Convinced she has to break off her engagement because her fiancée is no longer under a compatible sign. Can I interest anyone in dessert?"

While the waitress chatted, the lady tapped out a search query on her phone. "She's right. I found a news article from six days ago. 'Scientists say bright light in the night sky is aftermath of a star that went nova.' Goes on to say the star was thirty-four light years away."

Nodding her head as she walked to the lady's table, the waitress asked, "How old are the people who've changed?"

The lady replied, "Twenty-nine."

"My co-worker is thirty-two," the gentlemen said.

"Jason turns thirty-five next week. I've never believed in astrology nonsense, but I know his zodiac sign is something different."

"Wasn't he a breach birth?" Susan said.

"Yes. He started coming out on the twentieth but was delivered shortly after midnight on the twenty-first."

The waitress approached their table. "That explains it. He was born on both the last day of one zodiac sign and the first day of the next sign. Let me take that plate out of your way. My roommate would say his personalities have been in conflict. Since one of the signs no longer exists, there's no more conflict. Can I top off your coffee?"

Barbara placed her hand over her cup. "No thanks. We're finishing up. If you could bring the check, please?"

"I'm confused," the lady from the other table said. "Why would my friend who bumped his head start acting differently because a star exploded?"

"Astrology believes the stars and planets affect our lives. The light of the star that exploded took thirty-four years to get here. That means it actually exploded thirty-four years ago. The people you all know were born under a dead star. Until now, their lives were being influenced by the light it gave off before it died. No more light, no more control." She held up her pot. "Looks like I'm out of coffee. I'll get that check for you ladies and be right back."

Susan drained the last of her coffee. "Isn't that a relief to know Jason isn't ill and he's going to stay this way?"

"Her roommate sounds like a lunatic. If an exploding star could change how people behave, wouldn't it affect everyone?"

"If everyone changed at the same time, how would we know?"

Barbara nodded at the young man seated across from them. "I pray, he has it right and Jason's found a girlfriend. Would love to have him out from under my apron and, Lord willing, some grandkids before I die."

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