

How to Spend a Fortune

To spend a fortune you must have one, and you do, thanks to Dad's freshly signed power of attorney folded square in your back jean's pocket, warm and secure against your lucky ass. You may not have real blood ties to James Brownlee, but you've got his inheritance: the house, a hefty 401K, money market accounts at four banks, two hundred head of cattle and half a family farm worth \$4 million. What more could a son want? A smile curls your lips when you think of that weasel at First Trust finding out you control the money. Your meddling cousins won't be happy either.

You smooth your mustache, walk tall in your boots across Sunny Acres parking lot. Your cheeks ache from a smile you can't tamp down. You raise two thumbs in the air and whisper "yes, oh yes," a thank-you to the universe that life is good.

November drizzle blurs the air, softens the landscape. You pull your leather jacket tight against your chest and wonder if that nurse's aide was watching out the window when you made the thumbs-up, the nurse's aide who asked you to step outside Dad's room so he could "tend to things." Wipe Dad's butt is what the dude meant. You had smelled the stench.

A creepy shimmer ripples through your body, a rabbit hopping over your future grave. That's what Mom used to say when you were little. She was always coming up with superstitious things that made you laugh, but were scary, too. Like hold your breath when riding by a cemetery so not to disturb the ghosts. Or, step on a crack, break your mother's back.

She's who taught you to count "One Mississippi" as far as you could to keep out of trouble when you got angry. You were in second grade and had slashed Dad's truck tires with a butcher knife for grounding you from TV for bad grades.

“A lot of that anger will go away by the time you get to 100 Mississippi,” Mom had said. “You’ll forget what you were upset about.”

She died in a car crash the next year, right after you learned you were adopted.

You trade Dad’s Ford pick-up for a black Jaguar. You admire the smooth ride, check your reflection in the rear-view. The new you. Millionaire movie-producer you. You had always looked the part, could have been a sexy male model with your thin coolness and perfected smile, but producing is where your talent lies.