

Chapter 6

Victor Yakovich phones his workmate friend. It is late Friday afternoon, January 2.

“Hello.”

“Hi, Mat. Do you want to grab a beer at Abbott’s tonight?”

“Hey Ruskie, you a new man?” It’s the first time since meeting Mathew Angus, six years prior, Victor has ever called his colleague at home.

“Don’t call me that, it’s VICTOR!”

“Yeh, Victor.” Mathew continues, “A beer tonight at the pub, what happened to your other bar?” Without waiting for an answer, “I could make an exception, just this once, and go there.”

Victor smiles to himself, “I don’t go there anymore.”

“The pub it is then? We’ll celebrate a late New Year’s.”

“I’ll be there at...seven, alright?”

“See you there, buddy.”

Two hours later Victor and Mathew meet up at the familiar Abbot’s English Pub. By eight o’clock, after an hour of small talk and getting reacquainted; Mathew talking non-stop with Victor occasionally nodding between beer-guzzles, two women walk into the pub, and sit at one of the two last remaining open tables.

“Vic, do you see ‘m girls?”

“Victor!” Slightly turning on his bar stool, he takes a sly glance, “I see them. So what?”

“Cute and alone. Let’s buy’m a drink?”

“I don’t think so. I’m not ready.”

“The hell you’re not. It has been long enough. Time to get back on the horse, buddy.”

Annoyed at no reaction, “I’m going over. You do what you want!”

Mathew is loudly un-impressing the two women with crude sexual pickup lines when Victor soundlessly sidles up beside him. The short, brown haired woman gives him a teeth-showing large smile, “Would you like to join us?”

“What are you doing? We don’t need these creeps.” The other woman quickly blurts out.

Still smiling at Victor, “Oh I don’t think one beer would hurt.”

Victor’s friend quickly sits next to the scowling woman, “Hi my name is Mat.”

“Door Mat.” The Ruskie quietly chimes in.

“You’re funny.” The smiling woman flatters Victor’s comment.

Victor takes the seat next to Angus, leaving two empties between him and the smiler. She pats the seat of the chair beside her, “I don’t bite!”

Victor slowly moves around the table next to her. “My name is Jennifer. You can call me Jen or Jen-Jen. That’s what my friends call me.”

“My name is Victor.”

“It’s nice to meet you, Vic.”

Victor glares at his grinning friend, silently stating, “It is not an open invitation for everyone to call him, Vic.” Jen-Jen is special. Three of them talk throughout the evening while Vic sits silently drinking. Late into the evening, Jen-Jen forces Victor to one slow dance. When he refuses, she grabs his hand and pulls him to the small dance square in front of the jukebox. They slowly sway to the Moody Blues rhythms of, *Nights in White Satin*. She squeezes him tight and lies her head on his shoulder. It is only the second woman, not including his mother, he ever held. Her garden-fresh hair hypnotizes his senses.

At the end of the song, Vic’s new girlfriend steals a brief kiss on his lips. He reels in surprise before a wide grin blankets his face. He starts back to their seats as she grabs his hand for the few steps across the barroom floor.

Door Mat and the other woman get along better than expected and dance to numerous fast songs; Mathew’s date refusing to snuggle up to him on any slow beat.

Victor can’t wipe the smile off his face the rest of the evening. Around eleven, Jen-Jen suggests the two of them sneak off to Vic’s place and finish the evening. He eagerly agrees. They say good-bye and leave. Victor’s life just got better than he ever expected.

The other two also leave, only in separate cars and different directions.