

Cosmic Collision

By S.J. Hodgdon

“Hi, Winnie, glad you could make it, come in! Come in!” said Jennifer, as she quickly closed the door against the cold. “You remember Charlie?”

“Hi, Win, nice to see you again.”

Bronwyn smiled, “Seasons Greetings.”

“Sue, Bronwyn. Bronwyn, Sue.”

“Sue came over from Peaks Island,” said Jennifer, continuing the introductions.

“Hi, Sue. Must be cold on the water. I’m chilled to the bone just thinking about it.”

“It wasn’t bad. I came over on the 3:30 ferry before the wind picked up,” explained the hardy Islander.

“Nice to meet you. Merry Christmas.”

“Do you want a beer?” the hostess interrupted as she parleyed a path to the kitchen.

“No...no...ummm.... I’ll have a cup of coffee if you have any... with just cream.”

“Winnie,” Jenn called over her shoulder, “Scott’s here in the kitchen. Come and say ‘hi’, while I make the coffee. Do you like hazelnut?”

Bronwyn walked past the dining table, surveying the crumbs, chips, watery dip, and untouched fruitcake as well as empty bottles of White Zinfandel, empty beer cans, and crumpled napkins, while making her way to a hot coffee and another greeting.

“Winnie, this is Scott. He was just about to leave. By the way, what kept you?”

“Hi Scott, very nice to meet you.” Bronwyn smiled as flutters jumped in the pit of her stomach.

“Bronwyn,” he muttered, “Nice name.”

“Scott,” she pondered out loud, staring at a face that seemed quite familiar... somehow.

“And WHAT kept you, Winnie?” asked Jennifer a bit loudly.

“Oh nothing, Jen. Actually, I wasn’t sure if I was going to make it over, but Nathan called. He wanted his skis and stuff. So, here I am,” she explained while gazing at Scott.

“By the way, where IS Nate?” Bronwyn added.

“Oh, he’s out with Andy. They’ll be back later. Charlie, will you be a dear and open a bottle of Red?”

“Sure, Honey.”

“Scott, will you break out your guitar again? I really would love to have Winnie hear you play.”

“You know, Winnie, Scott gave me lessons.” Jennifer grinned.

“Sure,” Scott grumbled as he squeezed past Bronwyn, feeling somewhat dizzy or drunk... or both... desiring yet avoiding further eye contact with the intriguing latecomer. He took his acoustic guitar from the case and sat down on the floor next to the fireplace, where a Yuletide fire danced and cast shadows across the walls, and began to play and sing:

“I hear the drizzle of the rain
like a memory, it falls

Soft and warm continuing
Tapping on my roof and walls...”

Simon and Garfunkle, thought Bronwyn as she sat nearby warming her hands around her mug of coffee, all the while gazing intently at the musician.

“Have you ever been to Chicago?” Scott suddenly asked, as he lay his guitar aside.

Startled from her thoughts, she replied, “No...Why?”

“Nothing,” he muttered, “nothing.”

“No! Don’t say ‘nothing’. Why? What about Chicago?” Bronwyn implored.

He gave no answer, which left her squirming.

“I...I ...went to Niagara Falls, once....,” she encouraged with a growing sense of urgency and feeling a bit stupid for such a mindless remark.

“Ni-aaa-ga-ra Faalls...,” Scott creepily joked, “step by step...”

The Three Stooges - I get it! screamed Bronwyn in her head.

“I get it,” she said calmly with a smile, feeling giddy.

“How old do you think I am?” he asked, continuing the quiz.

“47,” she spoke without missing a beat...a heart beat for sure.

“Well, how old ARE you ?” she begged, seeking confirmation.

Scott looked at her with a strange look on his face. “47”

Quickly recovering, Bronwyn asked again, “What about Chicago, Scott? What about Chicago?” as she moved closer and sat facing him, gazing into his tired blue eyes, her heart pounding, undeniably disturbed.

“Alright, alright,” Scott began. “Twenty years ago I was on a business trip to Chicago, and I met a woman at a bar, and I thought... it was you. That’s all,” he said, as his voice trailed off into the memory...

Bronwyn exhaled, “No, it wasn’t me. Maybe it was just a Joni Mitchell song I used to sing,” she replied with a sad far-away look on her own face.

Scott stood up abruptly, shoving his hands into his pockets, searching for something... something, perhaps, to take his mind from the chaotic blitz wreaking havoc on his sensibilities.

“I’m going out for a smoke,” he mumbled as he found his lighter and his cigarettes in the pocket of his coat, which had been slung over the back of the couch.

“Do you have an extra smoke? I’m out. May I join you?”

“You smoke too?!!!”

“No... well... yes... sometimes.”

Scott and Bronwyn then made their way past Jennifer and Charlie. Sue was getting ready to leave, not wanting to miss the 10:30 ferry back to the Island.

“Bye, Sue. It was nice to meet you.” Bronwyn spoke as she stepped out on the unheated porch.

“Happy New Year.”

“Safe traveling.”

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