

Stalker

A 'LateShift' Mystery

Donna Gardner

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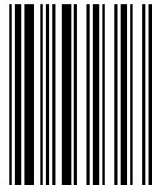
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For

*LateShift, Scott Green,
Andy Croteau, Paul
Gardner and Ron Bezener.*

*A special mention to
Isaura, this book
wouldn't be possible
without you.*

*To my husband Paul, my
rock, my soulmate and
my inspiration. Thank
you for always believing
in whatever I do but
mostly for being you.*

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PROLOGUE

*H*e was fuming as he hung the phone. “Assholes” he yelled, “how dare they fire me, it’s my band, I’m the one that brought them all together, Rick, then Scott, Andy and finally Paul.” He was in disbelief as he recalled Andy’s words.

“We’re taking the band in a new direction so there’s no need for you to show up at the next gig.”

“New direction” Doug screamed at the empty room, “what direction? Paul told them he’ll play the two gigs they have booked but after that that he’s done.”

Infuriated, he grabbed a mug off the table and threw it at the picture window. “Fuck it,” he screamed, “they’re taking my house anyway.”

He promptly walked over to a wall and kicked a few holes into it. “Crossfire is mine,” he screamed, “and nobody can take that away.”

Chapter 1

*T*he town of Seagrave is a quiet community, very picturesque with the Scugog River running through the town from the lake, situated just to the east.

Just over a half hour south is Oshawa, the head quarters of General Motors and their two

assembly plants, numbers one and two. The first is rumored to be the largest in the world and not too far away is the truck assembly.

The Gardner's live in Seagrave in a bungalow right on a hundred feet of lakefront. Pale yellow it has green awnings accented with white shutters. The driveway has lampposts with coach lights on top and just off to the side there's a perennial garden with a sign announcing that you've arrived at the Gardner home.

Longing to get out of the city and a desire for more property they had moved there almost thirteen years ago. It was

in their garage that the newly formed band 'LateShift' was rehearsing for the first time. Only a week ago they had been known as Crossfire, but after a couple of key changes had regrouped and changed their name to 'Lateshift.'

Frontman and the youngest member is Scott Green, a terrific singer with a wide vocal range. He is one of four children and nine minutes older than his twin brother, Scott has been married for almost ten years to his wife Lynn and has two young daughters. As project manager for Telus Real Estate Services he has a demanding job that takes him all over Toronto.

A veteran guitar player, Paul

Gardner is on lead. Having played in bands in and around the Toronto area since the age of fifteen he has also bent the strings in Vancouver and Calgary as well. The youngest of two, he was born and raised in Scarborough.

Holding the bottom down is Andy Croteau, a quick witted French man with a great sense of humor. Born in the Cabbagetown area of Toronto, he has two sisters and is youngest of the three. He had played in a couple of bands in the Toronto area a few years ago but in the last year decided to get back into playing.

Keeping time on drums is the newest member of the band Ron Bezener. A recently retired

life long Chrysler employee, Ron and his wife Patricia have two daughters and live in Whitby. Ron has been playing drums for decades in various genres throughout Durham Region. No stranger to the Gardner garage- Ron and Paul have been in a couple of bands together and had been playing off and on together for the past thirteen years or so.

“No he wasn’t happy, he hung up on me,” Andy told them as he relayed his conversation with Doug.

“To bad” laughed Paul, “he was told over and over to learn his parts.”

“But there’s more,” Andy continued, “I tried calling and calling him, but no one ever answered the phone so I drove over his house,” he paused before continuing, “there was a notice of foreclosure on the front door.”

“You’ve got to be kidding?” Paul exclaimed, shocked.

“Yup” replied Andy “he has thirty days to get out.” Taking a deep breath he continued, “so the next time I phoned him, I blocked my number. He answered right away so I’m sure he was avoiding my calls all along. I think he knew he was on his way out.”

“What I can’t get over,” said Scott, “is that he could tell us he

had gigs booked but when I went to the bars to follow up no one had ever heard of him or the band. "Anyway" he continued, "we're booked at the Irish Times next week and if we do well then I think we can get in there on a regular basis."

"Really?" Exclaimed Paul sounding surprised. "Did you tell the owner that we're now a four a piece band and that we got rid of Doug and replaced Rick?"

"No way" laughed Scott, "hopefully he won't notice."

Chapter 2

*“T*hank you, thanks so much,” they all chimed in as the audience applauded. “Welcome to the Irish Times, we’re ‘Late-Shift,’ announced Scott, “if you have any requests we’ll do our best to play them.”

Paul nodded in agreement and looking around the

room at the customers said “we have a big dance floor so here’s your chance to get close to that special someone.” He looked over at Donna and winked at her as he began singing.

“I love this song,” Donna said, turning to Andy’s wife Isaura.

“It’s nice, I like it too” she agreed nodding. “I think this is the new one they just learned, I heard Andy practicing it.”

“What would you like to drink?” Donna asked Isaura as she waved the waitress over.

“Oh nothing,” she replied, shaking her head.

“I’ll have a diet coke,” Donna said, and pointing at Isaura told the waitress to give

her a baileys and coffee.

When the band took a break the girls were quick to tell them that they sounded terrific.

“Thanks,” Andy replied as he grabbed his coat and headed for the door, “I’m going for a smoke.”

“I’ll keep you company” Paul said following behind him. “I want some fresh air.”

Ron pulled up a chair and sat down with Isaura and Donna.

“There’s a draft coming right through there,” Ron said pointing at the exit door that his drum kit was set up next to.

“Why don’t you use some duct tape and seal it up?” Donna wisely suggested.

“It’s an exit so I don’t think

we can seal it up," he said laughing, "but even if there is some kind of emergency they'll never get around us and the gear."

Halfway through the band's third set a fellow strode into the bar pulled out a chair beside Donna and sat down. Taken by surprise she looked over at him. There's something not quite right about this guy she thought to herself. He was scruffy, his brown hair poked out from underneath a toque that that although once had been white was now a dingy gray, the lettering on it long since faded and unable to be read.

The oddest thing, was that on

top of the toque he wore another hat, a baseball cap, the lettering on it also faded, the dirt embedded into it with what looked like grease stains. His old coat was two sizes too big, the sleeves so long that only his fingertips were visible. His green sweatpants were thread bare, a hole at the knee exposing skin, with few hairs sprouting out. He smells sour Donna thought, like spoiled milk, and he's paranoid too she said to herself. She recognized the tell tale signs, his eyes were constantly darting about the room and he kept looking over his shoulders watching for the nonexistent person that he imagined was following him.

“Is it me or is this guy weird?” Donna leaned over and whispered to Isaura.

“He’s weird,” she agreed shuddering, “I don’t like him.”

At that moment the guy reached into his pocket and yanked out a cell phone, holding it up toward the band.

Donna and Isaura watched as he used the camera to focus in on each of the guys for a moment before moving on to the next. Then he jumped up from the chair and ran toward them watching through the camera, then he would move backward until he was able to get them all on the screen.

Whispering to Donna, Isaura asked what he was doing.