

Donna Gardner

Seven Days

A 'LateShift' Mystery

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*In memory of my
dear son Jeff*

*Forever in my heart
always on my mind and
eternally a part of my
soul.*

Seven Days

PROLOGUE

*H*e didn't hear the footsteps as they crept up behind him, and he barely registered a thought as the rag was held against his face.

In seconds his body went limp and he slumped to the floor. His captors held on to him, one holding him under the armpits, the other picking up his legs.

“Quick, get him out the door.”

“How long will he stay out?”

“Five ten minutes tops,” he whispered, “we best get out of here before he wakes, if he starts yelling we’ll have eight men in here with guns up our asses.”

DAY 1

*Sunday, April 8
Toronto, Ontario
6:20am*

“*T*his way,” Donna told Paul pointing to their left, looking at the boarding pass she noted that they were supposed to be at gate 178.

“Hey you guys.”

Hearing Andy’s voice the two

turned and saw Isaura waving at them, a huge smile on her face. They stopped and waited for the pair to catch up.

“Our plane is at the far end of the airport,” Donna told them.

“Exactly,” Andy nodded, “it figures.”

They were about to catch a flight to Nassau Bahamas, to participate in Music Week International. Paul was the lead guitar player and Andy held the bottom down on bass for the band ‘LateShift.’

They had won a song writing competition that in part was sponsored by BNG Canada and the prize was the chance to record an album on the small island.

There would be a number of huge stars there Timberlake, Bono, Clapton, John and others, along with producers and other high profile industry giants, it was also rumored Quincy Jones could show up and Stevie Wonder was a certainty.

Donnas and Isaura were the only two wives going on the trip, unable to get the time off from work Lynn and Patricia were staying home. Their husbands Ron and Scott, the other two members of the band were yet to be seen, but with less than two hours before the flight, they would be arriving soon.

Going along with them to film a documentary about the trip and making of the album

was a young man by the name of Benjamin Ross, or Ben as he preferred to be called. The band had been given the opportunity to choose the producer and they chose him. He was a gifted and talented journalist despite his young age, and he had never ending enthusiasm. They had met a couple of years ago while he was doing his summer internship at a local newspaper, he had been sent to do an interview with the band and shortly after, Donna and Isaura had prevented a bomb from being detonated by someone who had wanted the four men dead.

The article that Ben wrote about that incident garnered wide attention and he had won

two awards. He was now a very well known reporter and at nineteen years of age was working for the largest newspaper in Canada.

Reaching the boarding area, they noticed it was practically empty except for one person who was laying across five of the narrow seats with an Ipod on his chest and plugs in his ears.

“Hey dude!” Ben yelled, as he jumped up and onto his feet in a single motion.

“How long have you been here?” Paul asked him.

Looking at his watch, he gave them a broad smile, “about two hours, my dad dropped me off. He was on his way to Kitchener so here I is.” With a yawn he sat

back down. "Is this da bomb or what?" He asked, "can you guys believe I'm going to be hangin' with you in the Bahamas, man that's sick."

Behind him Andy rolled his eyes, "glad you'll be with us, Ben," he said. It wasn't that he really disliked Ben, but his incessant chattering and especially his use of the english language was more than he could take, Andy just didn't understand him.

Twenty minutes later Scott arrived, plunking his guitar case down and throwing an overnight bag on a chair, he told them that traffic on the 401 was insane. "I can't believe for a Sunday how many cars are on the road," he

told then with a frown. "This early in the morning too."

Scott was the singer in the band, his wife Lynn had been unable to make the trip, she was a school teacher and could not take time off, not to mention they had two young daughters.

"At this time of the day I hope Ron will arrive before the flight leaves," Paul said looking toward the automated walkway. Ron was their drummer and was notoriously late for rehearsals and gigs, not so much that it was a problem, just enough that the band had something to laugh about.

"I wonder if there will be a lot to do when you guys are busy making the album?" Isaura won-

dered.

Laughing, Paul told her to ask Donna. "She's been there dozens of times and she knows it really well, it's one of her favorite places in the world." Patting his wife on the back he told the story about her being run out of a cemetery there, but not before paying off the guard to show her where Anna Nicole Smith's grave was. She could take you past her house too, she's been there...and she'll can show you how to get a great deal on knockoffs down at the straw market."

"I love that place," Donna interrupted, "it so much fun to barter."

"Hey look," Scott pointed relieved, "there's Ron."

“It’s too early for this,” Ron complained sliding into a seat.

Thirty five minutes later boarding began. With their seats in first class, the four members of the band, the two wives and Ben were all seated together in rows one to three.

“Just think, in only three hours we’ll be in the Caribbean,” Donna told them enthusiastically as their plane took off.

Sunday April 8
Nassau, Bahamas
10:15am

“What do you mean he’s not here? He’s missing? He has eight men in his security detail, how in the hell can you not know where

he is?" A vein was throbbing in Rick Davis' forehead and he looked like he was about to explode.

"I don't know," the young man told him, "he was there one minute, gone the next."

Rick couldn't believe what he was hearing. He hadn't been pleased when he'd been told they would be coming to the Caribbean and now this. "Are you certain he's missing? He's not out carousing?"

"Certain sir."

"Shit, if this gets out, there will be panic, stars will pull out, corporations will withdraw and we'll be fucked." Scratching his head he looked at the young man sitting across from him. "I don't want the local police involved in

this, look what happened when that Travolta kid died,” running his hand through his sparse hair he said, “shit, the paparazzi were everywhere, the cops were charged with conspiracy, even an ambulance driver was in on the whole thing.”

“How do we proceed sir?”

The young man asked.

“Find him, do whatever you have to do but make it happen.”

11:55am

First class had it's perks, being among the first off the airplane was one of them. The warm air hit them like a blast furnace as they walked off the plane down the stairs and onto

the tarmac. They followed the arrows marked on the concrete into Linden Pindling airport.

“Just follow Donna,” Paul told them, “she knows exactly where to go.” They walked into the covered walkway, the shade a welcome reprise from the stifling heat. As they entered the small building a four piece band struck up, local bahamians welcoming visitors to the island with a latin sound.

Stopping for a moment, the seven of them watched as the three men played steel drums, bass and guitar.

“Come on you guys if we don’t get going we’ll be at the back of the customs line.” Donna informed them.

“Better listen to the drill sergeant,” Paul told them solemnly but hiding a smile, “let’s go.”

Obediently they all followed and lined up single file in front of one of the agents. It was hot in the building, and even the dozens of ceiling fans whirring on the ceiling were not able to cool the building.

“Next,” the agent yelled, and Paul and Donna approached him together. As soon as their passports were stamped they moved through and turned to wait for everyone else. Walking out of the customs area and into baggage claims they went to carousel two to retrieve the luggage.

“It doesn’t say our luggage will be on this one,” Scott pointed out.

“It will be,” Donna assured him, “all luggage on international flights comes on number two,” gesturing to the only other carousel in the building she told him that that one was for inter island flights only.

“God is it ever hot,” Paul said wiping sweat from his face.

“It must be well over thirty degrees,” Andy agreed nodding, “and son of a bitch, it’s humid too.”

“Come on you guys it’s just nice,” Donna said with a laugh. Holding on to Paul’s guitar case she stood back while he got their luggage.

Once everyone had their bags they made their way outside and onto the sidewalk in front of the