

Chapter 10

While everyone waited around in the cold to see what would happen next, Chapin and Skeet decided to head across the street to the coffee shop to grab a cup of joe and try to warm up. They grabbed a booth in the corner, both hoping for a little privacy.

A blonde woman, who appeared to be in her mid forties, appeared beside them. She wore ear rings that were obviously larger than any human being should attempt to wear, but somehow, she pulled the look off. “Hi! I’m Jaque, your waitress. Can I start you off with some...” Jaque gasped. “Aren’t you...” Her smile became almost painfully huge. “Skeet Seaton?” she said in an accent with a strangely southern drawl, something that was not all that common in Chicago.

Skeet was somewhat taken aback. He used to get recognized somewhat back in the days when he and Stan were together, but since he worked as a sideman now, it was usually just the occasional diehard music fan that would recognize him.

“Yes maam, nice to meet you,” he said.

“I remember I saw you and Stan Balch in...’85, I think.” You guys were fabulous! What happened?” Chapin felt this was a rather personal question to ask a stranger, plus she was feeling a little possessive about her time with Skeet, but she sat there silent.

“Oh that’s just how it goes sometimes. We just went in different directions,” he said in a somewhat veiled attempt to avoid the question. He was hoping she would take their order so he and Chapin could talk some more, just the two of them.

“Oh yea, sugar. I know. Don’t I know. Well, what are you up to...and where is Stan?”

Chapin and Skeet exchanged looks, the irritation showing in both of their faces. But Skeet was cordial, if not forthcoming.

“I’m not sure what’s he’s up to. You know how you lose touch with old friends sometimes.” He hadn’t considered Stan a friend in years, but this was the easiest answer to try and placate Jaque with.

“Oh yea, sugar. I know. Don’t I know,” she said in an odd moment of *déjà vu*. “But...I’m sorry. Here I am, yakkin’ y’alls ears off and haven’t even been doin’ my job. What can I get for you folks?”

He looked at Chapin and nodded for her to order. “I’d love a big mug of coca, please.”

“Marshmallows?” Jaque asked.

“No thanks. Straight up!” she said with a giggle.

“And for you...,” Jaque asked Skeet.

“Large coffee, please. Hot and black. I’m freezin’,” he said.

“I’ll have it out for you in a jiffy! Oh, and uh...,” her voice lowered dramatically. “Don’t worry about the bill. This one’s on me,” she said with a smile.

“You don’t have to...” Jaque interrupted him.

“Oh hush now!”

Before he could say anything else, she headed for the kitchen. Chapin and Skeet watched her silently for a moment then looked back at each other and smiled awkwardly. He felt her two feet gently wrap around his right foot under the table.

“I just can’t get over Slash showing up for this gig!” Chapin said.

Skeet shushed her and looked around. “You would be amazed at who will hear that and it could get really messy over there if that got out.” He paused. “But you’re right. I’m really excited! Everyone wants to play with Niles.”

“Seems like a lot of them want to play with you, too,” she said, flashing him a little smirk.

“I just made a bunch of friends over the years, that’s all.” Skeet truly didn’t think he was that big of a deal. He was a good, maybe better than good, bass player and he was pretty easy to work with.

That’s all he saw, but Chapin knew better. First, she had heard the way he played, with such passion, heart and soul. Plus she had done the research. For the interview she poured over the comments of so many greats in the industry. He was not only one of the most technically gifted bass players in decades, what he brought to a show or a session was indescribable. His mere presence brought a vibe that few others could match. But she knew the modesty, almost to the point of self deprecation, was part of who he was.

Jaque appeared again with their drinks, as well as a little bowl on the side full of marshmallows “just in case you change your mind.” They sipped their beverages and both enjoyed the feeling of starting to warm up.

Brian appeared and sat down next to Skeet. “Well, they’ve cancelled the show. It’s gonna take four or five hours for them to get the power back on so they are gonna try to reschedule in a couple of weeks. They asked if you were still in and I told them you probably were. Just gotta check the schedule. Pat and the guys are still in and Niles. Amy and Emily are checking

schedules to see and, well, you can't have the show without Patti. How's the coffee here? Good? I'm freezing!" Brian caught Jaque's attention. "Could I get a cup of coffee and a piece of that apple pie?"

"You want that ala mode?" she asked.

"As cold as I am? No thank ya. In fact, if you could give it a little zap to heat it up, I'd really appreciate it."

"You got it, doll" she said and headed for the kitchen again.

"Did you hear that some guy was messing with the transformer? That's what happened to the power. He did a real number on it. They're gonna have to replace the whole thing. That's what's gonna take so long. It's a damn shame. This was gonna be a great gig. So...what have you guys been up to?"

Chapin and Skeet just stared at him. Brian was normally a quiet, reserved guy, but when he got excited, he talked ad nauseam. Skeet had seen it before, but in Chapin's limited experience, he had been quiet, dry and gruff.

"B, did you take a breath?" Skeet asked.

Chapin broke up laughing and Skeet joined in.

"Huh? What's so funny? I don't get it?" Brian lamented.

"Nothing, man. Nothing at all." Skeet said with a giggle.

They continued giggling and warming up on cocoa and coffee and Brian even shared a bite or two of his pie with Chapin. As she was chewing the last piece of pie, the cell phone in her pocket began to ring. Chapin pulled out the phone and looked at the caller id. "What the hell?" she said.

Skeet and Brian looked at her curiously.

"It says Chicago Police Department."

"Well it's best not to keep the fuzz waiting. Answer it," said Brian.

"Hello?" Chapin listened intently and her looked turned much more serious.

"Why in the hell are you calling me?" she asked. "You did what? Whatever. You did, they SAY you did. Just stop calling me."

Brian and Skeet exchanged confused looks.

“I’m not going to. You’re on your own. Don’t call this number again.” And with that, she shut the phone.

“Is everything ok? Why would the cops be calling your cell phone?” Skeet asked.

“It wasn’t actually the police...” She didn’t even know how to say it. “It...it was Jack.”

“I thought you said it was the cops?” said Brian.

“Jack’s in jail,” she said. “And he wants me to come bail him out.”

“In jail? What for?” Skeet asked.

“Umm...” she paused. “Criminal mischief and destruction of property. He’s the one who blew up the transformer.”

Brian broke into uproarious laughter and had to grab his stomach with one hand and hold on to the table with the other. Skeet couldn’t hold back a snicker but he could see that Chapin was upset and tried to. He gritted his teeth and turned his head away from her. He knew if he looked at her he would not be able to hold it together.

“Geez Brian, it’s not funny!” she scolded.

Brian grit his teeth and tried to hold it, but he just couldn’t. “YES IT IS!” He almost screamed it. “Psycho boy tried to kill a transformer to keep you and Skeet apart. Now THAT’S funny! Shawn is gonna piss himself!”