

Chapter 22

Chapin and Skeet met up with Brian and they had breakfast in a small café just a couple of blocks from their hotel and began to plan their strategy. Chapin had thought a picture of Stan might be helpful to show people and had gotten the front desk to print out three copies of the most recent one she could find, even if it was over 15 years old. Brian suggested that, since they had no real leads, they go to the site of the Stardust fire in Artane and start there. It was better than any other idea they had come up with so they decided to go with it.

Brian had rented a car and after breakfast they headed for Artane, Brian driving, Chapin navigating and Skeet offering useless advice.

“Brian you want to make a left up here,” Chapin instructed.

“I’m pretty sure it’s a right,” said Skeet.

“How do you know?” she asked.

“I’ve been to Ireland before, on tour,” Skeet announced proudly.

Chapin double checked the map, tapped Brian on the shoulder and pointed left, then turned her attention back to Skeet. “So because you have set foot in this country, you know we need to make a right here,” she asked, in quite a condescending tone.

“Right?” Brian asked.

“Right,” agreed Skeet.

“No left!” Chapin exclaimed. She poked Brian in the shoulder and pointed left again. He turned left.

“Well now we’re going the wrong way,” said Skeet.

“We’re going the wrong way? Should I turn around?” asked Brian.

“Yes,” said Skeet calmly.

“NO!” exclaimed Chapin. “You are going the right direction. Keep going where I tell you.” She looked at Skeet and squinted. “And you just hush! I am the one with the map and you’re confusing him.”

Skeet threw up his hands and began to watch the scenery go by outside the car. Chapin gave him a second glance then turned her attention back to the map. She looked out the window, peering at street signs, then, again, turned her attention back to the map.

“Make a right up here and the next round thingee and then find a place to park. We are pretty much there,” she said, obviously quite proud of herself.

“I told you it was a right,” Skeet said calmly.

She glared at him, then tried to help Brian find a parking garage. They found a suitable place, found their way to the sidewalk and just stood there looking up and down the street.

“So what now?” Brian asked.

“Where was the Stardust? We should just start from there and see if anyone knows Stan,” Skeet suggested.

Chapin pulled out the map and a little notebook she had jotted some information in. She checked the notebook, then the map, then the notebook, back and forth. She began to scan the street then looked at the map again. “I think it should be a couple of blocks that way,” She said, pointing north. “That’s the best I can figure.” She glanced wryly at Skeet. “Unless of course you have some divine, internal, Irish global positioning system that tells us something different.”

They started walking north until Chapin thought she had found the spot of the fire. They looked around to scout out the nearest pub. Skeet began to ponder exactly how big of a wild goose chase they were on, but he tried to shrug it off.

The nearest pub seemed to be one that was just across the street so they decided to try it. They walked in the front door of what appeared to be a classic Irish pub. They grabbed three stools at the bar and Brian ordered them three beers, which seemed to surprise no one except Chapin, who just couldn’t figure out why they were having a beer at ten in the morning.

“Hey, do you mind if I ask you a question?” Skeet said as the bartender poured their beers.

“Sure, that’s what I do. I serve booze and answer questions,” the curmudgeonly barkeep responded.

“I’m trying to find a friend of mine and I was wondering if you might know him. His name is Stan Balch,” Skeet continued while Chapin fished out one of the pictures she had printed out earlier.

“The name doesn’t sound familiar, but then again, I don’t really keep track of everyone. Much of the time, folks just want a drink and to be left alone.” Chapin showed him the picture, which he took and gave an honest look. “Looks like a pretty old photograph,” he said handing the picture back to Chapin.

“Yea, unfortunately, it’s the best we’ve got right now. Does he look familiar?” Chapin asked.

“Sorry folks. Can’t say I’ve ever laid eyes on the man. Wish I could help you yanks out.”

“It’s ok. We’ll just keep asking around. Thanks,” Brian said. As the barkeep walked away Brian turned and looked at Skeet and Chapin. “One pub down. Probably five hundred to go,” he said and took a drink of beer.