

As the July sun rose above the trees and cast its warmth over the Hidden Pines Golf Course the birds began to chirp and the grass glistened with dew. A large muscular body lay face down in a sand trap near an overturned golf cart. Two slender, young bodies lay in a mess of bramble under a group of pines. The two younger bodies awoke and spotted the muscular man in the tuxedo. With caution they approached him to ensure he wasn't hurt and upon discovering that he wasn't, they left him and proceeded up the hill. The young woman turned to young man and said, "I'll tell my mom where he is." When they neared the only vehicle in the gravel lot, she coyly asked, "Can I drive?" He returned her smile and threw her the keys.

The night before was the night of his cousin's wedding and standing in a tuxedo, sporting a new haircut, Tim felt very on his game. He was in the receiving line when he first laid eyes on the beauty with the red skirt. The way her heels made her backside sway was incredibly alluring and with her big doe eyes Tim considered himself lucky just to be in the same room. As everyone watched the bride and groom's first dance as husband and wife, Tim eyed the girl and decided at the start of the the next slow song, he would ask her to dance. With the first few melancholy notes Tim set his drink down and headed her way. He approached her and her friends and asked to hold her close although not with those exact words.

She said, "Next song."

He assured her that was fine and went back to his drink.

As much as he didn't want to admit it, Tim had developed his father's personality. Tim's father, Jack was a quiet man who didn't particularly like social gatherings even if they revolved around something in which he was very interested. He was certainly not a prude but was reluctant to outwardly show passion or excitement, unless it was humor. To watch him laugh was like

seeing a different Jack, an alive Jack, and Tim loved to make his father laugh. Jack would even dance and sing karaoke if there were sixteen beers involved; this didn't happen often but when it did, it was a sight to see.

At this point in Tim's life he was twenty-one. He had asked girls to dance in high school and some had danced with him, but it was usually awkward because he was too passive and shy. This night felt different. While at this wedding much of his bravado and calmness was due to the consumption of alcohol, it was also due to sheer confidence. At the start of the next slower song, he again approached the woman and this time took her hand. Tim danced with the stunning lady and learned her name was Jennifer although not much more. He could see his reflection in her large, brown eyes and marveled at the dimples in her cheeks. He was very aware of his hand in hers and how the fabric on the small of her back was coarse with sparkles, like sandpaper. They slowly shuffled along the hardwood floor and before he could fall helplessly in love, the song was over and he thanked her for time.

The groom informed Tim with a look full of amazement and confusion that the girl he twirled about was only fifteen and had only just received her learner's permit. Tim's eyes widened, he was sure this girl was at least twenty two. Tim drastically changed his thoughts regarding his dance partner and knew he had to forget her, he also knew it was just a dance and he had done nothing wrong.

"And that's her dad." The groom pointed to a six-foot four man with very broad shoulders nearing the bar. Tim had only heard stories about Mark, he was coming closer and he didn't look happy.

"What the hell you tryin' to pull?" Mark growled in a drunken slur.

The groom stepped in to try and calm him down but he was having none of it. Beer was spilled and the music stopped. Tim took the opportunity to hastily exit the establishment and when he did, much to his dismay, Jennifer followed.

The night skies were clear and the summer air was cool, as it flowed into Tim's lungs it ever so slightly sobered him. He wasn't drunk to the point he couldn't walk, he could, he could run too. Tim ran around the back of the building and down a large hill that led to the golf course. Every now and then Tim caught glimpses, sometimes in two's and three's, of Jennifer. As he was nearing a tree line he heard a commotion and saw a distant crowd around the clubhouse building he had left. Mark was still coming for him.

The stories Tim had heard about Mark were filled with drug abuse and bar fights. Tim knew him to be a former cocaine snorter and most likely a current rage-a-holic, body building, steroid user. Despite coming across as a friendly local business owner, he had allegedly beaten people until they needed to visit the hospital. Mark had also spent two short years in prison. What he had heard second hand, Tim was now experiencing first hand.

Tim shuffled through the branches and low-lying brush, stumbled and finally fell down, he hoped he was hidden. He heard more rustling and noticed the glistening sparkles of the red dress lying next to him.

“God damn it, what are you doing?”

“What are YOU doing!?”

“Shhhh! Be quiet and cover up that damn dress!”

Golden light poured out into the black night on top of the hill, many people were standing around and their distant voices shouted. Tim felt a little ashamed. He should be up there standing up for

himself but he had never been in a fight and the real-life version of the Hulk didn't seem to be a wise first opponent. Tim who was five foot five and 130 pounds knew he could run faster and longer.

“My dad's not going to hurt you,” Jennifer whispered

“Well, it kinda looks like he is!”

A large figure like an inverted triangle was zig-zagging down the hill, shreds of his tuxedo were flailing from his shoulders like streamers. He ran past Tim and Jennifer lying in the brush and stood a hundred yards to their left, his fists clenched at his sides and his head turning on a swivel.

“Jesus Christ, I just danced with you!”

“He can be a little overbearing.”

“A little!”

“It's” Jennifer said with reluctance.

“What?”

“He doesn't particularly like your family.”

Mark had started running around the course in the opposite direction yelling,

“I'm gonna get you, fucker!”

Tim whispered, “Um ok, why didn't you tell me this before I danced with you?”

“Well I did kind of decline your offer the first time, I didn't think you would ask again, when you did I thought it might be fun.”

“FUN!! You see that maniac out there?”

Mark had taken one of the flags marking the holes and was swinging it around and finally threw it like a javelin, yelling,

“You will die!”

“Relax, it’s because he’s been drinking.”

“Is it? Or is it because of the steroids or maybe the cocaine?” Tim said in an accusing tone.

“My dad quit that before I was born!”

“I’ve heard stories that suggest otherwise”

“Well, they’re not true!” Jennifer paused a moment before continuing, “I’ve heard stories too ya know, about your family, about your grandma who steals steaks and shouts obscenities at our grocery store.”

“She is senile and schizophrenic!”

Mark had commandeered a golf cart and was driving erratically all over the course. “Jesus Christ” Tim huffed as he looked over towards Jennifer to argue but couldn’t, it would make little difference.

The moon was shining down, lending a pale glow to Jennifer’s face, her eyes where shining and there was a universe in each one. Her dress was slightly askew and sticks were lodged in her hair. Tim couldn’t help but smile. She returned his grin and shimmied closer to him. Tim hesitated a short while as he tried to restrain himself, but he finally relented and kissed her plump lips. He could feel the side of his nose rubbing against her’s as he placed his hand on her cheek. He gently stroked her hair and smelled sweet lavender perfume. The two separated and exchanged bashful smirks, Tim said, “Our families may steal steaks and golf carts but you can’t say they aren’t exciting.” As they laughed Jennifer moved closer for another kiss. Mark was miles away.

By this time Tim had taken off his tux jacket and draped it over Jennifer's back as they kept watch for Mark. Every now and again people from the party would yell for Tim and Jennifer but they ignored them. Tim thought about going up to his truck as they hadn't seen the crazed man in almost an hour but figured it would be a mistake, Mark could be waiting.

As the adrenaline wore off, Tim's eyes grew heavy and his head nodded forward. Jennifer was already sleeping, lying on her stomach with her head rested on her arm. Before long Tim fell asleep himself. It had been a kiss and nothing more, if Mark came in the night Tim would die happy.