

From his perch back at the bar, Dixie watched in horror as Bryson and the musicians had to jump in front of an unglued Ryz'n to protect her from the onslaught. They literally had to pull her overzealous fans off her. Sheena helped to drag her chest-heaving, mind-blowing, sweat-glistening, hyperactive, oversexed, nubile sister to her feet. But some guy grabbed Sheena. Suddenly, people, milling in front of him, blocked Dixie's view of the stage...

Back at the bar, Willie Hayes was calmly directing traffic. He ordered all the lights and the A/C turned on full blast. Bouncers appeared out of nowhere. Dixie caught sight of a Maryland state trooper running up the stairs from the restaurant below to find the club in pure bedlam. The sudden, bright lighting overhead momentarily blinded Dixie. Yet, the fresh light revealed the whole stage-half of the club to be writhing back and forth like a python in heat. People, tables, chairs, bottles, glasses all were flying in different directions, as were the crashing sounds that accompanied such violence. And the virus was growing its way quickly back towards him. A great, gaping impassable gulf of writhing humanity stood betwixt him and the carpeted stage. There was no way he could get to Ryz'n to help her.

Dixie climbed up on top of the bar for a better view. From his new vantage point, he could easily see Bryson atop the stage now. Bryson cold cocked two overzealous patrons, tumbling each of them in turn head over heels off the stage into a sea of iniquity. Dixie waved his arms sweepingly, side to side, over his head and, once again in a state of crisis, caught his brother-in-law's eye. Dixie motioned to the state trooper across the room from him. Atop the stage, Bryson swiveled his head aside to look over the heads of the riotous crowd. Then he turned back to find Dixie. Bryson nodded that he understood and gave Dixie the high sign. Quickly, shielding the girls from the tumult as he went, Bryson herded the female band members along the wall farthest from Dixie toward the corner exit, Ryz'n and the grease ball had used earlier. Dixie watched his brother-in-law steal the girls away, off the back of the carpeted stage to the fire escape at the sole of the backwards boot. Standing atop the bar, Dixie observed admiringly as his brother-in-law acted swiftly and without panic.

He would have made a good Marine.

Perched as a shield rock between the sisters and mayhem, Bryson directed the male band members behind him to gather up the band equipment and directed them towards the same back door escape. To Dix's left, someone screamed as he followed a table, crashing through one of the club's gigantic, front, plate glass windows next to the dance floor. The crash startled Dixie, who turned from the band to notice the state cop ducking into one of the phone booths across the way by the rest rooms.

The back half of the club on the side opposite from the bar, where the school teachers had sat, had remained mostly stable, considering the circumstances. However, the rolling tide of discontent from the stage spilled over everywhere, ebbing its untidy way back towards the opposite end of the club. The once calm and stable night club that Dixie and his party had found upon their arrival was now in mayhem, amid flying

Rowdy Russian Retreat

chairs and rioting customers. For some quirky reason, the unruly situation reminded him of the similar but not quite so raucous time he mistakenly had tried to force Donna's forty-inch Double D's into a lacey thirty-eight-inch C-cup that he, unwittingly, had given her for Christmas. *What a thought at such a time!* He noted with glee however that Donna had kept the bra and had worn it for him, as best as she could, on *special* occasions. Dixie smiled. *God bless her!*

Willie Hayes interrupted Dixie's daydream and angrily motioned for him to get down off the bar or he would have Dixie thrown out. However, the manager was too preoccupied with the rioters surrounding him to carry out his threat. Nevertheless, Dixie dropped down and sat upon the bar with his legs dangling out over the customer side. He watched as the club manager took a whistle from his pocket and blew twice loudly. One by one, his bouncers shed themselves of their individual combatants to emerge from the thriving mob and assembled before the bar. Dixie listened to Hayes as he gathered his seven men about him. Hayes screamed over the din.

"All right boys, we're gonna deploy around the bar here and set up a perimeter. The cops are on their way, see? Now this is paramount! Nobody and I mean NOBODY is to get close to this bar, Understand? I'm not gonna lose a single, damned bottle of liquor! Got it? Now, let's go!" They nodded and fanned out around the bar. "Hey!" screamed Willie. "Put that bottle back!" Willie pointed towards the opposite corner of the bar, where a guy tried to hide a fifth of rye behind his back. One of Willie's men was on him in a flash. He clobbered the guy first and snatched the liquor bottle from his hand before the hapless filcher hit the deck.

"Good work, Shannon," yelled Willie. "Now drag his sorry ass over by the stairs." The big bruiser followed orders, grinning from ear to ear.

Now there's a man who's happy in his work, thought Dix. This scene did not panic him at all. He had seen this often in the red light districts of Honolulu and Manila.

Never in Vegas, though. Them wise guys ran a tight ship.

Pushing off the bar counter with his hands, Dixie slid his butt around the corner of the bar facing the stage. One of the bruisers turned to take hold of him and drag him off the bar. Dixie raised his hands in protest. "Hold on now, I'm a new hire. I'm just shadowing here. Willie made me our last line of defense." Dixie winked at him and nodded towards the wall mirror over the bar. The guy looked to Willie. The manager turned his head and nodded his OK to the employee. Presto! The guy left Dixie alone and resumed his foxhole. Dixie carefully climbed up on a bar stool, so he could see if Ryz'n was all right. He was relieved to find Bryson slipping the girls out the far side, fire exit door.

Meanwhile Paul and the Slutskaya's had been right in the eye of the storm. Dixie had kind of forgotten about them. Even though he searched diligently, Dix failed to find his party amongst the chaos. Dixie was unsure of what to do next. Then he spied Paul sneaking the girls along the far back wall at the sole of the upside down boot. They exited out the same, rear fire door at the far southwest corner of the building that the band had used, but from a different direction. Some customers in the back half of the club were slipping out, down the main stairs, even though Willie had stationed a

Out at Home

bouncer there as well, mostly to help customers exit in an orderly fashion, if that were possible. Dixie decided to join them, since everyone he cared about was gone and he didn't care to search for the school teachers.

Dixie passed through the line of bouncers defending the bar and gave Willie his Jett Rink body length wave. Hayes, who had more urgent matters, forced a grudging nod to Dix, who weaved his way towards the head of the stairs. The state trooper had emerged from the phone booth and waded into the mess, where he confronted Dixie in his path.

"This is a terrible disgrace, officer, just terrible."

Dixie looked about him in disgust. "I'll have to report this in tomorrow's news, I guess. It won't make the County look any too good, I'm afraid. But the readers have a right to know." Falsely indignant, Dixie authoritatively punched the air with his forefinger. Before the officer could respond, one of the combatants fell into the trooper's legs, affording Dixie his chance to escape. As he jogged down the stairs, stepping lightly around and over fallen patrons, Dix heard sirens blaring from out on the highway.

Outside, he crossed the north parking lot towards the Bonneville. Two shots rang out from inside *The Loft*. Dix turned his head that way. The large, asphalt parking lot suddenly was a madhouse with people running and cars peeling out everywhere. He heard someone call him and turned to find Paul and Tasha nearby, running his way.

"Whew, Mann! Glad you made it Nick. You all right?" Paul breathed heavily.

"Yeah! You?"

"Un-hunh, I think."

"Well, that makes three of us, Paul. Let's go."

"Wait. We can't leave without Tonya," cried Natasha. Dixie had forgotten about his date.

"Oh? Well, where is she?"

"She's over at the carry-out buying vodka."

"She's what???? Is she crazy?"

The north end of the restaurant had a carry-out liquor store with a drive-up window. Dixie looked over there. Sure enough, he could see her. She was just now paying for her purchase through the window. "Jump in the car. The cops are coming in already." The first of the state trooper cars had just pulled into the parking lot.

Paul nodded across the highway. "State police barracks seventeen is right over there."

"Sheesh," cried Dixie as he looked to the sky for relief. "Can this get much worse?"

Dixie began to open the driver's door but stopped because he heard voices coming from somewhere in front of the car, but he could see no one. Paul heard the voices too, from the passenger side. Baffled, Paul looked across the closed convertible top at his buddy. Dixie held up his forefinger to his nose and motioned with his head towards the front of the vehicle. The two of them crept forward quietly on either side of the car.

". . . Well, yeah Mann, we were both right. They was both all natural, no falsies at all and they weren't wearin' no regular bras though, that's for sure. So we're even."

Rowdy Russian Retreat

“Yeah, they was real all right, dang near the size of pineapples, too, cuz I couldn’t get my hand full around it good. What about yours?”

“Yeah, the same. But mine weren’t quite so big, mebbe just about like a small grapefruit or mebbe one of them big oranges.”

“Navel oranges?”

“Maybe, maybe bigger than that. They was pretty darned solid, but you’re prob—”

“Hey there! What are you doin’ sittin’ up against my car? Hey! You’re the guy that molested my—!” Dixie’s blood pressure sky-rocketed and he could not speak further.

“Now hold on there Mister, just hold on.” The guy, who couldn’t have been more than twenty, raised his hands up, in self defense, both palms outward. “You, you, you already crunched me once, see? That’s good enough, ain’t it?” He pointed to a bruise.

“Well I dunno. What are you two doin’ here?” Dixie was livid.

“Hidin’ from the cops, Mann! Our car’s been towed for parkin’ illegally. I guess...”

Suddenly, Tonya came running over—“OK, Nicky led make truck, Bay-bee!”

“Make truck??”

“Tracks! *Mother!* It’s ‘let’s make tracks—”

“Shhh Natasha! No time to vight.”

Cop cars were streaming into the parking lot now. “This place looks like the bust in the danged ‘French Connection,’” murmured Dixie.

“How are we gonna get out of here? They got us blocked in,” cried Paul, pointing to the state troopers rolling down the lane behind the Bonnie.

The fellow who had molested Ryz’n offered to lead them out, if Dix would take them along and promise not to “crunch” him anymore. Dixie didn’t much care for the idea, but he was stuck so he agreed to terms. They all piled into the roomy Bonneville with three apiece in the front and back seats. Paul sat between the two women in the rear seat, while the two jerks sat up front with Dixie.

Lester “the Molester,” as Paul dubbed him, told Dixie to drive straight from his asphalt parking spot out onto the grass out across the vacant dirt lot next door to the club. Dixie sneaked the Bonnie out across the other side of the vacant lot, where the creep directed Dixie to take a left towards the back of the lot and the wooded area to the west. Dix had to dodge trash, debris and old tires and hub caps. However, just before they reached the tall, leafy trees at the back of the lot, they discovered a surprisingly narrow dirt and grass lane running north and south which paralleled Rte. 301. Dixie turned on his headlights briefly to survey the scene. The lane was heavily rutted. Tall weeds grew down the center, bordered by two auto tire tracks on either side of the humped clumps of weeds. The height of the weeds informed Dix this lane was seldom used—*ah yes, the road less traveled*. He smirked and turned off his lights to hide from the state troopers. Dixie had to travel about five to ten miles per hour, as the car’s shocks were absorbing all they could handle over the rut-hewn lane. The Bonnie bobbed and weaved like a raft on the open sea as they sailed inexorably down the dirt path. Their escape from the police was one of the slowest on record, but the cops had more than enough to deal with back at the nightclub without chasing down some obscure byway after a lone ranger like Dixie and his carload of turtles.

Out at Home

They followed their path to salvation past the backsides of *The Loft* and *The Starlust*, clear down to the drive-in theatre. Above them, they could view the top half of Al Pacino's face up above the privacy fence on the larger than life screen in "Dog Day Afternoon." Lester said, "Hey, I just love this guy, robbing a bank, so he can pay for his transsexual boy friend's sex change operation."

"Sounds like real devotion, real academy award stuff," replied Dixie sarcastically. "We can let you out, if you wanna watch it with your buddy here." Dixie smirked.

"Nah, we seen it a couple times already. Take a left here."

Dixie thought that was a real intelligent remark, as they had nowhere else to go. The fence around the drive-in dead-ended the lane's path and the woods to the west blocked any move to their right. Dixie was not about to go back so the only option open to them was to go left. Dix headed the Bonneville over some rough ground behind a junk yard. He came out behind the Ranch Diner. From there, he circled the diner and slipped around the trash dumpsters, to the service road and took a right onto the highway, heading south.

"Keep straight here. Then jump on Three-Oh-One down to the light. We live in the apartments around the corner, the other side of the A&P." Dixie followed his instructions, letting them out at some strange looking, dilapidated old farmhouse.

"These are apartments?" Dixie asked incredulously.

"Yeah, kind of. There's a half dozen renters in there, Mann." "Lester" and his buddy molester hopped out and shut the door. With both hands on top of the door, "Lester" leaned down to thank Dixie.

"Say?" asked Dixie. "What did ya do that for?" The guy was stumped.

"So we could get away, Dude? What did ya think?"

"No, I mean with the girls, inside. Why'd ya grab their—"

"Oh, that!" He looked down to the ground, shook his head and laughed. Me and Al here made a couple bets. Al said them boobs weren't the real deals, looked too good, too large for such short, skinny chicks, said they must have had some kind o' fancy bra or some falsies on to make 'em look that good. 'Nope', said I, "the way them puppies was bouncin' around, them foxes weren't wearin' nothing under those tight tops, nothin' AT ALL but the real thing!"

"So, who won?"

"Well, we pushed."

"No way, Mann! I won. They were wearing something," countered Al.

"Like hell, you say. They weren't wearin' no regular bras, but they had some little kind of dinky support thing that didn't cover up half their fruit. No sir! Them babes got the real McCoys, that's for danged sure! We just never gotta good enough feel for the situation, if ya know what I mean, that is to figure out what size they was. Somewhere between the size of a big grapefruit and a fat pineapple, I reckon, but they were soft, real soft and—"

"Pineapple?" Dixie was incredulous. He had never head of that comparison

"Yeah, them kind o' short, fat ones. You know." The guy grinned.

"Yeah. Sure. So which girl was that you figure?" asked Dixie.

Rowdy Russian Retreat

“Oh! The cute one, the lead singer.”

“Well, A-hole, you guessed right,” replied Dixie tersely.

“How the hell would you know?”

“Because the one you grabbed is my wife! Lester! You molester. See Ya!”

Dixie peeled out leaving the molesters dumbstruck outside the old farmhouse, choking in a rising cloud of dust.

* * *

Paul directed Dixie west on Derry Road over towards Accokeek.

“Can ya believe the nerve of them guys,” asked Paul as he opened the bottle of Smirnoff’s Tonya had purchased.

“Ahh. They’re just kids out for a little excitement. That’s all.”

Tonya passed the bottle to Dix, who knew better, but he failed to stop and think. He sucked on the bottle anyway, despite his better judgment. With Tonya spiking his beer throughout the course of the evening, he had already consumed the equivalent of four boilermakers. Ever since they had left *Gusti’s*, Dixie had managed to stay just this side of sober, but now two shots of vodka sent him reeling over the edge. He didn’t care. The image of Ryz’n all over that gumba really ticked him off. Maybe she had shacked up with the guy and that’s why she was ignoring his calls? Dixie felt a little maudlin and pulled off onto the shoulder of the old country road to gather his senses.

Paul offered to drive. The couples swapped seats and Paul lowered the top at Natasha’s request. They drove off through the warm, heavy Southern Maryland night. Paul drove the back roads with no particular place to go. Tonya kept the fifth of vodka in the back seat. She plied Dixie liberally with the booze. Desiring to forget Ryz’n’s earlier antics, and to ignore her present doings, Dixie drank liberally, as did his date. The Cossack was willing and able. She wasn’t unattractive by any means, even if she were older. Dixie figured older wasn’t necessarily bad, because she was probably more experienced. When he thought of what Ry might be doing right now—well, he could not let her get ahead of him. Besides, Paul was right. The Cossack’s breath was hot.

Paul eventually wound up at a not so popular necking spot, on top of a bluff that overlooked the polluted Potomac between Fort Washington and Fort Foote. Paul raised the roof and lowered the radio volume as the couples indulged in some heavy, drunken petting.

Before long, the glare of flashing lights interrupted their dual tête-à-têtes. A county peace officer approached, shining a flashlight in on them. He checked Paul in the driver’s seat first. The officer asked for Paul’s driver’s license. In the course of inspecting it, he exclaimed. “PAUL SALVARANO! Hey, Paul! It’s Frankie, Frank Fello, remember me?”

“Frank, from across the street?”

“Yeah, back on Dickens Street. Me and your sister Nann graduated together.”

“Yeah, sure that’s right but you wouldn’t take her to the Prom, would ya, Frankie? You punk!”

“Aw shoot! You know how it was. I figured if I did that, I’d have to take her out every Friday night. And them Proms are expensive. You know how it is.”

Out at Home

“Yeah, yeah, I know.”

“Yeah, well your old man got that sharp lookin’ Marine in his dress blues to take her and they were the hit of the Prom. So, it worked out good for every body. Hey, how’s Nann doin’ these days, anyway?”

“Hey, she’s doin’ good Frankie. She got a nursing degree out in Minnesota, married a nice guy and now they got a nice, healthy baby girl. She was just here a couple weeks ago to visit.”

“No kiddin’?! Whaddaya know? Well say, who else you got in here with ya?”

Officer Fello shined the flashlight into the backseat onto Dixie and Tonya, who was all over Dixie and too drunk to care. Dixie’s shirt and pants were unbuttoned and Tonya’s dress was half off. “Looks as if you two are enjoying each other’s company,” Frank chuckled.

“That’s Nick Sheeboom, Frankie. You remember him.”

“No! LITTLE NICK SHEEBOOM? You’re kiddin’! That scrawny little runt who always wanted to play ball with us! Judas priest! “Hey, Little Nick, I thought you was dead over in Nam.” Dixie opened his eyes wide trying to focus and raised his hands up in a helpless fashion.

“Me ta-too, s-sssure feel dead,” he replied with a dirt-eating grin on his face.

Frankie laughed. “Well, I’ll be—hey Paul, what’s that your dad always used to say, uh—,” he snapped his fingers ““Well, if that don’t take the hair off a frog!” Yeah, that’s right!” The cheery cop agreed with himself even before Paul could. “Well Nick, if you feel dead now, you’re gonna be downright mortified tomorrow. Ha! Ha! Ha!”

The police car radio crackled behind them.

“Hold on Paulie, while I check this call.”

He retreated to the squad car and sat inside speaking on the radio briefly. Then he hustled back to the Bonneville. His demeanor had changed from jovial to judicious.

“Look Paul, there’s been a bad accident back down by Accokeek. I gotta go, but I’ll be back in a while on my rounds and I don’t wanna find you here. Got it?”

“Sure, Frankie, I, I mean Officer Fello.” Officer Fello winked and slapped the top of the car door. “OK!” He jumped back from the door and, as he turned he said, and tell Nann I said ‘Congratulations!’” Then he ran back and jumped in the squad car, turned on the siren and sped away.

Tonya was impressed. “Friends in high top, Paul, vat goot, vat ferry goot.”

“High *places!* It’s friends in high *places, Mother!*” shot back Natasha, embarrassed once again over her mother’s poor English.

“Ma-mother?” Dixie was confused.

Tasha had struck back at her mother for Tonya’s evening long, asinine performance by dropping their charade. Tasha confirmed that Tonya was indeed her mother. Tonya looked over the front seat, watching Paul redress himself. Paul’s clothes were as disheveled as Dixie’s and, like Tonya, her daughter was bare-chested.

“Whad chu to vere? Whad chu to vere yu duu, Natasha Lukashevskaya Slutskaya?”

Rowdy Russian Retreat

“Just the same thing you were doing, Mother!” said Natasha sarcastically. Tonya reached forward and slapped her daughter across the face. “Well, yu shtop it!” The women glared at one another.

Jimmy’s siren was receding in the distance. However, Dixie turned his jaded disbelief off by turning on his own siren, and replicated that highway sound precisely much to their dismay, as James Dean had done in the movies. Paul lowered the convertible top and backed out of their lover’s lane into Livingston Road.

“Well, we better scram.”

“Aww Paulie! We were just goin’ good. Do we have ta? Don’t leave just now on account of her,” pleaded Tasha.

“I’m not, but if I know Frank, he’ll be back just to talk and shoot the breeze, if for nothin’ else.”

“Lissen Paul, Tasha. He date. He know best.”

“Hope you remember that for later, Mama!” Paul grinned into the rear view mirror.

Tonya turned off Dixie’s siren by dousing it with Smirnoff’s. Always the gentleman, Dixie insisted that “Mom” have her share first. Of course, she didn’t need much in the way of persuasion. However, it appeared to Dixie, she could hold her ‘Wodka’ much better than he could hold his. When the party reached the Slutskaya’s apartment, the three of them had to help Dixie inside or he would have laid down for the night right on the apartment front lawn.

From Dix’s sated perspective now, the night was lovely, just lovely.