

## Leila Chapter 56

As the notes poured out from under his fingers, he started playing deep left-hand tones only, leaving his right hand free to adjust a microphone which stood on top of the piano. He pulled it close to his mouth and fiddled with a switch on the top. When he managed to turn it on, there was a loud fuzzy click as the microphone connected with a speaker. Leila could not see it. He called 'one-two' a couple of times. The old speaker roared into life with surprising clarity.

Leila recognised the melody from somewhere. She was not good at naming tunes or remembering their names. She could almost always play them though.

He cleared his throat.

*'I hear her, before I go to sleep, and think about the day that's been.'*

The words were clearly sung. He sang them in tune. He stopped and smiled.

'Go on then, that's cool!' said Dean from behind the bar. Dennis laughed.

'I can't sing that one! I don't know the words, and it's a girl's song. It needs to be sung by a girl! I like the piano part though.'

Leila thought for a moment they were going to ask her to sing.

He turned back to the keys, and started playing the tune behind the words. Leila sat back and took in the resonance of each note. She might even have closed her eyes as the left hand picked out the chords of the song and the right hand tinkled out the tune on the high notes.

She rocked to and fro gently as the music played. It seemed to transport her. Her head, which was so often full to bursting, allowed the music to find its own pathways, each one razor-sharp but soft-edged enough so as not to hurt. Vibration and resonance.

But resonance with what? Her mind took her up, so that she was looking down on herself. She was in a pub, in a strange town. She wondered what on earth she was doing there. But in some way, she felt closer to him.

As she listened to the music and the performance of a song she vaguely recognised, she stared out of the window and tried to think about where she'd heard it before. She thought the chords fitted with something she knew. Something she played? Or something she'd heard.

She kept her eyes closed as the man played on. She listened intently, imagining other instruments layering on top of what he played. An orchestra. A symphony.

'More coffee? You OK?'

'Oh, er, yeah I'm fine. Nice playing.'

'Oh that wasn't me. That was Dennis.'

She felt like saying that of course it wasn't him and that from what she could see he clearly had little

talent for anything apart from waiting table. He smiled goofily again, perhaps expecting her to warm to him or expecting a return smile. He did not get it. She really wanted to tell him that he was ignorant and annoying and in the three minutes she'd spent in his company he'd done about ten things that pissed her off. She managed to resist saying all that. She got up.

She was about to leave, without destination, when Dennis stopped playing momentarily, and stretched his hands behind his neck, fingers entwined. He arched his back and groaned slightly. She walked over.

‘What’s that song?’ she said, without a ‘hello’ or an introduction. He smiled.

‘I wish I knew,’ he replied, before adding, ‘or rather what I mean is I would like to know what the song is called, and I don’t. Do you?’

‘I don’t.’

‘I find that I keep playing it. I must have heard it somewhere. I absolutely love the chord progressions.’ He looked at her assuming she would not know what he was talking about.

‘Yeah that change from the C to the A minor at the start of the chorus is the bit I like.’

Astonished, he looked up at her. The chords did change in that way. He rehearsed the first two bars of the chorus again. C to A-minor.

‘So, you play, do you?’

‘Not really. My dad doesn’t like me playing in the house. A bit of guitar maybe.’

‘Well if you can help with the title of this one please do!’ He turned back to his keyboard and popped out a few more notes. The unnamed song sang once more.

*I definitely know that from somewhere*, she thought.

‘I’m playing here later. Come along if you can.’

‘Thanks. I can’t do that.’

She always spoke her mind.