



niko
Shattered dreams of love

PETER WINTERS

Anikó: Shattered dreams of love

P E T E R W I N T E R S



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Disclaimer

Some of the character names in this book are changed to maintain their anonymity or, in some instances, fictitious. Specific incidents and locations depicted are accurate. Other events, incidents, businesses, or places are either the product of the author's imagination or used in a fictitious manner to reflect the development of the characters. Any similarity or resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

Author's note

Anikó: Shattered dreams of love...

A tragic and heartbreaking saga of Anikó and László. Two young lovers whose love for each other was prevented by one truly evil, immoral, dominating witch, the mother of Anikó. The soulmates and their struggle to live up to the dreams they wanted for each other, only to fail as their dreams were shattered and eroded over a six-year period of on-and-off relationship.

Anikó was controlled by Mary and used as a tool for revenge against men due to her husband leaving her. Sacrificing her own daughter's innocence, and life to gain revenge and valuable assets through prostituting Anikó ever since she turned sixteen. Dominating her to comply using psychological tactics and physical punishment, as Anikó revealed to László later on in their relationship.

"I fuck, when she tells me to fuck, whoever she tells me to fuck! I will not marry you because I am not allowed to marry you! But I do love you, and I will always love you! I always look forward to being together with you when I can, I do not fuck, but I make love to you, and it is because I want to be with you and not because I am told."

Anikó loved that László stood up for her against her mother, which upset Mary. For Mary, László was a bad influence, as he dominated her daughter by spoiling her with kindness, understanding and passionate love instead of fear. László and his mother were cursed, by Mary. For him never to find a lasting relationship and to die lonely, for his mother to die from cancer.

László, with the last name of a former wealthy nobility but without any assets, and his mother struggled as new immigrants to establish themselves. László, if somewhat naïve, believed in lasting, tender, romantic love for a girl, who he felt as she did, to be each other's soulmates, sharing their dreams and desires. She was László's first love and tried to forgive all the pain her actions caused. Their passion for each other flared up, unable to let go despite the odds. When the odds ran out, he wrote Anikó off.

Anikó changed László forever in how he related to women in his following relationships.

While Anikó did not become a doctor, she did get involved with Health Care in Arizona. She married and had two children, just as she and László dreamed in Niagara Falls in their youth except it wasn't with László.

I. Anikó

László met Anikó for the first time in 1968 at a family friend's farm where he spent a few weeks in the summer. Anikó and her parents visited Martha, the owner of the farm, for a day. He really like the girl, who was 6 and a half years younger than he was. She reminded of a girl he was very found of, back in Hungary. Ironically both had the same name Anikó.

The second time at a wedding in 1976. Rose (his mother) and László were invited to a wedding, but he did not want to go. It was the marriage of Martha's daughter Baba. Baba was actually her nickname, which meant a baby in Hungarian. All her friends knew her by this name. Baba lived nearby, and László spent some time at her mother's farm in the summer of 1968. By now, Martha had sold the farm, moved to Niagara Falls to a small house, and retired. She supplemented her retirement by being a seamstress. László drove his mother down to Niagara Falls for visits a few times, plus Rose used her services to adjust some of her dresses. László bumped into Baba several times while walking Duchess (his German Shepherd) in the early evenings at the nearby park, as she lived across from the park. László used the excuse that he did not have a tuxedo to wear to the wedding and did not have a date. Such poor excuses did not stop Baba. She rented one for László and set him up with one of her bridesmaids as part of the groomsmen or ushers. Rose explained to László that it was an honour to be selected and would be an insult not to go, and he had to go.

It was a pleasant wedding held at the Hungarian Catholic Church in Toronto. Followed by an expensive reception at an upscale Hungarian restaurant, the Wooden Plate, on Bloor Street, near Yorkville. A chic and pricey area of downtown Toronto. Similar to the Fifth Avenue area with expensive boutiques in New York City. Baba indeed came through with a nice girl for László, but he wasn't interested in her. She was not the slim and sexy, the type he liked. László was mesmerized by someone else. An attractive girl (in László's eyes) about 18 was there as a guest with someone else. Something was drawing him to her. But since she was on a date, he did not bother introducing himself and just let it go.

In April, 1977, Rose, László, and the Duchess visited Martha in Niagara Falls. Their first visit since her daughter's wedding. Martha wondered what had happened between László and the girl he was with. László replied nothing; he was not interested in her, but he was in another girl there and described her.

"If you really want to meet her, she just lives around the block from here," Martha continued, "you may be surprised, but she asked me just a couple of weeks ago, who you were? I've told her your first and last names

and that you lived in Toronto.” After hesitating for several seconds, Martha asked “I can call her over if you would like?”

Ten minutes later, Anikó, with her mother, pulled up in a silver 1972 Cadillac Eldorado and parked it behind the 1972 Oldsmobile 98 on the driveway. After the short introduction, László, Anikó, and Mary (her mother) met in 1968 at the farm! Anikó was the young girl and her father who had invited László. A lot has changed since then. And not always for the better. A lot of water has fallen over Niagara Falls. Anikó had just turned 17 in March, although she looked over 18, and the Eldorado was hers. She had received it for her 16th birthday! It wasn’t new but a very well kept low mileage car previously owned by a local Cadillac dealer.

Anikó was five feet, four inches tall, had a feminine figure but was not skinny by any means, had long dark brown hair in a ponytail, warm brown eyes with a sexy twinkle, and a great smile. She had little make-up, nicely kept pink nails on her hands that matched her lipstick, a blue mini-skirt, a strapless white top that nicely fit her firm breasts, and high-heeled casual fabric sandals. She looked a bit exotic, like a Spanish flamenco dancer. Maybe because her mother had gypsy blood in her veins. She was young, sexy, and desirable.

Anikó and László clearly hit it off! They went outside with Duchess to talk. Walking the dog was a good excuse while the mothers and Martha chatted inside. It was a long walk down to the falls and back.

They talked about their lives and heartbreaks, and both were very sympathetic toward each other. It turned out that Anikó’s father had left her and her mother behind one day in 1970. He was declared dead a couple of years later, and her mother remarried. Now, she had a different last name than hers. Coincidentally, László had a different last name than her mother due to her marriage to Andrews that changed her last name. To have it changed back to her former name to match László’s last name, was complex, not to mention expensive. When they showed up at Martha’s house, Mary, Rose, and Martha were waiting beside the Cadillac, wondering where they disappeared. Anikó and László decided next Saturday to meet again around 11 a.m., next Saturday. László would drive down to Niagara Falls to see her on a date. Anikó got behind the wheel of the Eldorado and left with Mary, waving at László!

II. László's first real love

Martha warned László and Rose that Anikó was not the right girl for him. As Rose mentioned to Martha, Anikó and László would be an excellent match for each other. Since both had Hungarian roots, while Anikó was born in Canada, she spoke perfect Hungarian, which was highly admirable. Martha warned again indeed Anikó and László looked very suitable for each other. Mary, her mother, kept a snug control over Anikó. Mary would not make a good mother-in-law, as her background was not stellar and certainly not the type for someone with a last name like László. That was all she would say on the subject, and if László wanted to pursue Anikó, he should be on his guard, and she would not stand in the way. László thanked Martha for inviting Anikó over and for her warning. However, he will be back next Saturday. Martha mentioned to László, that he should bring Rose down too! At least they could chat while he was with Anikó. They soon parted, and László and Rose drove back to Toronto.

The week flew by, and on Saturday, László, Rose, and Duchess arrived at around 10 a.m., in the morning. László was looking forward to spending time alone with Anikó. To find out why Martha warned him about her and especially Mary. So, while they did not have the same aristocratic heritage as he had, it made no difference now: it was not the 19th century! Far from that, it was not about their background that László judged others, but how they acted toward him. Maybe he was a bit naïve and overlooked the facts because he was infatuated with Anikó, who was almost six and a half years younger. Or perhaps because of the values that Rose taught him not to judge others by their background. Whatever the case, he never had feelings for other girls like this before, not even for the ice cream parlour girl, Anne, his secret flame. Who just happened to have the same first name! Coincidentally or not. Anikó is an endearing nickname in Hungarian for Anne or Anna. While László had friendships with girls and dated now and then, he was not that interested in any of them.

Rose was worried a bit that he could be, God forbid, oriented to the same sex or gender, in other words, a homosexual. Which, of course, László wasn't. Apart from the fact that he was just very selective about whom he would call a girlfriend or would consider a committed intimate relationship with, He was also ashamed of living in public housing and the stigma that many attached to those who lived in it. It wasn't that László was not interested in intimacy or sex with females. Ever since László could remember, he was interested in the differences between male and female anatomy. With interesting thoughts, often very naughty. He just suppressed his feelings while he lived in an environment where he felt uncomfortable. Now that he lived in a decent area and that Anikó perked up László's interests, Rose was much relieved.

Martha called Anikó on the phone soon after they arrived, and it didn't take Anikó long to show up in her Eldorado. She parked it, jumped out, and hugged Rose first and then László. Anikó was very casual, with blue jeans, a blue strapless top, no bra, and a white loosely fitting shirt unbuttoned. She offered to show László around Niagara Falls in her car and eventually showed him where she lived. She gave him her phone number so their next date could call her directly and go to her house. There is no need for László to wait for her. It was very obvious to Martha and Rose that she liked László, which was 100 percent true. In fact, over the weeks, she did fall in love with him and László with her. But let's not get ahead of ourselves.

Anikó drove László to several sights in and around Niagara Falls, not just typical tourist traps but to some alluring hidden gems, such as parks hidden from the beaten path. While driving, she talked a lot, not just about the sights but about herself. László was more interested in her. Eventually, they parked at the Lotus Grove Park just on the north outskirts of Niagara Falls (aka the Lotus Grove picnic area). Which is hardly ever used by the locals or tourists. They embraced and kissed each other deeply on the lips. After a long, passionate first real kiss, they talked more about themselves and their hopes for their future. Anikó was in grade eleven at a private school in St. Catharines. She mentioned her mother was very controlling and often wished she could run away from home. While she was in many ways raised as a "princess" and liked luxurious and quality items, she was not necessarily the type, and deep down, she was more of a romantic with some wild urges for fun and adventure.

For example, she liked car racing and driving fast, and she admitted to László that she liked drag racing too, sometimes on the street with other cars. Her Cadillac was a heavy car. It had a 500 cubic inch engine with lots of torque, and she knew that fast acceleration was more about torque than just horsepower. László was quite impressed by her knowledge of cars and shared many common feelings, such as the quality of items and how she came across to people. She had a presence, not just because she looked attractive and fashionable but because she was also intelligent. Anikó spoke French fluently; her Hungarian was so perfect that one would have thought Anikó had just landed from Budapest. She had excellent marks in school. Her mother assured her of that, as she was very strict with her.

It was evident to László that Mary wanted her daughter to have a good education, just as much as she wanted to be eye candy to a wealthy suitor. By talking with Anikó about many things, it was also evident that, deep down, she had some resentment about the unpleasantness she received from her mother. Perhaps this was what Martha was hinting at?

There was only one way to find out. There is a funny Hungarian idiom that loosely translates to *"look and learn about the mother before you shag the daughter,"* meaning the very obvious. László wanted to know them better, especially Anikó, and learn how she felt about her mother. That would give

some insight into Mary and make up his mind about her. Mary was not ugly or overly plump; she looked like someone with some gypsy blood and smoked like a chimney, while Anikó did not. And that was a positive thing!

Anikó and László shared so many things in common that it was a bit uncanny, bordering on the supernatural, or maybe they were just true soul mates meant for each other. They both disliked cigarette smoke, for starters. Anikó loved dogs, but her mother loved cats, so they had several Siamese cats. She especially loved Dobermans and German Shepherds, as both were very intelligent and medium to large types. She was not too keen on lapdogs, such as poodles and spaniels, just like László.

They both liked the same types of music; she loved art, notably paintings that depicted landscapes and flowers; she was fascinated by European history; she loved going to discos to dance; she was interested in photography; and the list was just endless of what they mutually liked or even what they did not.

Both could be very cynical, sarcastic, or tender and loving. Anikó had to be genuine; this was not an act, and there was no way she could learn so much about László and his likes and dislikes in such a short time. This was the real Anikó, the girl for him! Time flew by really quickly. It was getting near 6 p.m., and it was time to go back. On the way back, László asked Anikó since she had mentioned that she loved the type, if she could look after a German Shepherd, would she? Anikó said sure; she would love to have a German Shepherd. László gallantly gave the Duchess to Anikó! It was not just a romantic gesture. László loved his dog but realized she was more suitable for someone who lived in a house. Anikó was thrilled and accepted Duchess. She gave him a very close, warm hug and a deep kiss, telling László that she could not wait to see him next week, and parted with Duchess after giving a hug to Rose and saying bye to Martha. Rose was not surprised by his generosity and hoped Duchess would get used to her new home. They had a light dinner with Martha before they drove back to Toronto.

On their drive back to Toronto, Rose mentioned that she learned a bit about Mary and Anikó from Martha and their backgrounds. The guy she was with at the wedding was her fiancée. Soon after Baba's wedding, they broke up. There were rumours that Mary was trying to use her own daughter to get ahead financially, looking for old money and telling Anikó who to date. This was quite shocking if true, but the joke would be on them, as László was not a financial catch. He did not have any assets apart from his aristocratic last name. Apart from that, László did not come across as someone with real or old money. He just worked as a mechanical draftsman. Thus, it did not make much sense to Martha why Anikó was interested and was mesmerizing László, or perhaps she truly liked him. But if she did, Mary would step in sooner or later. More than likely, why Martha indicated that Anikó was not the right girl for László! Shortly after they got home, Anikó called and once

again thanked László for a lovely time and for the dog. Mary was not too thrilled, but she would live with the dog. During the week, László called Anikó every day to find out how things were and to hear her voice.

Everything was fine until Friday. When the dog got out of the fenced-in yard, Mary and Anikó had difficulty trying to catch her. Mary was furious, as she ended up late for an important meeting.

László calmed Mary down slightly and mentioned that running after the dog and screaming her name would not get Duchess back. She liked to run freely in the park near his apartment, off-leash, and she returned promptly if her name was called with an authoritative, firm voice, but not by yelling and screaming at her. She was easy to control; one had to know how, and she should not be physically punished. Mary asked László if he was coming and around what time on Saturday, and calmed down when he said yes and first thing in the morning by 9:30 a.m., at the latest. As he promised on Saturday morning at 9:20 a.m., the Olds pulled up to the curb in front of their house. Duchess was outside, barking at a squirrel. When she saw László, she stopped barking and ran up to him, her tail wagging from excitement. She was happy to see her former Master. Anikó came out to the little front porch and greeted László with a warm and tight embrace, really close, pushing her firm breasts onto his chest. She had a couple of teardrops in her eyes and stated that Mary had enough of the dog, that Duchess had barked all night, and that she had to return with László today. László said all right, not an issue. He greeted Mary and Joe, her husband. Then he asked Mary if it would be all right to take Anikó up to Toronto while he took the dog back, and they would return around seven in the evening. Mary said yes, take the dog back, please. She looked grumpy and tired.

László called his mother on Mary's phone, saying they would be there by noon with the dog. They said goodbye to Mary and Joe and drove back to Toronto with Anikó and the dog. On the way to Toronto, he asked Anikó for clarifications about her ex. Anikó was not offended; she wanted to tell László about her ex-boyfriend to clear up some rumours perhaps he had heard. The matter of fact was that he was the son of a car dealership owner with money. Yes, her mother dictated who she could date. However, for some strange reason, she felt something with László that she had never felt about others: inner peace, warm feelings, and being attracted to him, almost like knowing him all her life and that she did not have to be pretentious.

László was surprised by her honesty. He put his right arm around her, pulling her close to him. She gently kissed him on his right cheek. Anikó started to cry a bit and said she was so happy to get away from home, and she wished she would never have to return, but she had to. Anikó was still underage, and she wanted to finish her schooling. She wanted to be a doctor,

to heal people. To settle down after that and have two or more children, she did not want just one. It was better for children if they had a brother or sister. She did not care what László did for work as long as he would wait for her. She wanted this relationship to work; she was very lonely and missed her father. László reminded her of her father by his kindness and caring attitude towards her. She was in this hypnotic and melancholy daze, talking during the trip, showing her real emotional side.

László parked the Olds in the underground parking lot. When they exited the car, László pulled her close and kissed her tears away from her cheeks. She thanked László for listening, snuggled up to him, pressing her breasts into him, gave him a deep kiss, and snapped out of her daze. Now Anikó was all smiles again. She quickly adjusted her lipstick and had her game face back on. Duchess was happy returning to her known surroundings and greeted Rose with an enormous slobbery doggy kiss. Rose and Anikó hugged, too. Anikó looked around the apartment and saw the paintings on the wall. She could not believe her eyes when she saw his name signed on the paintings. Yes, they talked about oil paintings, about landscapes and flowers, but László never mentioned to her that he painted such. WOW! Anikó's eyes sparkled; this was noticed by Rose. Just how happy Anikó was that László had such talent and talked intently about the paintings. Rose prayed that this budding friendship would progress into a caring and loving relationship for both. Finally, Karma, or whatever one wanted to call it, would be in their favour. They spent some time listening to music while Rose was preparing lunch. Anikó offered to help her, but she refused; she wanted them to enjoy their time together.

After lunch, they explored the neighbourhood and took Duchess to the nearby park. Anikó snuggled up to László, putting her left arm around his waist as they walked and sat down on a bench in the park, letting Duchess run around while they talked.

She kept telling László how surprised she impressed was by his paintings. Wondered if László had any other surprises for her, pleasant or not. Anikó genuinely wanted to know László. With every minute they spent together, she felt closer to him. László reassured her that there were no unpleasant surprises, and he felt the same about her. He would be thrilled to have Anikó as his steady girlfriend, and maybe when she turned legal age, she could even marry him. While he could not pay for her education, Mary could consider it if she loved her daughter. The University of Toronto had an excellent reputation, and many good doctors graduated from U of T.

Anikó pulled László closer to her, kissed him deeply, and told him that she would love to be his steady girlfriend, and she was thrilled that they had found each other. It just felt so ideal for her, and László concurred. Yes, it felt good, and he was delighted.

Around 4 p.m., they walked back with the dog to the apartment, and Anikó hugged Rose, kissed each other, and said their goodbyes. It was time to drive Anikó back to Niagara Falls. On the way, they chatted about plans for several weeks to come. She would be doing her year-end exams, so she needed to concentrate on those to get high marks on the upcoming weekend. But the following weekend after she was done, she would like to spend as much time with László as possible, preferably in Toronto, away from home. László mentioned that while it was alright with him, Mary would have to agree as Anikó was still underage. She could sleep in the same room as his mother or even with him, but not to upset Mary, she could not tell her that. Rose would not say a thing about it as long as they were both happy. But László would not have sex with her until she was of legal age. Anikó snickered about the no-sex part a bit. Alternatively, he would be willing to sleep in her house, in the living room on the sofa, if approved by Mary. This, of course, will be a challenging proposition to put to Mary. This would be a good test of what Mary was after. Money or the happiness of her daughter.

Mary wasn't home when they arrived, only Joe. Anikó was not close to her stepfather, cared about his feelings, or allowed him to make decisions about her. As far as she was concerned, he was just a submissive wimp to her mother. Which exactly Joe was. László could never understand why they were married, as he was so much older than Mary, apart from perhaps that he had some money. László was curious how Mary was able to afford to have two Cadillacs (Anikó's Eldorado and her 1969 Sedan De Ville) and Joe's 1970 Chevy Malibu have a paid house, sending Anikó to an expensive private school and not working. Eventually, he figured he would find out!

Anikó and László hugged, she pressing, embossing her body into his, kissing him deeply, thanking him for understanding her, and reassuring him that she was his girl. She would talk to her mother about the plans after her school year. She called László later in the evening, stating that Mary had said yes, she could stay up in Toronto for Saturday night once in a while. László could sleep in the living room sometimes to spend more time together. This was very unusual for her mother to agree without much convincing.

László was over the moon and told Rose what was happening. Rose was very optimistic and thought Anikó had a much nicer personality than others stated. But he should not fall for her charms so quickly because he could get hurt emotionally. She felt that Mary still had not played all her cards yet, and she may have something up her sleeve.

In the meantime, László asked Prisca at work if she could lend her driver's license to him for a weekend. She was about the same height and weight as Anikó. Anikó was over 17 but not quite 18 but easily passed as 22. He wanted to take his girlfriend dancing at the Zodiac Night Club. Prisca knew very well everyone had to be over eighteen to get in. With makeup, she could look 22, the same age as Prisca. It was an upscale restaurant with a

large dance floor with live acts and disco dancing. All the office staff at Allen Tank had had their annual Christmas party there the previous year. Prisca agreed. He was thrilled!

III. Disco Queen

László told Anikó that he would have a great surprise for her in a couple of days. She was excited that László was so cheerful about it. Anikó was very curious about the surprise. Finally, Saturday came, and he picked Anikó up in the late morning with a small overnight bag, and she looked stunningly sexy as usual. While driving towards Toronto, László handed a small envelope to Anikó and asked her to open it. She did. She had a very puzzled look on her face when she read Prisca's name on the license. László casually said, "For tonight, that is your name, Anikó; memorize it well, especially the birth date, as we're going to the Zodiac!"

Anikó screamed with delight and jumped up and down on her seat as much as the seatbelt let her! She unbuckled the seatbelt, moved the armrest into the folded-up position, and started kissing László on his right cheek, snuggling so close to him that László had to slow down while driving. After calming down slightly, she asked László how he managed to do this and whether it was a genuine licence. László reassured her that it was a genuine licence and she had to be careful with it because he would have to give it back to Prisca on Monday.

He had a dinner reservation made for 8:00 p.m., and after, they could dance as long as Anikó wanted. They had a glass of French burgundy wine with their steak dinner, sat back, enjoyed the live act, and danced to a live band and disco tunes. Anikó was a great dancer, and she looked so sexy in her short black skirt, white strapless silk top, a nice gold chain with a cross around her neck, small diamond stud earrings, and black stilettos. And she danced up a storm. She hated platform shoes, according to her, they were very unfeminine. She sprayed her favourite perfume, Bal a Versailles by Jean Desprez, onto strategic places. Many guys and even couples were looking at her with envious eyes. László felt awesome. They arrived late, around 1 a.m., and Rose was worried until they returned. Both showered quickly, he decided that Anikó would sleep in László's fold-out bedroom in the living room, and László would sleep on the living room sofa.

In the morning, Anikó was surprised that László kept his word and had not tried to get between her legs during the night, which she would have enjoyed more than László would have imagined. Although it was very tempting, László did keep his word. A trait that Anikó started to admire more and more. Her trust in and her love for László grew every minute. After a typical morning of refreshing in the bathroom, she put on blue jeans and a short-sleeved t-shirt without a bra. Her perky nipples pushed through the cotton fabric. They had breakfast and took Duchess to the park to do her business. After returning with her, they left for downtown Toronto. Walking around, window shopping, and talking about their fun at Zodiac. Grabbing some junk food for lunch, they returned to László's apartment early in the afternoon. Anikó thanked Rose for the hospitality; they hugged and kissed,

and it was time to drive her home. On their way to Niagara Falls, she snuggled up to László with his right arm around her.

She was singing along to Fleetwood Mack's songs that played on the eighth track: "Never Going Back Again, Go Your Own Way, Don't Stop, Dreams, and You Make Loving Fun." She especially loved the last song and played it several times over. She was again quite emotional. For the following weekend, they planned to go to the ZZ-Top concert across the Falls on the USA side, and she would get tickets for them. The Olds stopped in front of her house, and she sat in the car for a while, hugging László. Unfortunately, the weekend was over, and neither wanted this to be over.

On Monday, László returned the license to Prisca with a small box of chocolates. The work week was going slow. Ruth was smoking more and more in the office, and László started to complain to his boss that he was choking on the fumes. He suggested László open the window more; his drafting table was next to the window, but he could not do much. László started to fight fire with fire, in this case, smoke with smoke.

On Tuesday, he brought some smaller, wine-tipped cigars that came in a six-pack with him to work. Every time Ruth finished her cigarette, he lit up a small cigar. The smell of the fumes was quite overwhelming. Now Ruth asked what was going on: why was László smoking cigars? László mentioned that he would be from now on; if she could smoke, so could he. If she was willing to cut back on her smoking, he was willing to cut back on the cigars. It worked; Ruth cut back to one cigarette in the morning and one after lunch. At lunch, she went outside to the parking lot to smoke. This arrangement worked for a while.

Friday came, and László drove to Niagara Falls directly from work. He had his change of clothes with him in the car. Rose looked after the dog. She had stopped working again at the bank due to issues with her hands from rheumatoid arthritis. She was put on a short-term disability that eventually became long-term. This was the last time she actually worked at the bank. László arrived just before supper time and was warmly greeted by all. Mary wondered how her daughter had ended up in a nightclub when she was underage. Mary was not upset, just very curious. László said they did not check her ID, which was the case; she had looked old enough. They conveniently forgot to tell her they had a backup plan with a borrowed over-the-age driver's license. Anikó had an ear-to-ear smile and showed the ZZ Top tickets she had obtained for Saturday. She and László walked down to the falls after dinner and returned after the lights were turned on in the evening. The falls looked very pretty in the evening with the lights on. She retired to her bedroom, and Mary made his bed on the living room sofa.

After taking a shower and breakfast the morning, Anikó and László drove around a bit. She was showing a shortcut from the highway to her house. They went to another property in Niagara Falls and saw Mary there. It was a large house containing about eight apartments or rooms. This was how they made a living. Anikó explained, "The income from the rooming house plus what Joe got on his pension. And mother soon would be renting out the basement in her home too." She continued, "Keep it a secret that they did not pay any taxes on the income made. The house was registered in the former name of Mary, the same last name as hers. While the house they lived in was registered to Mary in her current married name, as soon as she turned 18, it would be transferred to her under Anikó's name." Now László could understand why sometimes her mother had to rush out and take care of issues. László thanked Anikó for her trust in him and enlightenment.

László started to trust her more and more. Doubts about her sincerity vanished as she revealed something she would not if she was not serious with him. He had fallen in love with Anikó and asked her to go to Lotus Grove Park, where they first kissed. She did, and they parked. He hugged Anikó and said with all sincerity that he loved her! She had a couple of teardrops as he had become emotional, slowly flowing down her blushed cheeks, shining like brilliant little diamonds, and she said that she loved him too! She kissed László deeply and pressed herself against his body. László felt her firm nipples and breasts as she pushed herself vigorously against his body. László felt a bulge in his pants that Anikó felt also. László just grabbed her behind and massaged the area between her cheeks from behind. However, she was still underage, and that was where they had to stop; she was jailed.

The last thing László wanted was to ruin the relationship by doing something both wanted so badly. Self-control was not an easy thing to do when a sexy, young, attractive woman clung to someone and said that she was in love with him. But by exercising self-control, he also showed her he was emotionally sound. They returned to the house to eat something before crossing the border for the concert.

Anikó wanted to take her car; it was alright with László. She would be occupied by driving which was a good thing, and she knew where to drive. Crossing the border was easy; they just showed their driver's license and told the officer they were heading to the ZZ Top concert. ZZ Top was great! The song Tush was their favourite, with the simple lyrics: "I have been up, I have been down. Take my word, my way around. I ain't asking' for much. I said, Lord, take me downtown; I'm just lookin' for some tush." Coming back to Canada should have been as simple as entering the US. But the Canadian border guards were being difficult. After declaring that they just went to the ZZ Top concert and didn't buy anything, apart from filling up the tank, as the premium was less, on the US side, the Canadian Customs searched the vehicle for drugs and alcohol. They wondered how a 17-year-old girl owned a Cadillac Eldorado. However, the joke was on them: no booze, drugs, not even

a cigarette! Anikó was quite furious, and rightly so; it was not their concern that she owned such an expensive car. Anikó had the ownership and insurance papers in her name; that was the bottom line. Not how she acquired her Cadillac, a gift, or otherwise! After a few minutes, László calmed her down and noted that it could have been worse; they could have been strip-searched! Anikó started to laugh out loud. They stopped near the falls to see the illumination from the lights. They walked a bit, hand in hand, and kissed. Overall, it was a good day for both of them. Then they slowly walked back to the car, and she drove home, back to reality.

László stayed once again overnight. On Sunday, after breakfast, which Anikó made for him, they hugged warmly, kissed passionately, and said their byes until the next weekend. The plan was to stay more or less in the Niagara region again.

Actually, László wanted to take her to the Club 747 disco in Buffalo, which had the look of the interior of a Boeing 747 airplane, in the Executive Resort Hotel. László had been there with Gabor and Les, another friend of his, about a year before Anikó. It was a fun place to meet girls, and one had even liked László quite a lot, as she corresponded with him and had invited him to visit her. László actually drove to meet Laurie, a girl with a Polish background. A lot of people with Polish backgrounds lived in the Buffalo area. But it was a bit far for László to get involved with Laurie. Laurie, 20 years later, worked at one of the local Buffalo TV stations as a journalist, reading the evening news.

László asked Prisca if he could borrow her license again for the weekend, and she obliged. But she mentioned to László that she would be leaving for her summer vacation after that, so she needed it back by Sunday night. László told Rose what he had found out about Mary and her rooming house. She made about \$2,000 a month without paying taxes, which was a lot of money (at the time). The only thing Mary paid was the property tax, water, and hydro. Which was not even 10 percent of her intake. László was planning to visit Hungary later in the month, as this would be his first trip back, and it was already planned and paid for. He mentioned this to Anikó, and she noted she wished she could go with him, but it was not possible.

The weekend would be their last for a while that they could spend together until he returned in about a month. He really wanted this one to be special. When he arrived to see Anikó on Friday evening, he had a dozen red roses for her. This wasn't the first time he had brought roses for her, but usually just three. Mary commented that László was spoiling Anikó way too much. Anikó liked flowers, after all, she was a girlie girl. László really liked her femininity. He also wanted her to be happy because making her happy made him happy and satisfied. After dinner, he joked with Anikó that he would race her in the Eldorado against his Oldsmobile 98. Knowing that she

liked to drag race with her Eldorado against big cars, but not against a Z28 Camaro or Mustang GT, would blow her doors off, which was a very unfair competition. They had the same horsepower as her Eldorado but weighed about 1500 lb less. Whoever lost would have to make breakfast.

Anikó was on, and they disappeared without telling Mary their true intentions. Mary could not understand why they needed two cars. She did not know about Anikó's drag racing with others. They went to find an empty street at the edge of town that was hardly ever used by others, lined up side by side, and on the count of three, put the pedal to the metal. Well, not exactly. László also put his foot on the brake for a good second to give Anikó a slight head start, then took off with smoke billowing from his rear tires. Anikó, of course, won without realizing that László allowed her. The Olds was lighter than her Cadillac Eldorado by about 600 lbs, and more importantly, it had more horsepower. In reality, the Olds would have won. They zoomed down to the main street, and at one of the traffic lights, they lined side by side. She floored hers again, and once again, László let her win. Anikó was smiling ear-to-ear. Her smile was worth it for László.

Upon their return, Mary was very probing. All Anikó said to her mother was that they just wanted to park their cars side by side near the Falls. Mary just threw her hands up, mumbled something, placed the bed sheet, pillow, and blanket on the sofa for László, and went to her bedroom. Anikó hugged László for several minutes very close to her and made the bed for László, and they kissed good night. She went to her bedroom, which was located above the garage.

On Saturday, upon waking up, László shaved and took a quick shower. Anikó quickly made breakfast for him while he was in the bathroom. It was a pleasant surprise for László since it was his task to do since he had lost the race. Mary and Joe had left for the market. They were all alone. Anikó sat in his lap, and how they ate their breakfast. She also put a little package on the table before eating. Once finished eating, she asked László to open it. It was a bottle, a medium-sized Aramis aftershave or cologne. She said that she loved the aroma of it and he should try it on for her. To see if he liked it or not. Yes, he did, and that made Anikó smile again. Everything was going well so far. Now, all they had to do was sell the idea to Mary that they would be late returning, as László wanted to take Anikó to the 747 Disco in Buffalo. This would be hard to sell.

Both Anikó and László were shocked that Mary so far had not objected to anything. Despite coming across at first as controlling and what Anikó had told László about her mother. Maybe Mary actually liked László? Stopped being so controlling; this was so hard to figure out. László asked Anikó, Just what did she tell her mother about him? Anikó smiled at him and said that was her secret. Mary and Joe arrived with some fresh vegetables and cherries. László mentioned that they would like to go down to Buffalo to a disco, and how late could they stay out? Mary said they had to be back by 11

p.m., at the very latest. It was a deal.

After a late lunch, Anikó and László changed their clothing. She wore the same outfit as when they went to the Zodiac. László wore black slacks, a dark burgundy Pierre Cardin shirt with a black leather Pierre Cardin belt, and comfortable black dress boots. They took the Caddy, as Anikó preferred the silver colour of her Eldorado with the electric sunroof. On the way, she opened the sunroof slightly to let the fresh air in.

They took the scenic route along the Niagara Parkway to Fort Erie, stopping at a few places for a bit of kissing and close hugging. Although László was slim and not very muscular, she loved to be hugged by him. She loved talking about her future as a doctor and starting a family with László; she told him just how good she felt being with him. And just how much she cared for and loved him. As if a ton of weight was lifted off her chest every time they were alone together. László could not understand this for the time being, but he soon learned what she meant by what this meant all along. He believed her and reassured her everything would work out as long as they loved each other, no worries. It took them almost three hours to make the 45-minute-long trip, they were not in any hurry. They crossed the Peace Bridge to the USA and slowly drove to the location of the 747 Disco, just across from the airport.

Anikó was still a bit melancholy; she got into a trance when she spoke about her future aspirations and dreams as if she knew that was all they would be. They just sat in the car; László pulled her close to him, and she pressed her body into his so hard that it hurt, but he said nothing; he just held her, not wanting to let her go. He felt her heartbeat as if it were his own, her nipples firm, excited, and pressing, penetrating into his chest and into his soul. After some time, Anikó said that she was ready to go in. She adjusted her makeup and lipstick, carefully cleaning off her lipstick from László's lips. She had her game face back on and her smile. Once again, she was not asked for ID she looked old enough and stunning. She loved the inside of the club; it was just like being inside a 747, just much wider, with aircraft seats and the waitresses dressed as stewardesses. The music was loud, with the latest disco songs blaring out from many speakers. Including the latest hit "Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood," a 1977 disco rearrangement by Santa Esmeralda of an Animals song from 1965. Anikó said this is how she felt about her life: whatever happens, remember this and hugged László. It was time to go. Time to go back where she did not want to go: home. She smiled and thanked László for the excellent time that she had.

This time, there were no issues at the border crossing back to Canada, and she just took the QEW to make it back by 11 p.m. She did not want to make her mother mad. She truly wanted and needed this relationship with László to keep her sane. Mary was up and waiting, and when they opened the door to get in, it was a few minutes to 11 p.m. All she said was goodnight, and

she went to her bedroom. Anikó set the sofa for László, kissed him with passion, and she retired to her bedroom.

László woke up early to some commotion in the living room. Mary and Joe were going back and forth, carrying something out to the Chevy. László went to the bathroom to shave and take a quick shower. In the meantime, Anikó got up too. She made breakfast for László again while he was in the bathroom. Then she took a shower, etc., and ate her breakfast. Soon, Mary and Joe left. Anikó was a bit grumpy; she mentioned something about her period and went over to the little bar section in the living room, where the stereo was put on some music and started to sing along. The living room was decorated in Spanish bordello style, with heavy, dark furniture and plenty of deep reds. It was not László's style; he liked the French provincial style or modern Danish teak style. Time flew quickly, and after noon, Mary and Joe returned to the house. László thanked Mary for her hospitality, gave her a hug, and said his goodbyes!

Anikó walked him out to his Olds. She hugged him passionately and wished László a safe trip back to Toronto and his upcoming trip to Hungary. She mentioned to László that she would be going away with her mother to New York City to visit a friend of her mother. But she would be in touch after they both returned. She from NYC and him from Budapest. She then kissed him deeply and said that she loved him so much. László started up the Olds and drove away as she waved goodbye until his car turned to the street that led to the highway back to Toronto. László was spiritless; he felt something was just not right. Anyhow, he would find out soon when they saw each other in a month. Now, he just wanted to get back to Toronto and deliver Prisca's license back to her.

When László returned home, Rose sensed that something was just not right with Anikó. He mentioned, more or less, what had happened. They had had a lovely time, but Anikó was saying some strange things to him, and he could not understand what she meant by them. Rose mentioned that Mary must have clamped down on Anikó, as she perhaps felt that her daughter was not ready for a steady relationship. Rose suggested he give Anikó space and time, and she would come around. Anyhow, he should concentrate on his trip to Budapest.

IV. Love hurts

On Monday, back at work, László's boss was not around, and Jack, the general manager of Allen Tank, called László to his office. He said that he would have to let him go, as Ruth had complained that he was rude to her and made a mockery of her smoking by starting to smoke cigars himself. László mentioned that this was not exactly fair. He had been with the company for several years, his work was always excellent, and he had worked on Saturdays almost every weekend overtime before Ruth and Prisca were hired. He was the one who had actually complained that Ruth smoked too much, which bothered him, to his boss. Nothing was done, and he had only smoked for a couple of days to show Ruth just how unpleasant it was for him to inhale and choke on her fumes.

Jack did agree with him, but it was a tough choice for him to make. If he let Ruth go, Prisca would go too, as they shared a car and apartment. He could not afford to lose two experienced draftsmen. He could afford to let one go, as the orders had slowed down for the summer, but not let two go. Unfortunately, it had to be him. What he would do was pay László until the end of the month, plus two weeks of holidays and another week of severance pay for every year he had worked. Sorry, he was no longer employed, and here was the check for the amount he'd discussed. László took the cheque, turned around, walked to his drafting table, picked up his mechanical pencils and other drafting instruments that belonged to him, and left without saying another word to anyone.

He drove home and told Rose what had happened. Rose, was just as devastated as he was. This could not have happened at a worse time, as László had just signed a renewal lease for a year. László went to his bank, deposited his final paycheque and checked his balance. He could pay the rent and all the other necessities for three months.

László knew that he could get another drafting job relatively fast. There were plenty of jobs available, and he had a needed skill. László called up a friend, Karl, for whom László had worked once. He ran a job-finding agency but was now working on his own. Karl said he could start at Lummus Engineering the next day on contract. László told Karl that he had to realize he was going to Budapest in two weeks. The only way he would take it is if he could go for his holidays. He already paid for the airfare and he can not get a refund. Karl advised him to take the contract for two weeks. And see what happens when he returns.

After that call, he called Anikó. Mary picked up the phone and told him that Anikó was not available. László should realize that after what he had done, she would no longer allow her to see him. Anikó was no longer interested in him, and he should not call her again. László, could not believe his ears. László asked Mary to tell him what he had done that brought this decision on so suddenly. Mary told László that a friend had seen Anikó and

him racing on Friday night, jeopardizing her life. László was flabbergasted and told Mary she was out of her mind. Anikó was never in danger. Mary was using this just as an excuse to break them up. Mary should admit to the real reason: he was not wealthy while he had the coveted aristocratic last name she was after, but there was no old money behind it. Mary was shuffling off Anikó to New York City to a higher bidder! She should stop selling and prostituting her own daughter! He knew this because Anikó had told him (indirectly, she actually had, and now, her behaviour and what she was saying all made sense!) Mary started to scream into the phone: enough. Anikó was leaving for New York today, and they were done!

Rose overheard all this and tried to calm László down. László was truly hurt and in a rage! Being fired from his job was one thing, and being forced to break up with Anikó on the same day was devastating. To prevent László from driving to Niagara Falls, and doing something stupid, Rose took his car keys away and told him he would get the keys back when he calmed down and realized this was not the end of the world!

Martha knew Mary well and all her dirty secrets. And that was why she told László that Anikó was not the girl for him! Even though Anikó could have been if only Mary had not been so deviously treacherous and full of spite.

László had learned from his mother and from his second aunt in Poughkeepsie that way back in history, his surname had come with prestige, influence, and wealth. All those were lost between the two world wars. This was now confirmed by his father and his grandmother, so it was not just a myth. László's last name could be spelled two ways. A common form or of the aristocratic way. After WWII, it was best to spell it the ordinary way, to remove all aristocratic indications under communism, and to stifle the past.

In some ways, it was for the better there was no point crying over lost wealth and properties that were now gone for good and destroyed. Sometimes, it is best to accept the present and make the most of it rather than dwell on the past and what might have been. Of course, some traits come through genes and develop into certain mannerisms that divulge or hint at something different that is not common or average. As László was growing up, these traits were noticed by his mother and by his father, even from a distance.

László's father faced something similar when he got involved with his first wife, with a slight difference. His father's father, László's paternal grandfather, forbade his son to marry Rosalie when he asked his permission to marry. His father told him she was from the wrong side of town. "He may be a pauper titled aristocrat, but even then, he should not pick a wife from the garbage pile!" László's father married her despite not getting permission by forging his father's signature. When his father found out about the

marriage, he wanted to charge his son with forgery. But his mother appealed to him, and he disowned him for a lifetime. He died shortly after that. What László learned from all the events and his family history is that it was not the assets or money that made the person, but how they were and their characteristics, good and bad. How they handled themselves and their actions spoke more than any words ever could. Not just when things were good but in the face of adversity. No one was perfect, and Karma was certainly a mean bitch with an odd sense of humour!

Once back in Toronto, he was still heartbroken and could not get over Anikó. He gathered all of her images that he had taken of her with his little Canon 110ED cassette camera, tore them up, and put the pieces in an envelope with a small note writing she was just a heartless lying bitch, and mailed it to her in Niagara Falls. He was trying to erase all the physical traces that reminded him of her, trying to erase all the memories (which, of course, he could not; they were burned into his mind forever). Through these actions, he was hoping to get over Anikó. He also called up Martha, told her what had happened, and told her she was right! Martha wasn't surprised and told László that Anikó was indeed in New York with Mary, and something immoral was happening. Forget Anikó she would never marry him due to her mother's influence.

He started to hang around with his old friends, like Gabor and Les, more frequently. His friends wondered what had happened to him for four or five months. László, without going into details, mentioned that he had met a girl, but now it was over. Gabor, Les, and László were not quite the three musketeers. They went out together sometimes to try to pick up girls at discos and similar places. That was how they ended up in the 747 Disco in Buffalo, and László knew about it.

László started to look for a new drafting position. He called up Lummus Engineering, but as they told him, the full-time position was filled. He saw an advertisement in the local paper and applied. He was called in for the interview. They looked at his sample drawings and asked how much he knew about electrical schematics. He said that while he could prepare electrical schematics, he was not an electrical designer. He was a mechanical draftsman, and that was what they were advertising for. He got the job.

The salary was \$11,000 per year plus benefits, which included two weeks of vacation after a year. This was \$2,000 less than László had made just a couple of months ago at Allen Tank. Gasoline prices were rising, and he would have to move closer to his new employer. Which was located in the northeast section of the city. While it would be possible to use public transit, it would take about two hours each way using two subway lines and a bus.

It was time to look for an apartment closer to work, preferably as close as possible. László was in luck. There were several not far, in fact, he could

even walk to work from a couple. However, they were far from the conveniences and luxury of his present apartment building. There was no indoor pool, TV camera at the entry, supervised parking, shopping plaza underneath, which included a grocery store and no subway. However, he could get a two-bedroom unit for less than he paid for a one-bedroom. Since he was making less money, some things had to be sacrificed. Now, he had to get out of the lease, and getting out of one was not always easy.

Rose did not have to go to work. She was on a disability pension, but the dog was becoming a liability. He liked dogs and liked Duchess. She was a good dog, did not chew on the furniture, and only barked when necessary. Rose had issues with the dog, although the dog was a good companion for her. She spoiled the dog, and because of that, Duchess did not always listen to her. Walking the dog was a challenge for her aching hands. Duchess was ninety pounds, a good size for a female, and was very strong. Sometimes, she would pull her, and Rose even slipped once or twice and fell. Luckily, nothing broke, but next time, she could break her arm, leg, or even a hip. On top of everything else, the Duchess became ill. He had to take her to the vet, and while turning into the underground parking spot, she started to jump around and throw up. László took his eyes off for a second to glance just where the barf had landed, and he bashed the right rear section of the Olds into a concrete pillar. He was not thrilled! He stopped, looked at the damage, and cleaned up the mess. Luckily, the dog threw up on the floor mat. The veterinarian bill was \$90, and the repair estimate was \$400, as the car required to be partially repainted. He just left the damage as is. He no longer cared what his car looked like. He just wanted to move to the new apartment and get on with life.

By now, he had been totally disillusioned. 1977 was, in many ways, worse than 1965 for him. He wiggled out of the lease by telling the landlord the truth. He had lost his job, and he no longer could pay the rent. Yes, it had cost him his last month's rent, but they let him out. At least, that was a positive step. He hired a moving company, as relying on his buddies to help him move would be more headache than it was worth. At the end of August, on a moving day, it rained heavily. He got the keys from the building superintendent and proceeded to sign off on the apartment's inspection.

The apartment was on the top floor, with water pouring through the ceiling. He could not move into that unit in such a condition! Quickly, the superintendent called the rental office to see what else was available in the building in the same rental price range. Luckily for him, another two-bedroom unit was empty, almost the same size, two floors below, on the 9th floor. Quickly, they checked the unit, and it didn't leak, so he accepted the new unit. This cost him an additional hour with the movers. After the move, he went to the rental office and had the hour's expenses deducted from his upcoming rent.

His new employer manufactured chilling systems for injection moulding machines for the plastic industry. It was quite different, but in many ways, it related to pressure vessels for the petrochemical industry, where László produced fabrication and assembly drawings and bills of materials. It wasn't a large operation, and László quickly got to know the staff in the office and the fabrication shop. He swiftly became friends with Joe, who was handling technical support, but eventually moved to sales. Joe had a very Hungarian last name, but he was not born in Canada and only spoke a few words. He was about the same age as László. It was quite funny that both of them had just broken up with their girlfriends, with the difference being that Joe's was a Canadian Italian and László's was a Canadian Hungarian. They could relate to each other's heartaches, how they felt, and what they were going through. Misery loved company! This was a good thing, and soon they just joked about being dumped. Joe had a .308 rifle too. Several times, they drove to Bolton to a gun shooting range to practice their aim at targets. László imagined Mary's head on the bullseye; it worked fine, and he did not miss a shot.

Attila, who knew about László's misfortune, invited them to his cottage for a weekend. László, Rose, Duchess, and Joe went up for a weekend. It was fun. They went canoeing, and of course, Joe had never been in a canoe. They flipped it in the middle of the deep lake while László took photos with his camera. Luckily for them, both wore a floatation device around their hips. Duchess joined by jumping from the shore into the water to rescue her master. Although she hated water, it was quite interesting to see her loyalty, despite her fear of water. The end result was quite comical, as now László was trying to overturn the canoe with one hand and, with Joe's help, keep the camera out of the water with the other. As they flipped the canoe right side up, handing the camera over to Joe, he grabbed Duchess by the scruff of her neck, keeping her head above the water until they made it to the shore. The rescuer is being rescued. Well, at least they had fun and now had something else to laugh about! Despite the duchess' bravery, her days were numbered. Rose had difficulties handling the dog and gave László an ultimatum: her or the dog! For László, if the dog could cook, it would have been an easier choice. While he loved his mother, she was becoming a hindrance when it came to his friends and any potential new girlfriends. Telling any potential one that he resides in the same apartment would indicate that he was a mama's boy. László wasn't, of course.

He found a place for Duchess at a car repair shop-junkyard nearby. While it was not the best for the dog, that was all he could do. She was good company and loyal, but he loved his mother more and understood her problems with her hands. Rose was sad, but she could not take the dog for walks when László was at work. She required a minimum of three walks daily to do her business; once early in the morning, László handled that, noon, which was done by Rose and by László in the evening.

Just at the time when László gave Duchess away, he received a call from Martha. Anikó was begging her to get hold of László. Even Mary was begging Martha to get in touch with him. They both really wanted to talk to László. She was getting tired of them coming every day and asking her. László was puzzled, and so was Martha! After all, Mary had told him just months ago that it was over. Leave Anikó alone.

V. Engaged to the Femme Fatale

László decided to call Anikó and Mary to find out why they wanted to talk to him so badly. Mary picked up the phone, and he asked for Anikó. Mary gave the phone to Anikó, and they spoke for about an hour. She profusely apologized; her mother had misunderstood the whole thing, and both were very sorry for hurting his feelings. She had tried to call, but his phone line was disconnected. Then they drove up to Toronto, but he no longer lived at the apartment on Duplex Avenue. When Mary told her she could not see him anymore, she broke down and told her mother she refused to continue her education, even if Mary killed her, she loved him and only him. Could he overlook what had happened?

If she could admit that they were wrong, if László truly loved her, would he forgive both of them? Anikó was sobbing, real or not, she knew that László would forgive her.

Anikó was correct. He agreed to go down to Niagara Falls on Saturday for a candid talk, and he would bring his mother along because she had a few things to say to Anikó and Mary.

On Saturday, just after lunch, László and Rose arrived. Anikó ran out to greet them both when she saw the Olds pull to the curb in front of the house. Anikó also noticed the damage on the right side and wondered, with a concerned look, if László had been in an accident. She behaved as if there was no animosity between them. László gave her a hug but not a kiss. He informed her that he was not in a car accident, just a parking mishap.

Everyone went inside and sat by the dining room table where Mary was sitting. Anikó stood up, stepped toward László, hugged him, and verbally greeted Rose warmly. The silence was deafening for about two minutes. Everyone just sat quietly and looked at each other. Since it was up to László what he would do, he finally directed his dialogue toward Mary and looked straight into her eyes. He was not questioning her. László just stated the obvious to Mary, his displeasure in Hungarian for all to understand.

“If you love your daughter, you want the best for her. You support her in her choices, especially when she is just about to reach legal age, and especially if it brought happiness to her, and it is not something that she or you should be ashamed of. You do not deliberately break her heart or the hearts of others who care for, respect, and love her. I have not done anything to her that would jeopardize her safety or well-being, and I never would. All I did was fall in love with Anikó and try to make her happy within my limited means. I do not have any ulterior motives. I do not care about your social status or how much or little money you may have. You know that I do not have any hidden financial resources, and I may have a rich family heritage, but that is just my heritage. I work for a living, and sometimes times can be tough. I know I am far from perfect, and I can accept that neither are you

perfect. I am not looking for perfection, but I expect honesty, open communication, and mutual understanding from here. Yes, I do love Anikó. That is why I am here. If any of you have an issue with that, tell me now. Otherwise, accept that fact and let our relationship grow and develop at our own pace.”

Mary took it all in without any interruption. Anikó was looking at her mother. It was hard to tell what was going on. Mary sat silently for a minute, looked at Anikó, then at László, and began speaking

“You are quite right. Maybe I jumped to the wrong conclusion. If you love my daughter, I leave it up to her. I do want what is best for her. If she wants to marry you once she has finished her schooling, that will be up to her. I will not stand in your way, my son.”

The last two words sent shivers down László’s spine and made the hair stand on the nape of his neck! Yuk! He thought to himself “I am not your son, even if I marry Anikó, and I become your son-in-law, do not ever call me that!”

Anikó looked at László and smiled, eyes sparkling, reached toward him with her hands across the table, wanting to touch László’s hands, and spoke in Hungarian:

“László, I do love you very much. I want us to share our dreams together. I do want to marry you when I finish my studies. If you can wait, please accept my hand.”

László touched her hands, indicating yes, but said nothing. Rose spoke while looking at Anikó, but it was also directed toward Mary.

“Your words show repentance, but actions speak louder than words. I know László loves Anikó very much. I also know he was committed to her and was not here to play games. As for myself, I do not hold any malice toward any of you. Anikó, if you love each other, I will love you as my own.”

“Did it sound like we just got engaged or what?” László asked with a surprise.

“YES!” Anikó shouted out with joy! “Will you accept me as your future wife?”

Mary jumped up quickly from the table, went to the fridge in the kitchen, took out a bottle of French champagne, put it on the table, got four glasses, popped the cork, and poured champagne for everyone. Before László would change his mind! They toast to the new beginning and happiness for all! Joe, her husband, was mysteriously missing. It was clear that while he was her husband, she was in charge, and affairs about Anikó were not any of his business or had anything to do with him.

László grabbed Anikó’s hands and started to walk with her outside, as he wanted to speak to her in privacy, leaving the two mothers to chat with each other. They embraced each other each other firmly. Anikó pressed her breast into him, but she had a bra on, so he could not feel her nipples against his chest. He asked her if she was sure about this, as he was not playing

games with her. She said yes; she was positive. Anikó went on about how badly she felt when he left, as her mother told her, as far as she was concerned, it was over. Mary would not allow her to see him again.

“László was a bad influence on her, and he was spoiling her. All men say the same things, and he would cheat on her look, what your father did to her, to them!” She cried over this all night, but her mother got a leather belt and beat her with it. While Anikó spoke, she took László’s right hand and guided it inside her jeans and inside her pants that she wore, to the scar on her left buttock, as proof she was on the level. She also confirmed that she beat her until she submitted to her demands, and she hated living at home. Anikó continued about her mother, and she was ready to kill her. Mary was yelling at her “I made you, and I can kill you! You will obey!”

László grabbed her left buttock with his hand, firmly slipped his other hand into her pants, and grabbed the other cheek too with the same firmness. He pulled Anikó very close to him, indicating that she belonged to him, and reassured her that he would be loyal to her as long as she was to him. László tenderly massaged her pussy lips, feeling the warmth and moistness and silkiness of her pussy hair for about a minute, as Anikó felt the bulge in his pants and stopped. Anikó let out some soft sighs and asked why he had stopped. László mentioned that this was not the time or the place. Pulling his hands out, he took a quick whiff of his fingers that had a slight muskiness intermixed with Bal de Versailles. He whispered into her left ear that her scent was heavenly.

Anikó smiled and noted that he must have some Aramis left. They went for a long walk, discussing his bad luck after the breakup. She did not talk much about New York (it was clear that Mary’s plan did not work as planned) except, she got more interested in photography and had travelled a few times on the subway with an undercover detective, who took pictures on the subway with his Minolta 35mm camera. It was incredible that he didn’t have to use flash, and still, the images came out well. She also mentioned that she hoped László had not destroyed the image negatives and that she would like to replace them at her own expense! He indicated to her, No, they were not cut up. He had torn up the photos to express to her how he felt, torn to pieces, emotionally worn out. As they walked and he listened to her voice, thoughts flashed through his brain at the speed of light. In his mind, László was still skeptical about what had just happened. Anikó was either for real or a convincing liar, and her mother was a scheming, deceitful gypsy witch! Perhaps the combination of all the above. He remembered one of his favourite sayings: “Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me!” or maybe he was fooling himself.

He wanted to believe in Anikó because he loved her and knew that she made him happy when they were alone together. But she was so different with her mother around! If only he would have money to run away with

Anikó and disappear for good. He also knew that was not in his cards. There had to be another way to free her soul to get the old piranha off her back that tore into her flesh and soul.

Could his love for her help Anikó not only to repent but to break out and free herself to truly pursue her dreams? Empathy was something he rarely had for others; for him, this was a sign of weakness, and now he would need it in spades. Would he be strong enough? Would it make any difference? Or was she just damaged goods that could never be rehabilitated? His logic said no! His heart said yes! There are millions of questions with no clear answers. There was just one burning feeling in him: his love for Anikó. Love would not kill him; it could only make him stronger. Anikó needed a stronger person than her mother. Someone who would stand up to her mother, hoping that one day Anikó would realize what kind of monster she was.

There was only one way, full speed ahead, fuck the consequences! He stopped suddenly at the gate to her front yard, and Anikó wondered what had happened. He pulled her close and whispered in her ear that he loved her. Anikó confirmed that she felt his aura and love for her, and when they were together, she felt so different and re-energized, his aura feeding hers. He just had to understand that for her, these were very different steps, not her usual ones. She found it ever so difficult to stand up to her mother, but for him, she would continue. She had already; otherwise, they would not be together right now. She did want him to be happy and never regret that he loved her. She knew he had doubts, but he had to believe in her. His love for her was an admirable strength that she needed and wanted.

Nice words, he thought, but we would see in a month, in two months, in three, would it last to the New Year, to her 18th birthday and beyond? They went inside, Rose and Mary were still having a friendly chat. László looked at his watch; it was getting late, and he was emotionally drained. They should be heading back to Toronto soon, he told all of them. Mary and Anikó looked at László with a puzzled look, like, "What are your plans now?"

László sat down, and Anikó sat on his lap and put her arms around him. This was the first time she had sat like that in front of her mother and asked, "When will I see you again?"

László tried to be diplomatic and fair to Anikó and all concerned. He reassured her that he would not interfere in her education. He mentioned that her final year at her college was coming up. To get into a university, she would need good grades. He would like her to get good grades. That way, Anikó could get a scholarship to continue. They could get married after graduation early next summer if that would suit them all. She could then move in with them (as Rose would have to live with them) and attend U of T.

In the meantime, she was welcome to come to Toronto on the weekends. She could sleep in his room alone, as now they had a two-bedroom apartment. He would sleep on the living room couch. He could come to Niagara Falls on the weekends, but not like he used to. He was making much

less now, but he was optimistic that would change. It would be superb if Anikó, and he could spend his 24th birthday together on September 4th, a week from tomorrow.

Now that they were engaged, shortly, betrothal her officially. These plans were just his, but he would like a consensus; he was tired of misunderstandings and wanted to avoid future ones. He loved Anikó very much, and he felt that she loved him. All he truly desired was that all of them support their mutual feelings, and give their blessings for them to be happy. Anikó kissed him and expressed verbally that she agreed absolutely with her future husband's plans. Emphasizing "her future husband's" part.

Mary said that they have her blessing and would strive for that. Rose, pretty well said the same and she added that she loved them both very much. After mutual hugs and kisses, László and Rose left. Anikó walked out to the car with them and opened the door for Rose, when László lowered his window, bent over, kissed him on his lips, and asked him to drive carefully, she waived with her hand as the Olds turned onto the street that led to the highway to Toronto.

On the way back to Toronto, László just shook his head, with a bit of sarcasm mentioned, that was an interesting melodrama! He loved Anikó and knew she felt the same about him, but he could not trust the old witch. Rose said those were her feelings too, after talking with Mary. On the surface, she played along, but deep down, she would not let go of total control of Anikó. Mary just wanted Anikó to continue her education, and perhaps that was why she had given her some slack for now. He should be careful, as he was playing with fire, and he might get hurt again. She was correct about playing with fire but wrong about hurt.

László was never hurt again, emotionally, by Anikó. He never allowed her to penetrate that invisible defence field he could wrap around his emotions and soul. He loved Anikó deeply and would for the rest of his life, but it was different than he felt before, the trust was gone. Several times, he got disillusioned yet fascinated by Anikó's and her mother's ability for depravity! Just how far could they sink? As time passed over the years, he realized she was beyond any rehabilitation. She could never change for the better; he just accepted her as she was for those few precious moments when she allowed herself to be in a different space: their shared dreams.

The next couple of days went by quickly for László. He mentioned to Joe at work that he had just gotten engaged to Anikó suddenly. He called up Martha and told her the incredible story; it was hard to believe what happened and she was shocked. Gabor called László, he had just bought a Corvette. He told him he just got engaged! Gabor congratulated them and wondered if Anikó was for real. It doesn't matter, László informed him. Whatever happens will happen.

Labour Day weekend was just around the corner. Anikó informed László she had made a reservation at a French restaurant in Yorkville for Saturday evening. She is driving up in the morning by herself to take her fiancée out for his birthday! László looked forward to seeing her. When Anikó was by herself, she was enchanting, attentive, loving, confident, assured, intelligent, beautiful, feminine young woman that László loved and imagined the woman he would marry. She had set a high standard for these characteristics that László admired and wanted later in his life. Very few females in his future life would even come close to, never mind surpass, her positive traits. Yet, at the same time, Anikó, with the influence of Mary, her mother, had set the example for the lows that he tried to avoid, like the plague.

Such a sad tragedy for Anikó, and in time, falling so far away from the dreams she had shared with László once. But we are just getting way ahead of the Anikó saga.

Anikó arrived in a very stylish white tailored suit. The beautiful jacket closely fitted her body, with a nice skirt, a silk blouse in a burgundy colour with a floral print (oriental-looking), a black belt, burgundy high heels, and a small, expensive-looking burgundy shoulder bag. Her long hair was up in a bun. Her hands were nicely manicured, with a small gold-coloured watch on her right wrist, light pink nail polish on her nails, and matching lipstick on her shimmering lips. A small diamond and white gold stud in her sexy earlobes, completed by her mesmerizing smile. Just stunning, elegant, oozing confidence, and understated sexuality! She was the femme fatale! She parked her Cadillac in the visitors' parking lot. Took the elevator to his apartment. She was warmly greeted by Rose, who complimented her appearance and kissed her on the cheeks. Anikó turned toward László, flinging her arms out to hug him and pulling him close in a deep embrace, kissing him deeply and smearing her lipstick on his lips. After the long kiss, she wished a happy birthday to László!

Yes, László was happy to see her and to feel her presence in his arms, holding her body close. Inhaling her supple skin's aroma set off by Bal a Versailles perfume, this exotic, intoxicating living flower of his! His drug of love, which he had gotten hooked on, addicted to, and at times like this, made him forget all the pain and anguish that he had faced in the past or would endure. Remembering his own pledge that he had made to himself a few days ago, "Full speed ahead, fuck the consequences!"

In just seven more months, she would be of legal age, and things would be different. Providence indeed made it different. After their warm embrace, Anikó took off her jacket, cleaned off László's lips tenderly with her fingers, and, as he kissed them gently, started to look around the apartment. Just a typical two-bedroom apartment, nothing fancy. The same furniture that she had seen before, but a couple of more paintings hung on the wall by László. She asked László, Would you paint something for me one of these days? He

replied, of course, with some flowers for you and ourselves, you, my love in the nude, for our bedroom! Anikó blushed and smiled.

Anikó liked it when László, through his demeanour and words, adulated her. She knew that it was not a fake flatter to get into her pants; he had meant it. Just how much Anikó wished for that moment that he would actually get into her pants. She needed to be controlled, taken, and ravished! László was always such a gentleman toward her. Caring and so romantic with her, she loved her prince charming; she just wished he would not wait until they were married. Anikó did not know how to express this to László. She was not a virgin anymore. She was actually afraid to tell László that. He might reject and dump her; she did not like being dumped. She was the one who dumped others! However, she understood that László did not want to be charged with having sex with someone underage in case Mary found out that they had sex. Even if it were consensual, Mary probably would have him charged to get him out of her life!

Anikó knew that her mother, Mary, did not like László. Mary was afraid; she sensed that László could be more dominating and influential in Anikó's life than she was. She sensed that Anikó was captivated by László as much as he was by her. Yet he did not dominate her by being rough or mean to her, but by doing the exact opposite by showing kindness, tenderness, and love. Dominant person's sense dominant traits in others, and rarely do they get along in their private lives.

They left for dinner. They walked around Yorkville, window shopping a bit, and he took photos of Anikó by some shop windows and entered the restaurant. The food was excellent, starting with escargot in a garlic sauce, followed by soupe à l'oignon, and Chateaubriand for two. Dessert was, of course, crepes stuffed with berries and a heavy cream sauce—no alcohol but some Perrier with a slice of lime. They enjoyed dining together, as several times before, not necessarily at expensive places; just being together was more important. Anikó was also a good cook and could make nice meals. She asked for the bill; after all, it was her treat! The bill was just over \$70. That was a lot of money in 1977 for a dinner. She looked for her wallet. Oops! She only had a twenty-dollar bill in it. She was embarrassed. László asked her if she was ready to do the dishes, as he only had \$20 in his wallet too. Luckily, he had his Visa card with him, and although it was charged up to its limit, he hoped it would float for one more transaction. It did. However, he was not pleased. Anikó explained that she had left the money home in haste to drive to Toronto. He said, Fine, and accepted the excuse. It was true, as he found out later.

After dinner, they walked around a bit, with arms around each other. Then to the parking lot. Anikó paid for the parking, and instead of driving him home, she headed towards Niagara Falls. László was puzzled, but she explained to him that she was going to show him that she had left the money on the dining room table.

She squeezed his hand firmly and told László, “I love you; please start trusting me. I want to be your wife. You are important to me, and I know you have doubts after what happened earlier this year. Trust me!”

László kissed her hand gently several times. Anikó was driving faster than the speed limit, and it was dark already. László asked her to slow down a bit. The traffic was light, and they got to Niagara Falls in about an hour. Normally, from downtown Toronto to her house in Niagara Falls was about 80 minutes. They pulled up to her driveway and entered the house.

Mary was home and was surprised to see them. After their mutual greetings, Anikó walked to the dining room table, picked up the four \$20 bills, sat by the edge, and handed them to László. Mary was asking her just what was going on? Anikó told her mother that she had forgotten the money for their dinner. It was now quite late for another return trip. László called Rose on the phone and told her that he would be going home tomorrow. He would sleep at Anikó’s home so she would not worry about what had happened to them. Mary said good night and went to her bedroom.

Anikó took off her high heels and jacket, got the bed sheet, pillow, and blanket, and prepared the couch for him. László sat on it. She came close to his legs, pulling up her skirt, exposing her wet pants, and sat in his lap facing him, with her legs straddling him, wrapping her arms around him. I was hoping that March was coming up soon. Indicating that she would be of legal age, as she felt the bulge in László’s pants. She started to squeeze her breasts into his, and László tenderly massaged her lower back. And he slipped his hands inside her pants from the rear. She squeezed her cheeks firmly for a while they kissed. It was tough to stop for László.

In the morning, Anikó drove him back. It was at a leisurely pace. They talked about her upcoming school, and László asked her to get the ring size she needed for her ring finger. He wanted to get the engagement ceremony over with. Not that it would make much difference, it was not an enforceable legal contract for marriage, just a commitment that some took seriously, while others did not so much. He just hoped by doing this Anikó would remain true to their mutual dream, and would give her a bit more strength to stand up against her mother.

He would have to sell his car and an additional possession, such as his .308 rifle. Going to and back from Niagara Falls would not be an issue; there was a train. Anikó could pick him up at the station. She could also drive up once in a while. He also told her that in October he was going to Mosport Park to see the F1 race with Joe, a friend of his. Soon they reached the apartment complex and parked. She went up with him and was greeted warmly by Rose. She loved Anikó and prayed that she had changed from her old ways, but mostly that she would make her son happy. It took about an hour to find the negatives and select the ones for reprinting. László hadn’t unpacked several of the moving boxes. They were just stacked inside his closet. After that, Rose and Anikó hugged, kissed, and said their goodbyes.

László and Anikó left for the parking lot. László escorted her to her Eldorado and opened the door for her. They kissed passionately. He told her that he loved her and to drive safely. He waved as she pulled out of the parking lot. Anikó called László to let him know that she had gotten home safely.

Work and other matters took up the next couple of weeks for László. Anikó started her final year and signed up for the Ridley College Girls Rowing Team. This was his last trip with the Olds. László drove it down to see her row and take some photos. He noticed that the Cadillac's front tires were at the low tread mark. László suggested to Anikó to have his two Michelin radials with lots of thread installed on her car from the Olds, her old ones placed on his rims, and installed back on the Olds; after all, they were the same size. He was selling his car to Gabor. It would not make any difference. A noble gesture that Anikó noticed.

The Grand Prix was good at Mosport and was the last one held there. Joe drove his Buick. While at the race, he bought a Jaguar Racing T-shirt for Anikó. She liked Jaguars. The Olds were sold to Gabor, as was his rifle. Rose was happy about the latter.

László ordered a custom diamond engagement set from Barney, the friend of his deceased uncle. He was a jewellery maker and would give him a discounted price, he wanted the best he could get for his money. It wasn't a one-carat ring that he knew Anikó dreamed about, but an 18K white gold ring with a half-carat centre stone and some smaller diamonds around it. His wholesale cost was \$800, and the ring had a \$2500 appraised value. (He eventually sold it for \$200 later on to Pawn Shop in February 1998) He had to also get a two-week advance on his paycheque to buy it.

In November, he took the train to see Anikó; she picked him up at the station, and they stayed in the Falls area. They stopped at Lotus Grove Park for a while, enjoying their private time, including setting the betrothal date for December 16, 1977. Later, they went window shopping in downtown Niagara Falls and picked up the reprints from the camera store. Anikó was showing him Minolta cameras, and the one she pined for was a black Minolta SRT 202 35mm camera with a 50mm f1.4 lens. She was thinking about buying one in the spring to use in the summer for their wedding photos. After staying overnight, he took the train back to Toronto.

In early December, László looked around the local camera shops for the Minolta 202 in black with a 50mm f/1.4 lens. Nobody had it in stock; it was a special order and was very expensive. One of the salespeople suggested that he get the camera with the 50mm 1.7 lens. It was significantly less. It was still more than he thought it would cost. He compared the prices at several camera stores and found one which gave him 25 percent off the list price. He ordered the camera and charged it to his Visa. He had a chance to lower the debt when he sold his Olds and received a refund on his remaining car insurance. Thus, he could float the amount on it. He had also bought a Shure

unidirectional (cardioid) professional microphone. As Anikó loved singing at home, she had a cheap microphone that she plugged into her stereo. This would improve how she sounded, and he knew she would be ecstatic. The camera and the microphone were his Christmas presents for Anikó.

It was Friday, December 16, 1977, and László got off work early. Mary and Anikó were to arrive around 4 p.m. Rose and László would join them at the Csárdás, the best Hungarian restaurant in Toronto at the time, for a dinner to celebrate Anikó's and László's engagement. They arrived on time and came up to the apartment. They were greeted warmly, with the usual hugs and kisses to everyone. Anikó wore a stunning silk white dress with large pearls around her neck. László took out the ring from the little box, got down on one knee, and asked Anikó,

"Anikó, I love you, will you marry me?"

"Yes! I will!"

Anikó replied quickly and without hesitation. She had a great smile on her face, with eyes sparkling with happiness. László then stood up, hugged and kissed, and continued,

"Let's do it in June next year after you graduate. That will give everyone time to plan and get ready. Let's keep it small and private if we can."

Anikó, looked at Mary quickly, as to seek her approval, and asked "Mother is that fine with you?"

"Yes, that would work just fine! Now let's go have dinner!"

Mary replied It was a simple yet tender event. Anikó and László posed for a couple of photos taken by Rose with his small Canon camera. Then they left for dinner. After dinner, all returned to the apartment to chat, and then Anikó and Mary drove back to Niagara Falls. The next time they would see each other would be in a week for Christmas. László would take the train down, stay for a couple of days, and then take the train back.

László spent the evening of December 24th at home with Rose, the usual time for them to celebrate Christmas. He was slightly apprehensive and curious about what the next day would bring!

In the morning, he took public transit down to Union train station, and he was off to Niagara Falls. Anikó arrived just in time; he had a shopping bag with him that contained his overnight change of clothes, Anikó's presents, and a bottle of champagne for Mary and Joe. After a warm hug and plenty of gentle kisses, he noticed that she wore his ring, and she drove him to her home. Inside her home by the bar, a pine Christmas tree stood, nicely decorated. Personally, László did not like the long-needled look, although many preferred it in Canada, as their needles did not shed when they dried, providing excellent needle retention. He preferred the more traditional short-needled fir or spruce type. Mary and Joe were not around.

Anikó was very excited. She took László to the tree and showed him a nicely wrapped box with his name on it. She asked him to open it. It was not

a large box; it was shaped like a brick, maybe two inches thick. László unwrapped it quickly and saw it was an orange-coloured Hermes box. He opened the lid, and there was a very classy silk men's scarf in it, perfect for the winter. Anything from Hermes was expensive, being a French luxury product maker. He gave her a warm embrace and thanked her. A useful gift, he noted in his mind, better than some chocolates.

By now, Anikó had to be a bit apprehensive about what she was about to receive from him. László knew her by this time and had her figured out in great detail. A lot more than Anikó thought. He knew her methods of slight hints, indirect manipulation, planting seeds into his mind, about the camera she liked, apart from the obvious one in the camera store when they had picked up the prints. He bought the camera, not because it was planted in his brain. He bought the camera because he enjoyed photography as well and perhaps knew more about photography than she did. Although he did not have a 35mm camera at this time. He figured that going out and taking photos together and sharing something special between them would help her to break those invisible chains Mary held onto, link by link, one step at a time. He was hoping that Anikó would realize that she could count on him to nurture and prune her so she could bloom into the woman she always talked about wanting to be. The woman he wanted was his soul mate. Naïve, maybe, but he was going for it.

László reached into his shopping bag and pulled out the champagne. It was Pol Roger, Brut, in a green and satin gold gift box; he had not bothered to wrap it. He smiled and said this to Mary and Joe. And he gave the bottle to Anikó. She took it to the dining room table and placed the bottle on it. When she turned around, László had the box with the microphone in his hands and told her this was for her. As the box was wrapped and very heavy, it could have been anything. Looking at Anikó's face, it was easy to see she was disappointed, as it was too small to hold the camera.

When she opened the box saw immediately that it was a top-of-the-line professional Shure microphone, she started to scream with joy! Right away, she plugged it into her stereo to test it out. It sounded so much better than her old, no-name one. László sat down to watch her clowning around and impersonating a singer. Her act lasted about five minutes, and he clapped when she finished. László asked Anikó if this was what she was hoping for. He knew well that it wasn't! Anikó replied that this was the last thing on her mind, and when she saw the box, she was surprised at this thoughtful and great gift!

László then reached into the bag and pulled out two more boxes. One held the camera, and the other held the lens. Anikó rushed over to him, and by looking at the boxes, she instantly figured out, by their size, that it had to be a camera and a lens. She opened that bigger one fast. When she saw the printing on the box that it was a Minolta SRT 202, a black model, she started to scream with joy. "Thank you, László, thank you!"

She then continued with the smaller box, it was the lens. She quickly mounted the lens on the camera body, looking through the viewfinder toward László, pressing the shutter, advancing it, and pressing it again. Listening to the fine click the camera made. László reached into his pocket, pulled out a small yellow Kodak film box, and threw it toward Anikó. Maybe this would help! She caught it and immediately proceeded to put the film in it. By opening the back of the Minolta, placing the film cassette in the correct location, threading the take-up sprocket, closing the back, and advancing the film, just like a pro! She pointed the camera again toward László, adjusted the focus and exposure, and pressed the shutter. Then she put the camera down and rushed over to him, hugged him in her usual fashion, and kissed him deeply! Anikó was jubilant, and that made László feel the same. Giving could be so much more joyful than receiving if deserved. László was still skeptical, with doubts about her complete turnaround. Only time will tell. But for this moment, she was happy and genuine. And to László those moments were priceless. Anikó returned to the tree, picked up a small box with Rose's name on it, and gave it to László. "This was for your mother from me." That was a nice thought. He thanked Anikó in his mother's name and placed it in his shopping bag.

Soon, Mary and Joe showed up. László greeted them and gave Mary the bottle that sat on the table. She thanked him and put it in the kitchen. Anikó was bouncing up and down with the camera strap around her neck, like a five-year-old kid, showing it off to Mary and snapping photos. Mary said to Anikó that László was spoiling her, and she headed toward her bedroom. It was about 2 p.m., and László was getting hungry and said so to Anikó. She went over to the fridge, opened it, and called him to see what he would like. There were several choices; he picked the Schnitzel, they were large and thin, so it had to be from veal, with mini potatoes fried with parsley. Anikó got them out, placed some in a pan, and put them in the oven to warm up. She also picked enough out for herself. He asked, What about Joe and Mary? Aren't they going to eat with them? She said not now; we would have dinner together.

While the food was heating up, she set the table, across from each other, and placed a bottle of cold mineral water on the table for them to drink. She was chatting about the Minolta camera, how good it was, and how happy she was getting such a great camera. She finally got around to the lens, the topic László was waiting for, noting that the lens was only a f1.7 and not a f1.4. László mentioned to her that the f1.7 was just as sharp as the f1.4, or maybe even sharper; furthermore, the f1.4, when focused close, would have less depth of field and a slight increase in the bokeh (the blurred background) but apart from that, it had a vastly increased price tag. In reality, it would not make any difference, apart from the ability to say that you have an f1.4 lens. He had to make a choice: just the camera body alone and no lens or the body with this lens. He opted for something she could use right away.

The food was ready, and she served László first, then herself. Neither of them liked to talk much while eating. Anikó asked if the food was warm enough for him, and he liked it. László replied yes, on both counts. László stopped for a minute and poured some water on both of them. After they ate, she collected the plates and glasses and washed them quickly in the kitchen while László played with the camera a bit. After drying her hands, Anikó wanted to go out and take some photos by the falls. They dressed, got into her car, and drove to the Falls for photos. They drove around, looking at the winter scenery. Soon, she had filled up the 36-exposure film. Anikó finally drove to László's favourite park, Lotus Grove.

There was plenty of snow, and they stopped at the farthest spot they could find from the road to be on site. Not that many drove in that area, anyhow, and it was getting dark. Anikó popped the trunk open, jumped out, took out a small bottle of champagne and two plastic cups, and smiled.

"I wanted to surprise you and drink on our first Christmas together in private!" and ran about ten yards away from the car with the champagne stuck the bottle in the snow to the cork. László followed her and, on the way, made a snowball and threw it at her. They started a snowball fight, both of them laughing and just horsing around. Hugging each other and rolling around the snow, just having fun, like young lovers do. Yes, they were in love, and Anikó was enchanted again.

After fooling around for 30-40 minutes, Anikó checked on the champagne. It was nice and cold while they warmed up from the activity with their rosy cheeks as if they were blushing. She popped the cork that flew about ten feet and poured the bubbly into the cups. They wrapped their arms around each other to drink from each other's cups. Then they kissed deeply. There was a bit of champagne left, so they split the remaining and toasted each other for their first Christmas, with many more to come. It was fun and romantic. She went to look for the cork but could not find it in the dark; instead, they took the empty bottle and the cups, placed them all into a plastic bag, and went back into the trunk.

They sat back in the car with arms around each other, and Anikó started to get into her dreamy haze trance state and talk about her dreams. László gently put his hand over her mouth and whispered to her that he loved her very much, and the last time she was like this, they had broken up, and he was hoping that this was not the case. She gently kissed his fingers, nibbling on his fingers playfully, trying to reassure László that she was not about to break up, and she was not the one who had initiated what had happened in the past. László explained he wanted Anikó sexually, and that he was tempted by her so many times. He just did not want to fuck her! He wants to make love to her as her husband on their wedding night. Maybe naïve or just romantic, but apart from that, he did not want to be charged, consensual or not, with having sex with a minor, especially by Mary. He had

explained this before, and she had to believe that he was very loyal to her. Anikó replied that this was very honourable, and she understood.

Unfortunately, what she did not do was confide in László about her real desires. She just played the virgin and the innocent. What she truly needed was László to take her, right there in the snow bank or in the car, to be in charge, to dominate her, and not care about her feelings as much! Time flew by really fast! Oops, they were going to be late for dinner; it was after 6:30 p.m., and that may make Mary upset! So she drove toward home. Mary wasn't too pleased; she was about to serve dinner to Joe and herself. The table was set for four of them.

Mary called Anikó to the kitchen and harped at her quietly. It was evident that she was very dissatisfied that they stayed out too long without telling her where they had gone or when they would be back. When they emerged from the kitchen, László saw that Anikó's happiness had disappeared quickly. Anikó served dinner; it was a Hungarian-style beef broth soup with fine noodles (similar in thickness to angel hair pasta, just very short), followed by Schnitzel, like László had for lunch, with more mini potatoes fried with parsley. Before they ate, Mary said grace and thanked God for the food. László thought to himself, what a pretentious and phony old witch, as she could not have believed in God, otherwise she would not have raised her daughter this way! After dinner, Mary thanked László for the gifts and emphasized that he was spoiling her, and by that, he was setting a bad example! László thought, "Yeah, I bought her the Cadillac Eldorado too! Never mind morally corrupting her and using her to avenge men! Right on, you miserable old witch! You're losing your grip! I know now you want to stop her again! I could see what was coming!"

László tried to be very diplomatic. He first looked at Mary and thanked her for the nice dinner. Then he turned back toward Anikó, sitting across from him, looking at Anikó's eyes.

"I understand where you're coming from, Mary, and you are correct; I am spoiling her. However, she is my fiancé, and this is our first Christmas together, and I just wanted to make it very special for her."

He could see once again Anikó's eyes sparkled and saw her expression change to a slight smile as he spoke, standing up and defending her! He continued,

"I love Anikó very much, and for me, it is very important that she feels good about herself, and when she feels good about herself, she will be a more positive and wholesome person overall. Sorry for being almost late for dinner; you can blame me for it; it was my idea to go and take photos, and we just got carried away! It is Christmas, after all. It's a time for joy and happiness, so why don't we do that? Let Anikó sing a bit with her new microphone."

Anikó jumped up and ran to the stereo.

"I will do that. Mother, you have got to listen to the quality of this microphone. This is a professional mike, the same quality and type that singers use!"

Mary had a puzzled look but nodded and said to Anikó, Let's hear you sing! Anikó searched her LP records for a minute and grabbed Patti LaBelle's disco hit "Lady Marmalade." It was perhaps not the best choice, but she loved this, just as László did, knew the song by heart, and more importantly, it had an upbeat tempo that would break the icy atmosphere by the dining room table. She started to play the record and belted the song out through the microphone. She sounded great, as she danced around during the song. Everyone started to laugh!

Mary and Joe soon retired and asked Anikó to turn it down. Anikó and László listened to a few more tunes, and they just sat on the couch with arms around each other. She looked happy but told László that she would be paying for this shortly. Whispering her wish again that it would be best if she and he would go out the door, get into her car, and drive as far as they could disappear. László pulled her closer, hugging her. He just had that inner feeling that, once again, they would be separated soon. They both remained silent; Anikó knew it too and sensed this would be messy! She prepared the couch for László, kissed him good night, and retired to her bedroom. László didn't sleep much.

Around 8 a.m., he heard Mary arguing with Anikó in her room, but it was muddled, and he could not make out what it was about. But he had an idea, as Anikó warned him last night that she will have to pay for this. He got up, shaved, and took a quick shower in the bathroom. When he emerged, Mary was in the kitchen, making breakfast for all. Anikó emerged from her room in a bathrobe and ran straight into her bathroom. László wished a good morning to Mary, and asked if anything was wrong? Her reply was just a mother-daughter thing; you would not understand! He sat down by the dining room table and stayed quiet.

After a few minutes, Anikó emerged in her bathrobe with her hair dryer, asking László if he had used it this morning. László replied yes, he had dried his hair quickly after a shower. Anikó replied, you must have broken it, as now it does not work! He got up and examined the hair dryer. It was still warm. He noted that sometimes if they are used on the hottest setting, as the setting slider switch indicated, they cut out, just let it cool down, and it should work. Anikó huffed and puffed, now she had to dry her hair with a towel and walked to her room. Mary yelled to her that breakfast was ready and to come eat. She yelled back, saying she would, after her hair was dry, eat without her.

This was very abnormal behaviour for Anikó, László thought to himself. Joe came to the table and sat down, and everyone ate without saying a word. The silence was deafening, and the atmosphere was tense. It was

broken by the phone ringing around 9 a.m. Mary picked it up and did not say much apart from saying she would be there in 30 minutes. She returned to the table to finish her breakfast, put on her winter boots and coat, grabbed her handbag, and took off in Joe's Chevy. Shortly, Anikó emerged dressed in a blue denim shirt and blue jeans without saying a word. Without makeup, in a bitchy mood and without her engagement ring on her finger. She ate cold scrambled eggs with some toast and drank her tea. László asked if anything was wrong. There was no reply from her. László knew there was something wrong, something huge. She was clearly upset. There was no reason for her to be like this unless he thought, Well, here we go again; we are about to break up! OK, then, let's get it on!

"Is there a reason, Anikó, why you are not talking to me? Come on, sweetie, tell me what is wrong."

She slammed her fork and knife down on the plate and said in an angry voice,

"I am not your sweetie!"

"No, you're more than that. You are my fiancée, remember?" László replied calmly and continued, "I can see that you forgot it already, oh, so very quickly, by not wearing your engagement ring this morning!"

"In your dreams, you cheap bastard! You insulted me with your ring. I am not a half-virgin! I am a whole virgin. I deserve a whole-carat ring, not a half-one!" She harped at him! Knowing that this was a lie, she was not a virgin anymore.

László remained calm and said, "Well, if you do not appreciate the ring and what it represents, you are free to return it. I didn't force it on you! It was your choice. As for me being a cheap bastard, you'll be lucky to find someone half as generous to you as I am, under the circumstances! And as far... "

Anikó wasn't phased and interrupted him now very cynically.

"You are a cheap bastard; you only got the f1.7 lens and not the f1.4 I wanted!"

She continued, mocking his generosity, trying to hurt him deeply and humiliate him. Not realizing that she could not succeed.

"Your cheap ring will just go into my ring collection, along with the other half dozen engagement rings I've got! Do you not think you were the only one who wanted to fuck me?"

László was about to lose it, but very calmly replied.

"I see, then you are not a wholesome virgin after all! I suspected that for some time. As you do not appreciate the ring, its value is in the meaning that it stands for. Just give it back since you, by having this shitfit, just broke our engagement. You have no right to keep it! Martha was right all along about you!"

"Never!" Anikó snapped back.

László controlled his emotions, but now he was cold and distant. He

had entered another realm, a space he referred to as his dark side. Inside the dark side, he remained calm, calculating, and dangerous. He was now devious, mean, full of vengeance, without mercy, with a take no prisoners attitude.

“You will not keep it! I guarantee it!” he smiled with confidence.

The telephone rang, and Joe answered it. He called Anikó to the phone,

“Mary wants to talk to you!” and gave the handset over to her. Anikó listened to her mother’s voice, then said, “I’ll be there in a little while.”

She hung up, put on her winter boots and her fur coat, grabbed her purse, and stormed out the door without saying a word to anyone. She jumped into her car and took off. It was just before 10 a.m.

Joe remained silent, returned to the table and continued drinking his coffee. László poured himself another cup of tea from the teapot and sipped it slowly. He looked at his watch. His train would leave in about an hour to Toronto. László looked at Joe and asked him if he would give him a lift. He said quietly, no, he could not, Mary had taken his car, and he was not allowed to drive her Cadillac or have a key to it. He suggested László call a taxi.

László put his things together. He was debating in his mind to leave Anikó’s gift he had gotten from her and the unopened little box with Rose’s name on it. László said to himself – fuck it. He’ll take them home. He called for a taxi and left for the train station.

This was László’s first and only engagement. (Only Mary and Anikó knew how many previous ones she had. How many more to come?) And their only Christmas together.

VI. The accident

László arrived home, emotionally tired and very disappointed with Anikó. But he was not hurting, just scheming how he would get even with them. He told Rose entirely what had occurred, how Mary, Anikó and that spineless Joe had behaved. It was clear to him that Mary was pulling the strings, and she had retaken total control of Anikó again.

The commotion in the morning with Anikó in her room was when Mary must have told Anikó,

“You have to get rid of László! Your feelings for him do not matter. Time to move on to find a wealthier fool, to hoodwink as many assets and valuables out of them as they could get.”

Anikó delivered her performance, even if it was detrimental to her real feelings, as those feelings were not allowed to get hold of her psyche. The feelings of love and self-worth had to be eradicated from her mind, conscious and unconscious.

Mary had no scruples. She was just a conniving and dominating gypsy full of deceit and depravity. Mary wanted her own daughter to be her instrument of revenge against men. It was shameful how she had raised and destroyed the innocence and the love of her own child.

László understood the reality of the situation. He was not angry with Anikó. If anything, László felt pity for her. Both of them were so morally corrupt there was no point in him even trying to rescue Anikó and help her see just how wrong it was what her mother had forced upon her.

The only way he could help Anikó was what she had suggested to László many times. To take her and go away to another part of the world. Somewhere, so far from her mother, where she could never find her again, vanished like her father had. It was more clear to him now, why he had left. Anikó had such wonderful qualities she was bright, but she submitted totally to her mother's evil will when she was around her. Unfortunately, László did not have the means to do so.

Rose was very upset about how they had misled her and László once again. She could not believe the level of deceit they were capable of. László calmed her down and mentioned to her that he had a plan, a simple and efficient one. There was a car rental place not too far from where they lived. He would rent a car, go down tomorrow, and he would take the ring back and the camera too if he could. He didn't have to go to work it was boxing day, so they had to act quick. But to do this, Rose had to call Mary and demand that she wanted to see her and Anikó tomorrow in the afternoon. He knew that Mary and Anikó would not be around to avoid verbal wrath from Rose or László when they arrived. All that László had to do was find the ring and take it back with him. He would sell the ring for whatever he could get for it and pay it towards his Visa balance.

Rose picked up the phone and called. Mary picked up the phone, and was surprised that Rose called, she thought if anyone would call it would be László. Rose very firmly insisted that she wanted to talk to both of them in person and that she would be there tomorrow in the afternoon, and hung up. The trap was set.

László rented a car and took Rose as a decoy. Of course, Mary and Anikó were not around to avoid facing Rose's wrath, only Joe. He let them in, and they sat by the dining room table. The empty camera and lens boxes were around the pine tree, but László could not see the camera. They waited about half an hour, and László stood up and said he had to go to the bathroom. This was the clue that Rose had to talk to Joe to draw his attention away. Instead of going to the bathroom, Rose darted to Anikó's bedroom. The small dark blue ring box was on the top of her dresser, along with the camera. He put the ring box in his pocket and picked up the camera. Since Joe was not around when he gave the camera to Anikó, he would not know whose camera it was. When he appeared in the dining room, he faked a surprise.

"Oh, this is where my camera was! I left it here yesterday by accident, and I will take it home now. Joe, please tell Mary and Anikó that we waited for them, but now we have to return to Toronto."

And they left. He kept his promise to Anikó, and since the camera was bought for his fiancée, and she was no longer his fiancée, he felt justified to take it back. He did not care about the microphone.

Rose was apprehensive about what they would do now? Call the police on them for theft? László reassured Rose they would not do anything as they had no legal grounds. He had the bills for the camera and lens in his name, which proved ownership. As for the ring, by tradition, if the bride broke the engagement, she had to return the ring. It was not him who had broken the engagement, but Mary had forced Anikó. Oh, they would be upset, would curse both of them, give Joe shit, how could he be so stupid etc, but they would realize that they have been upended.

Now Anikó would remember his last words were to her "You will not keep it! I guarantee it!"

Anikó would realize that she could fuck with a lot of people, but not with everyone. He was one of the exceptions! She could be prostituted by Mary as much as she wanted. To László, it made no difference to him anymore.

László, of course, was correct. Rose told Martha what had happened between them. Martha was shocked, but she did say I told you so! She also mentioned that Anikó was engaged several times since she had turned 16. She knew of at least two others besides László. One of them was a car dealer's son, and the other tried to commit suicide by jumping into the Niagara Gorge but survived.

Weeks passed fast, and László was busy at work. In March, Anikó turned 18, and not that he cared, but after her birthday, she called him on the phone because she wanted to see him.

He asked about it, and Anikó said it had to be face-to-face; it was crucial. László finally agreed to see her after work on Friday. László rented a 1978 Dodge Monaco that, by luck, had a 440 cubic inch V-8 with a four-barrel Carter carburetor and a top speed of 127 mph.

He arrived at Anikó's house around 7 p.m., only she was home. Anikó still looked good, but it was not the same for him. She was over 18 years old, legal for sex and an adult. Anikó looked much older than she actually was, worn and burned out. The sparkle in her eyes was missing.

They sat by the dining room table facing each other. The air was charged with emotions, tense and ready to erupt. László asked what she wanted from him that was so important.

Anikó said she needed to speak to him face-to-face. She was very sorry that it had to end the way it had, and he had to know she loved him and still does. If she could change the past, she would. She was under her mother's control as she was a minor. Mary was behind all the misfortunate events, as he had suspected and was saying all along. She was underage, nothing she could do. Now that she was of legal age, she owed him clarification in person. Can he forgive her? And one more essential revelation, she was no longer a virgin; she had gotten married in January. László was stunned by her revelations, but he still did not know why she was saying all this to him. He was curious about where this was going.

Anikó continued that her marriage was now over and filed for divorce. She realized how wrong she had been and how right he was. László now interrupted her and asked why she was doing this. Was she trying to punish or humiliate him? It was not working. He asked her if she remembered what he told her before she stormed out on boxing day?

He had kept his word; she had made a drastic mistake by not believing in him and abusing his trust and love for her. The only reason why he was here was to tell her he had forgiven her, but he could never forget the past. He had learned to live without her; now she was free to collect more rings, and he hoped she got the full-carat ring for losing her virginity and hoped it was worth it for her.

He knew deep down that he was tearing into her psyche, and it was hurting her. Anikó deserved it, and she deserved much worse, but he suddenly stopped. László's empathy took over, still loved her despite all that had happened. Anikó was his first love and everything he wanted in a girl. Suddenly, he had a couple of teardrops in his eyes. He felt sorry for Anikó and the pain she went through due to her mother. László said that he was mournful that this was how it all ended. He had so much hope for her and wanted to share her real dreams. He could not take her away from here to a

place that would give them a chance. Toronto was just not far enough. He did not have the financial means for that. She ruined her life, not him. He regretted that his best was not enough.

Anikó looked at him deeply, and she knew that he still loved her. She also knew that while he had no animosity toward her, it was certainly not the case for her mother. The architect of her doom in his eyes. All he had for her mother was utter repugnance! While she was now of legal age, in László's eyes, the chains that tied her to her mother were clearly visible. She could not break those chains; she was too weak, and László was not willing to break those chains anymore. It was over.

When László left, it was dark already, which matched his mood. In his soul, he was in turmoil. Anikó stirred up suppressed feelings. He missed those precious moments they shared, and he knew that while he may have relationships with others and would love them, nobody would replace his first true love, his soul mate.

At times like this, he just wanted to be alone, and one of the best ways he could refresh his brain and thoughts was to concentrate on something else he loved: driving fast! Not just a few miles over the limit but in triple digits if a car was capable.

He pulled on the QEW, the limit was 60 mph, at the time. It was dark by now when he flew by a parked OPP cruiser, that was hiding on the soft shoulder just north of Thorold Stone Road and south of Mountain Road where the highway takes a gentle bend, with his radar on. He saw the cruiser when he passed it. And that was when he glanced at the Monaco's speedometer, the needle hovering over 95 mph.

As soon as he passed the cruiser, the cop turned on his lights and floored it. Now he had to make a quick decision, get pulled over, lose several points on his license, get a huge fine, and listen to the cop's condescending lecturing for driving fast, or just fuck it and outrun the cop! He floored it! The big four-barrel Carter opened up all four ventures with a roar, sucking gas and air. The Monaco surged ahead, and the speedometer needle started to climb fast to over 100 mph, almost instantly to 110 mph, to 120 mph within a few seconds.

The officer realized he was about to stop and turned on his siren. László looked in the rearview mirror and adjusted it. To concentrate on the cop properly, glancing at it rapidly, turned off the radio and turned the blower fan down. The distance between the cars was constant. Both were moving at about the same speed. The cruiser was not any faster than his Monaco. The traffic was not too heavy to pass cars. He had to flash his high beams on/off to clear them off from in front of him or go around them and snake through the traffic. Because of the darkness and his speed, the cop could not read his license plate; all he had on him was that it was a four-door sedan, maybe a Dodge or Plymouth, dark in colour. He also used the semi-

trailers to block the cop's view. He was assured that the cop radioed ahead, so he had to be extra careful at the entrance ramps not to be cut off by any additional OPP cruisers. He passed the bridge over the Welland Canal in St. Catharines, and just after Grimsby, he saw another cruiser entering the limited-access QEW with sirens blaring and lights flashing! This distance between the new cop car was a bit closer but still too far away for the cop to catch him. The Dodge's 440 V-8 still had a bit left in the engine, and he was pushing it as far as it would go. The needle was now buried at the 120 mph mark, but he was still accelerating. From the Charger days, he knew cars, with the 440 V-8 and big Carter carburetors, were good for at least 127 mph. Soon, László was on the Burlington Bay bridge. Soon, he was at the sharp turn to the east, where he had to be extra careful by breaking heavy to slow down slightly to negotiate the turn designed for 55 mph and certainly not for doing 120+ mph.

By stepping on and off rapidly and pumping the brakes to avoid brake lockup and slowed down to nearly 100 mph. The two pursuers had to slow down too in the turn to continue toward Toronto. He could see two sets of flashing lights in his rearview mirror, unable to catch up but not giving up! Luckily, he had half a tank of fuel left as he floored it again. Rapidly Increasing speed, his speedometer was buried. László only worried about the mushy feeling that Goodyear radials on the Dodge had. He was used to the better gripping Michelins on his previous car, the Olds 98.

Oakville was flashing by with the two OPP cruisers still on his tail. One was now a bit closer, but soon he was able to cross between several large trucks, and those braked heavily, slowed the cop down, and the cop lost a bit of ground. He planned to get off from QEW at Mississauga Road, which turned to double back before it turned north toward Dundas Street West. He had to do some fast and fancy manoeuvring between cars and the large semi-trailers to block the view of the cops as he turned to the right at the exit and immediately turned off his headlights.

He entered the exit at a very high speed, over 100 mph, and stood on the brakes. Smoke from the tires and brakes filled the car with a burning rubber smell. He let go of the brakes for a second, stood on the brakes again while he yanked the steering wheel hard to the left, counter-steered his skid down the ramp, and let go of the brakes as the car straightened out and slowed down to about 50 mph. Now, he was going in the opposite direction he had just come from, and he could see and hear the OPP cruisers with red flashing lights and sirens sail by. Yes! He had lost them!

The car smelled of burned rubber, and he opened his window to let some cool, fresh air in. He looked at his watch. It had only taken him 30 minutes to get to this distance. At the speed limit, it would have been one hour. He continued at the posted speed limit to Dundas Street, then turned onto Highway 427 and 401 East to get home. Another adventure was under

his belt. He returned the car on Saturday, all tanked up, to the rental agency. He did not mention the car chase to Rose, only that, for sure, Anikó was history!

He was back to work. A convention was about to start in which his company was participating. He took part in the week-long event. After the convention, everyone went out to celebrate all the new orders with a nice dinner and a lot of drinks, all paid for by the general manager.

László got inebriated for the third time in his life. This time, László only had one type of drink, not mixed with other types, but too much rum and coke took a toll on him. He had to be taken home by Joe, his friend from the office, as he passed out in the car. He was hung over for two days, and everyone at the office laughed it off!

It was May now and getting close to summer. He booked another flight to Budapest in August. His father's first wife, Rosalie, wanted to fix him up with a very nice-looking Hungarian girl named Julie, who worked in her office and was friends with his older niece.

At the end of May, he received a call at home from Mary. He had to come down to see Anikó; she had been in a car accident, and she might die. She really wanted to see him. He told Mary, Well, if that was the case, give me the number for the hospital for him to check this out because he did not believe a word Mary was saying to him. And furthermore, he does not have a car; he sold it to buy her the ring, remember?

He was skeptical but called the hospital, and yes, she was in the hospital at St. Catherines. So he called Mary back. OK, so you did not lie this time. But I do not have a car to go down, and I have to work. I can only go down after work on Friday by train, and you have to pick me up at the station and take me back when done. Mary agreed.

On Friday, he arrived after work by train. Mary was waiting by the station with the Eldorado. They drove to the hospital right away, and on the way, she explained that it was Joe's car that she was driving when she had gotten rear-ended. Anikó was in bad shape, with a severe back injury; she would have to be operated on, but she did not want to go under the knife until she had spoken to him. This is why Mary was in such a panic.

When László arrived in her room, Anikó started to cry, held onto László's hand, and, with a very faint voice, asked László to forgive her. She said she loved him despite all that had gone down between them. László said that he had forgiven her. László knew she was not faking her feelings about him. Anikó spoke from her heart and soul. She loved him, perhaps the only person she ever loved besides her father. He hoped and prayed for her that Anikó would recover after the operation. She must have had the operation. Otherwise, she would not recover. Reassure Anikó most of all, he still loved her! Anikó asked László, despite all the hurt she and her mother had caused, how could he still love her? In front of her mother, she admitted just how much her mother was guilty of! László said he did not care for her mother;

she had to live with all she had done. He only cared about Anikó and still did. She would have to get better. She was way too young to die this way, but she could still make a positive impact on her own life. It was never too late to change. She promised that she would change because it was a miracle that he had come to see her. László replied that God works in mysterious ways! She asked him when he would see her again. He said it would be tough as he did not have a car. Anikó told him,

“László, take my car and use it, just come see me, please! I need you!”

On their way back to Niagara Falls, László told Mary that God worked in mysterious ways. Did she ever think that Anikó’s car accident was not just an accident but a warning from God? Out of retribution, out of vengeance for all the deceit and evil they had done! Maybe Mary should try to live righteously rather than in sin. He continued without holding back. Between them, they had committed so much sin and hurt. So many innocent lives to get the assets of others and to pay back men because Anikó’s father had left them, which was not the way to live. Mary nodded her head and started to speak.

“You are correct. I will try to make it up to Anikó and you, László. Please stay overnight; you can sleep in Anikó’s bed. Please visit her tomorrow. I will give you the keys to her car and pay for the gas. Please visit her every day! I do not want her to die. She needs you to give her the incentive to get through this. I was so wrong with you. Please forgive me.”

It was a difficult decision, but László’s compassion came through, and he gave in. He phoned Rose from Mary’s home. He would be back tomorrow after visiting Anikó in the hospital again. He slept in Anikó’s room, in her bed. He also read some pages from Anikó’s diary, which was on her dresser, that gave him a better image of what she thought of her affairs, and she had plenty. It was clear that Anikó was just a puppet. She was manipulated by Mary all the time.

After visiting Anikó on Saturday morning, he drove the Cadillac to Toronto. Mary rode with him to the hospital and gave him \$60 for gasoline, enough for two full tanks, with more to come as required. Mary was taken home by one of her girlfriends.

On the way home, he stopped at Simpson’s at the flagship downtown store. It had an extensive china, glass, and porcelain department. He was looking for a Dobermann porcelain figurine for Anikó. He found one and bought it. She loved Dobermanns. They were intelligent and sleek-looking dogs. She could not keep dogs; as he learned when he gave Duchess to her, this one would not bark!

When he arrived home, Rose was concerned about what had happened to Anikó. She called Martha, and Martha told her that she had gotten rear-ended and was taken to the hospital by ambulance. Anikó was in terrible condition. She would have to be operated on for her back, and she could end up in a wheelchair. A bad situation for anyone, especially someone so young!

Not even she or Mary deserved such a catastrophic situation. She wanted to visit her, and László decided that he would take her down on Sunday to see Anikó. Anikó was happy to see Rose. She was thrilled by László's thoughtful gift of her favourite dog!

She was operated on, and László visited her every day while she was in the hospital, driving straight from work and back every night in her car. He wanted to be an incentive for Anikó to heal and show her that he did love her. As soon as Anikó was back at home, Mary went back on her word and ended their relationship again, but this time with no drama. László felt he was used by the old witch as an incentive for Anikó to get better, giving her false hopes that things will change for the better and she be free to live with him. It was just an evil ploy by Mary.

László just sent Anikó a postcard saying that she was just a bitch, and now it was over. He was off to Hungary to see another girl. Good luck to her!

VII. "...I shall lay my vengeance upon them"

Anikó had more issues with her back and moved to Arizona. The dry climate helped her. She attended the University of Arizona in Tucson, studying nursing.

In the meantime, during the autumn of 1978, László moved on to another company. He had to relocate to Guelph, Ontario. It was paid for by the company. Rose moved with him also. He rented a very nice two-bedroom unit. László worked for ITT Fluid Products in Guelph, Ontario, an American conglomerate. Ironically, ITT had an assembly plant in Glendale in the Phoenix area, and he could have asked for a transfer to move down there. It was possible to get admitted into the USA that way. He could have been with Anikó if she truly would have wanted to be with him.

In 1979 and 1980, Anikó contacted László several times. They got together when she returned to Niagara Falls during the summers. Spent a few days, even a week together, at his place or up north in Attila's cottage. It was no more separate beds. Anikó was of legal age, and certainly, she was no virgin. They slept together during those visits and had a warm intimacy.

Anikó had called László her Rock of Gibraltar. Strong, steady, and dependable. Anikó always felt re-energized by being with László. She loved him in despite the devious ways Mary controlled her, loved the way he was with her, never being violent towards her, always caring, supportive, the intimate moments they shared. Even when he jokingly László had even called her a flat-footed Lucifer to her face several times, as every time her mother appeared, she became her devil puppet. Anikó admitted to László,

"I fuck, when she tells me to fuck, whoever she tells me to fuck! I will not marry you because I am not allowed to marry you! But I do love you, and I will always love you! I always look forward to being together with you when I can, I do not fuck, but I make love to you, and it is because I want to be with you and not because I am told."

László didn't care anymore and had known this for years. There were no more secrets. László knew he could not have any expectations. László lost trust and faith in her yet he loved her regardless.

In 1980, he had even been willing to fly down to Tucson, to look for a job to be with her. László had spoken several times with the Human Resource manager at ITT, who was willing to help him transfer to one of their manufacturing places in the area. Working at ITT was a benefit. But as usual, Mary prevented their union. László made a reservation for a return flight, and could not get a refund.

This truly pissed off László, and he got even with the old witch once and for all.

He contacted Canada's Revenue Income Tax Department. He gave them detailed information about Mary's rooming house operation, for which she had never paid any taxes. The Tax office investigated, and fined her so much that it cost Mary the rooming house. He had his vengeance.

"...I will render vengeance to My enemies, And repay those who hate Me." – Deuteronomy 32:41.

VIII. End of the shattered dream

Instead of going down to Tucson, László moved back to Toronto to the company that once had fired him, as their Chief Estimator. For almost two years László did not hear from Anikó, and he thought for sure he never would, but in 1982 she surfaced once again.

Anikó through Martha found out that he had moved to Toronto, and now had a good position and salary. She contacted him in May of 1982. She found him by checking with the telephone directory service. She got lucky, his name was listed as his last name was unique. She wrote letters and postcards and called him on the phone. She was very proud of his achievements, but most of all, she needed to be with him.

On July 9th, she arrived in Niagara Falls from Tucson, by driving her Cadillac. László went down to see her and took her back to Toronto for a few days in his 1975 Olds 98 Regency, with a highly modified 455 Rocket V-8. She loved his Regency, it was so fast! They had a lovely time as always when she was by herself.

László still loved her despite all the deceit over the years. She was sweet, loving, sexy, and so much fun when they were together without Mary nearby. He loved that they could talk in Hungarian. When they were out, let them have more privacy. She still had dreams that both could have enjoyed if only she could commit.

László saw Anikó for the last time on July 13, 1982, when he drove her back to Niagara Falls. He gave her one last chance to marry him. László was willing to forget all the bygones, and deceit, to give her at least some of her dreams. Which they talked about in their earlier years. He had a good position and salary as a Chief Estimator at Allen Tank. He wanted to marry her that week in a civil ceremony. No more games, no more interference from Mary. László wanted her to reply by the 17th when she indicated that she would come to Toronto to visit him.

He was ready to go with her anywhere in the world. He had a good skill set and experience in the pressure vessel field. He had continued his education and now had a diploma in Business Administration. László did not had to worry about his mother Rose. She had her own little apartment nearby, with all kinds of connivances in the building and pension. Finally she had a pleasant life now.

Anikó never showed up on the 17th or even bothered to call him on the phone, "I cannot make it today."

For László, this was the end of his shattered dreams with the girl he first said "I love you" to, his soulmate that could have been and was, in so many ways. He loved Anikó with all his heart. His on-and-off six-year-old relationship with Anikó was over for good. He was disappointed but not

upset. He understood that Anikó was very honest and warned him in 1980, realizing what Anikó said was from her heart about herself and her mother...

"I fuck, when she tells me to fuck, whoever she tells me to fuck! I will not marry you because I am not allowed to marry you! But I do love you, and I will always love you! I always look forward to being together with you when I can, I do not fuck, but I make love to you, and it is because I want to be with you and not because I am told."

Anikó was too weak to break her mother's chains and was beyond redemption. László's love and forgiveness for her sins were just not enough! It was very tragic to see such a lovely person destroyed over the years by her own evil mother.

On the 19th, Anikó called Rose on the telephone. She said to Rose that she would be coming to Toronto from Niagara Falls on the 24th and to tell László that she was ready to give him the reply. Rose knew about her son's deadline. Told Anikó that she had missed his deadline and László would be out of town. When Anikó and Mary arrived on the 24th to Toronto, László was in Honey Harbour. They drove to László's apartment, but there was no answer. They proceeded to Rose's apartment, about 60 yards east of his. Rose told them through the intercom what she had told Anikó when she had called earlier on the phone. László was out of town. They insisted on talking to her and asked her to let them in, but she refused to see them.

Anikó, with Mary in tow, still did not give up as they went to see László's friends, Eva and Attila, in whose cottage she and László stayed. Anikó tried to convince them to talk to László. She knew that they were very close to László, and he perhaps would listen to them. Attila was not home. Only Eva was, and she was shocked by them. Eva said it was up to László, and they did not want to get involved in their affairs. Eva called László when he returned from Honey Harbour what a miserable witch Mary was. Eva mentioned that Mary put a nasty curse on László and his mother Rose too. Eva felt sorry for Anikó, and László should be happy that he was done with them for good.

László never heard from Anikó again. She set a standard in many ways. He always wished her well...

László got married in 1994, and his wife in 1995 decided to rip out and destroy all his photos of Anikó and others out of jealousy. Despite having no images of Anikó, apart from their engagement photo, the rest of her images were burned into his memory bank for eternity. He heard from Martha rumours she had married to an elder person she was looking after as a nurse and later to a drug dealer. When he lived in Arizona in the early 2000s, László tried to look her up out of curiosity, after his divorce from his wife. He did not succeed.

In 2024, when he started write this book, László did an internet search of Anikó out of curiosity to see whatever happened to his first love. Anikó attended the University of Arizona from January 1980 to 1988 and received several degrees in Nursing and General Biology. She had several different last names, indicating several marriages. She had two grown children. She got married again in July 2024. Only God knows how many times. She partially fulfilled her dream without László, which they talked about in 1976 at Niagara Falls. But at what moral cost?

Anikó was a lifetime ago, in another universe and was purged from his soul forever. He also knew he would never forget his first love...

Books by Peter Winters

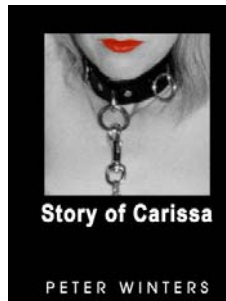
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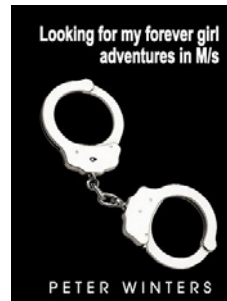
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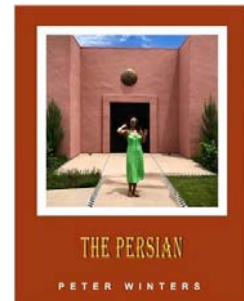
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The 13th letter is M...



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Anikó: Shattered dreams of love

Anikó had called László her Rock of Gibraltar. Strong, steady, and dependable. Anikó always felt re-energized by being with László. She loved him despite the devious ways Mary controlled her, loved the way he was with her, never being violent towards her, the intimate moments they shared. Anikó admitted to László, “I fuck, when she tells me to fuck, whoever she tells me whoever she tells me to fuck! I will not marry you because I am not allowed to marry you! But I do love you, and I will always love you! I always look forward being together with you when I can, I do not fuck but I make love to you and it is because I want to be with you and not because I am told.”

She was László’s first love, and he tried to forgive and forget all the pains disappointments, her actions caused, by purging her from his soul. That is what he tried to convince himself. He also knew he would never forget his first love...

A close-up, slightly blurred image of a Minolta camera lens. The lens is dark with silver-colored text. The word "minolta" is visible in the upper part. Below it, a circular inset shows a man and a woman smiling and embracing. The text "LENS MADE IN JAPAN" and "MC MINOLTA CEITIC" are visible around the inset. At the bottom, the name "PETER WINTERS" is written in large, bold, black capital letters.

PETER WINTERS