

Death Takes A Spin

By

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Chapter One

After having ordered a dark roast coffee and a breakfast sandwich at the counter, Roni Rainer sat down at a table near the window in the local coffee shop Sacred Grinds. She was puzzled by the encounter she had just had with Sara Wentworth out on the sidewalk in front of the shop. Sara had to be mistaken about seeing her husband Ted while on a business trip in Indianapolis. Ted just came back home last night from his own business trip but he had been in Cincinnati, not Indianapolis. Sara seemed so sure that it was him, though. How dare her smirk and suggest that Roni check for make-up stains on his shirts or a fragrance that wasn't hers! The nerve of that woman!

Roni took a sip of the dark brew in her cup and complimented Anika on the splendid brew, "Anika, this coffee is sublime! I think you have found a keeper with this roast, it may turn out to be one of your best sellers!"

"Gracias, Mrs. Roni! My new vendor he is giving to me so many new beans to try for my customers." Anika beamed with pride as she looked at Roni.

Anika Flores was still considered new to the little town of Beaver Falls even though she had lived here for at least 10 or so years. She had come with a dream to the States after having left Mexico. As she had worked several odd jobs about town, she had saved her money and studied hard to become a U.S. citizen. The sweet girl passed the test on her first go round and then began her little coffee shop shortly after. Beaver Falls, being so small, had not attracted the attention of any of the national chains so little Anika was brilliant in starting her own little place for the residents to pick up a cup of coffee on their way to work each day. Being quite the entrepreneur, Anika had contracted various ladies in town to supply her with baked goods, pastries and sandwiches as an offering with her coffee. She had even convinced Maggie Butler, of Butler's Diner, to supply a pie or two each day. Everyone in town loved little Anika and supported her shop as much as they could.

Roni looked at the time on her phone and decided she needed to finish her sandwich and coffee so that she could get down the street and open her own shop up for the day. She heard the motorcycle coming down the street before she saw it. It sounded like a Harley and that caused her to reminisce about riding on the back of a Harley with her first love, Mitchell Denton. She shook her head and told herself that was a long time ago and her riding days were over. Mitch had left town years ago, breaking her heart in the process. The bike passed by slowly and she laughed because it actually looked like Mitch's old Harley. "Get a grip, girlie," she thought to herself, "No good comes in living in the past. Go get your shop opened."

"Say, Anika I really like the new logo on your cups and paper supplies. Very cleverly done and will help with your branding." Roni said to the little barista as she rose to leave the shop.

"Oh, muchas gracias, Mrs. Roni! The art teacher, she say to me, she will help with the logo. I say that I have no money but she say she will have her class do something. It turn out so nice! Muy Bueno!"

Roni left Anika and walked down the street to her own shop, Revived. She had inherited the business from her Grandmother a few years ago and had completely turned the business model around to fit her personality and passion. It had been an antique store when her Grandmother had it but by the time Roni took over the antique industry was waning. Worried that she would not be able to make a living selling antiques and collectibles, Roni started adding items that had the potential to be used as an upcycled or repurposed piece for decorating. She felt she would have better success if she changed her focus to this trend. She could see that her generation and younger who were decorating their apartments or homes were not collectors and were not willing to pay an inflated price for furniture just because it was an antique. They would rather buy it at a low price and fix it themselves, sometimes making a totally new way of using the piece.

Since she no longer would carry just antiques, Roni decided that a name change was in order for the business. After all, people coming into a shop called Claire's Antiques would expect just that, antiques. So, with that in mind she had legally changed the business to Revived after six months of inheriting the shop. It appeared to be the right decision because her business was booming with her offerings of items that could be brought to a new life with a vision.

Her grandmother had used the back part of the building as a workshop for restoring antiques. As a child, Roni had learned how to work with woods, staining, painting, and repairing while helping her grandmother in the shop. She now used the workshop to create finished pieces of upcycled furniture to have available for her customers who weren't handy with tools or a paintbrush. She also did custom orders for some of her clientele.

As she approached her door, she grabbed her keys out of her purse and unlocked the door. Roni quickly hit the keypad for the alarm system to shut it off and flipped the switch to turn on the first bank of lights in the building. She walked through the building flipping the light switches and straightening as she went. After her building was completely lit, she walked up front to the counter to start her day.

Clayton Hudson came strolling in about 5 minutes later. Roni had hired the young man about 18 months ago and had not regretted her decision. He was capable, creative and could make her laugh more easily than just about anyone she knew. His penchant for attention seeking clothing was known all around town and on most days, Roni could hardly wait to see what the boy would pick to work in. Today, it was skinny red jeans and a bright yellow cowboy shirt trimmed in red piping.

"Has the rodeo hit town, Clay?" Roni asked as he strutted to the counter. She couldn't help but notice that his ensemble was completed with brand new cowboy boots. "Those boots are something! You know your feet will be killing you in about an hour, don't you?"

"Listen, girlfriend, these boots are already making my dogs bark! I have a spare pair of sneakers back in the workshop and if you don't mind I'm gonna mosey on back there and change now. They won't match my outfit but there is no way, I can wear these boots all day and be able to walk. What was I thinking?" Clay was already half way back to the workroom limping more as he went.

A few minutes later, Clay came bounding back up to the front of the store doing a fancy little pirouette as he reached the counter. "So, what do you think of my new look? Is it divine or what?"

"Well, it is different! Can I assume you have met some new guy who has inspired this new look?" Roni grinned as she took in the red and yellow get up. To say it was bright would be an understatement. It reminded her of the color combinations used in kitchens during the 1940s.

"Oh, he is a dreamboat! I met him in Indianapolis this weekend. He is a for real cowboy and works on a ranch out in Colorado. I want to go see him when I take my vacation this summer. Say, why was Ted in Indy this weekend? I thought you said he went to Cincinnati."

Roni frowned and wondered how two people could have mistakenly thought they saw her husband in a place that he was not supposed to be. "No, he went to Cincinnati last week to work on that machine for the meat packing plant. He just got back late last night. Listen, I've got some things to work on back in the workshop so take care of the counter for me for a little while."

Walking towards the back she heard Clay mumble, "He might have been packing meat but it wasn't in Cincinnati."

She busied herself in the workroom arranging items that were to be picked up today so that they would be easier to find. Suddenly Clay was at the door with his hand on his hip telling her that there was a guy up front that wanted to talk to her.

“Who is it, Clay?”

“I don’t know, he isn’t from here but he sure is a hunk! Correction, he must have used to be from here because he wanted to know about Miss Claire,” said Clay.

“He asked about my grandmother? Is he an older gentleman, Clay?” Roni was a bit baffled.

“Well, he isn’t like really old. He is more your age I would say. So, almost old,” Clay grinned. “He wanted to know where Miss Claire had moved and I said to heaven. He asked if she had died and I said that as far as I knew there were two ways to get to heaven and since Miss Claire wasn’t that kind of lady she had taken the last breath route to the Holy Grounds.”

“Clayton! The age of 43 is not almost old! Let’s get up front and see who this guy is.”

Roni walked up the aisle to the counter and almost fell over when she recognized the man resting his arms on her counter. Her heart skipped a beat and she had trouble grabbing the next breath. This couldn’t be Mitch but he looked so much like him. It had to be Mitch, though. Who else would be a dead ringer for him and know her grandmother used to have a shop here. “Can I help you?” she asked as she begged her voice to sound steady.

Mitch slowly turned his head toward her and she was dazed by those striking blue eyes of his. He took two long strides toward her, grabbed her in his arms and shouted, “Dimples! God you are even prettier than you used to be! Son, isn’t she the most gorgeous girl in the whole county?”

Clay smirked, “Hardly a girl anymore, not my type and her name is NOT Dimples. Take your hands off of her, she is a married woman. Married to a first class jerk, but married just the same.”

“Clayton Hudson you shush right now,” Roni glared at him leaving no room for him to think he could continue talking. He wasn’t her son but he recognized that look that all mothers give their kids when they have reached their last nerve.

Trying to keep the shakiness out of her voice, Roni turned to Mitch, “Mitchell, I didn’t know you were in town. How can we help you today?” She certainly hoped he couldn’t see that her legs were turning to rubber, her heart was beating so hard it was about to explode out of her chest, and there was a lump in her throat the size of a walnut. My God she couldn’t believe he was standing there right in front of her after all of these years. Then she remembered that he had crushed her when he left and she started to calm down.

Mitch didn’t seem to notice the effect that seeing him again was having on her. He looked at Clay, “Son, I believe she called you Clayton, I have always called her Dimples. She was never Roni to me, nor Veronica as her mother named her; no she was always my Dimples. This beautiful girl would flash that smile at me and those dimples would flare and I would just melt. She was and still is the love of my life.”

Roni wanted to cold-cock him right there. Love of his life her backside! “If I meant so damn much to you why did you leave without as much as a goodbye? Why did I hear months later that you married someone else and had a baby with her? Never mind, its ancient history at this point! Again, how can I help you today?” She heard Clay gasp and could picture his hand over his mouth. She couldn’t look at him though because she was staring into those stunning blue eyes and trying not to burst into tears.

“Dimples, baby I’m so sorry that I hurt you. Now, that I will be living here again, I would like to explain what happened back then but not right now. I took the Deputy Sheriff position here in Butler County and I came today hoping that Miss Claire would give me a nice deal on some furniture to fill my apartment up with. By the way, I’m so sorry to hear that she passed, she was a good woman.”

Trying to put on a professional demeanor Roni asked, “What kind of furniture did you have in mind? I’m not a typical antique store anymore. I have things that can be repurposed rather than actual fine furniture.”

“Oh, I have the regular stuff like a sofa and a bed. I need the extra stuff that makes my place be more a home instead of just someplace I throw my coat and park my boots. My granny used to have this little cart thing that she would roll into a room and serve tea, coffee and cookies on. Do you have something like that?”

“You mean a tea cart?” Roni asked.

“Yeah, that IS what she called it! A tea cart is what I want only I won’t use it for serving tea; I want to use it more like a rolling bar kind of thing. Can you help me out?”

“I don’t have a traditional tea cart anymore. I sold the last one a few months back but I may have an idea that you might like.” Roni motioned for Mitch to follow her over to the side of the building. She stopped next to an old metal unit that she got when the welding shop closed down. “Would something like this work as a bar in your apartment?”

“Well, it is kind of cool but it doesn’t have any wheels so I would have to pick it up every time I wanted to move it; either that or scratch the floors by dragging it. My landlord probably wouldn’t be too thrilled about marked up floors,” Mitch said.

Roni giggled, “Let me explain what I do here. I take things that are old and make them into something new with a new purpose. This metal shelving unit can be made into your rolling bar. I could put some old bicycle tires on the back, lengthen the front legs and add castors, add a handle and paint it any color you prefer. The end result is a very manly tea cart which will be a real conversation piece when you have people over.”

“What a clever idea, I love it! How much would you charge me to do that?”

“It will run you about \$125. I have several people ahead of you so it will be about two weeks before I have it done. Does that sound good?” Roni flashed her dimples at him on purpose.

Mitch saw those dimples and immediately went weak in the knees. God, she could still melt him with just a look. Why had he ever let her go? He was a dumb kid back then and it was the biggest mistake of his life. He cleared his throat, “You always were a creative genius, Dimples. That sounds very fair. Do I need to sign anything?”

“Just go up to the counter and have Clay fill out the order. Be sure to tell him what color or colors you want and give him some money as a deposit. I ask my custom orders to put down 20%. I’ve got some things to finish in the back so I’ll see you in a couple of weeks. Thanks for stopping by,” Roni said as she headed for the back room.

Roni closed the workroom door and teared up. She was shaking all over from that encounter. How the hell could he still make her feel this way when he had literally walked out of her life 25 years ago? She knew she had to shake this off and move on. She was a happily married woman, well, married anyway. She hadn’t been truly happy with Ted for a long time, if she was truly honest with herself. She needed to get busy doing something to get her mind off of Mitch. She decided to go over to Pedals the local bicycle shop and see if he had any wheels that she could use on the cart. She let herself out the back door and walked the few blocks over to see Willie.

As she walked she noticed Sara Wentworth driving past, probably on her way to the Middle School where she was the principal. Roni supposed that she should forgive her over that encounter at the coffee shop earlier. The poor

woman had not been the same since her son had died of an overdose about a year ago. One could not blame her for being so overwrought with the grief of losing an only child; it would be something that you probably never really got over. It just galled her that the woman seemed to derive such pleasure out of insinuating that her husband was cheating on her.

She sensed something was wrong before she even entered the door of the shop. There were no bikes sitting out front and the door was closed. The lights were on but it was like Willie was running late or something this morning. As she entered she noticed how quiet it was, there was no music playing which was odd. Roni called out, “Willie, are you here? It’s me, Roni Rainer. Willie?”

There was no response, just dead silence. She was sure that Willie was here, there was a disposable coffee cup from Sacred Grinds on the counter and a half eaten brownie. She kept calling his name as she got closer to the counter and then she saw him on the floor.

Roni rushed behind the counter and tried to stir the old man awake. His body was still warm but she could feel no pulse. His chest was not raising and lowering with breathing, nor could she hear or feel breath coming from his mouth or nose. She reached in her back pocket and pulled out her phone dialing 911. “I’m at Pedals Bicycle Shop on E. Main Street. I just found Willie on the floor. He isn’t breathing and I find no pulse. Could you send someone over right away?”

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Book 2 in the series:

[Illegal Harvest](#)

