

# The Golden Age Of Rock

## A Time Traveler's Tale

### Sample Chapters

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### *Chapter Three*

#### *Moving Forward*

After many hours spent examining each document and sitting by the open window, watching the rhythm of life unfold on the street below, Jake felt a sudden, irresistible urge to step outside and explore.

A newfound excitement dispelled the lingering despair. Pocketing a handful of cash from the briefcase and securing the rest under the bed, he stepped out with eager anticipation, ready to face whatever awaited him.

The allure of 1957 beckoned. And what better way to experience it than in a local pub or café, surrounded by people and lively conversation—one pint at a time?

Around 8 p.m., Jake stepped into the hallway for the first time. The subtle shift in aesthetics mesmerized him. The walls, the soft glow of the sconces, the faint scent of old wood and polish—it all belonged to another time. To his right, the hallway stretched endlessly, amplifying the surrealness of his new reality. He felt as though he'd wandered into an episode of the Twilight Zone.

And perhaps he had.

Standing in the doorway, directly across from him were the stairs. One flight down, the grand entrance to the world beyond awaited.

Stepping outside, he took in the imposing presence of the gothic

Adelphi Hotel. It was a landmark not easily missed. With its grand stone entrance and towering facade, it resembled a castle more than a hotel. The sheer scale reassured him—there was no way he could lose his way back.

Normally, Alex wasn't much of a drinker. But maybe Jake was. For reasons he couldn't quite explain, the idea of a beer and some human interaction seemed oddly appealing.

After navigating a few city blocks, he stumbled upon a café with a familiar name above the door: *Penny Lane Café*. The coincidence amused him. Could this be the inspiration for the Beatles' song?

Outside, the café exuded charm, bustling with people chatting, smoking, and sipping from mugs of beer. The sight of the crowd, the casual vibrancy of the scene, comforted him.

Surely, any odd behavior on his part would go unnoticed in a place like this.

With that reassurance, he mustered the courage to step inside. The warmth of the café enveloped him as he crossed the threshold. He hesitated at the top of the stairs, taking in the scene below.

The crowd—dressed in battered work clothes and full skirts—moved with a rhythm that left him awestruck. Then, from his research of the Beatles, he remembered Liverpool was a port town made up of mostly dock and factory workers. The chatter of conversation, the clinking of glasses, the smoky haze curling above the bar—it was a snapshot of the English working class in a time long gone, yet alive all around him. For a moment, he simply stood there, absorbing it all.

Finally, he made his way to the bar, drawn by its timeless, unchanging presence—a bridge between eras. Behind the counter, a bartender polished a glass, then gave him a nod.

"What'll ya ave, mate?"

Jake hesitated. What was even popular in 1957?

"Umm, can you make a Sea Breeze?"

The bartender frowned. "Not sure, mate. Neva 'eard of it."

With a chuckle, Jake quickly adjusted his expectations.

"Alright then, just give me a pint of whatever you think is good."

A moment later, the bartender returned, slamming down what looked

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like a gallon of beer in front of him.

“That’ll be six pence, mate.”

Jake paid from the cash in his pocket, then stood there, staring at the absurdly large mug. Then, the people-watching began. Back when he lived in the city, it had always been a favorite pastime. But this—this was on another level.

Snippets of conversation floated his way: Mentions of Eisenhower. New car models. The rising cost of milk. Each tiny detail helped him piece together the reality of the time he had landed in. It was irrational, yet oddly captivating—like flipping through the pages of a history book brought to life.

Then, his eyes fell on something familiar.

A recent copy of *The Liverpool Echo* sat on the bar. The same newspaper he’d found in the briefcase. He picked it up and scanned the date: July 4th, 1957. Months after his birthday. Any theories Jake had were now debunked and he was more confused than ever.

But here he was—in Liverpool, England, in a different body, and apparently, a very wealthy nineteen-year-old. Only yesterday, he had been fifty-eight, living in the mountains, married, with two dogs, and working as a plumber. The absurdity of it all hit him like a freight train.

A laugh bubbled up inside him—then another. And suddenly, he couldn’t stop. He laughed hysterically—uncontrollable, unhinged laughter that echoed through the pub, drawing curious glances from the patrons. Because everything about this was so utterly ridiculous. And laughing? Laughing seemed like the only sane response to an insane predicament.

Jake was just getting himself together when he felt a tap on his shoulder. Turning, he found himself face-to-face with a stunning auburn brunette.

Her big hazel eyes caught his attention first, but it was impossible not to notice her curves—especially her oversized bosoms, which seemed to defy the fabric of her dress.

She said something, likely asking about his laughing fit, but the noise of the pub drowned out her words. Jake stood there, momentarily speechless.

“‘Ello! You ok?” she asked, waving a hand in front of his face.

Jake finally snapped out of his daze. “Oh, sorry! Must be the jet lag—I just flew in from New York,” he blurted, grasping for a quick excuse.

Her hazel eyes widened with interest. “Nice ta meet ya! I’m Simone,” she said with a warm smile.

Her name rolled off her tongue with casual charm, and Jake found himself instantly intrigued. His earlier laughter was forgotten as he focused on the mesmerizing woman in front of him. If Jake were a cartoon, hearts would be floating from his eyes.

He started to introduce himself out of habit, beginning with “Ale—” before catching himself.

“I’m Jacob,” he corrected. “But you can call me Jake.”

“Nice ta meet ya, Jake. Welcome to Liverpool!” Simone grinned. “I saw ya laughin’ here all by yaself. Made me laugh just watchin’ ya. Mind me askin’ what was so funny?”

Jake scrambled for an explanation that didn’t involve time travel and existential crises.

“Oh, nothing really,” he said, forcing a casual tone. “Just tired, I guess. Thinking of a funny time with an old friend back home. You had to be there... I suppose. ‘Clown pizza’ was the punch line,” he said shaking his head with raised eyebrows, realizing he was blowing it.

Sensing his struggle, Simone smiled clearly amused by his weak attempt at deflection. Jake grasped quickly shifting to the safest small-talk option—the weather.

But Simone, not one for idle chatter, leaned in with a playful glint in her eye.

“Wanna join me an’ me mates?”

Jake hesitated, caught between the instinct to retreat and the undeniable allure of her presence. The thought of sitting alone with his thoughts—or worse, spiraling into another uncontrollable fit of laughter—seemed far less appealing.

With a slight grin, he nodded. “Sure, I’d love to.”

Simone guided Jake through the smoky crowd, weaving between tables and dodging waiters until they reached a booth tucked in the back. Two strangers sat at the table. Jake suddenly felt like an actor stepping onto an

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unfamiliar stage.

“Jake, this is Pete and his girlfriend, Kia.” She turned to them. “Kia, Pete, this is me new friend Jake. He’s all the way from New York. Found ‘im laughin’ to ‘imself at the bar!”

Jake forced a sheepish smile as Pete and Kia nodded politely.

Despite their friendliness, he couldn’t shake the feeling that he’d just been introduced as the local eccentric—the guy who laughs at nothing and somehow ends up at your table.

A few drinks in, and the tension eased. Pete had been going on about the tribulations of art school and his new job as a waiter right there at the Penny Lane Café, and soon, the awkwardness dissolved into easy banter. Jake found himself genuinely enjoying their company. Pete, in particular, caught Jake’s attention.

Something about him felt... familiar.

Short, wavy blonde hair. Sharp wit. Pete mentioned he was seventeen and played in a band with his schoolmates. Then he casually dropped the bombshell. His full name was Pete Shotton.

Jake nearly choked on his drink.

The name hit him like a sledgehammer to the face. Pete Shotton—John Lennon’s best friend.

Jake barely held his composure.

Holy shit!

Sitting in a Liverpool pub, with Pete Shotton, on the brink of the Beatles forming. Jake instinctively wanted to say, “I loved your book!”—referring to *John & Me*. But he stopped himself. That book wouldn’t be written for another 25 years. Having read it, Jake already knew everything about his friendship with John.

Moving forward, Jake treaded carefully, navigating the moment with measured words. “So, Pete, what do you do for fun here in London, besides play in a band?”

Pete grinned and took a hearty swig of his pint. Then, his eyes lit up with sudden realization. He slammed his pint onto the table with a resounding thud, his voice booming.

“Liverpool, mate!” Pete exclaimed, eyes twinkling with mock

incredulity. “We’re in Liverpool, not London!”

Jake froze.

Simone burst out laughing. “Told ya he was jet-lagged!”

Pete chuckled, taking another swig, clearly enjoying Jake’s momentary bewilderment.

Jake struggled to play it cool, all while marveling at Pete’s flair for theatricality. It was as if every word Pete spoke was part of an elaborate performance—one Jake couldn’t help but enjoy.

Pete, ever the friendly chap, settled back into his seat, his grin softening.

“Most of me time, though, I’m skippin’ class or hangin’ with John an’ me mates, tryin’ ta get our band soundin’ halfway decent—if ya know what I mean? We’ve got a gig on Saturday. You should come, if you’re still around, that is.”

Jake already knew the answer to his next question, but he played along.

“That’s cool,” he said, taking a swig of beer. “I’ll probably be around for a while. What’s the name of your band?”

Pete smirked. “We call ourselves the Quarrymen.”

Jake nodded, keeping his expression neutral, even though he’d heard that name a million times in documentaries.

“Nice,” he said casually, before continuing. “What instrument do you play?”

Pete hesitated, then laughed. “Rockin’ roll washboard—skiffle, mate. What other instrument is there?”

Jake grinned, mimicking Pete’s laugh. “Sounds like you guys have a unique sound. Looking forward to hearing you on stage.”

Pete took another sip of his drink and shrugged. “Yeah, we named it after our school—Quarry Bank.” But before Jake could press further, Pete’s expression shifted, and he tilted his head. “So, Jake, what ya doin’ here from America, then?”

Jake leaned back in his chair, choosing his words carefully.

“Good question,” he said. “Don’t really know. Got off the plane last night, told the cabbie to drop me at a decent hotel. Woke up this morning in Liverpool—at the Adelphi.”

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A ripple of curiosity passed through the group. Simone shot Jake a look that hovered between impressed and perplexed.

"I think that cabbie was havin' a bit o' fun with ya, love," she said, eyebrows arched. "The Adelphi? That's swanky—and Liverpool's three hours from Heathrow. Coulda dropped ya at plenty of posh spots in London. Musta lived here to drive ya all this way." She paused, eyeing him. "Ya must have a few bob too, if ya stayin' at the Adelphi! You stayin' for a while, then?"

Jake laughed, trying to keep the craziness of his situation under wraps.

"Not really sure. So far, it seems nice—nice people. Though I thought £200 was a bit much for a cab ride!" He grinned, hoping to lighten the moment.

The reaction was immediate. Pete nearly choked on his drink, and everyone at the table stared.

"Two hundred quid?!" they chorused.

Pete shook his head, smirking. "You're an odd bloke, Jake. For one, Liverpool's nowhere, mate. Most people wanna get out as fast as they can. Take a look around—this place is a bloomin' shithole!" He eyed Jake's pinstriped suit, amused. "And two, that getup? That cabbie saw ya comin' a mile away, I'll bet!"

Simone shot him a sharp look. "Cut it out, Pete! Be nice!"

Pete held up his hands in mock surrender, still grinning.

"Bollocks, I'm just tellin' Jake the truth. Gotta be a bit more savvy round here, mate. People'll take advantage if you're not careful. Just tryin' to help ya out, that's all."

Jake chuckled, amused by Pete's blunt honesty. As the conversation continued, the earlier awkwardness melted away into easy camaraderie.

As the night wore on, Pete glanced at the time and stretched.

"It's gettin' late. We need to be on our way. Grand meetin' ya, Jake. Hope ya come by the fair Saturday, if you're still around. I'll introduce ya to me mate John and the band. John loves America... and Elvis, haha!"

With that, Pete stood up, giving Jake a friendly nod as he gathered his things. Jake, feeling bold, covered the drinks for everyone—except Pete,

who had made it very clear his pints were on the house since he worked there.

Pete slapped Jake on the shoulder. "Thanks, mate. Not so bad for a Yank. Just screwin' with ya earlier—you seem like a good bloke. Jus' watch dem cabbies, yea? Alright, okay, let's get outta 'ere!"

As the group stood to leave, Simone discreetly slipped Jake a folded piece of paper into his hand. Her fingers lingered against his for a moment, sending a jolt of excitement through him.

Jake swallowed, staring at the small mystery note now hidden in his palm. Was it a number? A message? Something else?

Simone caught his eye and gave him a knowing smile, then turned toward the exit. Jake followed, his gaze trailing her swaying hips as she walked. And just like that, it hit him again—a rush of teenage hormones reminding him, quite abruptly, that he was no longer a middle-aged man.

He stepped out into the hot summer night air, the streets of 1957 Liverpool stretching before him. A smile tugged at the corner of his mouth. Whatever tomorrow brought, one thing was for sure—this was already one hell of a day.

Once on the street, Simone mentioned that her house was along the same route as Jake's hotel. She offered to walk with him while Kia and Pete headed in the opposite direction.

Their walk was brief—just three blocks—and they arrived in front of his hotel before any real conversation could unfold. Still, Jake was smitten.

"Great meetin' ya tonight," Simone said, her voice smooth and inviting, sending a thrill through him.

"If you wanna go to the fair on Saturday, let me know. Ya got me numba!" she said with a seductive smile.

As they parted, Simone hugged him tight—soft, warm, and far too brief. Her scent lingered, and Jake found himself wishing, more than anything, that he could take her up to his room. The thought made his pulse quicken, but he managed to keep his cool as they said their goodbyes.

The promise of tomorrow hung in the air.

Or so he hoped.



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What a night. Everything had clicked—he felt genuinely connected, appreciated. Jake couldn't remember the last time he'd felt this alive.

He still couldn't believe it. He'd met Pete Shotton, John Lennon's best friend, and was now on track to meet John himself. Then he suddenly realized, Saturday was July 6th. That's the day John meets Paul for the first time. The surreal nature of it all made his head spin.

And then there was Simone. God, she was hot. Jake replayed their interactions in his mind—the way she smiled, how she slipped him her number without him even asking. She had been confident, playful, completely in control of the moment.

As Jake made his way up to his hotel room, he couldn't help but grin. This new life, whatever it was, seemed to be unfolding in extraordinary ways. He was over the moon, riding the high of the night's events.

He wanted to call someone, share the excitement—post something on Facebook.

Except...

Facebook didn't exist here. And there was no one to call.

The realization settled in, heavy and unshakable. A dull ache suddenly bloomed in his chest.

You don't know what you have 'til it's gone. People had always said that. He'd always nodded along, assuming he understood. But now? Now he truly knew.

This wasn't just about missing old friends or simpler times. Fifty-eight years of experiences, memories, relationships—wiped out.

And now, here he was—starting over in a strange time, in a strange body, surrounded by people who didn't know him. People he could never share his past with.

The joy of the night dimmed, swallowed by the magnitude of his new reality. Tears welled up as the full impact hit him. The thought of never seeing his dogs, Veronica, his mom, his friends—it was too much to bear.

They seemed so far away now, like a distant dream—though just yesterday, he'd been sitting by his bonfire at home.

His old life and this new one collided painfully in his mind. If this was

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permanent, he would never see any of them again.

Jake stared out the hotel window, caught between two lives. One he could never return to. And one he hadn't yet figured out. The mix of grief and relief left him adrift in a storm of emotions.

Exhausted, he realized he desperately needed sleep. Today had been a day like no other—sad, confusing, and yet, wonderful.

As he lay down, the soft bed beneath him offered the only comfort in this strange new world.

Despite everything, a flicker of hope remained. Tomorrow was another day.

Or... Would he wake up in his old life, just as unexpectedly as he had arrived in this one?

With that final thought, he let the day slip away, drifting into a sleep that felt like both an escape from his past... and the beginning of something extraordinary.

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### *Chapter Four*

#### *Welcome To The Neighborhood*

The sun crept through the heavy black drapes, signaling the start of a new day—though Jake hardly felt ready for it.

After passing out earlier, he hadn't slept well at all. Tossing. Turning. His mind refusing to settle.

Every time he closed his eyes, his thoughts spiraled back to Pete Shotton and the fact that on Saturday, he was supposed to meet John Lennon. And how, exactly, he fit into a history he already knew so well.

In just a few short years, The Beatles would become the most iconic band in the world. The reality of that knowledge gnawed at him.

Should he intervene? Could he?

The potential to alter history made sleep impossible. But it wasn't just The Beatles keeping him awake.

His mind drifted back to the life he'd left behind—his friends, his family, the familiar comforts of a world he understood. The loss was profound, but even as he mourned, a haunting question took root: Did I have a choice?

The truth was, he still didn't know how or why he'd ended up here. And the uncertainty pressed down on him, blending with the strange thrill of being at the beginning of something so... incomprehensible.

As the morning light grew stronger, Jake grew restless. He couldn't

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stay in bed any longer. The day was waiting. And so was whatever strange fate had brought him here.

Whether he liked it or not... this was his life now. And he had no choice but to live it.

After a long, steaming shower, Jake decided it was time for a new wardrobe.

Pete's teasing last night had made it clear—he couldn't walk around in this suit every day. Even if it did make him look sharp. Blending in seemed wise. A fresh set of clothes was the first step.

He reached under the bed for the briefcase—but as his fingers brushed against something sharp, a quick sting made him flinch.

What the hell?

He quickly pulled his hand back, heart pounding.

Two small plastic bags, a heavy-duty syringe.

Jake's stomach dropped.

His fingers closed around them, and he rushed to the bathroom, panic rising.

No. No, no, no.

Standing in front of the mirror, he ripped open his shirt sleeve, his breath shallow.

Nothing.

Then he stripped naked, inspecting every inch of his body. His left leg—four tiny pinpricks. Track marks. A cold sweat pricked his skin as the realization hit him like a ton of bricks.

The body he now inhabited had been using heroin.

Jake gripped the sink, nausea curling in his gut.

Had he overdosed? Had I... The thought was too horrifying to finish.

Perhaps, at the exact moment his consciousness took over, the previous occupant of this body had died. Somehow his conscious mind had time traveled, which made sense, since he was now in a different body. It seemed a reasonable deduction—though the implications were chilling.

Jake exhaled, forcing himself to think logically.

His body felt... good. Strong, even. He wasn't shaking. Wasn't

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sluggish. No cold sweats. No nausea. No withdrawal. That meant one of two things: The previous owner was new to heroin. Or he hadn't used long enough for addiction to take hold.

Either way, the idea of being trapped in a body that could crave heroin made Jake's skin crawl.

Then another thought struck him. A darker one.

Had he died in his alternate life?

The question sent a chill down his spine. If he had... What did that make this life? A second chance? A punishment? Was this some kind of afterlife?

He stared into the mirror, into a face that was his and yet not his, and realized...

He might never know. For now, there were no answers. No authority to consult. Maybe Albert Einstein? Then quickly remembered he had died in 1955, just two years ago.

Just more questions. But one thing was certain: he needed to keep moving forward.

And the first step in this strange new journey was making sure he wasn't just stepping into someone else's nightmare.

With a deep breath, Jake tucked the plastic bags and syringe into the trash in the stairwell at the far end of the hall, and headed out the door.

Descending the stairs, Jake's mood lifted as the smell of coffee and freshly baked goods drifted up from the expansive lobby. A continental breakfast was laid out, but it was the sheer grandeur of the Adelphi Hotel that stopped him in his tracks.

Marble floors gleamed beneath high ceilings adorned with chandeliers. The place wasn't just swanky—it was opulent. A step back in time, where history *was* palpable, as if the very walls had witnessed grand occasions.

Jake couldn't help but feel like a lucky intruder in a world far removed from his own.

He needed food before venturing out, so he made a beeline for the breakfast spread. Without ceremony, he wolfed down a Danish, two doughnuts, and a glass of orange juice. He barely tasted any of it, but the simple comfort was enough to ground him.

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Finishing his orange juice, Jake glanced around, taking in the lavish surroundings with a wry smile.

“What’s this place costing me?” he muttered under his breath, a mix of awe and unease flickering across his face.

Crossing the lobby, he approached the front desk, keeping his expression neutral. The concierge greeted Jake with an almost comical level of enthusiasm, as though he were welcoming royalty—or perhaps some minor celebrity who had once graced a magazine cover.

“Hello, Mr. Fantastic! How are you finding your stay at the Adelphi? Anything I can assist you with?”

Jake requested a look at his account.

The concierge, all too eager to comply, handed him a crisp sheet of paper, as if it were some sacred document.

Jake scanned the details, his eyes narrowing slightly. According to this, he had checked in four days ago. What a deal it was, too—only £200 a night for such an establishment. A laughably low figure for this level of luxury.

Then it hit him. This was 1957!

Here, £200 could buy a level of extravagance unheard of in the far-off dystopia of 2024.

He smiled to himself—a private joke shared between him and the indifferent passage of time.

It also explained the shock on Pete’s face when he mentioned paying that much for a nonexistent cab ride. No wonder they’d thought he was insane.

The concierge’s voice cut through his musings, almost startling him. “Is everything all right, Mr. Fantastic?”

Jake raised his gaze from the paper, a picture of unflappable composure. “Yes, everything is splendid, thank you.”

With a nod of finality, he returned the paper to the concierge’s eager hands and made his way toward the front door.

Out on the street, everything seemed different from the night before. Pete had been right—Liverpool felt worn and heavy.

Jake’s thoughts were miles away as he wandered aimlessly through the

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streets, consumed by ruminations of his other life. Was he really dead? How would Veronica cope without him? The ache of missing his dogs, the familiarity of home, and the loneliness of being completely untethered in time clung to him, unshakable and raw..

Then, as he turned a corner—his spirits lifted. *The Cavern Club*. The legendary birthplace of The Beatles.

Jake stopped in his tracks, his pulse quickening.

Holy shit!

He chuckled to himself. They weren't kidding when they said this place was a dive! It wasn't open, but a show roster taped to the door caught his eye: *The Raving Texans, Friday night at 9 p.m.*

He recognized the name instantly. They were pre-Rory Storm and the Hurricanes, the band Ringo had started with.

Had Ringo joined them yet? He wasn't sure. But seeing the name felt like a brush with history. Pretty cool, regardless.

Walking past a movie theater, he stopped, eyes drawn to a poster of Marilyn Monroe in a new film, *The Prince and the Showgirl*. How strange—to be alive in her time. In just five years, she'd be gone. An overdose, they'd say. Later, whispers of scandal, of cover-ups, involving the Kennedys.

"She still has five years," he murmured.

Maybe this time... I could save her, he thought with a wry smile—half-joking, half not.

Though, truth be told, the idea was oddly tempting.

After hours of walking and shopping, Jake felt like a zombie. His hands were weighed down with bags, his feet swollen.

Flagging a cab, he let it carry him back to the hotel. Once inside, he dropped everything on the floor and collapsed onto the bed, staring up at a ceiling he was becoming well acquainted with.

The next thing he knew, he was waking up.

Feeling surprisingly better, Jake fumbled for the antique phone beside his bed and called the front desk to find out what time it was.

"Yes, Mr. Fantastic," the concierge answered, just as cheery as before.

“It’s currently 6:11 p.m., sir. Channel 3 on your television also displays the time.”

“Television?” Jake murmured, scanning the room. “I’m sorry, but there isn’t a TV in my room.”

A brief silence. Then, the concierge’s flustered reply: “Oh, terribly sorry, sir! You are in one of our older suites—I’ll have someone up immediately to rectify the situation!”

Before Jake could respond, the line clicked.

He stared at the phone, bemused.

“Umm... okay. Thanks?”

Moments later, a young bellhop in uniform knocked on the door, wheeling in a small, fifteen-inch black-and-white TV.

“Where would ya like the TV, sir?”

“Ah, right over there in front of the bed is fine, thanks.”

As the bellhop set it up, Jake asked, “What channel has the news?”

A pause.

“Channel, sir?” the bellhop repeated, puzzled. “We only ‘ave one.”

Jake blinked.

Oh. Right.

He recovered quickly.

“We have three in the U.S.” He forced a small, awkward laugh.

The kid didn’t seem amused, merely finishing his work in silence. When he was done, Jake handed him a five-pound tip. The bellhop’s eyes widened. A huge smile spread across his face.

“Thank ya, sir! Thank ya!”

He practically skipped out the door.

Alone again, Jake switched on the TV. To his surprise, a new episode of Benny Hill filled the screen.

Jake chuckled.

Benny Hill. A show that had ended long ago in his time. But here? It was fresh.

He settled back against a pile of pillows, letting the laughter and absurdity wash over him. And for the first time since waking up in 1957, something about it all felt oddly... comforting.



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This new life, it seemed, had its advantages.

There was a quiet satisfaction in lying there, knowing that financial security was no longer an elusive dream but a tangible reality. The future, once a murky unknown, now stretched out like a blank canvas, waiting to be painted with endless possibilities. And all of them were within his reach.

The evening plan was simple: Stay in. Gather thoughts. Devise a strategy. Naturally, the first thing that came to Jake's mind was the music scene. An industry he had meticulously researched. And now, with his newfound riches, it was ripe for the taking.

By 8 p.m., British television had lost its allure. Boredom crept in. Jake's thoughts drifted to the small slip of paper tucked inside his pocket—Simone's number.

Maybe it was time.

A flicker of nervousness tugged at him as he dialed the front desk for an outside line. His heartbeat kicked up a notch.

"What the hell do I even say?"

Maybe he'd invite her to Pete's gig at the fair—just like they'd talked about on the walk home.

The phone rang.

A man answered.

"Ello?"

"Hello, is Simone there?"

"Yeah, mate. One sec."

A brief pause. Then, her playful voice.

"Ello, who's this?"

"Hey, Simone! It's Jake."

"Oh, Jake! How lovely of you to call!" Her excitement was obvious, and suddenly, Jake wasn't so nervous.

"Well, I had a great time last night," he said smoothly, "and was thinking—how about we hit that fair tomorrow? You know, catch Pete's band and maybe indulge in some overpriced cotton candy?"

Simone laughed. "That sounds grand, luv! I think there's a bus stop just out front of your hotel, I can meet ya there?"

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Jake hesitated, remembering he had a DB2 Mark III somewhere.

“Umm... I’m fairly certain I recently bought a motor,” he said, trying to mimic British slang. “If I can figure out where it is, we can drive there if you want?”

“Fairly certain? Figure out where it is?” she teased in disbelief. “How do ya not know if ya bought a motor or not—or if ya can find it or not? Don’t tell me you’re still suffering from transatlantic confusion.”

Jake chuckled. “Let’s just say I bought one, and it was supposed to be delivered, but whether it’s physically here, in my possession, is another story. I’m still waiting on the final plot twist.”

She let out a delighted chuckle. “You’re a curious one, Jake. Bought a motor but not sure if it exists—sounds like something out of a Kafka novel.”

“I’ll fill you in on the details tomorrow when I pick you up—let’s say noon?”

“Noon it is, darling! Can’t wait to hear this mystery of the missing automobile.” Her voice softened. “Got a pen handy? I’ll give you my address... unless you plan on navigating by sheer intuition.”

Jake grinned, scribbling down the address. Then came a minute of painfully awkward small talk before he finally hung up.

And immediately—he felt like a complete idiot. He’d stumbled over his words like he was back in high school. Yet, at the same time, his heart was racing. Tomorrow suddenly seemed like the most anticipated day of his life.

The hours couldn’t pass quickly enough.

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### *Chapter Five* *An Unlikely Day*

The next day, after yet another night of tossing and turning, Jake found himself awake far too early, running on little more than nerves and anticipation. Somewhere in this hotel was an Aston Martin with his name on it—or at least, he hoped there was.

After downing a quick cup of coffee from the continental breakfast buffet, he began the morning by tearing apart the hotel room in search of the keys or some clue to where this Astin Martin was.

Dresser? Empty.

Nightstand? Just a hotel Bible and a mystery sock.

Desk drawer? He found a fountain pen—but no keys.

Jake exhaled sharply, muttering under his breath. “Where the hell are they?”

Then, it hit him. The all-knowing concierge!

Snatching up the antique phone, he called the front desk. “Yes, Mr. Fantastic, how may I be of assistance?”

Jake tried to sound calm. “Uh, yeah, I was wondering if you had my car keys?”

“Indeed, Mr. Fantastic. Your keys are with our valet in the garage. Would you like us to bring the car out for you?”

A wave of relief washed over Jake, so strong it was almost comical. “Yes! That would be great! I’ll be down at 11:30.”

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Just as Jake was about to hang up, the concierge added, “Top up or down, sir?”

Jake frowned. “Excuse me?”

“Top up or down, sir? It’s a coupe, and there’s a beautiful, sunny day upon us.”

Jake blinked, shaking his head at the concierge’s enthusiasm. “Oh, right... down, please. Also, can you write me some directions?”

Feeling like a kid on christmas, he rattled off Simone’s address.

“Excellent choice, sir. We’ll have your car brought around front for 11:30, and you can pick up your directions at the front desk.”

Click.

Jake stared at the receiver, then chuckled.

“What is up with this guy?”

He set the phone down, exhaling. This day was shaping up to be full of firsts—starting with his very own sports car. Now all he had to do was survive until 11:30 without combusting from sheer anticipation.

Down in the lobby, Jake picked up his handwritten directions and strolled outside to meet his ride. The valet, with a flourish, presented him with the keys.

And there it was. A black-on-tan convertible Aston Martin DB2.

Jake stopped cold.

It wasn’t just a car. It was a masterpiece. The kind of vehicle that made people stop and stare—possibly even reevaluate their life choices.

He walked around it slowly, fingers trailing over the polished surface, the spoked wheels, teak dashboard, feeling like he’d just stumbled into the ultimate James Bond fantasy.

Then, reality punched him in the face.

The steering wheel was on the right, and to further complicate things, the gear box was on the left.

Jake’s stomach dropped.

Oh, hell. The learning curve.

Settling into the driver’s seat, Jake took a deep breath. The instrument panel looked like it belonged in a fighter jet. Buttons. Dials. Gauges. Was

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one of these for launching missiles? He reached for the gear shift, took another breath, and—the car lurched forward with a humiliating jolt.

After a few tentative laps around the parking lot—one or two of which may have included some unintentional jerking and mild whiplash—he felt just confident enough to venture onto the actual road.

He reviewed the directions, committed the first two turns to memory, then, with a final prayer to the gods of 1950s traffic, pulled into the street.

For the first few minutes, Jake felt like a natural.

Look at me, he thought smugly. Handling this like a pro!

Then, reality slapped him upside the head once again.

One wrong turn. A near-disastrous attempt at going up a one-way street. A hasty U-turn that involved so much gear grinding it sounded like he was grinding coffee beans instead of driving.

Jake gritted his teeth, gripping the wheel. What should have been a five-block drive turned into a half-hour exercise in humility.

By the time he finally pulled up to Simone's front door, he was late. And slightly frazzled.

The Aston Martin might have looked perfect. But his journey to get here? Not so much.

Now, all he had to do was hope the date itself would go better than the drive.

Parked outside Simone's house, Jake took in the modest brick home, one among a row of identical ones, where neatly trimmed hedges and symmetrical flower beds hinted at a neighborhood that valued order. It was the kind of place where you could borrow sugar from your neighbor and still be gossip material by the afternoon.

Feeling awkwardly out of place in his Aston Martin, he gave the car horn a quick beep. Then immediately regretted it. Too impersonal? Maybe he should've walked up to the door like a proper gentleman.

As he debated whether to rectify his mistake, the front door swung open. And there she was. Simone. And wow! If she had been stunning the night before, now, in full light of day, she was jaw-dropping. The kind of beauty that made time slow down, made thoughts scatter, and made Jake

momentarily forget what he was supposed to be doing.

Was he supposed to get out? Wave? Say something intelligent?

His body decided for him.

He leaped out of his seat, nearly tripping over his own feet in an attempt to open the passenger door for her. Simone's laughter was warm, teasing.

"Hi!" she said brightly, sliding into the seat. "Wow, is this the motor you conveniently forgot about?"

Jake grinned, shaking off his stumbling entrance.

"Yeah, this is the one. What do you think?"

Simone ran her fingertips along the leather lined dashboard, eyes widening in admiration. "I love it! It's gorgeous—and a coupe, too!"

Then, tilting her head, she beamed. "Aston Martins aren't exactly pocket change, you know... So, between the 200-quid cab ride, staying at the Adelphi, and forgetting you own a car like this—are you rich? Or is this another one of your long, suspiciously entertaining stories?"

Jake chuckled, the stress of his drive slipping away. Simone was completely at ease, and for the first time since waking up in 1957, Jake felt like maybe—just maybe—life in the fifties wasn't so bad.

Just as Jake was about to pull away from the curb, he hesitated and glanced over at Simone. "So, I have to confess something."

She shot him a mock-suspicious look. "Uh oh. When someone says that, it's usually followed by 'I have a wife and three kids back home' or 'I moonlight as a spy.'"

Jake laughed, shaking his head. "No secret families or espionage gigs, I promise. It's just... in New York, we sit on the left with the gear box on the right. Everything here is backwards, and I've been navigating like a lost tourist on a scavenger hunt. That's why I was late—it took me almost half an hour to survive a five-minute drive. Liverpool must think there's a new idiot in town."

Simone burst into laughter, throwing her head back. "I did wonder if you got swallowed by a roundabout. Or worse—pulled over by a copper!"

Jake groaned. "Let's just say I'm one wrong turn away from causing an international incident." Then, after a beat: "So... here's my not-so-suave request: I know this isn't gonna sound very manly, but can you drive a

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standard?”

Simone's eyes widened with delight. “Wait, REALLY?! Didn't ya know, Brits are raised on standard shift!”

Jake nodded, gripping the steering wheel like it might save him from further humiliation. “Trust me, you'd be doing the entire city a favor. You actually know these roads—I, on the other hand, am a menace to British infrastructure.”

Simone's lips twitched with amusement.

“But... what if I crash it?” she asked, glancing at the pristine dashboard. “I mean, this isn't exactly a Fiat.”

Jake shrugged dramatically. “If we crash, I'll just... cry a little and then buy another one.”

She snorted. “Oh, well, that's reassuring!”

He grinned, knowing he could. “Honestly, you'll do a hundred times better than I did. I'm pretty sure I invented some new traffic maneuvers on the way here.”

Simone giggled, as they got out and changed seats. “Oh, this is gonna be fun. Can't wait to see Pete and Kia's faces when I roll up in this corks. They'll probably think I've gone and married a millionaire overnight!”

With a playful wink, she adjusted the seat and mirrors.

There was something captivating about Simone's energy—the way she embraced the moment without hesitation.

So far, Jake thought, this was going better than expected—especially considering the morning's disasters. And big points for letting her drive.

Simone glanced at him, wearing a playful, almost schoolgirl smile, and for a moment, all the stress melted away.

“Ready to see how a real pro handles this thing?” she teased, flashing Jake a quick smile.

Jake grinned, settling into the passenger seat. “Please, by all means—show me how it's done.”

With a confident flick of the wrist, Simone shifted into first gear, and the car rolled smoothly onto the road.

As they cruised through Liverpool's middle-class neighborhoods, Jake took in the new world around him.

## *An Unlikely Day*

The rows of red-brick houses, the occasional cobbled street, the children playing outside, kicking a football near the pavement—everything felt simultaneously familiar and foreign. Noticeably absent—cell phones.

Less than a week ago, he was just a country bumpkin. Now, he was in an Aston Martin, with a gorgeous girl at the wheel, driving through a city he'd never seen before.

And the kicker? He was on his way to meet John Lennon.

Jake's heart picked up speed, matching the hum of the engine.

If his hunch was right, today would be the day John Lennon met Paul McCartney for the first time—a moment that would change music history forever. And he was about to stand right in the middle of it.

He stole a glance at Simone, effortlessly handling the car, her long auburn hair blowing in the wind. With sunglasses on, she looked like a movie star, completely in the moment, enjoying the drive.

After a few moments of comfortable silence, Simone tilted her head, throwing him a teasing glance.

“Why ya so quiet? Am I driving that bad? Or did I scare ya into silence?”

Jake snapped out of his thoughts. “Oh no, your driving is perfect! I'm just... deep in thought, that's all. Sorry if I'm zoning out.”

Simone smiled. “Deep in thought, eh? What's rattlin' around in that brain of yours, then?”

Jake hesitated. How was he supposed to explain everything? The fact that he might be rewriting musical history? That in a few hours, he could be the reason the most influential band of all time forms? Oh, and by the way, I'm from the future.

Yeah. Not exactly first-date conversation material.

He flashed a half-smile. “That's a Pandora's box of a question, Simone. I'll fill you in later if that's okay.”

She arched an eyebrow. “Mysterious, aren't we? All these ‘It's complicated, I'll tell ya later’ answers... you're like a walking cliffhanger.” Then, softening, she nudged his shoulder. “But you know what? I'm glad we met, mystery man. You seem like a really sweet fella—even if you are a bit of an enigma. I can tell your a good guy.”

Jake felt a warmth spread through him. “I'm glad we met too. And



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thanks, you're a pretty good gal too."

Simone laughed at his awkward response, giving him a playful, knowing look before focusing back on the road. Jake leaned his head back against the seat, exhaling.

He felt relaxed, but his mind was in overdrive.

If he wanted to go down in history as the guy who introduced John Lennon and Paul McCartney, he needed to meet two complete strangers, and somehow introduce the two before Paul's friend, Ivan does.

How?

How was he supposed to orchestrate one of the most pivotal moments in music history?

He had no plan. No blueprint. Just one shot to get it right.

And as Liverpool rolled past by, he couldn't help but wonder: should he even to do this? What if he wasn't meant to interfere? What if—by trying to insert himself—he changed everything?

While all this swirled through Jake's head, the tight, cramped neighborhood streets suddenly opened up, revealing an ancient-looking church. The massive stone building loomed over the street, its towering spire casting long shadows across the bustling crowd below.

People were everywhere. The streets were so crammed with cars that you'd be lucky to find a spot for a bicycle, let alone a car.

As Simone searched for parking, Jake couldn't help but notice the dozens of admiring glances they were getting from the sidewalk.

A few passersby even called out, "Bloody hell, look at that motor!"

And, "Aston Martin? Who's he, the King of England?"

Despite feeling a bit pretentious, Jake couldn't deny the rush of validation. In a sea of hundreds, they stood out.

After fifteen minutes of circling, Simone finally pulled onto a patch of grass behind a row of other cars. She patted the steering wheel and grinned.

"There we go, luv. A bit of grass parking never hurt anyone."

Jake let out a low whistle, taking in the crowd. "Looks like a good turnout! And what a beautiful church."

Simone shrugged. "Yeah, it's okay. Come on, let's go find Pete and Kia before the band goes on."

Then, eyeing the crowd full of curious onlookers, she added, “Do you wanna put the top up and lock the car? Someone might try to sit in it. Or, you know... drive off with it while we’re gone.”

Jake chuckled, shaking his head.

“Brilliant suggestion, my dear!” he said, with an exaggerated British accent.

Simone rolled her eyes, smiling. “Really?”

Jake just grinned, securing the car before they made their way toward the entrance.

The crowd was electric, a buzzing mix of locals, students, and music lovers, all packed into the churchyard excited for the festivities ahead.

On high alert, Jake scanned the crowd, searching for one familiar face.

Paul McCartney has to be around here somewhere. With any luck, once the band started playing, he’d spot him near the stage. But right now, it felt like a game of ‘Where’s Waldo?’—except the stakes were much, much higher.

As they moved through the sea of people, Simone suddenly lit up, spotting someone in the crowd.

"Oh! There’s me mate Angela from school!"

Jake followed her gaze—to another buxom bombshell in a curve-hugging dress. He blinked. Does England have a factory for these women? Everywhere he looked, it was big boobs and blonde hair.

Trying to shake off his distraction, Jake glanced around, still searching for Paul.

Before they could get far, Kia spotted them first, weaving through the crowd to greet them. "There you are! Pete and the band are already backstage getting ready."

Jake nodded, following Simone’s lead—as she followed Kia. But his eyes never stopped scanning the crowd.

And still, no Paul.

A nagging thought crept in, curling around his brain like a cold hand on the back of his neck.

What if I’m in an alternate timeline? What if not everything happens the way I remember?

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The idea perplexed him. If that were true... All his plans were down the drain.

He had assumed history was fixed, that he could just nudge things along as needed. But what if things had already changed? What if Paul McCartney never showed up?

His heartbeat sped up. For now, he just had to keep looking—and hope he wasn't about to wreck the course of music history forever.

Kia led them through the crowd and as they stepped into the back room of *St. Peter's Church*, Jake's heart nearly stopped. There—unmistakable, even in his youth—was John Lennon. He looked exactly like the pictures he saw of this day, posted all over the internet. Seventeen years old, sitting casually on a picnic table, teddy boy hair, guitar in hand, strumming like he didn't have a single care in the world.

Jake's palms went slick with sweat, and he frantically wiped them on his jeans just as Pete walked over—breaking the spell of the moment.

Pete spotted them walk in, grinning as he walked over. "Ayyy, Jake! Ya made it! Good to see ya, mate. Had a good time the other night—hope I wasn't too harsh with ya!"

Jake, still trying to steady his nerves, forced a smile. "Not at all! I had a great time too! Even took your advice—bought some new clothes." Glancing at the band setting up, he added, "So, this is the Quarrymen? What songs are you guys playing today?"

Pete shrugged. "Oh, ya know, a little Buddy Holly, Elvis."

Before he could finish, John Lennon, having overheard the conversation, jumped in with a spark in his eye. "Rock 'n' roll, baby! We play rock 'n' roll!"

Pete grinned, motioning between them. "Jake, this is me mate John. He sings and plays guitar. Jake's ere's from America, John."

John leaned in slightly, studying Jake with a classic, mischievous grin. "Oh yeah? America? I can hear the accent." Flashing an even bigger smile, he added, "Million-dollar question—do ya know Elvis?"

Jake grinned, doing his best to keep cool. "I'm from New York—Manhattan. And nope, don't know Elvis. Do you?"

John laughed. "Ha! I wish I knew Elvis." Pointing at Jake with his pick,

he added, "Maybe when I'm a famous rock star, I'll meet 'im. And New York—I'll get there someday, too!"

A chill washed over Jake. Hearing John say those words—knowing his future, knowing how right he was—the moment was both surreal and mind-blowing. Jake was so wrapped up in it, he barely registered Pete clapping his hands.

"Right, boys, we better start tunin' up—we go on in thirty."

John nodded, turning toward the band. "Yeah, better start gettin' it together, boys." Then, as he casually walked past Simone—"Hey, Simone."

"Ay, John," Simone replied with a small nod.

Just as Pete was about to walk off, he turned back. "You should stick around after the gig—we're all meetin' up at John's mum's for a backyard pint." With a wink, he added, "Special occasion, ya know."

Simone glanced at Jake, as if seeking approval. He nodded. As if there was any doubt.

"Yeah, Pete," Simone said. "We'll be there. Wait till ya see what we rolled up in!"

Jake, still riding the adrenaline high of meeting John, suddenly called over, "Looking forward to hearing you guys play. Simone says you're really good!"

John, now distracted with tuning his guitar, barely looked up. His earlier excitement had vanished. With a quick, almost dismissive tone, he said, "Yeah, mate. See ya later."

Jake felt a tiny sting of disappointment. That had shifted fast. But he knew from history—John could be like that.

Instead of dwelling on it, Jake just nodded.

"Okay. See ya—and good luck."

John glanced up briefly, eyes unreadable, then went back to tuning.

Jake took the hint.

With Simone and Kia, he quietly slipped out the back door, making their way around to the front to find a spot to sit.

As they rounded the corner, Jake let out a quiet sigh of relief. There—standing in front of the stage, chatting with someone—was a young Paul McCartney. Fifteen years old, guitar casually strapped to his back.

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Jake's first instinct was to rush over and introduce himself. But instead, he'd wait, see where Paul sat, then make his move.

As they meandered through the crowd, Jake's eyes never left Paul. He'd seen pictures from this era, but seeing him in person was different. Paul looked like a chubby little boy, his baby face still round with youth. Beside him, chatting animatedly, was another familiar face.

Ivan Vaughn.

Jake's stomach tightened slightly. This was it. Ivan Vaughn—the person who originally introduced Paul and John.

Paul and Ivan eventually took seats near the stage, giving Jake the perfect opportunity. He interrupted Simone and Kia's conversation, gesturing for them to follow him. They all ended up sitting right behind Paul and Ivan.

Jake didn't miss the way Paul and Ivan's expressions brightened the moment the girls settled in.

Perfect.

Ivan, in particular, was clearly working up the nerve to introduce himself, but just as he leaned in, ready to make his move, Simone and Kia shot up, screaming and clapping as the band took the stage.

Poor Ivan looked completely flustered.

Jake bit back a chuckle, watching Ivan deflate like a balloon losing air.

Up on stage—a makeshift farm trailer—John stepped up to the mic, his voice cutting through the roaring crowd: “ELLO, EVERYONE! SO HAPPY YOU CAN ALL BE ‘ERE!” His voice boomed, filled with a mix of confidence and nerves. “AND WITHOUT FURTHER ADO, WE ARE THE QUARRYMEN, AND WILL NOW PLAY OUR MUSIC FOR YOU!”

And with that, the band launched into “Blue Suede Shoes” by Elvis.

John fidgeted slightly, his eyes darting around the crowd, giving away the nerves beneath the bravado.

Jake was torn. On one hand, he was witnessing the birth of rock ‘n’ roll history. On the other—he had a job to do. His mission: get Paul McCartney and John Lennon to meet before Ivan does.

But the full scope of it all was starting to sink in. His mind had been so

locked onto Paul, he that he'd barely thought about Simone, his date.

Had he been ignoring her?

Guilt flickered for a moment, but then he glanced over. Simone was completely in her element, chatting and laughing with Kia, unbothered by his distraction.

Jake exhaled in relief, shifting his focus back to Paul. He leaned in slightly, subtly listening in on Paul and Ivan's conversation. At the same time, his gaze flickered back to the stage, where the Quarrymen had transitioned into "Midnight Special." It was mind-boggling to think—this humble performance, in this tiny venue, would eventually ignite a cultural revolution.

Jake's heart pounded. The thrill of watching history unfold mixed with the pressing urgency if he were to have a role in it. Then—like a tidal wave crashing down on him—the enormity of the situation hit all at once.

*I don't belong here.*

The thought came out of nowhere, wrapping around him like a cold vice. His skin prickled with goosebumps, but not the good kind. A heavy dread settled over him, suffocating, crushing. For a moment, panic threatened to take over, clawing at his mind, dragging him down into worst-case scenarios.

Then, through sheer willpower, he forced himself back to the present.

Don't think of the big picture. Live for the moment.

He took a deep breath, tightening his grip on his knees, forcing his pulse to steady itself.

No more doubts. No more spiraling thoughts. Right now, his only job was to make his move.

He locked his gaze onto Paul and waited for the right moment to strike.

Simone turned to Jake, studying his expression. "So, luv, waddya think of the band so far?"

Jake grinned, leaning in. "Not bad! That washboard player is the best I've ever seen!"

Simone laughed, shaking her head. Before she could respond, a new voice chimed in from in front of them.

"Yeah, and that tea chest bass player ain't no slouch either!"

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Jake turned to see Ivan Vaughn twisting in his seat, grinning. Clearly, he had been eavesdropping on their conversation.

Jake extended a hand. “Hi, name’s Jake.”

Ivan gripped it with enthusiasm. “Ivan. Nice ta meet ya!”

Jake introduced Simone and Kia before adding, “They’re definitely a unique setup.”

From the front row, a head of curly hair turned slightly. Paul McCartney, who had been stealing the occasional glance backward, decided to join in.

“You from America, mate?”

Jake nodded. “Yeah, New York.”

Paul’s eyes widened slightly. “That’s cool. Always wanted to go there.”

Before they could continue, the band launched into a new song, pulling Paul’s attention back to the stage.

About halfway through the song, Paul suddenly let out a laugh, nudging Ivan with his elbow.

“Oh boy, that bloke is just butchering dem lyrics!”

Jake’s curiosity sparked. He tapped Paul on the shoulder. “What’s the song?”

Paul, still grinning, shook his head. “It’s called ‘Twenty Flight Rock’ by Eddie Cochran.” Motioning toward the stage, he added, “Lead singer up there just got half the lyrics wrong—definitely has some stage presence, I’ll give-em that!”

Jake grinned. Paul’s confidence was undeniable.

And that’s when it hit him—this was his chance to push history along. Jake kept his tone casual.

“Haha, yeah, he’s pretty good.” He gave a small nod toward the stage. “Simone actually knows him—want me to introduce you after their set?”

Paul perked up immediately. “Yeah, mate, me friend Ivan here knows him too, that’s why we came.”

Jake began to panic a little. Maybe he wouldn’t be the one to introduce them and history would unfold just as it did in his time.

Paul turned back around, watching the performance more closely than before.

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Then Jake had a eureka moment.

He would use Simone and Kia to distract Ivan while he introduced Paul to John.

When the band finished, the crowd began to scatter, gathering their chairs and blankets, ready to head out. But Jake's group lingered, chatting near the stage. The band already inside.

Casually, Jake made his move. "Hey, why don't we head into the church and say hi to the band?"

Paul's eyes lit up. "Yeah, mate, right behind ya!"

He grabbed his guitar, slinging it over his back, and they all headed in to meet the band.

Meanwhile, Ivan, walking beside Simone, was pulling out all the stops—excitedly recounting the time he'd seen Buddy Holly in concert, trying desperately to impress her.

Jake chuckled to himself—perfect.

Inside the church, the band was packing up, patting each other on the back for a job well done. The room buzzed with energy—a mix of post-show relief, excitement, and laughter. More people had filtered in, including John's family and some neighborhood kids, making the space busier than before.

Jake stole a quick glance at Paul and Ivan. Ivan had wandered off, talking to a friend he'd just run into. Paul was just standing there by himself, taking in the crowd.

With Ivan distracted, not willing to risk missing the opportunity—Jake walked over, stood next to Paul and called out to John, maybe a little too enthusiastically, interrupting him from a conversation.

"Hey John, you got a sec? I want you to meet my friend Paul here—he's pretty good on guitar, too."

John's head snapped up, his expression shifting from exhaustion to curiosity. "Oh yeah?"

His eyes flicked to Paul, studying him, like he wasn't quite sure if he should be interested or unimpressed.

Jake pushed forward with Paul behind him.



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"Paul, this is John. John, this is Paul. Paul thought you sounded great—figured you might want to meet, maybe compare notes or something."

For a second, the two just stared at each other.

It was like watching two scientists inspecting a bug through a microscope, each one trying to figure out what made the other tick. Then, finally—John tilted his head.

"So, you play guitar, do ya?" There was an edge to his tone, almost a dare. "You any good, then?"

Jake felt a twinge of nerves at the standoff—but Paul?

Cool as a bloody cucumber.

He met John's challenging stare with a relaxed smile, completely unfazed. It was like he was saying, no big deal. *Just another day in the life.*

The tension was almost comical—two future legends, neither one willing to blink first.

Finally, Paul gave a small shrug. "Okay, no problem."

And with that—he swung his guitar around.... **End of Sample.**