



Wynter's Horizon

by Dee C. May

Excerpt from Chapter 7

I had just turned my attention back to Quinn and the latest game on the telly when I heard the yell. Faint and high pitched. I met Quinn's eyes. It came again, and instantly we moved. I called to Jim as I pushed the door open, a muffled scream reverberating.

All I could see was a stocky male body and a mess of red hair and girl's arms flailing behind. He had someone pinned against the hood of a car. My eyes roved the parking lot, two still lit and smoking cigarettes lay abandoned on the ground.

Wynter came out from behind a car, lacrosse stick in hand. It whistled through the air as she swung. The first smacked across his back. He turned and the second swing connected with his knee. His leg buckled and he yelled in agony, "Son of a bitch."

She jumped away but not quick enough. He captured her ankle, bringing her down. She hit the pavement and immediately tried to scramble back up. Clinging to her leg, he dragged her backward, even as her other foot kicked wildly. Her arms swept wide and long, scraping along the ground.

Shouts and screams echoed behind me, and I reached them just as her fingers grasped a beer bottle lying on the ground. She slammed it against the pavement, glass tinkling as she gave one last kick, connecting with his face and freeing herself. Clambering to her feet, chest heaving, she poised in defense, glaring at him. The look in her eyes stopped me for a moment. The drunk righted and swayed, the leg she'd hit bent at a weird angle.

"You fucking whore."

An expression crossed her face, and she muttered a reply.

"I'm going to rip your arms off," he bellowed.

"Try it," she answered, her voice layered with venom. He advanced a step, and I grabbed him from behind, choke holding him. He threw his weight against me. My right leg buckled, but I shifted to my left and held him. He was short and well built. It didn't matter; his actions were futile. Even with my less-than-perfect leg, I could have snapped his neck in an instant, one benefit of my super human strength. Barely controlling my anger, I tossed him backward into Quinn, who chuckled and swung him around, pinning his arms behind his back.

Jim appeared, gesturing wildly, bat in hand, directing them back into the bar. Quinn dragged the hobbling drunk after him as Wynter's friends descended on us, encasing her in hugs. She dropped the broken beer bottle and, reaching up, wiped the dirt off her cheek. I retreated to the car, listening to their repeated concerns and her assurances that she was fine. Picking up the fallen lacrosse stick, I

inspected it. Written on the side were the words *Abigail Mackie*. Her friends pulled her by, still crowing about her triumph and bravery.

I held the stick out. "This is yours."

She stopped and looked up at me. Her eyes were green, with flecks of gray. Smokey green. I smiled, and she returned it. There was a pull in my gut, and my blood rushed downward.

"Where'd you learn the trick with the beer bottle?"

"My brothers taught me." She pushed her hair back over her shoulder, and a smell of vanilla and baby powder washed over me. My blood flowed faster.

"Why didn't you hit him in the bar?"

She shrugged. "No reason. It was a harmless pick up." Harmless to lethal.

"You could have been hurt. You're a good friend."

Her gaze dropped. "Yeah, I rule." Grabbing the stick, she quickly left, returning to her friends where they congregated around an open car trunk. She pitched the stick into the trunk and slammed it shut with a thud. There was a brief conversation about who could still drive, and then one of them called a cab and they piled in. I watched it pull out of the parking lot.

"Well, that was exciting. Way better than our usual boring nights," Quinn commented, appearing at my side. I picked up the broken beer bottle and dropped it into the garbage. He handed me my half-drunk beer, and I polished it off as we stood there.

"She was pretty tough, huh?" Quinn surmised. "I had her pinned for more of the country club type." I nodded in agreement, picturing her face-off with the drunk. *Where had I seen her?* Her scent still faintly wafted in the air.

"He could have annihilated her. He was drunk but still double her weight." I pictured her eyes, the cold way she had looked at him.

"I don't think she cared."

"She cared enough to save her friend. Put herself in danger while she was at it."

I thought about what she had mumbled.

Quinn drained the rest of his beer and grabbed my empty glass. He disappeared inside momentarily then returned empty-handed. "Let's get out of here."

We didn't talk as I turned the Jeep onto the highway. I could hear him humming to a Rolling Stones song as I drove and knew he was watching me out of the corner of his eye.

Finally, I could take it no more. "What?"

He shook his head and smiled slightly. "I was just wondering if you wanted to retract your statement about the whole not-wanting-to-get-laid thing."

"Very funny."

He kept going as if I didn't understand. "She definitely knew her elbow from her ass."

"Piss off," I growled. He didn't press me further, but I could see him smiling broadly now, knowing he had found a sore spot. He kept glancing at me then back out the window. I didn't want to discuss it. She had made my heart jump a little, my stomach tighten, my jaw clench with desire—but these were things I could ignore. I was better alone. Always had been, and some blond wouldn't make me lose my way now.