

Chapter 2

John worked 6 to 6, Monday to Friday for a small tech firm that operated in a small coastal town where most of the jobs and businesses were tied to the local tourist industry. John's job was not much different. His firm developed and serviced the software most of the hotels and some other businesses used along their end of the coast.

The small regional office that John worked at handled most of the clients in town and provided on-site support if needed. There were only a bit over a dozen people working there, John included. Two techs per 12-hour shift, four guys Mon-Fri, four techs for the weekends, and 1 to 3 office staff depending on the time and day of the week.

The day tech guys were the ones handling most of the work, updating and maintaining the software locally, but John's main job was coding and developing new software for the firm.

This ultimately meant they paid him for one position while he did the work of two. Though John could care less about that, this was his dream job. He was 3 years out of college and financially he was doing alright.

His biggest fear was some tech giant buying up the company and liquidating the local office. He talked about this with his co-worker Jeff.

"Those billionaires are too busy trying to get to Mars. They are not going to be needing our hotel management software up there for some time, I think our jobs are safe for now. At least until I'm ready to retire," Jeff would say, "You on the other hand, maybe you should be looking for a backup carrier." he would then laugh loudly.

Thursday, the day before.

"John, I'm going to need you to come see me in my office once you get back from lunch. I'll inform Barbra to expect you." The message from his manager Robert played on his voice mail.

"I wonder what that is about." John wondered out loud to nobody but himself as he left his office for lunch.

John got a full hour for lunch, but he was still on call. He walked down the strip and found his way to Johnny's. He ate here two or three times a week, during the daytime, it was a restaurant & bar, but at night it was a full-on nightclub, complete with a dance floor and DJ.

John guessed they had a space to store some of the tables every night in the back, but he had never actually been there outside his lunch breaks. Sometimes he would stop by on the weekends, when he was not on call, and enjoy a pint of beer with his lunch.

Thursdays were always his favorite day to eat at Johnny's. Every Thursday they had their Fish & Chip's special. John thought the fish & chips were alright, as far as fish and chips go.

"Hey John, good afternoon! Grab a seat I'll be with you just in a bit," the Dark-haired waitress told him with a warm smile.

"Thank's Jenna, I'll be in my usual seat."

Jenna was a young woman, maybe a few years younger than John, she has worked here since John first had lunch here, three years ago.

The name of the establishment had been what initially drove him to try the place out, but it was when Jenna first took his order that he decided he really liked the place.

John had dated a few women when he was in college. They were attractive in their own right, smart, fun to hang out with, great in the sack.

John had no trouble dating women that most other men would be satisfied with, but they always seemed to fall short of what John truly desired in a girlfriend. Sometimes John wondered if he was simply being shallow, trying to hold out for some physical ideal that he might never find, but that chance meeting at lunch three years ago sent his hopes soaring.

Calling Jenna simply busty or curvy, in John's opinion, did a disservice to the wonders that Mother Nature had blessed upon this young woman's body.

John pretended to look at the menu, but he always got the fish special on Thursdays, after all, it was his excuse to always come in on the one day of the week that Jenna always worked the lunch shift.

"You want your usual, John?"

He looked over his menu at the young waitress. He took notice of the gap in the button-up blouse that was part of her uniform. It was slight, but he could see a small sliver of cream-colored material that was part of her bra. John tried his best not to let his eyes linger and continued until his gaze met hers.

"You know me too well, Jenna," he said, "and I'll have my usual coffee as well, please."

"We just got some new craft beers, if you want I can bring you a pint." Jenna smiled at him.

John was not a fan of most craft beers, though looking at Jenna he gave it some serious thought before replying, "I really can't, I'm technically on call through lunch."

Jenna looked at him apologetically. "Sorry, I should know that. Frank's been riding us to upsell the lunch crowd. He's threatening to lay off someone on day staff if we don't get our lunch numbers up."

"That's crazy, you've been here since I started coming here. Frank would not let you go."

"No, but he might cut back my hours. I could not get by on just my dinner shifts, even if the tips are better later in the day."

John dreaded the thought of not having Jenna there during his lunch. He also genuinely felt sympathy for the girl. "Maybe I'll take that pint after all, but I'll still have that coffee."

"Great!" Jenna's change in mood was as quick as a light being switched on. "I'll bring you your drinks, and Ernie should have your meal ready shortly."

John watched Jenna leave his table and take his order to the kitchen. When she returned, a middle-aged couple were waiting to be seated. She showed them to their seats and took their drink orders. John noted that the husband got the craft beer, and chuckled to himself.

Shortly after Jenna returned with both his drinks and his meal. "I think Earnie started your order before you even walked in the door. You really are a man of habit." she playfully joked.

"We all have our simple pleasures that we enjoy," John replied as he watched Jenna move his order from her tray to his table. The fabric of her blouse stretching across her bust, he took notice as the spacing between her blouse buttons grew wider as she bent to place things on the table. John could see enough of the cream-colored material from before to know now that it was lace.

John ate his meal, occasionally watching Jenna maneuver the tables with orders for the small lunch crowd. When the waitress returned to the couple's table and offered to refill the husband's beer, he happily accepted, earning him a look from his wife after Jenna left the table.

A group of young men came in and open stared at Jenna's breast, and behind, making comments amongst themselves after they thought she was beyond earshot. John tried hard not to judge, after all, he had been coming here for years to enjoy looking at this woman, but the least they could do was be more discreet about it.

Jenna returned to John's table soon after he finished eating. He had not touched his beer. "I can take your plate if you're finished."

"Thanks, Jenna."

He placed his utensils on his plate and let her take them.

After a few beers, the group of men was now talking loud enough that they could be heard fairly clearly from John's table.

"I told you this place has the hottest waitresses on the strip." one of them said.

"You weren't kidding, Pete," his friend replied. "They at least have the biggest tits on the strip."

"No kidding. She could have just fed us lunch from those things instead." a third man said, then mimicked a baby suckling.

"That's not fair, you know poor Pete is lactose intolerant."

"I guess Pete can just eat that ass instead." the group laughed.

"Fuck You, Greg," the first man interrupted the laughter, a wide grin on his face. "We all know that that is more ass than any one man could possibly eat." The group again broke out in laughter.

Jenna must have read John's face as he looked over towards the group of men. "Don't worry about it, Hun. Douchebags going to douchebag," she told him drawing his attention back to her.

"I mean, fuck them, I'm not making excuses for them, but I'm also not going to let some drunk frat boys get under my skin. Unless they get handsy, then you can be my knight in shining armor and kick their asses for me." She punched him playfully in the shoulder.

John laughed half-heartedly. What she said had him wondering, "How often do they get handsy?" he said this out loud without thinking.

"The lunch shift, it's only ever happened once that I know of, and not to me. 50 something guy, on vacation with his wife, had a few too many to drink and grabbed Stephany's ass. Had to call the cops to save the poor fool from his wife." she smiled and then added, "The ol' coot was still smiling while paramedic looked him over after the cops pulled his wife off of him. Steph does have a great ass." she then chuckled.

John would not argue with that last statement. Stephany worked the lunch shift on Tuesdays, and he had admired her assets on many occasions. John often debated with himself if she rivaled Jenna in that department. But Jenna was a close second, and left all the other women in the dust in a couple of other areas, at least as far as John was concerned.

A short while later Jenna brought him his check, leaving to take another order for beer from the group of men.

\$7.50 Fish & Chips special, \$2 for coffee, and \$15 for the beer, plus tax.

John took out two twenties and whatever loose change he had in his pockets and left it on the table.

Stephany was beginning her shift and noticed him as was leaving. "Have a good one John. Come visit me on my shift next week, will you? 11 to 12 on Tuesdays are dead and I could use the company." she waved finger guns at him and winked.

John laughed and smiled at her. "How can I say no to a beautiful woman like you?"

"You'll make Jenna jealous if she hears you talking like that." she quipped back.

John blushed.

"Don't worry John, I won't tell you favorite waitress your cheating on her with me. Just don't stand this lonely girl up come Tuesday."

"Have a good one Steph." John smiled and went out the door.

John was about halfway down the strip when his phone vibrated in his pocket. It was a text from Barbara, back at the office.

'*Shit!*' he thought.

"John, we need you down at the Remington ASAP. Something blew their power, took the system offline and it did not come back up when they got the backup generators running. Jeff is already on site." the text said.

A second text soon followed. "Robert is pissed. Please hurry."

John texted her back. "Barbara, please inform Robert that something has come up at work, and I'll need to reschedule our after-lunch meeting for a later time."

"Har Har. If I did not know how much I would miss your ass around here, I might actually give him that message..."

"I'd come to visit you at your new job" he replied.

"Jerk!"

"But seriously this big, plz hurry"

John reached his car and started driving. Halfway to the Remington resort, his phone rang. It was Jeff, he answered and his car automatically put him on speaker.

"Jesus H. Christs, John. This is bad. I hope to god you are on your way here."

"Talk to me, Jeff. What's going on over there? Was the server fried by a power surge?" John was confused.

The servers at the Remington all have high-level surge protection and redundant uninterruptible power supplies.

“The hardware is fine, John. But everything has been whipped clean. The Databases, the backups, all of it is gone.” John could hear the stress in his coworker’s voice.

“That’s impossible. There is no way every single one of those drives was corrupted.” John was starting to share that stress.

“God Damnit! Listen to me, John. It’s! Just! Fucking! Gone! No corruption! Nothing! It’s as if the drives never had any data on them.”

John was silent.

‘This is bad,’ he thought, ‘If this was a software error, they blame the firm. If this was a hack job, they blame the firm, since we set up the security.’

“John, are you still there?”

“Yeah.”

John paused.

“Yeah, I’m here. Just pulling on site now. Let me grab my laptop and I’ll meet you inside in two.”

“Ten, Four,” Jeff replied.

John hung up.