

Blue Moon Diner

By Matt James Royle

The soapy water slowly dripped off the square black plate. I watched the tiny lemon-scented bubbles pop and burst down the twirling patterns of ceramic, before I wiped the plate clean with a towel.

I looked up and out the thin dirty window, watching the heavy rain pummel the road. It's falling so hard; the water is almost bouncing back up to the murky sky above.

All the plates and cutlery are finally clean. My name badge should read Dishwasher instead of Henrietta because the Blue Moon certainly can't afford one, not without firing me; at least that's what Simon tells me.

This is my life now, working in the Blue Moon Diner. I should accept it, washing plates, serving slightly ignorant customers who assume I won't understand English before I open my mouth. I've not been doing it long, but this was never meant to become my life.

I had another life, a more purposeful, exciting life...but that's a lifetime away. I've not even been born yet.

I was supposed to come back to the year 2098 to assassinate Prime Minister Anna Stewart. I was supposed to arrive in Chester, a small city in England, to destroy her when she was still in her mother's womb, but I somehow ended up in Roswell, New Mexico in 1998.

As soon as I awoke in the hospital and discovered the year and location, I knew my mission was over. It hurt me more than the journey.

I only had so much "intel" about Anna Stewart's history and coming back too soon meant I had nothing else to go on.

I was scared and alone. I had travelled across an ocean of time, leaving my family and friends behind, to save them in the future, our present, but now I was destined to die in the wrong time and for no heroic reason.

In a panic I escaped the hospital; I tried to talk to people to explain what had happened, even if it risked messing up the timeline. What would it matter when I was doomed to live out the nineties?

Naturally people thought I was insane. Would you believe someone who told you they were actually from the future or would you think they're crazy?

I didn't have any physical proof other than my pistol, and I couldn't risk that getting into the wrong hands. Thankfully when I arrived in the alley, just before the car hit me, I threw my backpack under the dumpster. It was still there when I escaped the hospital.

The next logical step then would be to try and mention up and coming events so I could easily prove I'm from the future.

Simon reluctantly took me in and gave me the job at the Blue Moon on September 2nd 1998, three weeks after my arrival. I think he pitied me more than he fancied me, but he most certainly didn't believe my story.

I kept telling him to wait for it and to watch the news on October 3rd 1998. I didn't say what was coming up, and I didn't give any hints. I didn't want to risk him spreading the word and affecting the timeline.

Today is October 4th 1998, and there was no plane crash at Coney Island.

So not only am I in the wrong time period, but I'm somehow in the wrong reality too; things are slightly different here.

"I'm so sorry; I wanted to believe you," Simon said with a sympathetic smile.

"So what the event didn't happen; it's still true!" I protested. "I'm from the future!"

"No, listen," Simon raised his voice. "The day you arrived, you got hit by a car right?"

"Yes, we've been over this. You think it knocked me insane!"

"What I think is that now is the time to get help, professional help," he pleaded. "I know you told me never to ask you this again, but please be honest with me. You always say you escaped the hospital...were you in the psych ward?"

"Oh please, you don't believe that!" I snapped. I knew he didn't. If he even had any doubt I was mentally unstable, he wouldn't have taken me in! He wouldn't let me stay in his trailer with him!

I walked out of the kitchen and into the diner. It was empty, as usual. There was only a strong smell clinging to the air, a mixture of coffee and sweat that I'd come to enjoy.

"What are you doing?" Simon asked, sounding a little worried now.

I went back into the kitchen and crouched down by the rusty fridge.

The reason I kept the pistol hidden? It vaporizes your target and then the weapon in the process, leaving no evidence at all. I couldn't risk it being stolen, used, and then vanishing, but now I had no choice. It's the only thing that proves my story.

My hand touched scraps of furry food and a wet gooey teaspoon, but no pistol.

"It's gone!" I panicked.

"What is?" Simon sighed.

"The pistol I arrived with; I hid it under the fridge when I got the job here," I quickly explained, "Gary said he was going to clean the floor the other night; maybe he found it and took it?"

My heart felt like it was about to explode.

"You kept a gun here?!" Simon snapped. He was about to lay into me, but instead muttered that he was going for a smoke.

He hollered as he left the kitchen: "I've left my cigs in the car; will you come out, wash your hands, and serve this lady that's about to walk in?"

I heard the front door open and Simon greet the woman telling her someone would be with her quickly. His sandpaper voice always went smooth when he spoke to the ladies.

I stayed on my hands and knees for a moment failing to hold in the tears that were streaking down my face and dripping from nose.

A horror had come and taken hold of me wrapping me so tight I couldn't shrug it off. What if Simon and all the others were right? What if I'm just a crazy lady who was in an accident and lost her mind?

I shuffled onto my knees and touched the top of my head; it still felt sore, even though it's been weeks since my arrival.

I tried to search my mind for memories outside of my previous life, but I couldn't find any. I put it down to the fact I was panicking, but there was a real terror taking control of me that maybe Simon was right and I am insane.

Guys will do anything to get laid, even put up with mad ramblings it seems.

"Hello, can I get some service?" a soft British lady calls. Her voice is somewhat soothing.

I found the strength and decided to serve her; at the very least I could make her take a coffee to go and lock up. I needed time to think things over.

I walked out, forcing a smile on my face as I came to greet her. I almost stopped in my tracks when I looked upon her. She was incredibly beautiful, her blonde wavy hair falling just past her shoulders, her striking eyes shining bright like a supernova.

"What can I get you?" I asked nervously. When I looked at her eyes, their unnaturalness haunted me. Something's wasn't right.

"Henrietta Welling?"

I nodded and then slowly looked down to my name badge. There's a crusty egg stain on it, but no surname...

"Don't move a muscle!" the blonde blurted out, just before pulling out a silver pistol. It's chunky, yet slender, with an intricate golden pattern, just like mine.

"Wh- where did you get that?" I stuttered.

"I was given one, just like you were, before entering the machine."

A million thoughts raced inside my head colliding and intertwining at incredible speeds. I couldn't speak!

"You messed up, Henrietta," the blonde sighed.

"Have you come to take me back?"

"Don't be stupid; you know the trip is one way."

"Then why come for me?" I asked. "It was the machine that sent me to the wrong time, to this alternate world! It wasn't my fault I couldn't get to Anna!"

"No, but in losing your weapon, you inadvertently caused a chain of events that leads this reality to break through and war with ours."

"Oh!"

"Indeed."

"But I've already lost it, so why threaten me?" I tried to smile when I ask her.

"This is your pistol. I used my shot on your friend Gary."

"Please, Miss - ?"

"Sara."

“Please, Sara, there’s no need for this!” I begged. “If we have my weapon back then everything’s fine!”

“If I have to live out the rest of my days here because of you,” Sara seethed, raising the pistol, “then –”

“NO DON’T!”

Sara raised the gun. The last thing I saw was a celestial light sending me to hell.

“Where has she gone?” The fat chef asked me.

“She swore at me screaming no one believes her,” I lied, “and then just took off!”

He shook his head and sighed like it was nothing to be surprised about. “I’m so sorry, Miss?”

“Sara.”

“Miss Sara, sorry, what can I get you?” He grinned. His teeth were a dull yellow.

I looked around the diner, sickened by how primitive the tech is and the stench of cheap coffee. This place is disgusting, but it’s an opportunity and a start.

“I hear there’s a vacancy at the Blue Moon Diner.”

End