

Chapter Eleven

A Stranger at the Window

Well, you know me. When confronted by monsters, vampires, and shadowy forms that look like men, I don't just sit there. I bark!

Yes sir, I cut loose with a withering barrage of barking. I bared my fangs and by George stood my ground and prepared to defend Miss Viola with every ounce of...

Slim?

Couldn't be. We'd left him back at his shack, and good riddance too, the cad.

I studied the face again and growled a deep growl, just in case...

It WAS Slim, standing out there with a silly grin on his face. Miss Viola seemed just as shocked as I. We both stared at him with wide eyes.

At last he broke the silence. "Somebody stole my dog."

I heard Viola gasp. "Why Slim, how can you say such a terrible...he must have crawled in my car while we..." She stiffened and raised the angle of her nose. "I can assure you that I didn't steal your dog!"

He chuckled and patted her on the arm. "I'm only funning with you, Viola, don't get your hackles up."

"Don't get my hackles up! Well let me tell you something, Mister Slim Chance..."

"Before you tell me something, let me tell you something. Loper and Sally May are having a little dance tonight. I know I ain't much fun and I can't dance worth a flip, but...would you care to go to the dance with me? I mean, would you even consider such a thing?"

There was a throbbing moment of silence. Then she started crying again. "Oh Slim!"

His face fell like a load of rocks. "Good honk, I didn't figger it would make you cry. I'll just gather up my dog and..."

"Oh Slim, I'd LOVE to go to the dance with you!"

His adam's apple did three flips. "You would? You really would?"

"Of course I would! What girl wouldn't be honored?"

"Well, I could name about three thousand that wouldn't, but thanks. I can't dance but maybe I ain't too old to learn. I'll try."

"Don't you worry about dancing, Slim. We'll go and have us a good time." She opened her door and turned to me. "Bye Hank, and thanks for listening to my troubles. You're a good dog."

On the way back to the house, Slim was in a jolly mood. He whistled and sang all the way home, while I thought about greasy stinking rotten fish.

Orp. Ump.

I tried to concentrate on happy thoughts, such as basking in the warm glow of Miss Viola's last words to me: "You're a good dog." But it was a struggle. The fish were winning.

When we pulled up in front of the house, Slim shut off the motor and sat there for a few minutes, smiling to himself and watching a robin down by the creek.

"Ain't it something, the way one little bitty woman can raise a feller's spirits? Heck, I feel like I could go chop three cords of wood with a dull axe...only I probably ought to take a bath and find some decent clothes to wear to this deal."

He opened the door and stepped out. "And you know what, pooch? I never would have worked up the nerve to ask her out if she hadn't had that trouble with the spark plug wire. That's what I'd call bodacious good luck."

I studied his face to see if he was joking. He wasn't. He never figured it out, but that was okay. Maybe he wasn't supposed to.

