Watch for tenses!!!!!

Ted Nugent – no, not that one - sits in his car. A light drizzle blurs the windows but he’s not looking out. The radio is playing, volume turned low, but he’s not listening. He keeps glancing at the dashboard clock, and then at his watch; the clock’s a little slow. The community club parking lot is crowded; he’d managed to find a spot in the row farthest from the club, almost out on Lakewood. Any further and I could’ve parked at home, he thinks. A final glance at his watch and he leaves the car, locks it and with a muttered “Showtime!” heads for the club.

Ring-Rage, the annual ringette tournament and, more importantly, fundraiser at Southdale Community Club is Ted’s nemesis; not the tournament itself, watching his daughter’s team play was one of his truest pleasures; but the mandatory volunteer hours, required of all parents, which filled him with an unaccountable dread. Ted was a shy man; he had raised shyness to a whole new level, he was an introvert’s introvert. Dealing with strangers scared him; well, not the actual dealing with strangers, but the lead-up to the dealing, the advanced knowledge

He’d been a ringette dad for eight years, and this would be the first after his separation; the first year he’d had to pick his own activities from the spreadsheet mailed around the team’s parents. Loonie-stick, fifty-fifty tickets, silent auction, merchandise table, and some others he didn’t recognize, but didn’t dare ask about in case it could be interpreted as an expression of interest. All required interaction with people; some, loonie-stick and fifty-fifty tickets required active selling.

‘No fucking way am I hawking tickets like a sodding Bombay street vendor.’ he’d once said to that. So tonight, he had an hour at the merchandise table. Where, if it was quiet, he could sit behind the ring of tables and read his book.

He entered the building, and seeing no line up at the canteen, eases his way around the silent auction tables, stacked with large prize baskets, displaying their contents through coloured cellophane tied with ribbons and bows with curly flourishes.

‘Hi Ted, you here next?’ asks the man half-hidden behind the prizes.

‘Oh, hi, erm…’ What the fuck’s his name, come on Ted, his daughter played with Cathy a few years ago. Tom, Bob? Nope, not coming, no name then. ‘No, I’m on merchandise in a couple of minutes. You been busy?’ Say yes. If he says yes then maybe that means the rush is over; say no, and maybe it’s about to come.

‘Oh, pretty steady, you know. Anyway, have fun!’ Fun? Fun? Was that irony?

‘Will do. See ya.’ A quick nod, and he turns to order a coffee. Now there’s a line-up. Bugger!

Coffee in hand he rushes through the building to the merchandise table, at the far end of the building, near the new rink. He’s just on time, well maybe a minute or two late, and the woman behind the tables already has her coat on ready to leave.

‘Sorry I’m late. Parking’s a mess.’ He said, recognizing her and all he could think was sour-faced bitch but couldn’t recall what had caused that impression.

‘No worries.’ How strange that sounds without an Australian accent.

‘Anything I should know?’ he asked.

‘Not really, all prices are marked on the table, and on these sheets.’ She pointed at printed sheets taped to the front of each table listing prices. All were round numbers, only cash wash accepted. One year there had been a set of toy ringette sticks for eight dollars and seventeen cents. Seventeen cents for christ’s sake!

‘Oh, there’s a hoody in that box, for a Marjorie, she said shed be back at eight. The cash box is on the chair there. Have fun.’ There it was again. Don’t these people know?

‘All right then, thanks. See ya.’