**Ted Nugent’s Nemesis**

**Week 4 Assignment**

**By Colin Foulkes**

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 checks the time, first the dashboard clock, then 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 farther 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 fundraiser at the local Community Club is Ted’s nemesis; not the tournament itself, watching his daughter’s team play is one of his few pleasures; but each year, the mandatory volunteer hours, required of all parents, fills him with an immeasurable dread. Ted is a shy man, a man filled with social anxiety and the thought of interacting with strangers scares him; and the period leading up to the event allows his anxiety to fester and grow.

Ted’s been a ringette dad for eight years, and this would be the first since his divorce; it would be the first year he’s had to pick his own activities from list assigned to his daughter’s team, the first he would not be sharing with his ex. Loonie-stick, fifty-fifty tickets, silent auction, merchandise table, and others tasks he didn’t recognize, and certainly didn’t dare ask about in case it were interpreted as an expression of interest. All required interaction with people to some extent; some, loonie-stick and fifty-fifty tickets required walking round the rink selling tickets.

‘No fucking way am I hawking tickets, like some Bombay street vendor.’ he’d said. So tonight, he has an hour at the merchandise table, selling t-shirts, fleeces, hoodies and assorted tat. Where, if it were quiet, he could sit behind the ring of tables and read a few pages of his book.

He enters the building, and seeing no line up at the canteen, eases his way to the right, around the silent auction tables, stacked with large prize baskets, a forest of coloured cellophane, and ribbons and bows.

‘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, Sammy’s dad. Tom, Bob? No, it’s 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 busy period is over, say no, and maybe it’s yet to come.

‘Oh, pretty steady, you know. Anyway, have fun!’ Fun? Fun? Was anything about this fun?

‘Will do. See you.’ 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 tables at the far end of the building, just outside the new rink; he can hear muffled cheering and what sounds like cow-bells through the large windows fronting the 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 bit of a mess,’ he says, recognizing her; all he could think was sour-faced bitch but couldn’t recall what had caused him to think that.

‘No worries,’ she says. How ridiculous that sounds without an Australian accent.

‘Anything I should know?’

‘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. All prices were round numbers to make calculations of totals and change easier, and only cash was accepted.

‘Oh, there’s a hoody in that box, for a Marjorie, she said she’d be back at eight. The cash box is on the chair there. Have fun.’ There it was again. Why not ‘Don’t despair!’ or ‘Endure!’ something more appropriate.

‘All right then, thanks. See you.’ Taking off his coat he glances at the piles on the tables, checking that each stack had a price associated with it. He then peers into the boxes under the tables, to see what extra stock there is; mostly hoodies and tracksuit pants, the more expensive items. Very few of the tie-dyed shirts, usually the most popular item, are left, and those are mostly extra-small.

Looking up he sees that the hall is mostly empty, but he can see through the glass into the rink that there’s only two minutes left in the game; just enough time for some coffee and a few pages of his book. Then a wave of parents will be exiting right past his table.

‘Excuse me, how much is this?’ asks the lady waving a t-shirt.

‘There’re prices marked on the table, also a full list at the front there,’ he points.

‘Do you have this in a medium?’

‘No, just what’s on the table. Sorry.’

‘Do you…?’

‘Have you…?’

‘Is this…?’

‘No. Yes. I’ll just check. Fifteen dollars. Sorry, what? Yes, over there just past the washrooms on your left.’

Calm again. There’d been a couple of busy times, but now the place was empty again, another wave of daughters transported away. He checks the cash-box; he’d taken one hundred and ten dollars; then looks at his watch, ten minutes left. Just time enough for a few more pages, maybe a chapter.

‘… were any dolphins harmed in the making of this sweater?’

‘Pardon?’ He looks up, surprised to see an attractive woman holding up a fleece.

‘Sorry to disturb you. Good book?’ she said.

‘Erm, not bad. Sorry? Did you say dolphins?’

‘I know, silly really. Just something I heard today at a restaurant and it was just so absurd I promised myself that I’d use before the end of the day. So I’m afraid you were the victim.’

‘Right. Ordering a sweater for dessert was she?’ He smiles. She smiles.

‘Hi, I’m Marjorie. You have a hoodie on hold for me,’ she offers her hand.

‘Hi, I’m Ted. Ted Nugent, but not that one,’ he says.