

Sometimes the
road's a little
bumpy!

The Flair
Jonny Newell

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2013 - Dedication

For my son Ronan – follow your dream and catch it!

Also to all those wonderful musicians in my life that inspired me to write this story it is for YOU and finally to my family - I love you all.

Revised Edition 2018 - Dedication

For my son Ronan and his soon-to-be born son - my grandson!

This story of a life journey belongs to you, Ronan, as you were my true inspiration behind the message of this – my very first novel! Soon you will be a father yourself and your own stories are to be written, told with love and heart-filled joy, and I know you will make a GREAT father.

And to Roger and Phil (R.I.P) – such treasured memories!

Author's note 2018

On *The Flair's* 5th publishing birthday I have decided to revise a new edition to celebrate the story (that is most probably closer to 15 by now). My style has obviously improved over the years (as grammar) but the essence of my very original story is still here, untouched. I, myself haven't seen it for quite a while and it gave me a chuckle at the excessive use of the politically incorrect humour and language, that we once all took for granted! As a muso, obviously some of the references were very close to home while others were so far-fetched and fictional ... yet only I know which side of the respective fences they belong! My first novel was never meant to offend but leave you with a sense of 'growing up' with the characters through a time when we never questioned right from wrong, as we do today; life was simpler!

Please enjoy and if so inclined, leave a review after finishing – Jonny

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Part 1

THE SEVENTIES

Virginity and vulgarity

Humble beginnings

“Okay, where the bloody hell is he? He’s always late for practice and it gives me the shits big time!” Joey was pissed but Cess was always unfashionably late ... but then again, he was the singer!

5 minutes later just as usual, in races, Cess to the rehearsal room in a frantic pace with a sorry boys look ... on his dial. Joey turned as we all did to simply stare at the outfit.

“What are you wearing?” questioned Joey.

“Wot!” complained Cess, “Look if I’m gonna be the frontman of the band then I got to have a strong image like Bowie or Freddie Mercury does and the only way that that’s gonna happen is if I start wearing stuff like this!” It was white satin and pretty shocking!

“Well, they’re both gay as fuck! So unless you’re trying to get your arse a kiss then there’s no fucking way you’re wearing that outfit ‘round here!” Joey stated while tuning his Ibanez and shaking his head in disgust.

“What’s wrong with it?” Cess’ upset face matched his tone.

“Come on Tit, what do you reckon?” Oh shit! Why did he have to go and ask me couldn’t he just have asked Stiffi? At least Stiffi wouldn’t beat around the bush for fuck’s sake! Like the time I asked Stiffi what he thought of Joey’s Mum - *“Yeh, she’s a strange bitch! But boy ... she’s got great pair of knockers!”*

“Well Tit, what do you reckon?” Cess was looking straight at me like one of those sad-eyed puppies who just widdled in the corner, begging me for some support and forgiveness. Oh well, here it comes,

“I reckon maybe I understand where ya cumin’ from but,” Spit it out you dickhead, he looks like a fucking swan wearing all that white satin and what the fuck is that on his head - a bloody tea cozy? So I tried my best to lie convincingly. “The white satin flairs and waistcoat look pretty cool and I don’t mind your matching platform shoes, did you paint them?” Cess nodded as Joey and Stiffi glared at each other, I continued, “Sorry Cess ... I don’t really like your hat ... it sort of looks like a ... a tea cozy.”

“For fuck’s sake,” butted in Stiffi loudly, “... it is a fucking tea cozy! His mum probably knitted it for him!”

“No,” defended Cess, “... well me Mum did make it but-but it’s called a beret, a knitted beret!”

“A beret eh!” Joey just raised his eyebrows yet again. “Buried is what’s gonna happen to you and that piece of shit if I see that poofy thing on your head again! Now take it off! Start singing ... and stop dressing like a fucking ponce and wipe that fucking lipstick off!”

Joey’s demands were always taken seriously in the band - why? Because he owned the drums, bass, and the guitars and had a whole forty dollars in the bank already, saved for a new amp ... and not one of those poxy Coronet 10-watt jobs we’re using now, but a real big fucker of say a 100-watts. We all respected Joey; he was looking at the big picture way before any of us ever did! He was always the first to come up with some sort of crazy idea or hair-brain scheme - for better or worse to earn a quid. At school, he was the one who in grade eight started **3-2-1** marbles. You know, that gambling game, where you roll marbles through rectangular holes cut in the bottom of a piece of cardboard.

#1 hole - was the biggest and easiest hole and scored one marble plus your own back (we called this the sucker-in hole).

#2 hole - won you two extra marbles (win this and you were pulled hook, line, and sinker) and of course the smallest,

#3 hole - the near impossible but with the best odds of **4 to 1** and fuck you had to try - didn’t you? Most did and lost!

Shit! Did he clean up for a couple of weeks until that fuck-face Russian from 10E beat the crap out of him for realizing #3 hole was actually smaller than any normal sized marble by a fraction. Joey was using a smaller odd-

ball marble and it fit perfectly through #3 - and was used simply to demo the game and lure unsuspecting customers and he could roll that fucker straight through everytime!

Joey got 6 of the best for promoting gambling ... and cheating! Little did they know he'd already sold the marbles back to the original owners and he made enough for a pack of durries, two pies and a packet of Chocolate Wheatons!

What about his grade 9, Summer of '75 scam, we remember as 'Sunny Boy Beetles'. Who'd ever thought a 10 cent piece would buy you one gold colored Christmas beetle with a bit of cotton tied to its back leg to keep in your top pocket - and Hey Presto! When you let him out for some fresh air, he'd take off for a fly and you'd be walking the schoolyard flying your very own pet beetle. True, every now and then someone would throw his or her beetle a little too high at take-off and you'd be saying goodbye to your five-legged friend. We must have caught and sold two lunch boxes full of 'em before opposition beetle entrepreneurs fucked the whole swindle by flooding the market and inturn getting it banned for cruelty to beetles! I ask you seriously, do insects have feelings? Bollocks! Sunny boy ice blocks all around in the Queensland heat for a few soon-to-be dead beetles sounds like a fair exchange to me.

Well halfway into grade 10, it all turned to shit! Joey got totally pissed off with his mother one morning and after an argument with her, drank half a bottle of her best scotch before school. He got expelled from Ridgetown

High for being drunk as a fucking skunk on parade laughing, stumbling, and finally collapsing in front of the whole school. His weirdo-bitch of a mother (who happened to be so involved in becoming a real estate agent than mother of the year), sent him to Catholic Boarding School in Sydney for the remainder of the year. Yet while Cess, Stiffi and I were frigging around after school playing silly-buggers, he was busy learning how to master his fingers around the basics of the guitar. I remember the Sunday he phoned me and planted the seed into all of our heads.

“Tit, let’s get a band together when I get back in 2 months. I scored a second-hand electric guitar and I’ve even been learning a few chords.” Well the first thing that came into my head was my last musical memory in grade 8 shakily singing ‘Train Whistle Blowing’ by *The Seekers* in my warbly voice accompanied by Suzy Nelson on the recorder, or sitting in my bedroom window bellowing along with *Gary Glitter* singing, ‘*Do you want to be in my gang?*’ Shit! Was that the hairs on the back of my neck standing up yet again?

“Yeh, I’ll play the lead guitar and Stiff can play the drums . . . he already does remember?” Played the drums? More like sweating his balls off carrying that double bass drum through the streets of Ridgetown in forty-degree heat, only to get to hit the prick of a thing at the end of every second bar. Joey continued, “Cess sang in a school choir too, didn’t he? Yeh I know he’s a dopey prick but with a little bit of practice I’d reckon he’d sing alright.” Fuck! I thought to myself, he’s right! Okay, that leaves me, what the fuck am I going to do? Play the spoons? “Tit, I’ll teach you the bass,” he finished off excitedly.

“Err, what’s the bass Joey?” now come on remember ‘Train Whistle Blowing’ was about the extent of my musical career so far, so Joey did his best to explain the fundamentals.

“It’s like the guitar but easier . . . you only have to play four strings, not six!” Well, fuck me ... I thought with an ever so slight hint of sarcasm, now that explains EVERYTHING!

Joey returned to Ridgetown at the end of school only to be greeted by his I’m-so-fucking-sorry ... so ... can-I-buy-you-something-to-make-up ... for ... treating-you-like-shit-this-year-at-school? Well, the bitch fucking came through and did - a bass guitar and a set of drums as a bonus!

We all left at the end of grade 10 except Cess whose parents decided he was going to be a fucking brain surgeon or something and sent him back to finish senior. But the seed had been planted. We were going to start a band.

Two months went by and we couldn’t believe it. After actually practicing every spare moment the blisters on the end of my fingers were starting to heal and turn to calluses. Even Joey had got down a few basic solos and we realized that YES, this is fucking possible! Cess was managing to sing in key every now and then and even though he wasn’t the greatest of vocalists, he still was a shit load better than the rest of us; he definitely had potential! We started off learning old *Beatles* and *Creedence* numbers from beginner books but soon got bored with them, it was simple, we wanted to ROCK! *Kiss*, *Led Zeppelin*, *Status Quo*, *Deep Purple*, *Bachman Turner Overdrive* and of course Joey’s favorite - *AC/DC*. We even nussed out ways to work out songs that were obviously too complex for our current musical

abilities for example, we'd play a record on Joey's record player at a slower pace, playing a 45 single at 33 1/3 rpm or an album with your finger pressed on the middle of the record so the tempo was slower, then taping it on Cess' dad's crappy mono cassette tape player. Then all we have to do was, do our best to work out the riffs (or what we believed was correct), transpose it back to the correct key and attempt to make our fingers go as fast as the original pace of the record. Sounds easy eh? Joey was always way ahead of me in that department so he'd work most of the complex bass lines for me so all I had to do was learn them from him. I never believed I could be a musician without reading a single note of music but Joey taught me how to trust my ears and my fingers.

After leaving school we all got full-time jobs bar Cess. Joey, became a brickie's laborer, Fuck that! Up at 5:00 am, then out in the forty degrees sun all day, picking up bricks for some fat wog bastard to reap all the profits. Stiffi got a job in the local 'Chick 'n' GO' shop carving up dead fowls and removing giblets, he even had to wear one of those horrible hairnets and white gumboots. Fuck that too! He looked so uncool and miserable! I was quite happy at 'Pricecut' packing groceries for a living earning my weekly fortune of \$46 after tax. Yeh Joey might have got twice as much as I did but the worst I ever heard was,

"Mop and bucket aisle 3!"

We came to that familiar problem that all new bands endure - the naming of the band! Man, we must have read every song title on all our

records, read every TV show or character in TV Week. We even randomly opened pages in Cess' Oxford dictionary and blindfoldedly picked words. Of course when one liked a name you were lucky if just one of the others did. We all had our favorites. I remember mine *The Crusaders* I thought it was fucking great but only to hear my suggestion followed by a chorus of, "Get fucked!"

The Flaps is what Stiffi wanted to call us; actually, Cess did like that one until we explained to him the female genitalia connotations. Cess suggested names with every color in his choices as that what all the famous groups he liked had – *Deep Purple* and *Black Sabbath*, but there was no way we were going to be called *Pink Elephants*. It was Joey who came up with the name and we all loved it immediately.

We were simply – *The Flair*.

Originality

“Look! It’s fucking simple, we need to write our own shit,” explained Joey while wiping the sweat from his guitar strings as his Black Ibanez hung around his neck before continuing, “we’ve learnt twenty-five songs already and it’s time to start being creative.” Stiffi glanced across at me while he was rolling a durry, sitting crossed leg behind the drums.

“Cess has already been writing some words haven’t ya!” Stiffi chucked his 2 cents worthin as he was now looking at Cess. “Show them the ‘Woman in need’ song, Cess,” demanded Stiffi.

“Err, it’s not finished yet.” I could sense Cess’ apprehension so I piped up for some encouragement.

“Yeh guys, I got a half a song too!” Joey smiled and spoke,

“Well fuck, I’ve been coming up with a couple of chord patterns of my own.” We all exchanged smirks and it was obvious we would no longer be simply a copy band. We listened to Joey’s riffs one by one and didn’t dare mention the AC/DC comparisons as none of us had any music to contribute. We jammed on all five riffs and before long our AC/DC comparisons were dissipating and The Flair originality was taking over. To someone else, I’m sure we would’ve sounded like a poor AC/DC copy band but a sense of ‘we can do this’ was filling the room. Cess even had a go at singing a few of his own lyrics over the top of the music; his melodies were

a dead set rip off of The Doors and Quo but that never mattered. We had just taken our first stumbling steps as a baby into the big bad world of originality.

Inspiration flourished for the next week as I myself, couldn't stop pumping out lyrics and realized I had to start writing with Joey. I'd written six sets of lyrics in two days and it was time for me to share them. Oh fuck ... what if they're total shit! I thought, what if he laughs at them? You see most of 'em were darkish lyrics, don't ask me where they came from? Maybe just because my fave bands were Alice Cooper and Black Sabbath and best of all - my parents hated them!

Nervously I made my way to Joey's house, songbook in my left hand and Joey's bass in the right. I stood in his front yard for a minute or two contemplating how to approach him and from nowhere a wave of confidence came over me - fuck it! I thought ... he can't write lyrics at all! Joey's mum answered the door bellowing,

"Joey, Ian's here to see you." I always felt uncomfortable alone in the room with her, like she was waiting for me to pull out a shotgun and start shooting up her kitchen appliances ... or like I was some sort of sexual pervert – *'Hi, Mrs. Taylor, want to see my cock?'* He summoned me to his bedroom and I noticed he had another Status Quo poster added to his already full wall collection, it was from their new album 'Blue for You'.

"Looks friggin' cool!" I said nodding my head as if he was waiting for my approval. Now, down to business, "I've been writing words all week ...

don't ask me if they're any good? But I'd thought you'd wanna see 'em!" - there you go, now that wasn't so hard ... was it pussy?

"Yeh really? Awesome, give me a look Tit." Joey replied by prying the book straight from my sweaty hands.

Oh shit! And he perused my lyrics. Joey sat quietly reading and never even let his eyes rise from the pages until he was finished. I felt extremely exposed; it might as well have been Tit's naked photo album and he was studying my knob at close observation. Joey closed the book and handed it back to me shaking his head.

"Tit!" Joey's voice was serious! He stared straight into my eyes with his look of death, "What are you gonna buy when we make it to number one?" We both laughed hard for what seemed a good half hour, out-doing each other with imaginary purchases e.g. I'd say "*I'm getting a Harley Davidson!*" then he'd say, "*Fuck that! I'm getting a whole fucking tour bus!*" At one stage we were both buying each other a night with Farrah Fawcett. He said he loved them all but 'Web of Lies' was the winner for him and he straight away played me this chord pattern with a catchy chorus riff around E minor he'd been working on all week and it suited it perfectly. Somehow I knew straight away how those lyrics were to be sung; it was like the chorus melody came in a package deal with his music.

What is this feeling around me?

I'm panicking, like a caught fly!

Spun in an eternal nightmare,

Trapped in your Web of Lies.

We phoned Cess and Stiffi to come on over and as soon as they got there we thrashed it out in Joey's bedroom, no amps or drums just on the unplugged electric guitars with Stiffi using sticks on the bed and a phone book as his kit. Cess picked up on my melody line easily and as soon as the chorus started working for us then the verses came easily. We all realized, that this was it and we can do it! So we had a go at putting together another tune, one of Joey's he'd played at rehearsals. I went through my lyrics and reworked a half-baked song I had written called 'Machine Gun Love'. After a few changes, the first verse and chorus ended up like this complet with stuttered last line.

Blow a hole in my heart babe,

as hot as the red flaming Sun.

Love finds its target - rapid fire,

straight from the love of a gun.

(chorus)

Machine Gun Love, Machine Gun Love

I've been smit with a critical hit

from your Ma/Ma/Ma/Ma Machine Gun Love

So here we had two original songs ready for our next rehearsal and we couldn't wait. The next 3 months we practiced our arses off. Joey and I had about another dozen songs written even Cess had thrown in a couple of his own including 'A Woman in Love is a Woman in Need'. It was a ballad and I didn't write any those soppy chick songs so I thought it was good for a soft spot in our repertoire. We did have to upset Cess though when we all refused to do one of his songs 'Telephoney Love'. It wasn't even the title that put us off but no way were we singing backup vocals of "Dial L-O-V-E love" while Cess was Singing,

Ring the number for my broken heart

and dial the number of love.

When you're finished, don't hang up on it baby

just give my poor heart a little shove.

Yeh, we thought it was crap no matter how hard he tried. Cess couldn't sway us on that one.

Time to play

At rehearsals, Joey made an announcement.

“It’s time we played a proper gig boys,” Joey now had our full attention, “there’s a band competition at Henderson’s Music shop on Saturday mornings.” The rehearsal was dead silent with panic glancing from one to another, I twiddled my bass tuning key and Stiffi dragged on his fag as he sat cross-legged behind his drum set. Joey might as well have told us we were going to have teeth pulled. “If we make it to the grand final and win, we’ll get free recording time and shit loads of gear and c’mon ... think about it, we all need to get better shit than the crap we’re playing now!” Oh! I get it now; we’re going to win! Someone better tell Cess that because he looks like he just gone and lost something in his undies!

“Do you reckon we’re ready Joey?” Stiffi asked what we all we thinking as a puff of smoke billowed from his mouth so Joey continued,

“Of course we are! Look ... we have got to start playing live someday and it might as well be this. You only have to play four songs in the first heat and if you get through to the final (he dragged on his cigarette), you get to do a full thirty-minute set.”

“Ours or other people’s songs?” I asked as I took a swig of my Coke.

“Doesn’t matter.” Joey had planted the seed.

After discussing it, we all agreed our originals were the way to go and started picking out which songs we would play. We all knew 'Web of Lies' was our best and decided to save that song for the big finale. Open with a newie 'Dirty Money' it had a great G-F-Am run starting with just Joey cranking it out, followed by Stiffi bringing the drums in with one of those Quo type floor tom build-ups, I'd come in with a big bass slide and we pump it out to the end – it was solid!

Dirty Money! Dirty Money!

Let me buy your love

and get me dirty Honey

Cess really did justice to the vocals on this one. The way he'd make his voice get that Rod Stewart/Noddy Holder gravel showed he was improving. The second song was a cranker - 'Full Tilt' and fuck it was fast! Joey's left hand used to burn like hell after playing the bar chords and Stiffi's shirt was always ringing wet after we'd practice that one a few times in a row. We all agreed after two rockers, we needed to slow down the pace, so chucked in Cess' reworked 'Woman in Need' ballad.

Joey and I got the job of entering the band in the competition.

We caught the train to the city the following Saturday and walked up the hill to Henderson's Music that sat majestically on top on Courtney

Road. There was something magical about walking into a music shop and being surrounded by guitars and amps. The way they (guitars) hung there suspended in mid-air begging for someone to lift them off and stroke them. The only time we ever came here before was if we were going to the flicks and pop in to play our dream guitars. I wanted a Fender Precision but who had a spare six hundred and fifty dollars to give me - no bastard! Joey wanted them all – S.G.s, Les Pauls, and Teles as long as they were genuine American made - none of that Jap shit crap! He always complained,

“What’s fucking next? I suppose *Made in China* stamped on them!” That always cracked me up to think guitars would ever come from China.

The guy behind the counter was a prick with a severe attitude problem. Fuck, he must’ve been only a couple of years older than us and his head was so unusually big! Childbirth would’ve been a bitch passing that one through your fanny!

“Yeh, can I help youse?” Redheaded fuckwit managed to actually look at us. Joey nudged me to speak up,

“We wanna sign up for your band competition ... we got a band.” I smiled, glanced at Joey and then back at his Big Red’s ugly dial.

“Yeh, all right I’ll get you the forms.” Big Red reached under the counter and then handed them over to me, turning his back on us straight away.

“Have you got a pen we can use?” I asked. He turned, and the look he gave me then was like I was total fuckwit for not bringing one. Fuck you Prick! ... I thought to myself. I started reading as Joey was annoying the

fuck out of me by looking over shoulder and pointing at the rules. But the rules were simple

- 1:** Four songs maximum.
- 2:** Bring your own guitars/sticks (drums and amps supplied).
- 3:** All bands to be there by 8:30 am for band order draw.
- 4:** No offensive material.

Lucky for us, we didn't choose to do Stiffi's one and only song 'Life's Fuckin' Shit!'

After filling out the entry form we headed straight for dream guitar city. A Gibson Goldtop Les Paul drew Joey like a fly to a freshly laid dog turd. I could tell by his face that he'd never seen, let alone played anything like this before, it was simple - he was in love! It sounded deadly through that 100 watt Marshall and he must have played it for 3/4 of an hour - straight. He played every song and solo he knew, from our songs to covers like Zeppelin's 'Stairway to Heaven' and Purple's 'Black Knight' and every AC/DC riff there ever was! The bigheaded fuckwit was getting pissed off with us for taking too long, but - Fuck him! Joey was in love and no one was breaking up this affair. 'Goldie' was priced at 850 buck-a-roos. Shit, who had that sort of money for a second-hand guitar? Joey had been saving his ring off though and had about \$300 in the bank; he was a third of the way there!

As the banks were closed on a Saturday Joey had to wait 'til Monday to get the money out of his account to put a deposit on her. He took a sickie and did just that. Actually, I'd never seen him so anxious as that Sunday

(the night before) going out o his fucking mind, imagining some famous rockstar would waltz in first thing Monday morning, pick up his very guitar, play it, pay cash for it, walk out, and it would never be seen of again. Oh, until a couple of months later when we'd be watching Countdown and fuck me, there it would be! In the hands of some shirt-lifter with no talent and more money than you could poke a stick at! But he did put the money down so at least Goldie was safely stored out the back.

Our heat was scheduled in three weeks, so we practiced those four songs over and over even re-writing the middle eight in 'Full Tilt' so it had a breakdown. Yes! We were ready for our first gig.

Heat one

Stiffi parked Shitbus out the back of Hendersons. Stiffi's rusty shitbox Bedford van had a nickname 'Shitbus' and aptly named, but it was the only wheels any of us had so we never complained about standing in the midday sun while Stiffi jiggled around the battery leads until the fucking thing would eventually start.

Cess was the most nervous of us all, (maybe because he was wearing blue eyeshadow and felt like a quiff) actually Stiffi didn't look nervous at all, he was just looking forward to bashing the shit out on a half decent kit with cymbals that actually sound better than saucepan lids. After leaving our guitars in the corner and checking in, we sat at the back of the room to watch the first band that was setting up. Scruffy looking bastards ... I thought to myself. The singer's motley black jumper had more holes than a block of Swiss cheese and made me think, maybe Cess' mum could knit him a new one?

They were called *Systematic Punks* a four piece of vocals, guitar, bass and drums and their music was some style I'd never heard before. Their guitar player had a good sound that just blended like one continuous distorted chord. The plumpish, pimply faced singer wasn't really that great but had a great presence on stage, but there was no way this uncommercial (do you call punk?) type of music was ever going to take off, it was all

yelling and too fast for me. Joey hated them, Stiffi loved them and Cess was still shitting bricks and didn't even hear them.

There were only eight other people in the room, the singer's fat girlfriend, two judges from Hendersons and the other band who were called *Why Ringo*. Yeh, that's what I'd like to ask too? What a ridiculous name! They started their set with 'Ticket to Ride' by the Beatles but the singer's voice was fucked! He looked like a curry-eating Paul McCartney but sang with a cross between a poor Liverpudlian and Pakistani accent. Actually, Cess could pull off a better John Lennon accent than that, "*Can I have me ball back, please? Dr. Winston O'Boogie saying goodnight and God bless.*" He cracked us up every time with that one, he was a funny cunt when he wanted to be. Thinking of this, I looked to see how he was handling things, he was smiling and that was a good sign. This cocksucker's singing was so bad the judges were fidgeting in their seats; they were already done and dusted! After playing a tortuous set of Beatles covers, Why Ringo left the stage with their head heads held high. Confidence is a wonderful thing ... I thought, then panic hit as I wondered if we were the same, full of confidence and no talent at all. In four songs time, we would know for sure.

Cess did the old 'test one-two, test one-two' into the microphone followed by Stiffi imitating him 'Test-icles, test-icles' while adjusting the kick drum pedal. I plugged Joey's bass into the Ampeg amp, which had an eight by ten cabinet underneath; I hit the stand-by switch to on and gave it plunk on the open E string. Man! Is that what it's supposed to sound like? I felt the rumble of bass hit me in the guts and Joey smiled at me. He was playing through a Fender twin and with a little tweaking; he had it sounding half decent; it was time!

Stiffi counted us in on the hi-hats 1-2-3-4 and Joey pounded out the 'Dirty Love' guitar intro. Cess grabbed the mike stand and leaned forward and let out,

"It's time for some dirty lovin'!" Pointing right at the singer of Systematic Punk's fat miserable girlfriend; the singer cracked up! Stiffi brought me in and we were away. Stiffi was playing it faster than usual so obviously, he had been a little nervous too, but hadn't shown it! Cess sang surprisingly well, maybe it was because he could actually hear himself? We'd never used a Vase 200-watt column p.a. before (or any for that matter). My fingers felt a little stiffer than normal. Was it the air conditioning or simply nerves? We finished 'Dirty Love' without a mistake and it felt good to get the first one out of the way. The boys from Systematic Punks applauded lightly and made me glad we did for them too (yeh, lightly). Cess turned and gave Stiffi the okay to start 'Full Tilt' and he did. I missed the count in when I accidentally dropped my pick and Joey glared at me. Luckily Joey had always made me keep a spare under my scratch-plate. I don't think it was as noticeable as I imagined and I was in. 'Full Tilt' pumped! Joey's solo was a beauty; it wasn't that fast but he bent the strings just right as to create a catchy melody; we were cooking with gas! Cess had totally relaxed by now and even took the mike off the stand to sing 'Woman in Need'. It wasn't bad but Cess over-sang that one, way too many Ooo and Woos in it. We finished with 'Web' and it was great! We even finished the set with one of those big Rock'n'Roll endings with Stiffi standing up, hitting all the cymbals. We'd done it - our first fucking gig!

The two judges swapped notes and a lot of nodding was going on.

The bald-headed judge stepped up to the microphone, gave it a tap and spoke, "Thank you to Systematic Punks, Why Ringo and The Flair, for all turning up today." He waited until we all applauded, then continued, "Today's winners are ... Systematic Punks, congratulations boys, see you on Saturday-16th, next month." That can't be ... I thought we were supposed to win ... weren't we? We applauded the winners just to be polite, shook their hands on the way out and left the shop in disgust. Silence is golden so they say, so it was a golden trip home that day with Stiffi the only one to comment.

"Well, that's a cunt then!"

The phone call

Somehow we got over our loss and things went back to normal, Joey saved his pay for Goldie, I even started saving myself! I had to get a good amp and bass after hearing the actual sound of a bass guitar rumble. Stiffi had his own plans of investment for a new kit too, by pulling a big treble on the trots! Unfortunately, it wasn't going to plan and was always hitting us both up for a loan until his next payday.

It was Friday the 15th when I got the call from Hendersons,

"Ian, its Bill Heslop here. I'm one of the judges from Henderson's band competition, remember me?" Aahh, and I assumed it was baldilocks!

"Yeh, sure Bill," I answered as if I remembered his name (not just that he was the baldie headed fat-arse who robbed us fucking blind)!

"Look! Are you boys free tomorrow?" Hmmm! Now where this heading? "Systematic Punks pulled out ... which leaves a spot for The Flair ... that's if you want it?" Did someone just give me the pools numbers? I didn't even remember the conversation after that but I know 'YES' was in there somewhere.

The rest of the band were as excited as I was, and we agreed what a great bloke that Bill Heslop was! A quiet practice was organized straight away at my house. Pop and Mum were excited for us too and even moved all the furniture back in the lounge room so we could fit in Stiffi's (Joey's) drums. But he was only allowed to play if he subjected to having towels draped over the skins. Pop bought us all fish 'n' chips for tea. He wasn't a bad father, after all, just a little old – forty-five actually! Plus why did he have to try to be a cool dude all the time? He always had to say something that would embarrass me in front of the guys like,

“Joey, do you like that new song by Queer?” Only to be corrected by a smiling Joey,

“Err, I think you mean Queen Mr. Thomas?”

“Queen-Queer, they're all a bunch of long-haired Nancy-boys if you ask me!” Joey would wink at me and I'd shake my head as Dad would adjust his glasses, scratch his arse and walk off., mumbling,

“Queen ... yeh, that's who it was!”

We finished rehearsing about 10:00 that night and then Stiffi dropped Joey and Cess off home.

8 o'clock next morning (after a restless night), Stiffi returned in Shitbus with the boys to pick me up on the way. We left waving goodbye to my parents standing on the front veranda who just wished us all the best; excitement plus! This was such a great feeling and we were in the fucking semis but more than that, we had another chance.

Heat two and the girl

There was a heap more cars in Henderson's car park this time round and as Cess and I climbed out of the back of Shitbus we checked out the opposition getting out of their respective vehicles at the same time. Inside there were about forty people and all chairs were taken. Standing room and was two deep at the back of the room. Smoke filled the room from the obvious smokers.

5 band names were ink-marked in black on the band competition poster, we were second on. I looked around the room checking out heads. You could tell each band, by the way they dressed similarly and stayed real close to each other, just as we did. Baldie Bill came on the stage and introduced the three judges, two from the shop including himself and an old fart from the local paper.

Aces High was the first band to go on and they were good musos, a three-piece vocals-guitar, bass and drums, they all sang full harmonies and this blew me away. How were we going to follow these guys? But by the end of their six-song set, I wasn't worried at all. They were fucking boring! Six songs this time and we'd decided to play the same songs as before, opening with 'Dirty Love' and ending with 'Web' just add an extra two in the middle. We all agreed and added our next best songs 'Machine Gun Love' and the new one - 'Love Satisfaction' and in that exact order. Nerves were

much more evident this time around re a bigger audience but too late now ... we're on!

It took us more time to settle down but we got there. 'Love Satisfaction' was the surprise of the set, it rocked solid. This pulled us a decent applause from all. 'Web of Lies' killed it as we expected and we finished our set with a pretty good crowd reaction even a couple of woof whistles; we were ecstatic!

Packing up our gear the next band was coming on for the on-stage crossover and, fuck me ... a chick bass player!

"Good luck. You guys pumped!" She said to me as we were passing each other.

"Thanks, same to you!" Conversation comes from the mind and the mouth, not your cock and your balls, but Mr. Pee-Pee and his two circular friends had just taken control of mine - BIG time! When Velvet Touch started their set, all I did was watch her; she was mesmerising! She looked hot as in that red Jumpsuit, bass guitar hanging really low. They sounded all right and she played average bass but who fucking cared, looking that hot and she sang great backup vocals. But we all agreed (except Mr. Misery Guts of course), that she was very easy on the eye.

"Chicks in bands, what fucking next, robots and computers?" Joey yelled in my ear as I stuck my finger in it to quell the pain of his volume. But how could I not think, *'Err ... ever heard of Suzi Quatro and synthesizers Joey?'*

They went over well with the judges. You could tell they were just a little different than the norm, like pop-rock mixed with a little disco at

times. It was a long day waiting for all the bands to play and the last one on were the only real contenders in our eyes, and *Horizontal Lovers* hit the stage with a bang! A pop based guitar band in the style of glitter glam groups like The Sweet. The entire band wore heaps more make-up than Cess ever had and Cess' satin outfit would have fit in well with these guys. Most of the songs sounded the same but they did do a great version of Slade's 'Goodbye to Jane'. I liked them a lot, so did Cess and Joey, Stiffi thought they were just poofy.

Baldie Bill tested the mike before coughing to get our attention,

"Well it's been a long day for all, I'm sure, you'd agree?" C'mon Baldilocks, get on with it ... surely is what all the other bands were thinking simultaneously. "Exceptional talent today so the decision wasn't easy. The judges have decided two bands go into the Grand final at Planet Rock Disco next month. A round of applause to congratulate ... Velvet Touch and The Flair!"

We had fucking done it. We were going to win ... or were we?

We met and congratulated the guys from Velvet Touch out in the car park. Dale was the singer-guitar player, not bad on both, a bit of a watery guitar style for me though. A guy with a worse nickname than Stiffi played drums - Frogdog. We all had guesses on the way home of how he got his name and the best one came from Cess who said his head sort of looked like a cross between a cattle-dog and a toad. Peta was the cute bass player with

long blonde dead straight hair down to her arse and was Dale's younger sister. She was - HOT stuff, I thought. What a great smile, great hair and of course the important part, tits not too big - not too small! She had one of those arses that would've looked great in a pair of those ripped shorts on the cover of 'Ripper' or 'Scorcher' compilation records! Peta had it all and to top it off, a bubbly personality to add to the package. We all exchanged band history and they'd been together for a year practicing and writing in Dale and Peta's parent's garage. They were all nice guys and we wished each other good luck for the final, where next time we'd all be competing for the Holy Grail ... and we'd slaughter 'em dead!

The King is gone, so has mine

The rehearsal wasn't going that well!

"Get it fucking right, Dickhead!" Joey screamed at Cess, "Just sing it like, Tit showed ya!" Fuck, I thought, taking a sip of my RC cola, he's going a bit overboard ... again!

"Okay, I'll try it again then," Cess said willingly just to calm Joey.

Pressure to win was on Joey's mind all the time now, we had to be the best and no one had the guts to even suggest, just maybe, we may lose. Cess got the melody down a bit better but I had a feeling there was something missing in our thirty-minute set and this new song didn't help. Joey believed it could be a winner. But I could tell Cess and Stiffi didn't get it, let's face it, it's too dreary for a live number, sounds like Jim Morrison on downers (hang on, wasn't he always?) ... boring! Well, Joey wrote this song the day Elvis's death came over the radio - 'The King is Dead!' So Elvis was gone - BIG FUCKING DEAL! Well wasn't he just some fat-arsed hairy-chested has-bean bastard who wore girdles, shoots T.V.s while stoned, stars in annoying Sunday midday movies your mum loves, and hasn't had a really decent song since 'Hound Dog'? No ... not to Joey! He'd always loved Elvis, his image more than the music so he wrote the music and lyrics for this tribute song and made me come up with a melody line for them; I struggled!

*Death is only the beginning
of Heaven's Earthly plan.
Sing songs of praise, strum your harps.
The King is now your man.
Down here we'll always miss him,
up there he'll sing like hell.
Shake your hips one more time King
and ROCK those Heavenly bells

The King is Dead! The ROCK is gone!
The King is Dead! The ROCK is gone!*

Yeh, nice if you're an Elvis fan but Cess hated Elvis and I knew he wouldn't want to sing this as soon as I read the words. Cess even told Joey he didn't want to, but Joey argued and defended his song so much, Cess just gave in.

We only had a week to go before the finals on Saturday night at Planet Rock. I'd been there once before about 2 months before when Stiffi had lined us up for a couple of sure-fire dates - Gwen and Ursula, the German sisters from school. You see we were not just desperate to learn music, oh

no! We were even more desperate to lose our virginities! Seventeen years old is just getting a little embarrassing, not that we had any choice in the matter. Stiff wasn't a virgin so his expertise and help in getting laid were gladly accepted.

The disco was a good size and held about 200 people, it had a decent size stage about 4 feet off the ground but no band was playing that night, so we never got to hear what the room sounded like with an actual band playing. The D.J. had one of those multi-colored light boxes, which flashed in time to the drumbeat, and a strobe would get turned on for those special numbers like 'Nutbush' and 'Timewarp'.

We met the girls as pre-arranged near the loos and after introductions Stiffi and Gwen pissed off straight away smooching on the dance-floor under the mirror ball leaving me with, Ursula, and feeling a little sheepish. After an uncomfortable silence I braved up,

"Nice disco eh?" Fuck, it was like pulling teeth!

"Yeh, it is, would you like a dance?" Ursula smiled and she was definitely cute!

"Okay, sure." How brave of me!

"Cool!" Ursula grabbed my left hand and dragged me to the floor. It was a slowish tune by some crappy disco band. You know, the shit chicks love and guys hate but fuck, she had her arms around my waist and was rubbing her lower body against mine ... it felt good!

“So Gwen tells me you play in Stiffi’s band?” Ursula asked looking straight into my eyes. Did I hear right? Stiffi’s fucking band! Then I realized we would all have temporary ownership when it came to getting lucky. So I surrendered the ownership,

“Yeh, I’m the bass player.”

“Cool ... that’s cool!” Ursula was swaying from side to side and nodding her head. She was quite pretty and the shorter of the two, which suited me fine, as I didn’t get called ‘Tit’ for nothing, Tiny-Ian-Thomas or Tit for short. I blame Abba for that acronym, as that was exactly how Abba got their name by taking the first letter of everybody’s Christian name. Yeh, theirs was actually cool but I copped a female body part instead, oh well, I’ve been called other female bits many times before!

I did like the way Ursula’s bleached fringe hair hung across her eyes and that silver glomesh top was certainly filled out. The blue eyeshadow was a little too thick for my liking but her green eyes sparkled in the reflection of the disco lights and mirror ball’s reflection, every time she smiled. The gap between her front teeth complemented her smile and face nicely; she was very cute!

At the end of the night, Stiffi and I drove the girls home, Gwen in the front passenger seat while I and Ursula were rolling around pashing in the back on Shitbus’ mattress. To both our luck, the girls invited us in for coffee but had to be real quiet. Their parents were asleep in the bedroom and best left that way. Gwen turned on the radio at a volume that could just be heard and the Ted Mulry Gang were blasting out (or more like fluffing out at this volume) some bar chords for his little girl.

“Cool,” whispered Ursula as she walked to the kitchen. I liked her, she was, let’s say – cool! Already Gwen and Stiffi were at it - fuck! He had his hand inside her blouse on her tit, the dirty fucker! Next minute he jumped up, smiled at me, raised his eyebrows, pulled a Keith Moon face at me and dragged her giggling out to his van. Ursula returned from the kitchen with four cups of coffee. That’s bloody well right, isn’t it! Coffee for Stiffi means sex! Coffee for Tit means coffee! She sat on the couch beside me sipping her hot coffee with her right thigh touching my left. Looking at me she gestured a shush finger and out of nowhere she grabbed my hand and put it right between her legs - Bingo!

Her coffee flavored tongue was fantastic! She undid the straps on the back of her top and one-finger flipped her bra undone. Next minute my pants were around my ankles and her panties were off and I was examining one very sweet pussy and then we were at it. She was riding me like a bucking bronco on the kangaroo rug in the middle of the lounge room. Her hair was whipping across my face while both my hands were firmly gripping a pair of mighty fine breasts. Fuck! What was that ... her parents? I nearly shit myself as Tiddles the ginger moggie sprang on the arm of the lounge meowing to be scratched.

“Piss off Tiddles!” Ursula whispered sternly. One of Ursula’s stilettos gave Tiddles full understanding to vacate the premises immediately. She was bopping up and down like a fucking jack-rabbit and it wasn’t long before I realized there was only one virgin prior to this de-flowering but who cares right now? Dr. Hook was walking right in on us on the radio, as I groaned a little too loud when I came. She covered my mouth to shut me up

and then we both rolled around giggling, pashing and getting dressed quickly.

Five minutes later Gwen and Stiffi returned from the van, clothes, and hair rummaged, while we were sitting on the couch fully dressed, drinking coffee, like nothing had ever happened.

“Shit Gwen, if you get caught Dad’ll kill you both!” Ursula chastised her big sister. She was a little beauty, Gwen had the root-rat reputation in Ridgetown so Ursula could let her take the lead in the rooting stakes and she’d tag along quietly behind, fucking her sister’s boyfriend’s mates without her knowledge. Ursula had a fail-safe plan all right, as she made me promise not to tell Stiffi and the boys that I’d fucked her and she’d promise to root me again – But! If word got out, rumor or not, I’d be back to paying visits to Mrs. Palmer and her five daughters as all verbal nookie contracts would be off. So her secret was safe with me - I was still a virgin!

During a break in rehearsals under Stiff’s house, I was having a fag with Joey in the backyard and I had come up with a way of fixing the Elvis problem.

“What about you sing ‘The King is Dead’ mate?” I suggested with my fingers crossed behind my back, “You’d sing it with more passion than Cess could and it would put a different feel in the set,” I continued, “Cess can play the tambourine and sing a harmony to you.” Joey would’ve certainly butted in by now if it was a stupid idea, but alas, he was actually thinking about it. “You need to do a longer solo at the end too! This way it’d be like a

bit of a feature ... you know what I mean? Like Hendrix.” was I starting to plead? Joey nodded his head,

“I’ll give it a go.”

He was a little apprehensive on the microphone at first but soon realized his voice wasn’t that bad. Cess loved the idea too and for the first time attacked the song with partial enthusiasm. Stiffi was Stiffi, who knows what he really thought; he’s just a drummer. It worked! Joey’s poxy song actually came together, the feel had changed a bit bluesier but heaps better. We’d never been more ready and knew that this was the last nail for the coffin.

The party

Dennis Evans was an old mate from school and he was having a party for his 18th and his parents were fucking off and leaving the house to him. This was exactly what we needed to break the tension that had built up over the last couple of weeks. Stiffi's moustache made him look eighteen already and his older brother Scottie worked at the bottle-O, so getting alcohol was not a problem for us . . . drinking it was! None of us liked the shit! We'd drank three largies of beer once at band practice and we were fucked for the whole afternoon, maybe because they were a bit warm, but they still tasted like shit if you ask me. Stiffi picked us all up around eight-thirty. I was first for a fucking change and got the window passenger seat. I was usually always the last and got delegated to the mattress in the back. Joey suggested we get a bottle of Southern Comfort instead of beer. Yeh, we all agreed - beer's shit so let's try something else. Stiffi pulled Shitbus into the bottle-O waving to his brother. He was a big bastard all right and his name wasn't really Scottie, it was Harold after his grandfather but he got called that for his accent. He was born in Scotland and Stiffi over here so they had similar features but it was like two different vocabularies of Scottish and Australian in one family.

“Give us a bottle of Southern Comfort and two bottles of Coke, you Scottish cunt!” Joey screamed from the back.

“W-whoo, hitting the fukin’ ‘ard stoff arre weh?” Scottie asked as he clipped his younger brother across the back of the head. “And you ya cheeky cunt in the back, shove a woolly pup up ya!” We all cracked up, he was an even funnier prick than Stiff.

“C’mon you prick! Hurry up! I don’t want the ol’ man pulling up behind me. I’ll be fucked!” Stiff was looking in the rear view mirror in a panic.

Scottie was a fucking legend! He popped four bottles into Stiff’s lap, a Southern Comfort, a bottle of Blackberry Nip and two bottles of Coke. He knew we were always broke and must have taken pity on us as this cost us a grand total of five dollars and one of Stiffi’s tailor-mades. Cess was really excited about this party as he heard women galore were going to be there. He kept mumbling something about some lucky lady would be seeing his wedding tackle tonight!

Stiffi left Shitbus three streets away just in case the cops raided the place. It was strategically parked, so all we had to do was jump the back fence, cross the street and take off down Johnson road which was a beauty of a hill. You could roll right to the bottom before any lights, motors or ‘Oink! Oink! You Pigs!’ obscenities needed to be actioned.

The party wasn't bad. Cess wasn't quite spot on with his girl prediction! Honey babes everywhere? No! About twenty-five turned up in total and only about six had breasts. Dennis was pissed already and he was spilling more than he was drinking. Stiffi poured us a Southern Comfort and Coke each then proceeded to find a hiding spot for the bottles. Dennis warned us to do this as some thieving cunt (as he put it) just stole his Bacardi. So Stiff found a beauty of a hiding spot in a hallway cupboard between what looked like Dennis' mum's wedding dress and an old singer sewing machine - no fucker would look there!

My first Southern Comfort tasted pretty shitty but drank it anyway; maybe Stiffi had made them a little strong? The sickly sweet taste actually got better by the third. Cess was on his fifth with Stiffi already and had made his way by himself to the backyard pool area where most of the action was. I'd thought I'd better not miss the opportunity to give him a hand chatting up those two half-naked birds drying themselves off.

"Cess you right for a drink?" I knew perfectly well he was but it got me straight into the conversation.

"Tit, this is Dallas and Hope ... they're both cousins of Dennis'," stated Cess stated as he leaned over to me and whispered just a little too loudly, "... and they both got nice tits eh?" Well, the girls and I were horrified and we all pretended like we'd never heard that at all.

"Hi! Nice party hey?" I asked with a dumb smile on my dial and to change focus off of Cess' tit comment. "Where you from?" Whooo made it! They were both smiling again.

“Sydney,” Dallas replied. She was the older and better looking of the two, about five foot six, corkscrew brunette with freckles and huge bazookas! Cess was right on the knocker, so to speak. “How come your name’s Tit?” Dallas asked so I told her the ‘I blame Abba’ story as always, before she asked, “Do you play in Cess’ band too?” And here’s that fucking ownership issue again!

“Yeh, I’m the bass guitarist.”

As if that’s all I fucking do! Play the bass - write the fucking songs - organize the rehearsals - fix any band conflicts or problems - and now change subjects - when pissed singers insult big tittee girls! Cess was pissed all right, he was starting to sway a bit and oh no! He’s staring right at their tits!

“Cess said you all write songs?” Dallas questioned and who’d manged to stop jiggling them about long enough in the wet bikini top for Cess to manage a glance at their faces.

“Yeh I write most of the words and Joey,” I pointed him out talking to Stiffi, “writes most of the music.”

“Great!” My statement was acknowledged with a nod and a tit bounce. This isn’t going too bad ... I thought to myself - I could be in like Flynn here!

“How come you’re here tonight?” Dallas enquired and I was just about to answer when Cess butted in.

“We’re trying to pull a root ... so you wanna root us? Ha-ha-hah!” I didn’t know which way to look and the girls either. They stormed off with looks could kill glances at Cess yelling back at him,

“Fucking comedian ... let’s go, anywhere away from this Dickhead!” I heard Dallas whisper and order Hope to follow, who was just raising her eyebrows and agreeing by following her lead. Dallas’ final comment was directed at me, “Maybe you should take Paul Hogan home!”

“Good one Knobend!” I said as I pushed Cess in the arm. “Now what we gonna do?”

I suppose getting pissed was the answer now, as all the other birds were taken. So we did and had an excellent time trading jokes with Stiffi and some fuckwits we knew from school.

I was getting pretty fucking pissed when I went looking for Joey who’d been missing for about half an hour. I found him out on the front steps with Dennis, Dallas, and Hope and what was that godforsaken awful smell - Dog shit? Fuck off! They were smoking it!

“Tit, try this,” Joey passed me what was obviously some Hooch, a Joint or a Doobie. Well, I wasn’t really keen at trying it at first, so I checked them all one by one for signs of any side effects (like tentacles growing out their heads). Besides Dennis, whose eyes looked like red colored ping pong balls, they all looked fine. I took my first toke or should I call it choke - Shit! As soon as my lungs filled my throat burnt, I coughed for at least a whole minute and they all laughed their arses off. Pricks! Stiffi and Cess found us

on the steps and the girls were still unimpressed with Cess (our Paul Hogan). Joey had him under control and made him apologize to the big tittee girls whom were still in their bikini tops and now wearing towels as skirts. The girls were up from Sydney and had brought a bag of grass, so were smoking it up big with their cousin! The first tokes didn't affect me but by the end of the second joint I was feeling shockingly wobbly so I went inside to watch a little late night tele to straighten up a bit. A Benny Hill repeat was on and I laughed my guts out so hard that the Unit sitting next to me gave me the strangest look - FUCK HIM! It wasn't long after that I spewed my frigging ring out over the back veranda. I was well and truly fucked! I needed to lie down and I managed to make my way to the first bedroom using the wall as a guide. Stumbling through the bedroom door I just happened to catch a FUCK OFF Dickhead look from Joey who was taking Dallas' temperature with a flesh colored thermometer. I waved him farewell with a double thumbs up sign and exited back to the lounge room; I was hammered! Unbeknown to me, Stiffi had Hope around the side of the house with her bikini bottoms pushed to the side giving her the old taste test. Cess and Dennis were still on the front steps and smoking another stinky cigarette by themselves and I could smell it from here. I was nearly asleep when they shook me awake to tell them where Stiff had hidden the drinks. I told them they were in the cupboard and they let me catch forty more winks next to the Unit, while they found the full bottle of Blackberry Nip.

I must've been asleep for a while as a neck cramp from Hell was killing me when I awoke. I also had a dribble mark that had made a nice little pattern on my new light blue body shirt. There was spew in my hair too! I could see and smell it. And that's when it all started!

Howls of laughter and cheering were coming from outside in the street. I managed to get my act together enough to join the crowd that was gathering on the front lawn. What the hell is going on? But as soon as I realized the on-lookers of about twenty-odd, had taken it upon themselves to start singing the 'Here comes the Bride' in unison *Daa da da-daa, Daa da da-daa*. Joey and Dallas joined the gathering and asked me what all the commotion was about. Stiffi was up the front of the crowd already, before pushing his way back towards us, he was doubled over wetting himself as he hyperventilated. Hope was behind him with a disgusted look on her face.

"You've got to," Stiffi still couldn't contain himself, "... get a look at those stupid fuckers!" Joey grabbed me by my corduroy jacket collar and dragged me to the footpath. I had to fall on my knees to stop my guts from spilling all over the lawn. The sight of Cess in the bollocks bar a pair of red rubber thongs and Dennis' mum's wedding veil upon his head was just too much. Three paces behind him was Dennis also in thongs and starkers, holding the train of the veil. Heads held high they were proudly doing the wedding march down the road. They had it down too, Cess holding a dodgily made bouquet of frangipanis (from someone's garden) and the way they'd both take a right step forward in time and then sliding their left feet along the road bringing their thongs level. Cess was just passing us by when he turned and yelled an announcement to Joey and me.

"I told you pricks girls were gonna see (hic) my wedding tackle tonight! Ha!" he was fucking Blackberry Nipped bad, and when they came to the end of the driveway Cess turned his back on the crowd and threw the bouquet backward over his head. Who should catch it? But the Unit! He waved it

high in the air to cheers of approval. Cess and Dennis finished off their performance with a tastefully timed browneye.

It's funny how a few seconds can change a whole situation. A cop car pulled up in front of Dennis' house with the wedding couple too pissed and stoned to get away.

"Fuck! Pigs! Back fence!" Stiff screamed and order and we responded instantly yet he was already halfway there. I remember running as fast as I could (and losing my new green thongs) after scaling the fence, with Joey on my arse. By the looks of how many others had done the same thing, we'd realized we weren't the only underage drinkers with a get-away plan of Johnson Rd.

"Cess! What about fucking Cess?" I screamed. We hopped into Shitbus as fast as drunkenly possible,

"Fucked if I know?" Stiffi said as he was pulling off the handbrake for a rolling take-off, while poor Cess was about to have his first confrontation with the law.

The fat copper with his torch demanded,

"What's your name Sonny?"

"Cess-Cess Poole Sir." Cess was still naked and starting to spin out. But the copper bastard wasn't impressed,

"Yeh and I'm Sgt Bilko! Now son, no time for games, tell me your name!"

“No Hof-ficer, it really is Cess-s s-Cecil Poole, can I put some clothes on? My willie’s getting cold! Ha!” Cess was pissed way beyond caring now, and suddenly from nowhere the party had come to an end for our young Cecil Poole as he vomited all over Bilko’s shoes, then fell over and passed out to Dennis cracking off at Constable Hard-Bitch for cuffing him before he could take a piss in the rose bush.

We went to visit Cess at his place the next day but were politely told to “Piss off” by his old man. Apparently, he spewed so much, in the Cop car and in the lock-up that the Cops rang his parents to come and take him home A.S.A.P.! It didn’t help Cess’ case when he threw up in the back of his old man’s brand new HJ on the way home. All contact with Cess was severed. He was grounded for a month and the Grand final was off as far as his parents were concerned. Only six days to D-day. Now we were truly fucked!

Operation Cess

“We’ve got to get in contact with Cess, he’s the fucking singer!” Yelled an overly obvious Joey.

“We can’t get anywhere fucking near him. His bloody mother’s been dropping and picking him up from school every frigging day,” he added, “and he’s been in detention every lunch this week!”

His parents had vetoed any of our calls to him and we even slipped a note to him through one of Cess’ classmates - Willie Vanderhoof, about sneaking him out for the finals. Willie returned a message from Cess saying he was shit-scared of getting in more trouble, so the finals were off as far as he was concerned as well. Then Stiffi was smirking.

“I got it!” Was that a light bulb flashing above Stiff’s head and why was he looking at me? “Tit, you’re going back to school!” Stiffi smiled and with his Groucho eyebrows were in motion, as he began to unravel his cunning plan to us.

“Fuck off! Fuck you! No fucking way!” I wasn’t quite as enthused about his idea.

“Look Tit, we need Cess on Saturday and we have to smuggle him out of Stalag 13. We need to get in contact with him and you’re our man!” Joey stated.

“Why don’t you do it then? Why does it have to be me?” I asked.

“Because you look the youngest ... and the only one that can pull it off! It only has to be for half an hour, tops!” And in a terrible Sean Connery imitation Joey spoke, “It’s a dangerous life being a secret agent, but you can pull it off ... double-O-Tit!”

“I dunno?” Now was that my - I’m being conned again voice?

“He needs to know the song list so he can practice by himself.” pleaded Joey. I finally agreed with the feeling of - GOOD ONE Knob-end ... sucked in once again! But it did make sense, I suppose. We proceeded to write out our set list for Cess and develop our simple but effective escape plan; there was only one problem - Cess!

“No fucking way man!” Cess’ reaction to his Saturday night breakout plan wasn’t expected. “Man I’m in big fucking shit with the olds and they’ve threatened to send me to the GP’s for the holidays.” Now the GP’s were Cess’ worst nightmare. His stinky old grandparents whose idea of a good time was sitting around the kitchen table playing used ticket bingo listening to ABC weather updates on their portable trannie and nightly prayer book readings.

“Cess! C’mon mate we need you! We can’t do it without you singing . . . Cess!” - beg boy beg!

“I just can’t Tit! The olds,” Cess said shaking his head as the third-period bell rang.

“Fuck you Cess,” now I was losing it! “Fuck you! I didn’t take a sickie, put these stupid poofter shorts and long socks on, then hide for forty minutes behind the science block waiting for you to say - No! No thank-you! Now fuck ya! You’re going to frigging well do it right! You have too! We’re counting on you ... the whole band’s counting on you and we’re going to win! You’re going to win!” He looked down at his Batas and nodded,

“Yeh your right, we have to play, don’t we.” I grabbed the big palooka by the scruff of the neck and gave him the biggest hug. Sharon Symons was one of Cess’ many female fantasies and just happened to be walking by giving us both quiff-boy dirty looks, so I grabbed his left buttock and pursed my lips at her - Cess died!

Second chance

Saturday arrived before any of us really wanted it to, couldn't we have had just one full practice? The three of us met in the late afternoon at my place where Pop made us steak, egg 'n' chips for an early tea. He wanted us to have a good hearty meal in our bellies for extra energy to play our best. We lied to my folks telling them that Cess was allowed out for the night and we would be picking him up on the way. It was a necessary requirement.

"Any more chips boys?" Pop asked.

"No thanks Mr. T." replied Joey.

"Chuck 'em over here Pops!" demanded Stiff. "Hang on Pop! I just gotta make some more room." And Stiffi let out a rumblor that read 6 (noteworthy or moderate to strong) on the Richter scale. Pop cracked him over the head with the egg-flip and chuckled out loud,

"Cheeky bastard!" I looked at the old man in an observant sort of way, his hair brushed from left to right in that thinning on-top comb-over look, his thick black-rimmed specs on the end of his nose or his pipe that constantly hung out the left side of his mouth. I then realized how much he was enjoying our band too. Maybe it was just him getting a chance to be one of the boys again or just maybe he just found it fun to spoil us all?

We left for Cess' place about six after Stiffi took a stinky crap at my house (I don't know what it was about our toilet he liked? But he felt compelled to pay it a visit every time he came over) and it was time to get the plan into action.

Stage - 1: We'd stopped at the phone box around the corner from Cess', and gave him a warning call. When his old man as predicted, told us to "Piss off! You're not speaking to him." Too late! Cess was already at –

Stage - 2: One of Cess' mum's biggest fears (being a pommy) was big hairy spiders! So Cess - already to go in his stage clothes, with them hidden under his dressing gown, came running out of the toilet screaming, "Huntsman! Dad, it's a huntsman!"

He'd very well knew his mum would lock herself in the bedroom until it was dead! She was out of the way - now with only his dad to go.

"Get me a bloody shoe, Cess, you baby!" His Dad ordered with a good old John Wayne bravado in his voice.

"Dad!" says Cess in a shaky voice, "It's this big!" holding his hands in the size of Dolly Parton's left boob.

"Shit! I'll get a bucket of hot water," So his dad was making his way quickly to the laundry.

Stage - 3: Cess didn't miss his chance and bolted through the front door, down the steps and jumped into the open side door of a slowly cruising Shitbus, to the cheers of his get-away team. The last thing we saw was his dad standing on the front steps in his white-fronts holding a steaming bucket of water with this astonished - *What the f-f-f* look upon his face.

Mission completed!

Operation Cess (part 2)

“Oh fuck! Oh, fuck! He’s gonna kill me!” Cess looked extremely pale.

“Nice to see ya Dickhead,” Joey said as was leaning over the passenger seat ruffling Cess’ wavy shoulder-length light brown hair.

“I told you we could do it,” Stiffi gloated as he took a glance in his side mirror to change lanes. We all laughed our heads off at the cheekiness of what we had just done. Stiffi had just about run every red light in the neighboring vicinity as if we were trying to outrun the law and got us on the highway in record time. The plan had run like clockwork, or had it? Thirteen minutes of precision timing and now it was going to turn to crap! We were close to the venue when Cess took his dressing gown off and proceeded to roll down his white satin pants,

“Shit! Shit! Shit! Guys! We’ve got a bit of a problem,” Cess was pointing.

“What’s up mate?” asked Joey.

“Look!” Cess replied. Horror, Shock, and Panic hit us a six! For Cess had forgotten to grab his platform shoes from the front garden-bed that he’d hid earlier that afternoon.

“We gotta go back, we don’t have a choice!” I stated to Stiff and Joey.

Cess' feet were huge and none of our shoes came close to fitting him. You see Cess was sitting in the back of Shitbus with his head between his legs wearing a pair of those slip-on woolly dark blue slippers with the red striped edging.

"I can't do it!" pleaded Cess, "Can one of you guys, please?"

"Yeh I'll do it," agreed Joey.

Stage - We're fucked: We gave Joey a thirty-second head start on us. Cess explained where they were and it didn't seem too hard a job. We rounded the corner at a cracking pace of five miles per hour to see Joey hiding out of view from Cess' mum who was in the process of her daily late-afternoon ritual of watering the garden during dusk.

"Oh fuck!" Cess instantly went into panic mode. She recognized the sound of Shitbus' holey muffler and her face turned to a shade of purple. She started screaming and running towards us hose in hand. Joey hastily made a dash for the shoe's hiding place and managed to pick them up on the run. Cess' mum was startled by Joey's dash past her but quickly regained herself enough by spraying Joey right in the side of the head. Just as Cess had, Joey lunged at the open door of Shitbus making it easy. We drove off this time with Cess' mum screaming and waving a spraying hose about, while his dad was standing on the front steps, who had come outside to see what all the fuss was about. He was holding the Saturday paper, still in his white fronts with jaw wide open.

Mission completed ... again!

Cess put on his white boots and I had to admit it since his hair had grown he looked the part, even his white outfit (without the tea cozy) had a more ruffled used-by look about it. His confidence as a singer had grown also (even though he was still worried as all fuck about his olds). He was starting to relax after we hit the highway, far enough from his folks and close enough to become a fucking legend. We must have drove him crazy on the way, making him recite to us, testing him so we knew he knew all the lyrics and arrangements. Joey handed the setlists out and made us put them in our pockets. We pulled into the Planet Rock Disco car park at about seven and reality was just starting to show itself, the car park was nearly half full.

The BIG one

“We’re one of the bands tonight,” Stiff announced to the gum-chewing door-girl with pony-tails. I thought, Quite fucking obvious Stiff, we’re carrying guitars ... but she seemed emotionless and still stamped our wrists for a pass-out later. Entering the room was like a metamorphous for me, outside I was just another bedroom would-like-to-be, inside I’d finally become a real musician! No more playing to Joey’s neighbors in the backyard or to Mum and Pop in my lounge room, this was it! About ninety people were here already but the dance floor was still empty.

Yeh a bit early for dancers ... I thought. It felt like all eyes were upon us as we walked across the dance floor, guitars in hand. We left our gear in the designated roped off area and went to take a look at the stage set up. It was fucking huge! Joey smiled at us all and said with pride,

“We’re gonna rock!”

We found Baldie Bill Heslop and all shook his hand, he told us that we were on third and six bands in total would be competing. The first band on started at eight and a ten-minute changeover was scheduled between groups with an hour interval in the middle.

Getting a little thirsty we made our way to the food bar.

“You in the band?” Asked the pimply wog chick behind the counter with a bigger nose than Stiff’s and his wasn’t a small honker at all.

“Yeh, we are ... we’re the Flair,” Cess answered with confidence.

“All bands get free soft drinks and a hot dog each,” she gave us a look like she was giving us the keys to the city and handed us drink and meal tickets before adding, “... no alcohol!”

Sorry if I didn't seem quite as enthusiasticas the others.

“Beauty, we’ll all have Cokes then Love,” Big Nose Stiff ordered to the Big Nose wog bitch.

A tap on my shoulder and I turned around to be greeted by Peta the punkrat from Velvet Touch, she looked fucking HOT! She was wearing a school uniform and the way you would’ve certainly got expelled for at Ridgetown High! Her pleated tartan skirt was short, really short! Her white blouse was open, exposing milky white cleavage in a black bra, her hair was tied with black ribbon in ponytails to each side and she wore long black suede leather platform boots up to her knees (KISS type) that seem to suggest – Tit, how about you coming to fuck me! (Thank God! I never got that message from Gene Simmons)! Her cheeks were very heavily blushed and she was chewing gum, she looked naughty and needed a damn good spanking! Please, Miss, can it be me?

“Hi Guys,” Peta smiled, “pretty exciting eh?” Then she screwed up her cute nose.

“Wanna Coke or can I give ya a jolly good spanking, Miss Velvet?” Stiff asked (spanking must’ve been on his mind as well) leaning between us with a cheeky look on his face.

“Stiff!” I groaned as if that comment was uncalled for, yeh right! She whacked him hard on the arm, laughed aloud and asked for a Coke. Dale and Frogdog had finished registering and joined our group.

Velvet Touch we’re on after us in the first half, so we all decided to hang out together. It wasn’t long before Joey and Dale talked guitars while Cess, Stiffi, and Frogdog went off checking out the local talent.

The Room was quite high and the music sounded a little echoey like it was in a barn. The walls were painted red with music and space icons (astronauts with guitars and music notes and moons etc.) randomly. The stage was about 4 foot off the floor and quite big. I could see the cubicles around the edges of the club. Peta and I grabbed one of the few remaining empty cubicles at the right of the stage before all the seats were taken - and what a shame the others all went off and left us by ourselves. I sat on one side and she sat opposite even though it was a half circle seat that met in the middle.

I looked at her face closely and noticed all the perfect imperfections I hadn’t really noticed before, like the way her freckles were evenly placed running over her high cheekbones or the way her fringe swayed slightly to the right, so her fringe seemed a little longer above her left eyebrow than her right, or that her teeth were white, pearly white with her eye teeth just slightly longer and protruding forward. I’d never truly realized how

gorgeous she really was. She was raving on ten to the dozen, hands flailing in every direction and I was agreeing and disagreeing whenever an answer was required but I couldn't stop looking into her baby blue eyes.

"So do you have a girlfriend?" Peta popped that out of nowhere.

"No! None." I answered before asking, "What about you? A boyfriend of course!" Yeh Dickhead, I'm sure she knows what you mean.

"I broke up with my last boyfriend two months ago." You fucking beauty ... as I imagined myself lying naked in her bed with my arms folded behind my head next to this blonde spunk popping under the covers for a bit of erectile stimulation. "He was too jealous for me ... a real pain in the arse jerk!" Suddenly my naked fantasy was interrupted by a six foot two, toothless rugby front-rower, dragging me out of the bed and shoving a football pump up the ol' jack seat. Joey and Dale joined us after inspecting each other's guitars and it was like they pulled up Peta's conversation to an instantaneous halt. She slid around next to me to let the boys in the circular cubicle. Oh fuck ... she put her hand on my leg under the table and gave it a squeeze turning her head smiling and asking,

"What's your real name, Tit?" So one moe time the - I blame Abba acronym story was explained.

"Ian's a nice name," Peta said looking straight into my eyes.

"Yeh, but we call him Tit, even though Vagina is a more a suitable one if you ask me!" Thanks for your contribution, Joey, I thought to myself and gave him the forks across the table. They all laughed heartily at my expense while my beetroot impersonation was going well. The other boys returned

and advised us where the best birds were strutting their stuff. Stiffi was eating his free hot dog when he pointed to the stage and to the cheering crowd. Baldie Bill walked on the stage and grabbed the microphone while the first band was standing ready for action behind him.

“Welcome to this year’s Henderson Music and Planet Rock’s band competition and wait ‘til you see the talent we have for you tonight! How about a bit of encouragement for them?” The crowd who had doubled since we arrived, did just that. “We have some special judges with us tonight sitting down there with their pencils and rubbers ready for action,” Baldie Bill pointed to the table at the left of the stage and continued, “A big round of applause for local boy come good straight from Australia’s new rock sensation, lead singer for ... *The Mysterious Monkeys* – Jim-Jimbo Daniels.” He stood up to cheers from the audience and a pack of nubile screamed at the front of the stage.

“That wanker’s a one-hit wonder and a fucking ponce!” Joey scoffed at our table. We didn’t have to be convinced at all as his open shirt baring his hairy chest was enough for me, and by the screwed-up look on Peta’s face, she agreed too. Those pricks didn’t even write their own hit! It was a re-worked cover version of an old Stones number ‘Street Fighting Man’ and it was total shit! Bill continued,

“Our next judge we all know as Dr. Phillip Barnes from that great show *Police Case* on Monday nights, and no other than Channel O star - Ben Holder. C’mon everybody, let’s give Ben a big warm welcome to Planet Rock!” the crowd needed a bit more egging on for this overweight aging crappy actor who was well past the use by date. “Lastly all you musos in the audience remember ... impress this man and you’ll be halfway there, all the

way from Jester Records - Bob Saunders.” Bill clapped his hands but the applause was already getting strained, it was mainly suck-hole musos now clapping, I spun around hastily when Cess let out an ear-splitting woof-whistle. I looked at Joey and he just shook his head with embarrassment while Stiffi told Cess to sit down,

“Fuckwit! He’s the bloke we gotta impress ... not kiss arse!”

Baldie Bill announced the prizes. First prize was twelve hours of recording time at Dark Lady Studios and promise of work from entertainment agency Eastcoast with guaranteed airtime publicity on 4RH. Second prize was three hundred dollars to be spent in Henderson’s Music with third winning one hundred to spend there also.

“Will you put your hands together for our first contestants of the night *Gravel Rash*.” Bill ran off the stage and down the walk-on stairs just as they hit their first power chord and it was huge! These guys were a lot older than us, I’d say around twenty-one to twenty-three and obviously had been playing a lot longer. A four-piece band - vocals, lead guitar, bass, and drums. Their opening number was Zeppelin’s ‘Black Dog’ and it was fucking unbelievable! The singer did it justice too! A sinking feeling came over me straight away; we were out of our league. The dance floor was filled by the end of ‘Black Dog’ and they broke straight into an original that sounded a bit like Steve Miller’s ‘Jet Airliner’ and it was just as catchy. Joey was sitting there looking straight ahead not even looking left or right, eyes fixed on the band watching every note they played. Stiffi stated the obvious,

“These bastards fucking cook!” Cess was shaking his head side to side, yet agreeing. Velvet Touch had similar panic-stricken faces as ours and agreed they were very professional. Their set was simply mind-blowing, songs executed perfectly, exciting to watch. Even the drum solo in the middle of the second last number knocked Stiffi and Frogdog for six. The punters loved them and so did the judges by the way they were all clapping. Bill re-emerged onstage clapping and the crowd applauded Gravel Rash one more time. While the first changeover was happening we all dissected their performance with the good out-doing the bad by a mile.

“Let’s face it! They were great!” Stiff admitted, “But that doesn’t mean they’ve won just yet, we both got to play our sets and you never know ya luck in a big city, we could just fuck ‘em over.” Optimism is a wonderful thing ... I thought and if anyone had it, it would be our Stiffi.

“Yeh! Fuck ‘em!” Joey announced and Frogdog made a toast with his half-empty can of Tab and we all raised our various cans of free drinks and the two bands clicked them together screaming out in unison

“Fuck ‘em!”

Big Fat Mamas were on next (thank God, there were none in the band) and they were about the same age as us, a four-piece two guitar band like Quo. The guitar players played a couple of harmony line solos which sounded cool but their vocals seemed weak after the lead singer’s voice in Gravel Rash. Their songs were good rockers (very Quoish) and easy to

dance to so the crowd responded in the way they knew best - and danced their tushes off. Joey attracted our attention when there were about two or three numbers to go, to make our way to the backstage area to tune and warm-up before going on. We all shook hands with Velvet Touch wishing each other luck and Peta grabbed my hand then whispered in my ear,

“See you after, we’ll have a dance. Good luck,” Peta then pecked me on the cheek and smiled at me then spun around and pecked the other three, good luck too. Big Fat Mamas finished off with a cover of ‘Roll Over Lay Down’ and the crowd loved it.

Baldie Bill shook our hands one last time as he ascended the stage. He again summoned the troops for a round of applause for Big Fat Mamas and the boys left the stage nodding their heads at us for luck as we crossed paths so we did back in approval of their set. Stiffi lead us on stage and fuck ... what a feeling, the stage seemed higher and the crowd looked bigger from here. Stiffi was grinning from ear to ear and Cess was setting the microphone height with the stage roadie’s help. Joey chose a Marshall to play through over the Fender Twin sitting next to it this time. I was plugging my lead into the Ampeg when the roadie leaned across, hit the standby switch and gave me a nod of all okay go-ahead. Joey’s guitar sound was distorting loud and feedback wailed as he covered his pick-ups and turned away from the squeal of the quad box. Stiff had adjusted his cymbals and was playing a drum fill around the kit when Bill asked us if we were ready; yeh, we were!

“Ladies and Gentlemen put your hands together for The Flair!” The dance floor was packed and goosebumps hit me as the crowd bellowed. I looked down at the dance floor and Peta was screaming and cheering right in front of me. Joey’s guitar intro never sounded better. That fucking Marshall made his Ibanez sound unbelievably huge, a sound Angus and Malcolm would’ve been proud of. Stiff pumped the kick drum in time to Joey and hit the cymbal while deadening it with his left hand. I could actually feel his kick drum in my guts. Cess yelled out his - “Who needs dirty lovin’?” remark as he pointed to a couple of chickee-babes in the front row and then we were off and rocking.

Dirty Love is dirty indeed

Dirty Love is hard as a rock

Dirty Love is just what I need

Dirty Love comes hard as my ... love!”

We never ever sounded this good before and the floor was full of dancers, jiving away to Joey’s and my song. I looked across at Joey who was arched over his black Ibanez with his waist-length straight blonde hair covering his hands while he was playing his ‘Dirty Love’ rhythm. Cess was nervous but covered it beautifully, besides the sweat that instantly dripped from his forehead and the underarm stain in his white satin shirt.

We finished ‘Dirty Love’ without a fuck-up from any one of us and the following cheers put a smile on all our faces and calmed the nerves. ‘Full

Tilt' wasn't bad but Stiffi sped up slightly and made me lose the feel a little but we finished it with a good tight end, which caught the audience off guard, dancing to silence, then applauding. Cess introduced us (Joey and I) to the crowd as the songwriters and joked every now and then we'd let him write one or two songs, which led Stiffi to count in 'Woman in Need' perfectly. This time Cess sang it fucking awesome, no over-singing at all. I was relaxed enough now to take a glance at the judges and could just make them out behind the glare of the front lighting; it was a bit too hard to tell what they were thinking as they all looked expressionless while they listened intently.

The dance floor cleared a little during Cess' song but this gave a chance for all the randy blokes to grab a bird and give her a good arse-squeeze under the spots of the spinning mirror ball's reflections or the flashing disco lights that blended amongst the fog machine's output. Soft song over, 'Machine Gun' reeled them right back in - it cranked! Joey's solo was lightning fast and accurate and I was relaxed fully now so strutted to Joey's side of the stage and rocked it out with him there. Stiff's floor tom sound boomed loudly while he beat it solidly in time to my pumping bass riff. Cess finished the song with a scream and an air punch in time to Stiff's end. We were cooking with gas! I looked down at Peta who gave me the sound's beautiful thumbs-up just as Dale tapped her on the shoulder for her to go side-stage to prepare.

Things were going just great, until our second last song. Joey's 'King is Dead' and it died and would haunt us one more time. The song was actually sounding great and Joey's first solo was flying, they even put the strobe on for his solo as he stood out front of the band as we had planned. But just as

he was coming out of it, he broke an A string, Fuck! The end sounded a bit dodgy (as his vocals were flat) but worse than that Joey was pissed! Real pissed!

“Piece of fucking shit!” Joey yelled at me, “Now what am I’m going to do?” Normally Joey would just change a string but we had no time or spare guitar, then out of nowhere, Dale runs on and hands Joey his Hagstrom Swede six-string. Joey quickly changes guitars, plugs in his guitar lead and adjusts the strap while Dale exits with the Ibanez in hand. The sound was pretty weak but would have to do. Cess introduced our last song ‘Web’ and thanked Dale for his guitar rescue and the crowd for being such a great audience. Stiff counted us in and Shit! Dale’s guitar was a flatter tuning than mine by about half a semi-tone out and it clashed! Cess came in straight away and sang slightly out as he couldn’t quite get the pitch right so sounded weird. Joey attempted to tune it while playing and did the best he could but it was still out so fixed the problem by kicking his gig bag next to the Marshall. He fluffed the solo and the bends sounded a bit cat-strangely. We knew our best song now sounded like our worst song and it was nearly over. We finished to clapping and woof whistles but we knew we could’ve finished better than that.

After packing up quickly Baldie Bill egged the crowd on for us one more time. Joey was really pissed and when Dale came on stage to set up he gave him back his guitar. After shaking his hand he then wished Dale all the best and a thank you by giving him a pat on the back - but Joey looked really fucking miserable. I handed Peta the lead to plug in her bass and she told me we were fantastic. I told her to “Rock Hard!” and gave her a rock fist for good luck, hopped off the stage and proceeded to put Joey’s bass in

its case. We all looked at each other waiting for someone to say something and Joey broke the silence,

“You guys played great! If it wasn’t for me fucking breaking a string we might have had a chance.” Cess went to disagree first and Joey raised the stop signal. “No Cess! You sang a storm up there, man! I was the one who fucked it,” Joey grabbed me in a headlock and ruffled my hair, “and you ya little cunt! You pumped with this Stiff-Dick bastard.” While he had me in the headlock he kicked back at Stiff’s left leg, connecting.

We made our way to BNWBHQ (Big Nosed Wog Bitch headquarters) to get a drink and Cess went off for a slash. With my drink in hand and adrenalin starting to ease, I started taking notice of how Velvet Touch was going and they were basically ready - it was nearly their time.

After retuning his Hagstrom, Dale was testing the mike with the normal test one-two, one-two, just the same as all the other singers had. Peta was ready to go; her grin was from ear to ear.

“Wish ‘em luck- it’s Velvet Touch!” Baldie Bill screamed and Frogdog started the count-in. Dale played a backbeat rhythm and Peta joined in with a simple rolling bass pattern around G it was real dancy and the punters found it easy to move their arses too. Peta sang the opening song to my surprise and her voice was incredible, girly with a rock scream every now and then. She sang something that I interpreted as ‘My love triangle is very one-sided’. Dale and Frogdog backed her up in the chorus and Velvet Touch sounded mighty fine indeed. They didn’t end that song as such just sort of kept going and mingled into the next groove and shifted the key up to A.

Peta pumped the bass straight in this one but she was a finger player and the level consistency was a little up and down, truthfully - she wasn't that good. Frogdog was playing a great groove underneath Peta and it made me realize what a shit-hot drummer he was ... unfortunately, she did him no justice; he was the best player in the band by far! Dale's voice wasn't bad but I preferred Peta's any day. Dale announced 'Dance to a Jealous Heart' and it was a pretty good song. Peta sang harmonies and maybe because of the family thing, their voices blended perfectly. The floor was constantly crammed while they performed their set, as their music was perfect for bopping. We all cheered as loud as we could, after all, it was simply their songs that were doing it. Peta sang the second last song a ballad she announced as 'Torn in Hearts' and her vocal range was higher than we all realized. Cess even leaned forward, bent down to my height and spoke directly in my ear,

"Oh, she's magic Tit ... and you're gonna fuck her ... you lucky asshole!" They finished off with an up-tempo rocky song called 'Line of Fire' which sounded like one of ours. It wasn't until afterward we'd find out they wrote it after seeing us at the semis and liked the way we rocked out.

They left the stage with a healthy reaction and knew they had played a very good set. Peta skipped towards me with that excited schoolgirl look and asked,

"How was it?" I was about to give her a great congratulations hug when I felt two hands grab me on the buttocks!

"Stiff!" I groaned out aloud turning around only to see a smirking root rat - Ursula! Her low-cut blue mini-dress looked like it had been sprayed on

showing off every curve of her tight little body and with those high black sparkly stilettos on, I couldn't help but think back to my de-flowering. She gave me a kiss on the lips right in front of Peta - Oh Shit!

"Sorry we missed your set, the taxi was late," then she whispered in my ear, "... you'll have to punish me later!" After she shot me a wink, she turned to Peta, "Your band was cool!" Ursula then spun back around and grabbed my hand dragging me on the dance floor. I wasn't really sure what I should've done at this particular point in time, as this was quickly becoming a catch 22 nightmare. On one hand, I had a real good chance to take out the spunkrat that all the guys in the club tonight are fantasizing about in her naughty schoolgirl outfit or - a sure-fire fuck with a cute little blue dressed root rat who had just pressed her pussy hard against my cock!

"I'm not wearing any panties tonight!" Ursula whispered in my ear on the dance floor and shot me another wink. Oh, fuck! I thought and my cock thought the same, things were getting harder with every movement. As we slow-danced together I turned Ursula around enough to see what Peta was doing and she didn't look as smiley as before. She was just sipping her drink and fuck she was glaring at us! The song finished and I used, "*I gotta take a piss*," as an excuse to get off the floor and give myself some thinking room away from little pussy-presser. Ursula pointed to a round upright table where Gwen and her four friends were based and asked me to come over later and meet her mates, I agreed. Then she tongue kissed me and ran off. I made my way to the toilets and was walking in, just as Joey was on the way out doing up his fly.

"Fuck Man! I got a dilemma!" I blurted out to him, "I got tell you something then ask you a question." I dragged him in the corner and told

him about sex education with Ursula, then continued on with Peta's flirtations and how I wanted to fuck her more than Ursula but wasn't sure if Peta would, as I preferred her but had a sure-fire thing with Miss NO-pants in the blue dress. After a minute, Joey just laughed his arse off.

"You poor bastard! Let me root 'em both and you can go home and pull ya pudd!" Now Joey's advice was usually taken pretty seriously but was this just a little too blasé about my little pre-dick-a-mount. "Tit, the answers you're looking for is so bloody obvious, and is wearing no knickers, why do you think she told you? She's gonna bonk your frigging brains out Mr. Rockstar. Peta's a nice chick but face it, Fuckwit, she's the type that comes with a relationship and you don't want a girlfriend, do you?" Joey the Profound laid out the truth. Only one problem with Joey's answer he had gone and raised the question I didn't dare ask myself - Did I want a relationship with Peta? Shit! A girlfriend, a real holding hands, go to the movies (without Stiff farting next to you in the theatre), meet the parents, fooling around girlfriend!

I looked past Joey and watched her from the other side of the room talking to Frogdog nodding her head quickly making her ponytails bounce up and down with those over-expressive hand gestures. Oh my God! It's too late! I realized the truth. I was in - LOVE!

"So," Joey asked, "how about introducing me to Ursula's mates. I wouldn't mind pulling a root myself tonight!" But without realizing it, Joey had just pushed my decision to the surface.

“Sorry mate, I’m not gonna do it with Ursula,” I hesitated, “I think I’m in love with Peta!” Joey just looked at me so seriously for a moment or two then let out the biggest belly laugh chuckling,

“Fuck off!”

“No man, I’m going to see if she’ll go steady with me.” I wasn’t joking but Joey thought it was the best one he’d heard in a long time - Prick! Just then Bill announced the next band *raZor* with the Z, the only capitol painted on their banner.

We made our way back to the rest of our group and *raZor* were really fucking heavy rock. They looked like devil worshippers wearing smudged eye makeup under their eyes all dressed in black and gold flowing shirts over their black satin flairs, hair teased out so to appear like they just plugged their fingers in the electrical sockets just before walking on stage. I loved rock but I didn’t like their music, neither did the crowd, it was too heavy and undanceable. The only people on the floor were their groupies, female and males (not that you could tell the difference). The keyboard player had a Fender Rhodes and the intro of the third song was pretty but when the band came in I found them a little too annoying and repetitive.

“Where’s your girlfriend?” Peta asked as she quickly glanced into my eyes then resumed watching *raZor*.

“She’s not my girlfriend!” I pleaded with that you gotta believe me voice.

“Yeh right lover.” Peta pushed me slightly off balance with a girly grin.

“We went out just once!”... and bonked the arse off each other ... not going to tell her that are you Tit! “Peta, I really like you,” I hesitated and continued, “I was hoping we could go out sometime?” Finally, she smiled and grabbed my right hand as she was quietly thinking and then looked at me and replied,

“Only if you promise to stop getting fresh with cute girls in blue dresses on the dance floor!” I smiled at her and caught Joey’s distasteful pelvic thrust in the background followed by Stiff’s head job impression. Big brother Dale was unimpressed!

raZor actually got better as the set went on with their major mistake being the order of songs. Three slow heavy fuckers followed by four not bad straight rockers. I knew it was time to put Ursula out of her misery and tell her to put her panties back on as it wasn’t going to be me in them tonight. I still couldn’t believe what I was about to do, was I fucking crazy? I approached the table finally after taking the slow trip to China route to prolong the agony.

“Tit! You’re here!” Ursula said in an excited voice. “Girls! This is Tit from The Flair.” Her mates seemed rather uninterested, I imagined they were picking me apart already – ‘Fuck he's short and he's a bit skinny!’ She grabbed my arm and introduced me. I took a closer look at her mates, Julia was a total pig, I wouldn’t let my worst enemy fuck this one and why do fat chicks always wear tight dresses so all their wobbly bits look even wobblier? Kathryn wasn’t bad looking but a bit of a stuck-up bitch! She looked like a real disco chick, how much glitter dust could you wear on your face before

it's unacceptable? I was getting introduced to Anna the blonde who reminded me of the blonde one in Abba, but she was a lot younger looking, Swedish or Norwegian, nice tan and delicious looking long tanned legs right up to her bum. I was taking a good look at those legs when Joey and Stiffi tapped me on the shoulder. Gwen gave Stiff a *Hello Babe* kiss and started checking out Joey's body, it so fucking obvious but Joey's eyes were fixed on Anna's legs already. He pushed between us and introduced himself and by the look, she flew back at him, they were going to fuck! It was now or never and as I now had a distraction from the other guy's entrance, I grabbed Ursula, pulled her aside and nervously started.

"Ursula!" Boy, she was beaming tonight - Fuck! She looked hot and that low cut dress - ooh yeh! "I got something to tell you." Was it my voice that had that bearer of bad news in it or was it my eyes not being able to look straight into hers or the way my hands had no real place to go? But she already knew what was coming. I hadn't even got to finish breaking the bad news when she burst into tears and said bravely,

"It's cool!" Then she patted my chest, grabbed Gwen and Julia and made her way to the chicks loos in a flood of tears, Joey just gave me a *fucking blew it Dickhead* look and resumed paying attention to Anna. Stiffi wasn't happy with me either as Gwen conked him one like it was his fault for introducing me to her, spitting out.

"Fucking men ... you'se are all arseholes!"

Making my way back to Peta, I felt like I'd just confessed my sins and committed adultery all at the same time, but it was done! Had I made the

right decision? Were my wanking days over? Suddenly a wave of panic came over me! What if she's a virgin and hates anything to do with sex? What if she's a Jesus freak who attends church every Sunday? What if I get to be her boyfriend and not even be allowed to play with those perky white breasts? What had I done?

Back to reality when I realized the last band was about to hit the stage. What the fuck is this? An all chick band! Shit, Joey'll hate 'em. Bill introduced them as *The Jam Tarts* and the singer who played a Tele was tiny but a stunner, she looked European, Jet-black hair in a bob style with matching jet-black eyes, her nose, a definite wog one. She was wearing the shortest skirt here tonight and probably the reason Cess, Dale, and Frogdog raced to the front of the stage. The bass player was a wild looking redhead with enormous boobs and chunky legs; she looked like a dyke to me (as if I knew what one looked like). The drummer and guitar player looked like twins or sisters both with long straight dark hair down to their bums they were a couple of lookers too and could see Cess making gestures to Frogdog about those two in bed together; it wasn't half obvious! I knew Cess' ultimate fantasy was the same as all ours was - two pussies, four tits and one cock and pair off randy balls and these two would fulfill that fantasy quite easily.

They started their set to more guys cheering than girls and by Cess' dial, he was getting a good view of the singer's knickers. Pure-pop is what they were and pure-crap is what they sounded like, crap at playing, crap at singing, crap songs as well, even the cover version of Bowie's 'Jean Genie' was utter crap! But they were received well by all the blokes on the dance floor and it made me wonder if Ursula was the only one wearing 'NO

panties' tonight! Peta thought they had a great image but agreed they sucked shit! Joey and Stiffi were still hanging with the other girls and I could see Anna and Joey had reached the - I touch you, you touch me stage.

The Jam Tarts finished their bracket with another cover, Elvis' 'Jailhouse Rock' which was their best song on the night but that didn't mean it was good. Bill thanked them and drew applause for the last time. He announced the judges would be tallying up the points and the winners would be announced in half an hour. I thought to myself if The Jam Tarts win then this contest is fucking rigged, they looked wonderful but, as far as musos go - no way, Jose!

The D.J. started playing again and the first song was 'Jeans on' by David Dundas and Peta didn't miss the opportunity to get me on the floor. She danced great while I tried my best. Fred Astaire, No! Fred Flintstone - maybe? 'Nutbush' was next and I was trapped. Fuck, she made me do the 'Nutbush' moves with the rest of the dancers laughing at me every time I got one wrong and I was always a move behind the others. She laughed her arse off at me doing this and found it hard for her to keep in time. I thanked the sweet Lord when that one finished and next song was 'Time Warp' - Fuck off! Now I'm off! I'm no fucking dancer and just at that moment, Peta grabbed me and stuck her tongue so far down my throat I nearly swallowed her gum. We pashed off for most of the song, just standing there until I opened my eyes and found ourselves in the middle of the Time Warpers. I dragged her off to the side and we continued there, her mouth was sweet, wet and strawberry fresh with her tongue exploring every bit of mine. Peta's body was hard pressed against mine and oh ooh! I had a horn!

“Get that boy out of your mouth! You don’t know where he’s been!” Stiffi was back and had us both in a tight embrace. He managed to get us to unlock from each other and we all ventured back to the boys. Stiffi leaned over to me and whispered. “Ursula’s gone home ... heartbreaker!” Stiffi grabbed me on my left tit and gave my nipple a nice twist, it fucking burnt and he whispered again, “Gwen went with her, so you owe me one head job Loverboy!” And he gave my nipple another twist. Joey returned to our camp with a *guess what chaps? I’m getting laid tonight* grin on his face. He took a look at me holding Peta’s hand while she was raving on to Dale and pointed to his ring finger shaking his head. I was about to tell him to “Fuck off” when Baldie Bill emerged on the stage catching all of us by surprise.

“Well ladies and gentlemen, it’s come to that time in the night we’ve all been waiting for, especially all you musos,” Bill pointed to the various band members he could see around the room. “Now firstly all bands were fantastic and are all winners in my book!” Yeh suck-suck, Bill, go on ... “I would like to thank our judges, no easy decisions tonight, a big round of applause please!” The crowd responded, “Third prize of a hundred dollar music voucher goes to ... congratulations lads ... Big Fat Mamas! We all clapped and Cess let out one of his ear-piercing woof-whistles again and right in my fucking ear, no one complained about this decision. The boys all went on stage and collected the white envelope shaking Bill’s hand one by one. “Congratulations boys,” Bill said again then got on to the second spot. “Three hundred dollars to be spent at Henderson’s is second prize and that means lots of new gear for one of my favorites tonight and runner-ups ...” FUCK! He’s talking about us! “Velvet Touch!” Peta nearly jumped on my back but we were all jumping and screaming anyway. Dale, Peta, and Frogdog sprinted to the stage to collect their white envelope while we made

more noise in the club than anybody else. Peta looked ecstatic while Dale thanked Henderson's for putting on the band comp. First prize was coming and I could see the boys all crossing their fingers, this was it, another defining moment in our careers, we'd come a long way this year and we always knew this prize had our name on it! 'Web of Lies' recorded and #10 on the charts with a bullet!

"Ladies and gentlemen to present the first prize," Just as poofter boy singer emerged on the stage next to Baldie Bill and he patted him on the back, "Jimbo Daniels," The girls in the crowd screamed once more.

"Hi Groovers," Fag-Boy did his best, "I'd just like to say it was a hard decision but there can only be one winner. So we've decided this year's Grand Final winners are," I was ready as ever to run on. Peta had just got back and gave me a good luck squeeze, "... no other than the boys from Gravel Rash!" What you mean The Flair don't you, Poofter boy? The Flair! ... The Fucking FLAIR! We'd been robbed again but we clapped in shock anyway, just not quite as enthusiastic as previously. Joey's temper dare I say it . . . flared again and walked off in disgust. Gravel Rash collected their first prize and afterward I realized they fucking deserved it.

Admit it Tit ... they were just fucking awesome!

Velvet's win wasn't dampened by our loss and after twenty minutes of sulking, we were accepting our defeat (except Joey who wasn't at all). Peta was bubbling and babbling, man was she excited! I was genuinely happy for her and the boys. If it couldn't be us at least it was them and they were our new friends. I watched Joey cross the room and head towards the toilets he

was fucking cranky all right, he pushed guys out of the way not giving a fuck at all. I had that feeling he was heading for disaster when he shoved this BIG prick and made him spill his soft drink all over his girlfriend. Did he see it coming? I don't know but Shit! I bet he felt it! Joey retaliated instantly with a right hook, which connected the BIG prick right in the mouth, drawing blood. Bad move Joey! The BIG prick took him down with a knee to the guts. By this time, the bouncers had stepped in and grabbed both of them. We all ran over but we were way too late as they were on their way out the front door with a little assistance from a couple of gorillas. Stiffi was screaming at the bouncers but to no avail. Joey was out and his Magilla Gorilla gave him a little reminder not to cause trouble here again ... in the form of knuckle sandwich! It was over for us, time to go home - fucking typical! I had Peta *Hot to Trot* and Cess was charming a nubile in the corner who'd come up to me with her mate and asked me to pass him a message - "*Can you tell him, I think he's beautiful?*" Cess beautiful err, pass! So I told him all right, but in an - I'm taking the piss out of you way, flashing ROOT me glances at him the whole time pursing my lips. Peta grabbed me and suggested,

"We can drop you guys home on the way if Stiff wants to take Joey home." The way she looked at that moment meant I would've walked home, I wasn't leaving yet! Cess felt no real need for him to leave, as when he got home he knew a reality check of a giant case of a parent to son ball-squeezing was to be unleashed.

Stiff left with Joey - and the shits! Anna quizzed Peta and me about Joey's fight and was already feeling sorry for him. She slipped me her

number and made me promise to pass it on. Peta again dragged me on the floor and a slow number was playing. Fuck - she was HOT! She was a perfect size too! Her schoolgirl cleavage was hard pressed against my chest, top of her boots rubbing on my knees and she was smiling right at me when she spoke,

“Thanks, I’m glad you stayed.” I kissed her then and there and this time I was more aware of everything; it was just perfect!

“Do you want to go out tomorrow,” I asked, “like the movies or something?” She stopped dancing, smiled at me and broke our embrace.

“Ian, let’s get some fresh air.” We went back to the boys, Dale, Frogdog and Cess (who was still being beautiful with Miss Nubile) and let them know we were going outside for a walk.

Passion-fruit

The moon was nearly full with wispy clouds moving across the night sky. Wilson Street was relatively quiet besides the five or so out front of the disco, either having a fag or wandering to their car. The car park was full and so was both sides of the street; it was obviously a good night for Planet Rock. We made our way down the street hand in hand and out in the fresh air I could really smell her strawberry perfume. The further we walked from the club the quieter it got and the more I realized we were alone. The conversation was light and easy and I felt really comfortable with Peta, no airs, and graces, no bullshit, no games.

“What made you play bass?” I asked.

“Dale taught me and he said it was easier than guitar, plus that’s what we needed for the band. Dale already knew Frogdog from school.” Her answer was so similar to my bass player origins it was uncanny and made me wonder if every bass player position in the world was always filled by the last chicken in the shop. “Ian!” she stopped me by the front of Ken’s fruit world where this weeks special was bananas and continued, “I really like you heaps, I’m really attracted to you.” Now the conversation was just a little starting to sound like a Dear John and I was feeling a tad uneasy waiting for the BUT. She sat down on the bus seat we were standing near

and patted the seat for me to sit next to her. “Do you like me, Ian? I mean really like me?” Peta asked with a quiver in her voice.

“Peta! I think you’re incredible, everything Peta ... just incredible.” She smiled and mounted me on her knees face to face, her pleated tartan skirt fanned over the both of our pelvic regions she kissed me this time harder than she had before. She started undoing her schoolgirl blouse buttons and pressed her breast cleavage towards my mouth. The smell of strawberry breasts was so strong and memorable. I knew I’d never forget this moment to my dying day.

“I don’t usually do this.” Now Peta was horny as I was and I knew this was not going to be a quick fuck down the street but the beginning of something big. My heart pounded as quick as our bodies did and nothing else mattered, like that we were fucking on the bus seat in the middle of the street or that this was only my second inexperienced root or the whole band comp thing or even for that matter - The Flair.

Our first fuck wasn’t as intimate as I had imagined, it was more animal. Peta bonked me hard on her knees with my Bogart jeans pushed down to my knees and she bit me a lot, on the lips, neck and even pushed up my t-shirt to bite me on the chest. I pulled her ribbons out of her blonde hair accidentally as I run my fingers through her ponytails. She was very vocal too, not in the sense of words but with groaning sounds finishing off with a big “oooh!” So I must’ve done something right. Peta was giving me a love-bite on my shoulder when I came; she acknowledged my coming by biting me harder! Fuck, she could root! We pashed for another ten minutes

before the passion came to an end, not suddenly, just sort of slowing down to a gradual halt. Peta pulled that screwed up face of hers at me and asked, if I was I any good? I just shook my head sideways slowly smiling,

“Peta that was incredible, fucking incredible!” Yeh, incredible was my new extent of description.

We fixed our creased up clothing as best we could but Peta left her mane of blonde fly free in the soft breeze. Now I could smell strawberries mixed with sweat and her sweet wet pussy, it was everywhere and it was fucking awesome!

The rest of the night was a blur to me as when conversation wasn't being warranted of me, I was reliving every bump and grind on the fruit store bus seat (except the actual price of bananas). Peta was peaking and hyper to the max - she was everywhere, boy did I realize how racey and full of beans this gal was? I suppose my cock was going to find out.

Dale dropped Cess off first after we left. He was feeling pretty happy as he'd got a good pash, a tit squeeze and a phone number of the chick who thought he was 'beautiful'. Panic hit him when we rounded his street though, with his parent's unknown reaction to his getaway but he did have a number and a name and that's all that mattered in the long run.

Surely they couldn't cut off his balls ... could they?

Dale pulled up in front of my house and the dog next door did his usual late-night bark. Peta jumped out also and walked me to the door while the boys waited impatiently in the car.

“Ian, call me tomorrow, please. I had a wonderful night, Sweetie ... call me.” Peta handed me a piece of paper with all her details on it and for the first time, knew her last name Kennedy, Peta Kennedy ... and I kissed Peta Kennedy tenderly goodnight.

Guess who's got a girlfriend?

Two months flew by and Peta and I had passed all that new relationship stuff, like meeting the parents or me breaking wind. Now my olds thought Peta was the best thing since sliced bread while I got the feeling her mum thought of me as the boy who's fiddling in her daughter's jewelry box. Her dad was okay about us but I don't think he had a clue or refused to believe we were fucking. Cess was finally paying his price for the getaway, six weeks grounding and every chore humanly possible. Joey started seeing Anna and he started rooting her soon after that (like 5 minutes later). Stiffi patched it up with Gwen so he was getting laid too! This must've been the rootiest time of our band so far (except for poor Cess) and since Cess wasn't around for band practice, then practicing wasn't a major issue for any of us either - but naked women surely were!

Peta and I were rooting each other silly. We kissed, licked, sucked, and fondled every bit of each other's body. We were already very comfortable with each other and it was like I couldn't ever remember life before Peta. I got to know Dale and Frogdog a lot better too, as I was always hanging around their band rehearsals in the garage. Dale's songs weren't bad but his voice wasn't as good as Peta's, it was simple, she should be the main vocalist of their band, not Dale. I found it quite easy to tell Peta but I

couldn't confront Dale about it, it wasn't my place to. Peta said she didn't want the main vocalist job either but I think it was more that she didn't want to upset her brother than actually changing her role. I had to get her to talk about this as her voice was just too fucking good to stay hidden in the background.

"Look, Peta, think about this for fuck's sake and be honest to yourself, you know you sing better than Dale ... plus having you up the front would be a better image for you guys!" Did I make sense and how convincing was I?

"Ian I'm not doing it to Dale, he started the band and he writes the songs, plus I'm not that good ... I'm just not that good!" She was getting chokey in the voice and it wasn't long before the tears followed. Oh shit ... I made her fucking cry for the first time in our relationship. "I'm shithouse on the bass, let's face it, you of all people should know I struggle. And you're asking me to sing and play at the same time, it's just too fucking hard!" Now she was sobbing hard.

"Peta what about just becoming a lead singer and add a new bass player to the line-up?" Now was I making sense? Silence - except a little suck of air every now and then I wiped the tears from her eyes as I held her tight, this felt awful she was always an up-there girl never a down-there one and I made her go down there but I knew she had been suppressing the truth. "Have you asked Frogdog what his thoughts on the subject were?" I asked.

"No," Peta replied and was regaining her composure, just her eyelids remained puffy and red.

“Ask Frogdog without Dale knowing, Pete. You don’t have to make it a fucking conspiracy! Just find out.” I could read her face and I was getting through.

“Yeh! Okay, I’ll ask his opinion tomorrow without Dale around.” She nodded her head and accepted a supporting cuddle from the bastard who just upset her.

Come to Poppa

It was Friday arvo when I got the call from Cess.

“Tit, I’m available for band practice. I’m finally no longer grounded!” Cess was excited and his release was good news for us but somehow I had a feeling getting the band going again would take away my time with my little blonde spunk-rat, and we’d seen each other every day since final night.

“Great Cess, I’ll organize it and get back to you.” I hung up the phone and left for Joey’s. I hadn’t seen Joey in a week and last time I did, he had Anna there and I took Peta. The girls didn’t get on at all mainly because of the Ursula thing so we only stayed for ten minutes and left. I casually walked around to Joey’s and it sort of felt strange in a way, had it really been that long since I actually done anything by myself? Joey answered the door,

“Hello, Cuntlips! Where’s the slut?” I interpreted this as, *Hello Ian, where is your lovely girlfriend Peta?* He greeted me with his usual surprise headlock ruffling my hair in his ritual way, not the fucking hair! Don’t mess the fucking hair! I fucking hated it! He was beaming and when he told me why I beamed also. The day had come - Goldie was coming home.

Stiff picked both of us from Joey's at about nine in the morning and we left for Henderson's. It was really good to see Cess and he was even more excited to be with us as a free man. We all exchanged rooting stories and caught up on each other's love life except Cess who kept repeating, "You lucky bastards!" Joey was still seeing Anna but typical! For Joey, it was just sex - fucking good sex so he said but he was picking up the true love of his life very fucking soon. Stiff told me Ursula was asking about Peta and me and reckoned I could probably screw her if I was interested. Joey thought this was perfect opportunity to tell the boys my Ursula sex education story and this time both Cess and Stiff blurted out "*You bastard!*" and "*You sly little bastard!*" I hadn't truly realized how much I missed these dumb arseholes and their puerile sense of humor. Cess' hard luck stories, Joey's overly loud car farts (not actually the smell though) or Stiff just being Stiff. I totally forgot about his usual pulling up at the traffic lights and before the paperboy could sell you a morning newspaper, he'd already popped out his own request,

"I'll have a pie with sauce and a can of Sars." The look on these unsuspecting kids' faces was too good for money.

"Sorry mister, I only sell papers." Every now and then you'd get a smarter kid who'd get the joke but most of them whoosh ... right over their heads.

Joey was first into the shop, he nearly fucking ran inside. We entered and he was already at the counter demanding the red-headed fuckwit get his lay-by out. He had the cash and the docket on the counter.

The moment was a Kodak one alright. Red laid Goldie's light brown leather case with the gold logo stamped on it, on the counter, opened it and we watched Joey pick her up with delicacy or should I say ecstasy? He played a C chord to us beaming "Yes!" He gently placed her back in her case bought a couple of sets of strings and six Fender medium picks and we left. I had a quick play on a new Vantage fretless bass, nice for a cheapie but it felt a little too light for me, not as good as a real 'P-bass', so I would wait.

We practiced all afternoon under Joey's house. He overplayed shitloads, but we all expected that. Goldie had a great sound even though the shitty no-name amp wasn't doing her justice. I got to have my first touch of Goldie about an hour into practice when Joey finally was able to let go of her long enough for a fag. She was just beautiful, just fucking beautiful. The action was set-up perfect and she felt totally cool just hanging against my body, heavy, solid and absolute heaven. We rehearsed all our songs that afternoon but Cess' throat got a little sore and we called it a day on his say-so. Generally, it was a good practice. After Joey getting Goldie I knew I had to pull my finger out of my arse and get a new bass ASAP! I'd been saving but blowing it on usual shit like I just had to have the 'Bill Cosby 200 mph' comedy record which I'd knew I'd play about three times, then shelve at the back of my collection – the far back!

The ol' trick

I got Stiff with a little arm-twisting to drop me off at Peta's at about six-thirty. She wasn't her usual excited to see me, something was wrong and panic raised its ugly head when I realized why.

"I'm late Ian, they were supposed to come yesterday ... they always come on a Friday," she was really fretting.

"You've been late before, haven't you?" Now I was hoping that somehow she had forgotten her own bodily workings, just maybe she'd forgotten!

"Ian I've never been late, ever!" Tears again and fuck! Was this going to be it? The end of my glorious musician days - already? My future flashed before my eyes, married at seventeen, factory working father at eighteen and by twenty-five, a fat miserable bastard with Peta hair in rollers, fag hanging out the side of her mouth wearing fluffy slippers screaming at the six kids running a muck and finally me dying of heart-attack at forty. Fuck! My head nearly exploded as I grabbed my heart! "What am I gonna do Ian? I don't want a baby!" Peta burst out crying bad now, so bad that when I comforted her, she was wiping her dribbly nose on my new Zeppelin T-shirt. *NOT the SHIRT!!!* Guilt was my next reaction, I was responsible for this, it was my sperm and I was the one who didn't like wearing condoms - did I now!

“Look, Babe, we’ll be okay, no matter what. We got each other! We’ll get married if we have too!” Did I say something wrong? She just howled louder!

I remember the walk home that night not being the religious type at all, I’d never had any real reason ever to talk to God, but I did tonight! I confessed to the stars and prayed for forgiveness for my cardinal sin promising, Get me out of this one God and I’ll NEVER ... have sex without wearing a condom ever again.

She got her rags Sunday night and it was our happiest moment of the month. We were so relieved that we promised each other no more sex without precautions. It’s amazing how quickly you forget these promises as a week and three condoms later they were ditched - we both hated the fuckers. Condoms felt fucking awful like blowing into one of your mum’s kitchen gloves, so we decided to use the ol’ trick you know, pull out just before you come. It was all a matter of timing, but mine was way off most of the time.

Vocally wrong

Our bands were taking up a lot of our time and our relationship was starting to take second place. Sex wasn't as important as rehearsals but it's funny how as soon it was over ... fucking was on both our minds. Peta still hadn't faced the impending issue of her vocal ability or raised this problem in the band and I was getting pretty fed up with her denial, we'd even got to arguing stage over this. It was Saturday when I finally had enough and blurted out to Frogdog my shuffling suggestion.

"Man! You've gotta be fucking deaf if you can't hear it!" I was fed up with touching over this subject. "She's so much better than Dale and she should be up front!" I could tell by his face, mind your own fucking business ... was being thought but he was listening, arms crossed, eyes down.

"Tit! She can't play and sing ... she's fucked!" Yeh, I knew that she knew that, everybody fucking knew that!

"What about getting another bass player - a better one?" He was thinking about my suggestion and then piped up with what I didn't want to hear.

"If I get Dale to give it a go, would you fill in, just 'til we find someone?" Yep, that was the question ... I knew Joey would crack a wobbly big-time if I

did but on the other hand, Peta was my fucking girlfriend and this is the obvious thing to do.

“Yeh, okay.” I accepted for Peta’s sake and knew me filling in was the only chance they would get Dale to agree. Frogdog and I approached Peta and explained our filling-in suggestion. At first, she was reluctant then she agreed. She’d at least give it a go. Great! Only Dale to convince and win over – easy peasy!

He was silent when Frogdog and I broke the news of how we all thought his voice wasn’t as good as his sister’s and surprisingly, he took it well. Peta was obviously nervous and uncomfortable wriggling on Frogdog’s drum stool constantly playing with her golden locks.

“And you’ll play with us?” Dale asked flicking his bottom lip.

“Yeh as long as you need me.” I had just committed myself good and proper – wax sealed the deal; Joey was NOT going to be happy!

Peta’s amp was a better one than mine, a Wasp with a 4 x 10 quad box. Her bass was about as shitty as mine and her action was a little rattley for my liking. I knew all their songs by ear so it was only a matter of Dale showing me the chord progressions. Peta was smiling at me in her usual I love you way. Frogdog started ‘Shadow of Doubt’ and I just sort of felt my way through the song. And within 30 seconds I knew what I had always suspected was right! Frogdog was a fucking great drummer and I found it easy to get a groove happening with him. ‘Shadow’ was a funky tune in A minor. I’d never really played disco bass before so it was a pleasant change.

Dale played way better concentrating on just playing funky guitar and no vocals, he had a new foot pedal a Cry Baby Wah Wah he'd got from their second prize win, and he was getting fucking good on it. Peta's voice was wailing, she just sang her fucking lungs out through their new p.a. system. I knew then - this was her calling.

Lights out!

I started to panic on the way to Joey's but knew it had to be now or never as the Velvet Practise went really well and I had enjoyed myself immensely. Joey's mum was home and fuck me dead ... that was the shortest and tightest skirt I'd ever seen on anybody's mother! Stiff would've loved this one.

"Hi, Mrs. Taylor is Joey home?" She did her usual ear-piercing bellow and out popped a smiling Joey's top half from behind his bedroom door, holding Goldie parallel to his leaning body.

"I've got something I got to tell you mate." Was there a sound of panic in my voice? I entered the room of doom. "Peta's now the lead singer for the band!" Joey nodded and placed Goldie on his guitar stand.

"Great mate, about friggin' time, she's got a way better voice than Dale, everybody knows that!" Yeh Joey that's the easy part ... "Joey, she's not playing bass anymore," I hesitated, "they need a new bass player and I sort of agreed to fill in until they find one." There you go it was done!

He fucking hit the roof yelling and throwing his Beatles 101 songbook across the room, he loved that fucking book - this was fucking serious!

"Fuck you ya little cunt! You play in our fucking band! I knew that slut would pry us apart. Fuck Her! Fuck you!"

“Joey I’m only filling in ... just ‘til they get someone.” I started to get angry now. How dare he test my loyalty and integrity, the pushy fucker and his demanding agro that’s when the lights went out!

He’d head-butted me hard and I went down.

Joey’s mother’s tits were the first thing I saw when I came round and it’s funny how being knocked out isn’t anything like the movies, no fucking cartoon birds or stars, just a state of confusion and Joey’s mum’s tits looked bigger and more inviting than any I’d ever seen before. I couldn’t help it! I had to touch them! Her scream brought reality back to me seeing Joey’s face with his - what have I done to my best mate expression? Soon followed by Joey’s mum’s disgusted look - *get your goddam hands off of my tits ... you dirty little pervert!*

After a glass of water, I was feeling myself again except for the egg on my forehead. Joey had one too, so at least some justice prevailed. He apologized repeatedly and we then started seeing the funny side of the situation especially the tit-grab. Joey said his mum nearly wet her knickers! We laughed aloud again.

Get out of jail and do not pass GO

Velvet Touch auditions weren't going that well; no bastard could play half decent bass. One guy was more interested in selling Buddha sticks than playing while another had the best gear - a Fender Jazz bass and an Ampeg amp with an 8 x 10 cab but when he plugged it all in, he couldn't keep time to save himself. The truth was Peta's shitty bass playing was better than all of them and I was stuck as their fill-in for now. My boy's patience was getting a bit thin with me shuffling two lots of rehearsals and song lists; I wasn't writing anything as well, which didn't help my case. Joey and I had patched up any differences over my playing with Peta but I very well knew Joey was never going to like Peta. He didn't try as far as I was concerned but - *That's life with Sanyo ...* I thought.

After two months I had to pull the pin on Velvet Touch. There were no decent bass players around and I was getting stale playing disco shit, I faced the truth; I was a rock-player, not a fucking disco-duck! I did it after rehearsals on Saturday. Peta knew first and I think she was sort of glad to see the end of my discontentment playing their crap and as our relationship was suffering too. Frogdog was more pissed than Dale because I'd promised to stay but fuck him! I had to go, go right now. So I got my get of jail card and left as soon as I fucking could.

Walking home afterward relief sunk in, no more pretending to like a song when you know it's rubbish - no more having your shitty bass-playing girlfriend telling you you're playing it wrong - for fuck sake! Fuck her! Fuck 'em all! I was free!

I didn't see Peta for a week after that; it wasn't because I couldn't face her! I just didn't want too! I wanted to be with my boys in my band - my friends. We practiced all week and Joey and I even wrote a new tune 'Don't Sell Ya Mama!' which was about selling out just to become famous. It was easy to come up with the lyrics after the way I felt about the Velvet experience. Peta resumed her bass playing duties but remained the lead singer, which made the last couple of months not a total loss. Playing in the same band as Peta was a no-no, it had soured our relationship so much so, it was unrepairable, it was time to end it! I didn't want to fight anymore, I didn't want to play the game anymore. I just wanted to play music and write, no distractions, no commitments, and only - The Flair.

It is funny how at the time a decision seems like the absolute positively correct and only thing to do, then a couple of months down the line you start wondering if your actions were just a tad too hasty. I fucking missed her. I missed her laughing at my inane jokes - I missed her strawberry tasting kisses - I missed her sparkling blue eyes staring into mine when we were making love (and the sex of course) - I missed her over expressive

hand gestures but most of all ... I just fucking missed her being a part of my life and it fucking hurt like a motherfucker!

End of part 1

Part 2

THE EIGHTIES

Off the beaten track

Reality

December 9, 1980 (Australian Eastern Time) and Cess woke me with the news.

“Tit, Lennon’s dead ... he’s been fucking shot!” I was still waking up out of that dizzy daydreamy state rubbing my eyes, to Cess’ blurry face of disbelief. He can’t be fucking dead! Not Lennon! Not the Beatles!

Cess had the radio turned on and I heard the news headline for myself, it was true he had been shot dead outside his home in New York. I don’t really know what you call that funny feeling in your stomach and why did it feel like John was related or a fucking close friend - and he had just been killed. I was moving around enough now and made Cess and myself my usual piss-weak cups of tea. Stiffi waltzed in from outside eating a burger with the lot (and most of it was hanging out the right side), his hair was wet, had he been for a swim already? It’s not even ten-thirty!

“You pricks gotta try one of these bastards!” Stiffi summoning our eyes to his half-chewed monstrosity.

“John Lennon’s been fucking shot dead Stiff, listen!” We all went silent and listened with disbelief once more. Shit! It was of the few times I’d ever heard (or should I say never heard) Stiff speechless. It dawned on me then ... someone had to tell Joey. Err... not me ... not fucking likely! Not after his reaction of Bon Scott’s death last Feb, he went fucking ballistic! Like someone had raped his goddam mother! Joey still loved AC/DC as much as the day he first saw Angus and Bon sing ‘Baby Please Don’t Go’ live on Countdown. He was absolutely devastated by Bon’s passing like there was no life after Acca Dacca and I thanked God for the release of ‘Back in Black’ even if it wasn’t Bon - it was something and it was good! Now the Beatles were Joey’s other love, Christ! All his chords were learned from their music books and Lennon’s songs were always held with the highest regard, no matter if they were Beatle classics or his solo career tunes.

We decided there was safety in numbers so we all went to change Joey’s life forever, together.

“Joey ... wake up, Dude! Joey ... we got some bad news man!” Good on ya Stiff and I’ll stand right behind you ove here.

“Huh, wah,” Joey blocked the streaming sun from his puffy eyelids. Stiffi sat next to him on the bed and got it straight out there,

“Lennon’s been murdered mate ... shot dead, it’s all over the friggin’ news.” He just sat there sideways on his single bed with his hands covering

his face, elbows on his knees while we repeated and confirmed all we knew. “You okay man?” Stiffi was probing Joey, and it was like trying to get a reaction with a big stick from a dying possum, but Joey just sat quietly not moving a muscle, or even making a noise. His blonde hair was hiding his face and we all one by one touched his shoulder for comfort but still he didn’t flinch an iota. We left him in there the whole day until it was time to get ready for the night’s gig.

The hours passed and still no Joey. I knocked on his door and asked,

“Joey, you ‘right man?” no answer so I continued, “We got an hour before the first set dude.” Finally a voice let me know he was alive.

“Yeh Tit, I’ll be out in a minute.” Yay, I got an answer and looks like progress. Three cigarettes later he came out in his jocks, picked up the last piece of cold Hawaiian pizza and made an announcement to all us. “Fuck it! I’m not playing tonight. I can’t play tonight ... let’s call it off!” Joey, Joey, Joey ... I thought to myself, we’re on the fucking road dude! We’re staying in the pub’s free accommodation and we’re booked here for four fucking weeks with two and a bit to go ... so I had to reason.

“Mate, we gotta fucking play, they’re expecting us too,” a quick pause and let that sink in before adding, “we’re booked for the whole of December.” He looked at me and agreed by nodding then said,

“Fuck this place, I don’t give a rat’s arse, I’m not playing.” Cess and Stiff butted in now to back me up.

“Joey we gotta fucking play man, they're depending on us,” sell it Stiff, sell it! “We loved Lennon too ... but life goes on, you gotta fucking play!”

“Yeh Stiff’s right, Joey,” added Cess the courageous.

“Look, guys, I’m feeling really fucking fragile, I’ll probably end up punching some cunt’s lights out!” Joey looked like he was about to let it out, then he did. I made him a nice cup of my piss-weak tea and Cess got him a wet tea towel to wipe his face. “Sorry guys! You know how much I loved the Beatles and after Bon what the ...” But Joey was finally talking and I checked the time without him noticing, thinking, come on big boy, forty-five minutes to Showtime! He continued, “What the fuck is going to happen next?”

“Joey, we gotta play tonight and Noddy will be panicking his arse off if we don’t get there soon!” I had no choice, I had to lay it on the line. I had won as he had started to nod his head ever so minimal.

“Yeh, alright, I’ll have a shower then.” We’d succeeded! Stiff looked at me with that sigh of relief with a sideways glancing eye movement while Cess comforted Joey by patting him on the back and I did too - by packing Joey a cone.

The Klub

We entered 'The Klub' at about eight-thirty to a usual Tuesday night crowd. I always thought it was amazing how many people come out on dollar drink nights. Noddy our soundman was panicking just as I'd guessed,

"You pricks are fucking late! The fucking bar manager's been asking where the fuck you are."

"We've had a little problem, all fixed," I shot him a dumb-arse smile to disarm his pending anger. We went straight on the stage and Joey tuned up first then passed me the tuner. The stage was pitch black bar one par64 light-can focused on Stiff's kick drum, but we had the getting ready in the dark thing down anyway. The p.a. was cranking out 'Hurt So Good' and the D.J. made the two more songs gesture to me from his box. Joey was looking a lot better and amazing how just washing his waist-length blonde mane made him look as fresh as a daisy and squeaky-clean. His facial growth gave him that rough Marlborough Man look which all the girls loved and he'd had a few too! I remember him sitting us down at my place to tell us we were going on the road,

"It's gonna be Sex, Drugs and Rock'n'Roll!" We all rubbed our hands like Fagan in Oliver but there was only one problem when we hit the road, and it was named - Joey. All the girls loved him, his blonde hair, his guitar playing, his charisma, and his fucking everything! Obviously he got all the

pussy while we drank cheap piss and smoked joints in poxy band rooms with fat farting roadies.

Stiffi started our warm-up song - 'Dodo Do Do Dada Da Da' and as usual, Cess did his usual two fingers down the throat choke towards me, he hated that prick of a song. We all had our pet hate songs mine was 'Stuck in the Middle' by Stealers Wheel. I actually loved the recorded version, it was just the way we played it, it didn't happen, actually I'd never heard any band pull it off and reminded myself it was just another fucking song and in five years no one would ever remember it and no band would have to play it just like 'Jessie's Girl'.

The first set went pretty well, nothing spectacular but fuck, at least Joey was playing and not as bad as I imagined. Joey's guitar playing had excelled in the past couple of years and his style had morphed from an Angus Young clone to a Joey Taylor original. Goldie was still a big part of Joey's sound but he had acquired a lovely Sunburst Stratocaster which he'd dubbed 'Sunny'. Yeh, not one of Joey's most inspired moments ... but Sunny was a rip-snorter of a guitar too!

We all had new gear these days but then again we were making money as professional musicians so we had to have tools, no longer the toys of yesteryear and thanks to Henderson's we all had accounts in the red! Joey still owned his crappy bass that I learnt to play on and every time I'd pick it up to play it, it would get put back down just as quick. It was truly a fucking piece of unplayable crap. My latest bass was a blue and white Rickenbacker,

a huge fucking beast of a bass but I loved the sound, nothing else felt or sounded like this. It had a deep slappy sound just unique! My amp was a new Yamaha with a Yamaha pre-amp over a 2 x 15 cabinet loaded with JBL's. I liked my sound and most other players did too. Stiff had finally pulled a trifecta and bought himself a brand new wood grain Tama kit with Paiste hi-hats and Zildjian cymbals all round, he even had one of those pang China cymbals and fuck was it loud! A brand new Tele was owned by no other than our new part-time rhythm guitarist Mr. Cess Poole. After many frustrating nights, Joey finally got something through to Cess and his fingers. He could always play a couple of basic chords on his mum's upright piano but the guitar was a real challenge for him. He wasn't a great player by any standards but was competent enough to keep our sound full when Joey was soloing. He owned a nice little Roland amp (the Jazz-chorus model) so he had a really nice rhythm sound in some of the slower songs. Effects were Joey's new passion, he just loved them and got a new one whenever he could and was probably the main reason his account was the reddest of all! His favorite was still his 'Roland Space Echo' delay machine that blended perfectly with Goldie.

We all got to be fairly decent players these days and as a band, we Kicked Arse! Work hadn't been a problem since we joined up with 'Shark Attak' agency; they had the east coast sown up. Our agent Paul J. Davidson (known as PJ) wasn't a well-liked man but he liked us for some unknown reason, he already had a reputation of pulverising any up and coming opposition agencies, his monopoly gave him the power to demand changes in your band if you wanted to work, that you'd normally tell anybody else just to *Fuck off!* Covers were a big change for us, it was simple - be an original band, starve, and play fuck all gigs or become a covers band - earn

money, play five to six nights a week, travel the east coast, and fuck your way through the entire population of east coast groupies. So we did what any young bunch of randy twenty-year-olds would - we cashed in!

The D.J. playing John Lennon tributes all night didn't help Joey to forget about the news of the day but he handled it pretty well, it could have been something to do with that redhead who's fun-bags kept him afloat all night. Cess scored that night also and she was model material, reminded me of Deborah Harry, actually. Cess had begun drawing more woman than previously and as usual I got to stay up all night and watch videos with Stiff, Noddy and Bigears. The band accommodation wasn't bad, we'd had worse, way worse to be honest as most were cockroach infested shitholes. This house wasn't huge but big enough if someone was getting his knob polished in one room you at least have a choice of another couple of potential rooting places, except the roadie's room of course - that was totally off limits! No one would fuck in their stinky sweat filled bedroom, let's face it, Noddy and Bigears were two fat smelly arseholes. We found them through Henderson's when we hired the p.a. and light show to go on the road, we inherited them from another band who just broke up and got back home, so these guys had constantly been on the road twice as long as us, eighteen months straight and they smelt like it.

The night was going all right and the place was starting to pull a half decent crowd and our third set rocked! We actually had dancers on the floor for that set, I never understood why clubs had bands and discos on the

same night as they just never fucking mixed! It used to piss us all of us off when you'd play your fucking ring out only to have three dancers on the whole floor - Ugly Chick No.1, her dyke girlfriend with no make-up and some drunken has-been who'd downed too many mushies in the seventies and saw these overweight leso pogs as available beauty queens.

All our good numbers were in this set from Acca Dacca's 'You Shook Me All Night Long' to 'Goodbye Astrid' by Chisel and with songs like these we were ensured to have a half-filled dance floor - leso pogs, drunks'n'll.

Bourbons and bazookas

There were a few decent looking women in the club tonight but there was only one I'd been interested in since our stay here and she was working behind the bar. I was hoping my previous week's groundwork was about to pay dividends. I finally got to the bar after a tight squeeze between Fat-arse and even Fattier-arse, one disadvantage of being small is you always get stuck in the armpit line of fire of fat smelly fuckwits who think that their own body odor is such a worldly gift it should be shared with us all.

"Wot ya won't luv?" Sexy Sally with the big tits asked, "Wanna annuva J.D.?"

"Yeh, ta!" As she looked to see the bar manager wasn't watching and handed me the freebee with a wink.

Sexy Sally was a working pommy tourist backpacking her way "round our bootiful contry!" She was a bit of alright in my mind and her tits were those perfect stand to attention type that didn't require any restraining devices to dampen their perkiness and she was tanned all over (I hoped I would be confirming that observation real soon)!

"What time you finishing?" I asked as I sipped my Jack Daniels.

"One." Sally answered while showing me her skills of knowing how many fingers to hold up to make one.

“I’ll come an ‘ave a drink with ya and we can ‘ava darncce.” Yeh sure ... I thought, me darncce? No fucking way! Well, two hours and seven free drinks later, there I was on the dance floor doing my usual late night bourbon balancing trick while the body attempts to keep in time to the music, with the only thing to think about but Sexy Sally’s bouncing bazookas! Joey was fucking pissed as a newt by the end of the night but Big Red’s fun bags were about to cushion Joey’s crash back to Lennon land, but I was so glad he made it through the gig in one piece and the bloody bastard never missed a single beat or hit one bum note all night. Stiff, Noddy, and Bigears were summoning me from across the room with hand gestures to go outside to blow a joint with them but Sexy Sally and myself were engaged in a serious case of I’m gonna root you tonite games so I politely declined by giving them the middle finger.

“So you comin ‘ome wif me tonight, Luv?”

“Yeh!” I could think of, was our late night X-rated version of ‘Bad Case of Lovin’ You’ by Robert Palmer. *“Doctor - Doctor! Give me a call! I’ve got a Bad Case of Lover’s Balls!”*

Big Red had Joey in one arm and my Rickenbacker in her other and with Stiff, Cess and his blonde root they waved us goodnight and made their way through the front foyer, disappearing down the stairs. The crowd was starting to thin now but there were a few pissheads still hanging around the bar waiting for Miss Right to walk up to them, grab them by the nuts, take them home and then fuck them silly. Then I realized I was one of these loser pissheads most other nights ... but not tonight!

“This is me Flatmate, Feeona, Tit” and we both did the nice to meet you head nod across the bar as Fiona was still working. “You don’t mind if we grabba lift ‘ome with ya?” Sally asked her.

“No problems Babe.” Fiona smiled then turned around toddled off to serve Fat-arse who was demanding another stubbie of V.B. by pointing to his empty one. I couldn’t help checking her out and her face was pretty plain but her bum made up for that, small tight and egg fryable! Sally was just the right height for me and it felt great having Pinky and Perky both pressing up hard against my chest. We sunk another drink in each while Fiona finished up behind the bar. Fat-arse was still hanging off of it and finishing his last V.B. before leaving without Miss Right.

The car park was looking pretty empty now and we followed Fiona to her multi-colored EH Holden. It was mostly white but had one red undercoated door and a matching bonnet plus a light blue front panel on the front left side; it really was a Frank’n’Car. Sally and I both hopped into the backseat while Fiona started the car to chauffeur us home. The ride home was what I would call, a little bit naughty, both leaning forward talking to Fiona while Sally had her hand down my fly stroking the wild untamed - Mr. Sausage and me searching her knickers to eventually find the little man in the boat.

We screwed all night long and fuck it was good! She was good! No, she was friggin’ awesome! Sexy Sally used to be a gymnast and the way she handled my pole ... I gave her the Gold!

I got dropped off by the girls around sixish (after spending the whole day drinking English tea and eating English pussy) walking in the band house receiving a standing ovation from all the boys with Cess' woof-whistle deafening Stiff as he was standing in a fly's shit's distance from him. I raised my arms in an - I just WON - Rocky Balboa sort of way! I walked through them all heading straight to the bathroom to find any sort of cream to take the edge of my skinless cock.

I bonked Sexy Sally for the rest of the residency at 'The Klub' and it seemed to be one of those mutual relationships where we both really liked each other, even spending Christmas dinner and New Year's Eve together but kept the reality well in our grasps, it was just sex - bloody good sex!

Goodbye and hello

Our last night was always a good excuse for a piss up with the next band that was about to take over and we heard on the grapevine that Evolution was it. We'd met these guys in Townsville and thought they were pretty cool guys; they were one of those haircut poofy bands with heaps of keyboards and not much guitar but we liked them. Joey and I had definitely come a long way from our early days as players and songwriters. We were writing some good shit these days but playing covers didn't add much to your inspirational creativity. We always played originals in our sets but the more we played on the road the fewer originals were left in our sets. Dancers were always important and it was hard enough to compete with the disco, so originals had to take a backseat for now. It never really mattered as we were only playing covers to get some bucks in the bank to record some demos, then fuck off the cover scene altogether (well that's what we believed).

We'd already packed the truck and Noddy and Bigears were planning to get a head-start this afternoon, so they wouldn't be hitting the piss too hard, it would be cones and a line or two and that's all, to send them on their merry way. We planned to hit the road tonight and drive straight through. Stiffi was cranking the makeshift barbecue that some previous

band had made out of some Besser bricks at the back of the band-house and the snags smelt good. Joey was pissed already playing his acoustic while Big Red sat next to him stroking his hair as she was already facing her reality of the end of their time together, not that Joey gave a fuck. Stiffi and I were rolling joints for later (we were the delegated driver's so weren't hitting the piss hard as well) while Cess was having a stubbie with Sally and Feeona, telling some of his worst puerile jokes that he found amusing but the girls found quite distasteful.

The next band's truck pulled in and straight away a lot of *Fuck Off* finger pointing was going on as this wasn't *Evolution* but our old mates - *The Velvets* (and that's what they'd shortened their name to these days). Dale was first out the truck with Frog Dog and he had driven up with their four-eyed roadie who was known as Blind Billy, he was a weird looking fucker with those black-rimmed Buddy Holly glasses, and with the worst case of b.o. I'd smelt in ages. Dale's hair was fucking longer than Joey's and they sort of looked similar these days as they both were sporting cowboy style moustaches. Frog Dog hadn't changed much but had some sort of fashion sense (or no-sense) poured into him as those new pink striped trousers were a real conversation starter ... but never to his face of course. After hugs all round and introductions over, I knew I had to ask where she was? When was she getting here? What does she look like? Fat - Thin? Is she rooting anyone? Well?

The boys informed me that Peta and their bass player were flying in tomorrow morning as she was still working today and that there wasn't enough room in the truck anyway. Evolution had broken up after a band argument and decided to head home so Shark Attak had to pull some strings and just about begged The Velvets to fill in the gap. Now The Velvets weren't your typical on the road type cover band, yeh, they played covers but not all the same shit all us other cover bands do, they liked to play a lot for themselves more than the punters. Dale told me that Peta was Assistant Manager for some shit-arse travel agency and was making pretty good money, so she wasn't interested at all doing the full-on cover scene. She preferred originals any day so this was a paid break for her.

After a few beers, the boys played us their demos they'd just recorded and were trying to flog off to the record companies. They were dance style songs and Peta's voice was better than ever and it made me realize just how long it had been since we'd seen each other, three years two months and twenty-five days ... but who's counting?

I didn't mean to ignore Sally and Feeona on purpose but the conversation was directed towards our old mates and the girls seemed to understand and laughed along at all the 'do you remember' stories. We all got severely hammered and I thought, fuck it! There was no law that said that we had to leave just yet, so I took up their invitation to spend the night with them and leave tomorrow instead. So we did and drank, sang Eagles

and Creedence tunes to Joey or Dale or both accompanying and just had a great time with our dearly missed friends.

“I’m gonna miss ya Babe,” Sally whined teary-eyed as we cuddled, leaning against Frank’n’Car while Feeona kicked her over for their final drive-away and it made me realize how much fun this pommy bitch had been. She was cheeky and that accent was goddamn sexy. Yes! I will miss her!

After the girls left we continued drinking, smoking and compared our best sexual conquests in the greatest of over-exaggerated stories. I passed out about one thirty, spread out on the lounge with the last thing I remembered being, Big Red dragging Joey to the bedroom to give him his good-bye head job.

Small talk

“What, what!” I opened my eyes to blinding light and the silhouette of what I could make out as Peta with dyed reddish short hair. She was kneeling beside me, shaking me and her smile was beaming,

“Ian, look at you!” and she laughed.

Fuck what was so funny? My hangover or was she making fun of my new perm. Bitch ... I liked it!

I managed to drag myself out of hangover state to time-for-a-cuppa state and after one of my piss-weak teas and a slice of Vegemite toast, was coherent enough to start a half decent conversation with her. She was looking radiant, even if her make-up was a little strong in the eye department for my liking, giving her eyes a slightly angry Pat Benatar look. She wore her Levi's like a glove and her red T-shirt had the sleeves cut-off with a print on the front, a picture of a cat with his tail on fire with the words HOT PUSS written underneath.

“Love your demos.” It came out croaky! Far suck of the sav, I've only had seven hours sleep and I was still half pissed!

“Thanks! How's your writing going?” Peta seemed genuinely interested, so I answered.

“Yeh, not bad, gotta a few newies on the go too!” She was nodding and listening intently. The conversation stayed on bands, songs, and the road and never strayed into the relationship No-Go zone and I was sure we were both happy about that.

The rest of living dead arose from their respective graves and one by one joined us in the land of the living-room with Cess recuperating the best of us all. No matter how much he drank these days he never seemed to have a serious hangover, bastard! We all got introduced to Jeffrey the bassist and I thought he was a tool and by Stiff’s eyebrow raise, so did he. It didn’t take long for the laughter to return especially when Stiffi went for his all-time record of a morning-after fart, before dashing off to the toilet with the possibility of a messy follow-through of bourbon and snags.

Peta offered me a cigarette and instantly lit us both one and passes it over to me, even before my acceptance was retorted. I followed her to the veranda where she leaned against the handrail crossing her legs, holding her left arm with her right while her left placed the fag in her mouth not looking at me but straight at the glorious view of the back of ‘The Klub’ – rubbish bins included.

“So Ian, tell me, how have you really been?”

Crash and burn

Eleven months later and we were fucked! We were on the way home. It was simple we were burnt out! The road just wasn't fun anymore. We were all fed up of living and sharing together, it was a mundane existence. Joey was losing his cool all the time and even head-butted a punter who grabbed his fuck at the time's bum right in front of him on the dance-floor. Jumping the stage, Joey hammered the prick and had to be pulled off by the bouncers. We got the sack the next day and were forced to move on almost immediately; but we were more than done!

The agency wasn't impressed about our decision to return home as they needed all the decent bands they could get, so we had them by the balls when we wanted to restart. Our songwriting had dried up entirely and couldn't even remember the last time we'd even played, yet alone wrote an original! So we were taking the same road as all cover bands took and we were no different to all those bands we'd seen self-destruct in front of our very eyes and unfortunately, now it was our turn.

I never saw the boys for the next month and a half. Let's face it, I didn't want too! I was sick to death of them all! Joey's fucked temper, Cess' constant whining about everything and Stiff's over-indulging self-importance! I'm sure they felt the same about me. We just needed a break from each other. Lying around the old's house was the best therapy a burnt

out musician can get, watching Days of the Drearys and sleeping for fourteen hours a day. Mum and Pop spoilt me rotten. This made me realize how much they missed their only child; it was obvious! Playing my bass or attempting to write lyrics never even entered my mind with the only musical reminder being Shark Attak agency ringing me every goddamn week to get the band back on the road – they had holes to fill.

It didn't take long to get fucking bored out of my head though and I was flat broke to top it off. I'd started writing a few new tunes but needed Joey's input to add that magical touch. Stiff turned up out of the blue to go down the pub for a couple of beers together and about ten later, the 'I love you mate' reared its ugly head. He told me Joey had been hitting the drugs pretty hard and partying most nights. It was obvious we were getting stuck in a rut and needed some positive stimulation. We both decided it was time to call a band meeting then we got back to some serious drinking until it was time to call me a cab!

Yep, it was confirmed ... I was a cab!

We're back!

"Cess!" Stiffi offered him his right index finger to pull and knowingly only too well Cess would and he did!

"Fuck! That fucking stinks! You shouldn't be alive!" I had good reason to complain as his rotting anal wind had just severely put me off my piece of half-chewed Kentucky and there was no mystery what that secret spice was.

"We need to record some demos!" Joey opened the meeting, "We've been writing for friggin' forever and still we have no fucking idea what we actually sound like recorded?" Joey was right, we'd started out with all good intentions of becoming Rockstars and had been sidetracked into becoming cover band musicians instead. It was time to get back on the right track! Stiff was first to complain,

"We need money Joey, I haven't even got enough to buy fags."

"Yeh, I've gotta plan!" Joey threw staright back at him. Now, was I becoming Tit the Cynical as Joey's voice had alarm bells ringing all through it! "We need to go back on the road!" And before he continued we were all told to hold our negative comments and just fucking listen. "This time we only go for 3 month stints at a time, saving a set percentage towards recording." We were all listening but Cess' screwed up face told me he wasn't sold on the idea so far (or was it just a nose full of Stiff's arse) he continued, "Then we come home for a month, record one or two songs then

go back and do it all again ... 'til we got enough to send away to the record companies!" Silence was golden. We all agreed on one thing though, we were all flat broke!

I got the job of ringing PJ at Shark Attak and arranged a meeting for the next Friday and as normal he was his usual obnoxious self. He wasn't keen on the idea of the 3 month only stints but had no choice as he still needed all the good bands he could get, he had plenty of shitty no-hoper bands that worked for peanuts but the circuit had its reputation and club manager's expectations to keep intact. Stiff got a hold of Noddy and Bigears whom had been working for some local band and were only too keen to get back on the road with us, let's face it, they loved us and claimed themselves and their loyalty as a part of The Flair. I got the position of Band Treasurer in the early days and wished I never had as never a week went by without one of them hitting me up for an advance or someone sticking the odd carton or two on the band tab without my authority and I'd end up with the rob Peter to pay Paul solution to all end of week balances.

One of the worst things about starting up again was putting everything on tick, the truck, the p.a. and the light show; this put us in the red even more from day one. I had to borrow three hundred bucks from the folks just so we could hire a car to be in Darney, ready to play in forty-eight hours.

Noddy and Bigears had the truck loaded in record time and they were well on their way by the time we even picked up the hire car - a blue Commodore with air conditioning, luxury we all thought and it summoned

a flashback to Shitbus whom I envisaged was now a piece of junkyard trash after Stiffi ran her to blown motor heaven.

We all took turns in driving except Cess who still didn't have a license and I made sure I got the nightshift as that was my favorite time to drive, bar the time I hit that fucking wallaby on the way from Townsville to Mackay. The boys made sure I got the job of cleaning roo guts off of the dented hire car, then the job of taking it into the hire depot to report it, Pricks! We passed the band truck about two hundred k's before Darney. Stiff and Joey who were sitting in the back seat decided to treat the boys to a couple of squashed arses on the back window while I slowed down enough for them to follow close enough behind to be able to reach out and give them both a kiss on the lips if so desired?

We were definitely on the so-called road again and as I drove through the North Queensland countryside, it made me realize it didn't matter where the fuck you drove, it all looked the fucking same, dry and fucking dusty! Cess slept most of the way. Joey and Stiff cat-napped while I stayed awake the entire trip. We took about twenty-five hours in total with fuck-all breaks but only stopping mainly for Cess' upset stomach, whom we'd tried to warn about the potentially deadly cocktail mix of a large bottle of Coke, a full block of rum'n'raisin chocolate, and a cold Chiko roll.

We were booked in 'Microsphere' this time 'round and we'd never played this gig before. It seemed like a nice looking room that was a part of the Dory Hotel chain and the Manager Robbie seemed pretty cool shouting

us a drink each on our first meeting with him. We picked up the keys of the band house, which was situated about fifteen kilometers out of town; it was basically not far from some crap-arse beach so we knew our suntans were about to be topped up. The house was fucking enormous, four bedrooms with two bathrooms and a great kitchen, this was definitely the best band accom we had ever had - this was looking like a great start!

Not having a practice since we came off the road showed, as we played shithouse on our first night, not that we sounded bad all the time, as there were times that it did happen but we were rough, real rough! Management didn't seem to worry nor the punters. A few of them remembered us from previous trips and other punters had actually seen us in other towns! As usual, Joey got hammered on Jack Daniels which shitted me off to no end that I had borrowed money for us to get up here and have some sort of kitty to get some food until we get our first pay and here was Cunthead drinking a small fortune of unseen moolah!

After the first week, we were back to normal in our usual tightness with minimal bum notes or missed beats. Stiff and I hung around a lot together while Cess mainly worked on his suntan reading Stephen King while King Joey slept, drank, ate, pulled cones, shit, and then slept again. But after two and half more weeks, it was already getting tiresome.

Cracks

“Nah! I don’t like that E minor 7.” The look that his majesty shot at me was a killer! But the truth was that Joey’s chord did not go with my chorus melody and I wasn’t accepting his half-hearted effort.

“Write whatever you fucking want!” And Joey threw down Sunny on the lounge and stormed off to the kitchen to make a cup of coffee. I could feel my forehead start to throb and I tried to cool down but it was too late, I was fuming!

“Listen here you fucking asshole!” I screamed at Joey’s back while he spooned two sugars and a coffee into his mug. I continued, “I’m fucking sick to fucking death of your prick of an attitude ...and-and you shit me to tears! You never do anything, just laze around on your royal arse expecting all of us to wipe the shit off of it for you,” I continued, “plus ... you only play your fucking guitar when I push you! You never write anything anymore, just smoke cones beyond wasted and sleep all fucking day!” Yeh, I didn’t make sense but I was angry as all fuck!

“Fuck off Tit!” Joey still had his back to me and had missed my best back finger pointing in my entire life! He ignored me as he was pouring the boiled water into his mug and this infuriated me so much I totally lost it and started poking him between his shoulder blades. The jug went back down on the bench. The back poking ended up being the straw that broke

the camel's back and it nearly ended up breaking mine. All I can remember was rolling around on the kitchen floor throwing punches and copping most of them. It was over pretty quick when Cess and Noddy grabbed Joey while Stiff grabbed me. I was screaming at the prick when the boys holding Joey let him go a bit prematurely and he swung a right hook that connected in my stomach expelling all oxygen from my lungs. Air, where's the fucking air! Stiff took offense to this and as my protector, decked Joey with one king hit, he laid him out cold and although I was struggling to breathe, I still felt like giving Stiff the biggest thank you kiss of all time. I hobbled to our bedroom with Stiff's assistance while Cess and Noddy attended to Joey's awakening. Bigears crossed our paths wondering what the fuck had just happened, as he was asleep and woken by all the commotion.

A silent hour passed and Cess was the first to raise the issue - *are we playing tonight?* And that we'd better call a band meeting to sort things out soon! I was still really pissed at Joey, but he and I have always had a history of thumping each other. *Err!* Let me re-phrase that ... Joey had a history of thumping me with the odd one every now and then, landing an occasional direct hit on Joey.

Cess demanded a band meeting about 3 hours later and it was icy cold until Stiff dropped a nuclear fart and broke the ice, so to speak. Joey and I shook hands and followed by our usual I'm sorry mate hug. Joey and Stiff then did the same. Bigears had just finished rolling a double paper trumpet with a lid, so we all blew that before getting ready for the gig. Finally, we were all on the same page!

Sometimes a good argument can really clear the air as Joey was kicking arse tonight! I hadn't seen him play like this in fucking ages and by the look on Stiff's and Cess' faces, they hadn't either.

We were in our last week here and it wasn't too bad a gig but we couldn't wait to move on to the next town as it being off season, there weren't the usual hordes of tourists so most of the crowds were made up of your regular locals and this meant we weren't pulling our usual share of root rats. We spent most nights smoking cones with the local drug dealers which wasn't anything to complain about, but for the fact we were all toey as all hell! I'd actually thought I'd got lucky when I'd got a tap on my shoulder and recognized this brunette Evelyn from a year ago, boy what a difference a year can make! Look at the size of her arse! I couldn't help getting a mental picture of her devouring five Big Macs in one sitting then eyeing off Ronald's leg! Her arse was fucking huge! How could God be so cruel and ruin a perfectly good-sized arse? I was still pretty toey so I still thought about doing her, but besides 3 weeks of Fat-arse rooter stirring from the other boys she actually wasn't offering on the basis that last time I'd actually failed to complete the contract on the case of too many beers and not enough wood in the pecker! Yeh! I'd forgotten that little prick-dick-amount and worst of all she asked if I was GAY? Slut! So I politely smiled and said "Goodbye," and she waddled off back to fat arse land and that was the last I ever saw of Fat-arse Evelyn. So I myself was praying for some overly sexed nubile in the next town.

Wishes do come true

We arrived in Herston about four o'clock on a Monday and one look at the room and we wanted to go straight back to Darney! We were booked in at no other than the Royal Hotel and we knew we were guaranteed the following.

- 1:** Saggy Mattress, smelling of camphor on a crappy iron single bed!
- 2:** Share bathroom with limited hot water, situated ten miles from your room!
- 3:** Share TV room with the local drunk farting his way through 'Sons & Daughters'!
- 4:** And a NO-SEX guarantee on the condition of all of the above!

"What about a fucking pizza?" Cess suggested to us all, as we slowly paced the main street of Herston, it was dead as, "Or maybe this place?"

We stood outside an aptly named takeaway 'Mr. Chips' and besides the local sitting at the window table drinking his cuppa and having a fag, we decided it looked good enough. Noddy ordered a burger with the lot before any of us had even finished perusing the chalked menu.

"Nah Fuck it," announced Cess, "I'm getting a pizza!"

“Me too! See you arseholes back at the pub.” Joey left the shop with Cess to walk the streets ‘til they’d find the local pizza parlor. None of us felt like it so we just ordered a burger instead. The shop itself looked like your typical country town take away complete with red and white vinyl chairs at a laminated table with round corners and an aluminum strip edging. The salt and pepper shakers were empty jam jars with holes punched in the tops.

The girl serving on the counter wasn’t bad looking but her blue uniform with apron did nothing for her, but with her long brown hair out of that ponytail and a bit of makeup slapped on, she’d scrub up quite passable.

“You must be the new band in town?” I paid for my cheese and pineapple burger hold the beetroot and answered her question.

“Yeh,” I nodded and shot her a smile and she did the same, suddenly my balls started sending messages to my cock and I could feel a semi coming on. “We’re called The Flair and tonight we start playing at Royal ... you should come.” She smiled again while she was putting my money in the cash register.

“I was anyway. I’ll be there with my mates about ten,” I smirked, as she replied with that smile that was fast becoming sensual to my aching love-nuts. Stiff gave me a dig in the ribs when she turned away to make my lime spider and whispered,

“Bet she bangs like a dunny door!” I politely gave him the dagger look to shut the fuck up and she popped around and asked Stiff what he wanted? I’m sure he was thinking about answering ‘blowjob’ but managed to restrain himself and ordered half the fucking shop instead.

You always knew you were in the country when you get half a cow on your burger and it was huge and was well worth the \$3.50 they were charging. Even Stiff was astounded at the quantity of food laid before him and for once, even shared his chips with us. We decided then and there we'd just found our new eating hole (and knew many a hangover would be attempted to be remedied here).

The crowd wasn't too bad on the first night and more importantly I looked like pulling a fuck with the local Mr. Chips girl named Jenny. She wasn't bad looking on any level, nice little titties but it was mainly her local Aussie drawl of an accent that put me off a bit, also the fact she drank twice as many beers as I ever could, was possibly a concern. Her mates bar one weren't that flash but Stiffi would root anything so was paying special attention to Dorothy, as she seemed to take a fancy to him straight away. Kate was the best looking of all her mates but there was something I didn't like about her, but Joey did and as usual, Joey was Joey and did fuck all and Kate was after him. She had two other mates there, Agnes and Karen but they weren't much to look at so Cess wasn't interested but both Noddy and Bigears were. Jenny and I got on quite well she'd been working at Mr. Chips for six months but was saving her arse off (besides the half a fortune I'd seen spent on XXXX tonight) to leave this dump of a town forever.

The gig went pretty quick, a 1.00 am finish was real early for us so the girls invited us back to Dorothy and Kate's house for a party. We were all over the limit but Cess looked the soberest so he got delegated to drive the hire car (even without a license). I went with the girls while Dorothy went with the Stiff and the boys. We'd all chipped in and got a carton of XXXX

over the counter before leaving while Noddy had the heads stashed in his undies safely separated from his sweaty nut-sack by being in a plastic zip-lock bag.

We pulled up out front and instantly a tied up red cattle dog started to bark.

“Shut up Misty!” Kate ordered and the dog settled down to hand licking sook. The boys pulled up as we were walking up the red painted front concreted pathway to the blue weatherboard lowset. Kate opened the front door and we entered, girls first, then me. I placed the carton in the kitchen and pulled out a six pack and proceeded to put the rest in the gaily pink colored Kelvinator, there was already a carton in there, boy, could these girls drink! Jen found half a dozen stubbie coolers in the cupboard above the stove and threw one at me while Kate took off her shoes and threw them up the hallway and headed towards one of the bedrooms. Looking around the house it was pretty plain but one of the girls must have had a soft toy fetish as the lounge was covered in them and most of them were pigs, I fucking hated pigs!

Dorothy and Stiff entered, followed by the rest and I passed them both a stubbie while Jenny threw them a cooler. Agnes turned on the stereo while Karen took a piss or a shit. Kate returned from the bedroom in her comfortable clothes a Fords Rule t-shirt and a pair of whisper pants; you know, those stretchy ones where you can see the lips moving but you can’t actually hear what they’re saying!

“Wanna go outside for some fresh air?” Jen suggested and I agreed so followed her out the back door to the back steps. “So Tit, got a missus?”

“No, not me ... why?”

“Just asking,” she smiled and turned away dragging on a Winfield, so I did the same as she floored me, “want your cock sucked then?” Boy, I didn’t see that one coming as she stubbed out her ciggie gave me a quick tongue pash, knelt down undid my fly and gave me a blowjob right then and there. She was sucking so hard it felt like my jeans were going up my arse. I think she might have done this once or twice beforehand. I fucking blew my load within a couple of minutes and she swallowed every last bit. Holy fuck! I thought that was the best head job I’d ever, ever had and not a minute too late! All I could think of was less than 8 hours ago, I was asking her to hold the beetroot and now she was giving me the works.

I heard giggling laughter only to realize that everyone inside had their noses pressed hard on the kitchen window and had just witnessed my *Oh my God! I’m coming* expressions and as soon as they knew I’d seen them, they applauded and wolf-whistled and I’m sure I heard Stiff scream,

“Shove a dildo up his clacker!” To my amazement, Jenny didn’t give a rat’s arse and kept sucking my cock so fuck it ... I thought and toasted the audience with my stubbie and kept on drinking while she kept on sucking. With Jen’s expertise in the sucking department, it didn’t take me long to get half a chubby that was doing the job quite sufficiently.

After a few minutes, she popped my cock back into my jeans and stated,

“My turn!” She then grabbed my hand and led me through the cheers of approval to the closet bedroom and had my pants off before the door was even shut. I couldn’t be bothered undressing her so pulled up her skirt, bent

her over, pulled down her black knickers and rammed my tongue home into a hot wet bush. Next minute the door opened in came Kate with a vibrator and Joey. They watched us fuck while Joey undressed Kate then used the vibrator on Kate's shaven pink oyster. Then after we'd finished we watched them fuck! It was fucking marvelous! But best of all was watching both the girls use the vibrator on each other and before long 'Twister' took on a whole new meaning! I then fucked Kate and Joey fucked Jenny while the girls were still kissing. Joey and I couldn't contain ourselves any longer and both laughed out simultaneously. We both agreed this was fucking unbelievable!

Next morning we all were supporting a major beer hangover and Stiff's usual joke just wasn't funny anymore.

"Jen, know what's the best thing for a hangover?" Stiff asked smirking.

"No, what?" Asked a croaky Jenny.

"Drinking heavily the night before!" He laughed while she just screwed up her face, shook her head and walked away. Stiff had done Dorothy but now he'd cleared the pipes wasn't paying her much attention and she looked pretty bad in the morning light. Jenny didn't look too bad though and Kate and Joey were still asleep in the bedroom, lying naked with Kate's hand holding Joey's worn out love truncheon. Apparently, the others had a great game of strip poker while were in the bedroom and Stiff cheated his arse off to get the girls naked but they didn't care until Agnes said,

“What am I supposed to do now, I’ve got nothing to take off?” And that was when a pissed Cecil Poole declared,

“Lie on your back and open your legs like this,” Cess proceeded to demonstrate, so she did! Cess fucked her then and there, right in front of them all including Noddy who was pulling himself to Stiff’s displeasure. So we really had hit jackpot in the ‘Slut Department’ of Herston.

“Any shops around here to get something to eat?” I asked Jenny.

“We’ll make you something, scrambled eggs and bacon alright?”

The feed was fantastic and with a few cups of my piss-weak tea was feeling alive once again. Joey and Kate were awake now and joined us for breakfast. These girls might have taken the ‘Flair Band Moles no.1’ prize money but they were all likeable girls and we had a great Saturday with them, they took us down to the local river where we had a swim and had a picnic on the riverbanks with no other arseholes around, so skinny dipping was the go except for Noddy who wore his stained white or should I say brown-fronts. We left the girls about three to get a few hours catch-up shuteye before tonight’s gig. We’d known we hadn’t seen the last of them and would be doing it all over again tonight!

Well, we were wrong! They never turned up and we were all a little disappointed and even worse Saturday night’s sucked in this town and we played to the bar staff, twenty-three punters (counted by Cess) and our farting roadies.

Anyone for seafood?

Sunday was fucking boring as all hell and the highlight of the day was watching some drunk fall over in the main street, while no one gave a fuck and left him there. Until Bigears helped him up, wiped the spew from his mouth, then propped him against the Pub's wall and gave him another stubbie to perk him up.

I went and saw Jen at Mr. Chips for Monday's lunch and she was pretty cool about it all. I asked why they didn't come on Saturday night and she said they all drove to Bensbeth, which was about forty k's from here to see their favorite band *Wallaby Jack*. I couldn't help wondering if we got what we got, then what did their favorite band get?

We fucked four more times after that over the next week, but we both were getting a little bored with each other. Cess was still rooting Agnes and I couldn't believe he was, and she was way below his standard but he seemed happy about it all. The most worrying of all was Joey and Kate. They were together all the time and she was feeding him more lines than a grade three feint ruled pad, he was constantly stoned and was playing like it. He was irritable when he was coming down and as soon as she showed up hey presto Joey's magically back!

I would be glad to leave this shithole and unfortunately, the bad memory wasn't the only thing that possibly would be leaving with me as I was carrying a package full of crabs in my pubic region, Fuck! I'd never itched so much in my fucking life and couldn't believe they looked like fucking crabs! The smell was awful too and now I'd remembered this from Jenny's box and was the main reason I'd never stayed south of the border for long and glad I wasn't able to grow a decent moustache.

Six months prior, I was diagnosed with N.S.U. or commonly known as 'The Clap' and Dr. Cunthead gave me the shits with his unprotected sex lecture and kept repeating how 'Herpes' was for life, but I hated fucking condoms as did the entire band and it was chick's responsibility to take care of the birth control factor and shit like that. So I had a choice of crab lotion from this town's Dr. Cunthead or shave off my pubic hair? So bald was the look for Mr. Sausage and his two hangers-on, as did Joey, Cess and Stiff but for once, just like the undersexed Noddy and Bigears came out on top.

I went to give Jenny a hard time over it but she burst out crying as soon as she saw me, she'd already deloused her bush! Joey didn't even have to tell Kate as her shaven mutt had prevented her from catching them but she knew anyway from the other girls. So Joey kept fucking Kate's shaven pussy with his shaven cock and that was that, but for the rest of us - NO! Word had got around through the bar staff about 'Crab City' thanks to Bigears' big mouth.

Back on track

We finally left Herston and the only problem was we were supposed to go home for our first break but no! Shark Attak had begged us to fill in for another band in Winston Lake who had to pull out as one of the singer's folks had passed away. We knew these guys, they weren't great players but were all good blokes. We all loved playing there last time we were there and not forgetting the other point of that we were still broke as all hell, we all agreed unanimously. The one problem we didn't envisage was that Shark Attak had diverted us further away from home rather than closer. Our plan of three-month only stints would soon be forgotten.

Joey had actually come good about three and a half months after leaving Herston and started a fitness regime, which was infectious through the whole band bar the roadies. We all looked and felt great, which flowed through to our creative skills as we wrote a couple of beauties by all band members, not just us two. We were more focused now and our recording plan was back on track. We'd all decided after this last residency, we would go home and record. So we did - nine months was long enough!

Harsh reality

“Look Stiff! Stop fucking speeding up ... and get the fucking groove right!” Joey was pissed and he had a right to be, Stiff wasn’t cutting it! We paid a small fortune for this second lot of demos at ‘Dark Lady Studios’ and time was money. The problem was that these new songs were funky and not straight rock and our drummer was straight rock - not funky, and that’s it in a nutshell. We had outgrown our old style.

“Ah fuck you!” Stiff threw his sticks on his snare which bounced off to the floor, he took his cans off of his head and exited the studio. Cess looked at me through the control room window as to say ‘Fix it please’ while Joey just shook his head and made his way from the red-paneled studio to the control room with Cess and the so-called producer/mixer - whatever you wanted to fucking call him.

I found Stiff on the front steps having a fag and when he saw me coming, lit one for me as well. I don’t know what happened next it was like mental telepathy, as we just looked each other in the eyes. We both knew what Stiff was about to decide.

“Tit, I’m pulling out ... I’ve had enough, I’m tired and I can’t play this shit!” I didn’t know what to say but somehow I understood. So we sat silently as I put my arm around my friend (or closer than that, brother) for the last time as the drummer of our band.

Auditions were disastrous as no bastard was even as good as Stiffi let alone better and horrific flashbacks of bass player auditions for the Velvets filled my head. We were left with only one sensible option to fill Stiff's shoes - Frogdog. Much to my disapproval, it was the only option we had to fulfill our dream of Rock Superstardom and he certainly would cut these songs easily and quickly, it was simple, he knew us, our playing style and more so importantly, he was a good mate. We organized a meeting with him over a beer but the thought of stealing him from the Velvets was a sin in my eyes, like rooting your best friend's missus, but I was totally over-ruled by the other two on this one.

"Yeh! I heard Stiff left," stated Frogdog, "I was wondering who you were gonna get?"

"Well, that's why we're here, dude," Joey was going in, "we were wondering if you were interested in joining us?" Frogdog just smirked then took a sip of his half-drunk beer, he knew very well why we were here and he was just torturing us. So I did my best to bait him,

"You know we've got Dark Lady booked for another two-week block? That'd mean you'd have to miss work or take holidays!" Oooh yeh ... I tried to put myself in his position but how could I? I hadn't had a day gig since Pricecut days.

"Okay, why the fuck not? Velvets aren't playing enough for me personally since Dale's decided he wants to be a fucking doctor ... and

quitting my day gig as a shop assistant ... thank fuck!” And that was it! Frogdog didn’t even go back to work after our lunch. He insisted we go get his kit and take it straight to the studio to start pulling a drum sound; he was excited about recording with us!

I felt like the afternoon was a bit of spin and I even think Cess looked like I felt but Joey and Frogdog were focused and ready to go. Ric the sound engineer didn’t mind us coming unannounced (even though this was already paid for at a super/super discounted rate as Ric was the no.3 man) as he was just doing a mix down on an old project while we weren’t there so he was pretty keen to go too. We played Frogdog a tape of already recorded raw versions of our songs and home demos of just Joey and myself on acoustics and Cess singing un-miked, while he set up his kit in the main studio. Ric loaded our tape reel onto the 24-track recorder.

“Solid hits on the kick first .. err what’s real name Frogdog? I can’t call ya that!” Ric complained about the worst nickname he’d ever heard.

“Adrian, mate.”

Adrian! ... Well there you fucking go and it never occurred to us to actually call him by his real name yeh, I knew he was an Adrian years ago but had forgotten, as he’d always been Frogdog to us.

“Snare,” Ric bellowed through the studio mic and Frogdog hit the snare in time every 3 seconds constantly, until Ric raised his hand to stop.

Frogdog's (I mean Adrian's) kit sounded magnificent in the control room and I had a feeling then that he was supposed to play with us all along and after jamming out our first song 'This Feeling', I knew for sure - it was meant to be.

We recorded to eleven at night and got two rhythm tracks down, drums, bass, and rhythm guitars and they were good tracks! We were very happy, especially Joey.

I awoke about a quarter past eight next morning with the harsh reality that Frogdog still had to announce about our thieving from The Velvets. Frogdog told them by himself even though we told him that we'd be there for support but he went and did it anyway. I knew he had when I received a phone call.

"You fucking lowlife bastard!" Nice to speak to you too Peta! ... Yes, she was pissed! "Don't ever speak to me again, you little cockroach!" She hung up before I even got half a word in. Pop was just looking at me getting yelled at in the background. He had answered Peta's call and had a quick chat to her while I was getting my shit together. I just shrugged my shoulders and raised my eyebrows towards him. I made a huge mistake of telling the others she'd called me a cockroach as that would be my new nickname for the next two weeks during the whole recording session. Frogdog said Dale took it okay but he said Peta looked pissed about it all, as she'd been practising her arse off singing and had even started to write her own songs, so with Dale's fading out to medicine, this would leave her all

alone and frustrated with a tool of a bass player that Frogdog said she never really got on with.

The demos were going well and we played our arses off, even Ric felt there was a magic happening here and reassured us getting Frogdog was heaven sent. He played every song the way it was meant to be Funky, Fast or Firesome! I had to admit now that the boys were spot-on as I'd never played this good with Stiff and unexplainable how we gelled as a rhythm section instantly just as we had in the early Velvet fill-in days. I mean, Frogdog had got up and jammed with us heaps of times over the years but this was better, we were both older and more experienced. 'What About Love' and 'Futile Rock' were the two demos that came out the best by far and we knew we'd had winners with those two.

The last of the gear was loaded into Frogdog's HX Sandman and I took my last look at the front of Dark Lady before leaving. A bittersweet taste hit me as yes, we had actually done what we set out to achieve by recording these new songs but with the hefty price of Peta's anger towards me. Let's not forget the loss of Stiff, whom had been there from the very beginning, and had wanted this as much as us, and more importantly, I missed him.

Nail in the coffin

“Nah thanks, dude.” Frogdog was pissed as a fart and put his arm around me as he declined my offer of a cold beer.

We’d finished recording but still had the mix-down to do over the next couple of weeks so we decided to celebrate with a barbecue at Joey’s Mum’s house. He continued, “I love this band Tit! I fucking love playing with you guys.” I was half pissed too, so was able to meet him halfway easily,

“We love you too mate!” Now was that enough of the I love youse for the moment?

“Futile Rock is the one Tit ... it’s the fucking one!” Frogdog sated as he swigged his near-empty V.B. but I actually preferred ‘What about love’, I thought the chorus was catchier by a fly shit and I was fond of my lyrics.

Please make up your mind about me?

Not a pawn in your lustful game.

Too many nights you’ve gone and left me.

What about love to make you stay?

What about love, what about love?

Cess' voice cut on this one and even Joey and my harmonies were actually in key (even if they were hidden by Cess' multi-tracked voice).

"I like What about love." And we both laughed, who gave a fuck? Let's get pissed! Joey was cooking the barbie with his mum, and she was still wearing those mini-skirts at her age, she must have been forty at least? But I had to admit she had a great set of pins, still at her fucking age!

"Ian, can you be a love a get me a plate to put the meat on?" Joey's mum yelled and I was sure she caught me checking her legs and arse out, but didn't seem to care, but her latest root – Bob sure did! He frowned at me before I nodded and raced upstairs and found a suitable plate and made my way back to Joey and his mum.

"Here you go, Mrs. Taylor." I handed her the plate.

"Ian, I think it's time you started to call me Lizzie." And a tipsy Joey's mum shot me an unsettling wink; was she human after all? Then it dawned on me Lizzie was short for Elizabeth and all the years I'd known Joey, he'd never mentioned once that his mother was Elizabeth Taylor! So I paid out on him straight away.

Cess returned from the bottle-O with another carton of V.B. for us all and that wasn't all he had, as following him in was Dale and Peta. My balls instantly retreated behind my arsehole for fear of being kicked. Peta seemed okay, giving everybody else a kiss and hello while I got the cold shoulder with a nice brush off. Dale was his normal self and like nothing

ever happened. Cess bumped into them at the Ridgetown bottle shop and he said they asked how the recording was going? So Cess, as usual, blabbed them about the barbecue and invited them along. Joey and Dale talked guitar tracks while Cess and Frogdog were into the carton already, so I thought there was no time better than now to make peace with Peta, so I bravely made my way to her corner.

“So Frogdog tells me your writing heaps of your own shit now?” I prepared myself for a right bollicking!

“Yes!” Peta turned away but not for long. “You fucking little cockroach,” and she was whispering my bollicking to me, “... don’t try to worm your way back into my life!” What the f-f-f-fuck was that? ... But she hadn’t finished just yet. “Loyalty ... now there’s a word you wouldn’t understand, would you?” Peta once again, turned her back on me. Now I tried to analyze what she just had said and just to me, I wasn’t quite sure if she was talking about us or about the Frogdog thing.

“Are you okay?” As I touched her left shoulder. Peta turned and faced me, looked me straight in the eyes and blurted,

“Ian, I never got over you and the only reason I stayed in Ridgetown this long, was because of the band,” Peta was getting a little choky and continued, “... now thanks to you, there’s no us, no band! So I’ve decided, I’m leaving Ridgetown.” I was speechless, so just hugged her instead. No one else had paid any attention to us until Cess saw us cuddling, totally misreading the hug and loudly toasted,

“Here’s to us finishing our demos and here’s to Tit and Peta. When are you two gonna get back together? You know you are the perfect couple!”

Hey whoo, dere partner! Pull up da dere son! Da ain't what I wasn't thinkin' wasa happenin'! Soon they all cheered and Cess woof-whistled and still I wasn't game to look Peta in the eyes, and no way was she wriggling out of my hold just for my ball's sake. Peta then grabbed my face with both of her hands, pulled my face towards hers and tongue pashed me for the next minute. Man ... this is what it was like! I'd forgot! The memory of her kiss was like putting on your favorite jacket for the first time for winter or like climbing into your OWN bed after being on the road. Her tongue was wet but no longer tasted like strawberry but nicotine, it was by far the best kiss I'd had in years. Peta pulled us apart and looked me in the eyes, so I did the same. She was beautiful, her blue eyes so alive, like innocent eyes the ones children have when they get their first puppy or kitten. Her lips, soft and mouth perfectly sized for mine, her hair, back to her natural color with just a hint of pink food coloring in one side of her fringe, it was still shortish, now in a bob style but it suited her perfectly. Oh boy and to hold her waist, I could feel her tight abs and she smelt amazing and yes, I had missed her immensely!

“Have a nice life Ian! I'll always love you!” Peta kissed my cheek, grabbed her bag, and made a teary exit with everyone looking at me like I was the biggest cunt under the Sun.

Peta did leave the very next day, so I found out! She didn't even tell Dale she was leaving or where she was going. She just left a note for her mum, dad, and brother with a trademark lipstick kiss on the bottom. Was I supposed to have stopped her like they do in the movies? Was this why she told me? Somehow I just couldn't envisage myself running along the train

platform, catching a flying Peta jumping from a moving train. But the reality was she was gone, and it felt like I lost her one more time.

Me Jane

We mixed the demos over the next 2 weeks and we were pretty happy with what they sounded like. Of course, there was no way you agreed with anyone on the mix of your instrument and I was always first to give in. But the bass was never loud enough for me, yet guitar, clear as a whistle! We settled on song order opening with the best two first, 'What About Love' and then 'Futile Rock', we left our ballad 'Living Life' for the last song. It had a great turn-around ending of a long fade out with a layered guitar solo, Joey pulled with his Roland space echo and Sunny's distinctive strat sound; it was truly wicked!

"What about a horse's head in a bed with the title, 'Oh my Godfather' or better still put a tiara on the horse's head and call it 'Fairy Godfather'."

I had to admit Cess' idea for the cover of our demos was imaginative at least and it was better than any I'd come up with. I tried to think of all my favorite album covers for ideas but failed miserably and mine were all just rip-offs. Cess was the artist in the band and quickly knocked up a rough pencil sketch of his Fairy Godfather idea and it didn't look half bad. Joey then suggested his boring idea of having an Australian flag upside down on the front cover with the title, Made in Oz (I cringed). It was Cess who grabbed Joey's idea, twisted it around by again knocking up a sketch of a

well-endowed young lady wearing the Oz Flag as a set of bikinis with matching stilettos and the title 'Maiden Oz'. *Oh yeh!* We all loved it and gave Cess the headlock of approval.

Cess' art classes at school had paid off as his masterpiece was finished in a couple of days. He named his cartoon broad - *Me Jane*, as he gave her a wild untamed mass of hair, big tits and a tiny waist with her edible arse facing the front, wearing only the Aussie flag briefs. The backs of her stilettos matched the flag colorings of her pants. Her body was in a half-turned position with both arms crossed, covering only the nipples of her enormous boobs while she was winking. In the background, he had drawn a silhouette of us in grey and he'd done a great job, as you knew who was who ... guess who was the shortest? The words Maiden Oz were painted in red, white and blue (Aussie flag style) while The Flair logo was in black. Cess had done an excellent job and had blown us all away, we knew he was always good at sketching but this had far excelled any of his previous stuff. And dare I say it ... Cess had a *flair* for this and Me Jane had just become the Flair emblem trademark logo and would be used on all posters, albums and promo material such as T-shirts from now on!

The covers were printed up and looked great. Frogdog had a mate in the printing industry so this saved us dollars that we never really had. Everybody loved all eight songs on Maiden Oz and we had predicted the two new songs that everybody commented on. We made a hundred copies and decided to send away twenty to record companies then sell fifty at gigs and give thirty away between us. We had an extra one hundred and fifty covers printed as that was the smallest run but at least if required all we have to do was ring Dark Lady and get another hundred tapes done at the

drop of a hat, but we thought this was enough for now. We tossed around the idea of getting it pressed onto record but the cost was way out of our reach at the moment. Joey and I hassled everybody we knew, from the music shops including Hendersons or agencies for contact names to send our baby off to. I decided whom to give my free tapes to, so I posted an extra one to Dale so he could forward it on to Peta (if he actually knew where she was).

I made my way to see Stiff as we owed it to him, a tape in hand and for the first time getting together, since he quit.

The betrayal

Stiff had been doing some casual work booking bands for Shark Attak and had been rehearsing with some young band called *Innocent Bystanders*. He played me a band practice tape and they were drivey-rock, a cross between *The Angels* and *Rose Tattoo* so were right up Stiff's alley. He had no hard feelings about it all (so he said) just that he missed us all and I fucking did him too! I gave him his tape and he chuckled at the cover and commented on Cess' improved art skills. He didn't say much about the songs or Frogdog's playing until 'Living life' finished.

"That's fucking great Tit! The first one ... that's the one you know." We sat outside in his folk's backyard sunning ourselves with our shirts off, having a beer together. His parents were out, so we blew a joint as well.

"I hear Peta's living in Sydney," Stiff inhaled as much as he could from a dying roach.

"How do you know?" I needed to know if he knew where she was.

"Dale told me, I met him at 'The Palace' last week."

Now 'The Palace' was the local shit-hole club that you always said you were sick of going to, but always seem to end up there when you were feeling either, a little toey to try and pick up or just wanted to get pissed. Especially on dollar drink nights as \$10 would buy you 10 neat J.D.'s on ice

and that's only if you made it to ten, usually after about eight, number four would be just kicking in and I'd be pleasantly done – TAXI!

Stiff told me all he knew, "She's scored a gig straight away singing in some originals band 3 nights a week at King's Cross. Dale said she went and had a blow with the band and they loved her!" Stiff disposed of the nothingness roach and then looked me in the eye and knocked me for a six, "You do know Joey fucked her, don't you?" And a wave of nausea came over me like the last skittle standing had been knocked down by Joey the bowling ball.

"Bullshit!" I refused to believe him, yeh I knew Joey'd do her but Peta? Peta wouldn't fuck him! No fucking way! Would she!

Stiff continued and told me of how he walked in on them at Joey's house one night about a year ago while Joey was in his boxers freshly showered and Peta had twaddled out wet hair, wearing only Joey's T-shirt, and they both made him promise not to say anything to me. They'd bumped into each other at The Palace and things went from there. I was hurt and fucking furious but kept it inside I think my eye's welled up a little as Stiff had asked me if I was alright. Maybe Stiff felt revenge on Joey by telling me this, as he knew for sure I'd have to confront him about it.

"Look, man, I'm gonna have to get ongoing," I made a quick exit and headed straight over to Joey's. I was about to explode, and the word 'loyalty' kept flashing in my mind.

The taxi pulled up outside Joey's mum's house and it looked like Joey was the only one home as his mum's metallic green Datsun 180b wasn't in the driveway, so I assumed she was still at work. I paid my fare to the fat cabbie with the sweat-stained armpits and virtually ran to the front door. I knocked loudly and constantly until Joey answered it.

"You cunt! You fucking lowlife cunt!" I kneed him in the balls before he even had time to ask, '*What was wrong?*' He went down like a sack of potatoes and I just turned away to leave - mission accomplished.

I made it to the bottom of the front steps and was about to go when I hit the ground with Joey's arm in the most painful headlock of my life. After a struggle, I managed to elbow him in the guts a beauty and it winded him so much he let go. My adrenalin was pumping so fast and hard I think I could've taken on Ali and won. I punched him in the face and connected with his right eye while he was still down gasping for air.

"That's for fucking her ... you arsehole!" Again I angered and punched him but this time I broke, perfect Joey's ... perfect nose! He was fucked as he hadn't seen it coming. "I'll never trust you again, Fuckhead! So consider yourself, thrown-out of the fucking band, Fuck-face!"

And I left while Joey was holding his bloodied nose still gasping for his first full breaths. I felt fucking great!

Yet I was a fucking mess by the time I got home, bawling my eyes out, my knuckles were bruised and my favorite tie-dyed T-shirt was a tattered

mess. Mum shit herself as she thought I'd been mugged or attacked or even worse - raped, while Pop helped me inside and got me a Coke.

"I had a fight with Joey," and I made my way straight to my room where I was alone safe and sound but no matter what. I couldn't wipe the mental image of Joey and Peta fucking, it was etched into my memory cells and it literally made me sick.

"No, I'm all right Cess ... really," I swapped the phone from my right ear to my left, "... no, he's fucking out mate and that's it!" Cess again tried to sway my decision but I had taken it upon myself to rid my life of the biggest pain in the arse - for good!

"You should see his nose Tit," Cess now tried the guilt factor, "... it's fucked and he's got two black eyes out of it!"

"Cess, fuck him, we don't need him. Guitar players are dime a dozen out there, we'll find a new one." Now I was convincing myself as well as Cess.

"He swears he never fucked her Tit!"

"Bollocks! He's nothing but a low-life. Stiff doesn't lie ... he caught them and he just crossed the line dude, no more, no fucking more!" I hung up as I was starting to cry again. It didn't make any fucking sense we'd broken up years ago and yet the thought of Joey entering her just made me want to KILL - DESTRICT - DESTROY!

Pact of forgiveness

I stayed home alone for the next couple of days contemplating, as I just couldn't face anyone. The boys left me alone too as per Pop's instructions, to give me some space. I'd calmed down heaps and had tried to put things in perspective. I had no right to be jealous of Peta, we had gone our separate ways years before and she's probably slept with a dozen guys since then, but I realised that both Peta and Joey were the two people in my life I loved to death, and they had betrayed me behind my back, especially Joey. He could fuck any woman he wanted so he had to go into my territory and I didn't know why? I couldn't stop wanting for Peta now and it was driving me crazy!

The time had come for me to face Joey as I couldn't hide forever and reality was, he owned this band as much as I did, so once again I made my way to Joey's and boy, did I take my time.

"Hi Lizzie, is Joey home?" Lizzie then gave me some.

"How dare you come around here after what you did," Lizzie was winding up for a 12 o'clock chime when Joey entered.

"Mum! Calm down, I'll handle it." And she glared the daggers of death at me and left to the lounge room, hand in the air, shaking her head.

Joey's face was a fucking mess all right! No way I could've done this, his eyes were purple and his nose was covered with white sticky plaster. He actually looked like he'd done a round or two with Ali .. a tiny Tit-Ali!

"What do you want?" Joey was blunt but I understood why.

"Just wanted to clear the air ... if possible ... and I don't want the band to break up." He looked at the ground the whole time I was speaking just taking it all in, then he looked me straight in the eye, and said,

"We can't break up Tit ... we just can't!"

We sat in the kitchen and he cracked open a couple of cans of beer and we sat opposite with both our heads down for the first few minutes while neither of us spoke a word.

"I'm sorry man," I lost it like a big girl after seeing his face, I truly fucking was.

"Don't worry about Tit," Joey reached over and grabbed my left shoulder to comfort me, "... and how many times have I laid one on you?" So I thought about that one and yes! He had shitloads! "So you got one on me ... we're even!" He was smiling as I was just getting my act together.

"Joey! No more fighting ... you and me, it stops here! I mean it, no more!" He grabbed my shoulder once again,

"Yeh, I agree we can't fight like this anymore."

We smiled at each other and made a toast to our promise. Joey did make me feel bad when he told me how much pain he'd been through with his broken nose but was joking about it now and I thought to myself,

Haha ... not funny ... cunt!

Original at long last

We managed to get off of the fight subject and talked band shit and the demos still had to be sent, so we organized a band meeting to settle things down, we had worked too hard and invested too much money to let this situation ruin it all. Cess had been freaking out re my sacking of Joey and didn't know how to handle the situation. Frogdog wasn't happy with me either. Joey said he was spewing as he'd joined us as a unit after giving up what he'd previously had, only to come two months down the line and now it was over! We had mended our rift but both of us never even came close to raising the Peta issue at all or ever would - let sleeping dogs lie!

We made sure a sealed posted copyright copy came back to us of our Maiden Oz tape before posting out all the designated demos to the various record companies and then it was done. So now it was the beginning of the waiting game.

PJ from Shark Attak had offered us a month of Wednesday night residencies at the 'Trojan Horse' supporting changing headline bands, which suited us to a tee as we got to play a one-hour set of our originals. It felt like it was all starting to fall in place for us.

We committed ourselves to practice over the next week just to ensure we would cut it and do justice to Maiden Oz songs. We needed about

fourteen songs to cover us for the set so had to choose another six and also teach Frogdog them. We pulled 'Web of Lies' out of the dust-pile just for a laugh and I must admit we all enjoyed playing it, so we tweaked it a bit and kept it in. The tempo was slower and Joey added a bit more to the riff in the timing, which broke up the previous monotonous version. The bass was the same and I just pumped on through.

In a break at rehearsals, I showed Joey this new chord progression on Goldie in the band room that I'd been working on. It was a sweet open string tune, he loved it! He made me teach him it straight away so he could write a solo later. Cess and Frogdog re-entered the rehearsal room.

"That sounds awesome!" Cess commented with Frogdog nodding in agreement while draining his can of Passiona,

"I can hear how it goes already, give me go at it." Frogdog hopped back on his kit and started a beat that suited it perfectly, so after 5 minutes, Joey took back Goldie's playing rights while I kick-started my bass. I played a chord bass line similar to Joey's rhythm and it sounded mighty fine. I tried a few melodies but none were good enough for it or could I even think of any words to suit it – it was a blank canvas! But we dubbed this little tune 'Sweetie' and vowed to finish her at the next rehearsal.

Erna and the rack

“Look at the tits on her!” Cess was pointing to a great rack on no other than an old school buddy - Erna Drew, whom I went through grade eight to ten with and I never remembered them being that big! He added, “That’s Erna from school, don’t you remember?” But Cess was in the brainy student classes while I was put in the *‘You’ll never amount to anything’* - dumb-arse ones, so maybe he’d never met her. She caught us looking at her from across the dance floor and recognized me immediately by giving me a little *Oh Shit! It’s you, Ian*, wave.

“You gotta introduce me to her Tit, man please!” I popped Cess’ eyes back into his empty eye sockets and agreed.

As we made our way to Erna at the bar, I took a good look around at the layout of Trojan Horse and it wasn’t too bad a club. It held about a thousand comfortably and the stage was a good height so you could see the band no matter where you were (2 levels). I liked the Greek decorating of the club with concrete pylons everywhere and the way the D.J. box was the back of a chariot with wheels slightly off level as if cornering in a chariot race, even a dust cloud was airbrushed on the wall. The light show here was impressive as well; a dozen Par 64’s running across the front bar and another dozen or more behind us. The house p.a. was a huge double 4-way system complete with side-fill that blew your head off and in sound-check,

Froddog's kick was so deep and loud you could feel it just about move your bowel as my bass rumbled BIG and FAT! They had their own soundman - Tony and he'd worked with heaps of major bands and had that classic live rock-mix down.

"Erna," I tapped her on the shoulder. She turned and instantly smiled at me while Cess stood patiently behind me, "Hi."

"Ian, you look great!" Erna looked me up and down so, fuck it ... I did her too!

"So do you," It was the truth - she did! Her hair was way longer than she ever had it at school and it gave her a surfy look around her lightly freckled face, her make-up was understated (for a pleasant change as most girls loved those evil eyes) and made her eyes look luscious. Her body was in top condition and she was wearing a floral flowing skirt with a tight-fitting sleeveless top that you couldn't help but be drawn to her oversized mammary glands. Cess was nudging me now! "Oh Erna, this is Cess ... he's the singer in the band." Cess nervously said hello and she politely said,

"Howdy!" and gave him a girly handshake. "Is your band playing here tonight?" I soon realized Erna knew I was a muso but had never seen us play.

"Yeh, we're supporting." Why did the word supporting sound second rate? We were playing originals not covers now but somehow it just didn't sound right.

“Great, I can’t wait to hear the band. Do you boys want a drink?” Erna pulled out a twenty from her canvas handbag that hung diagonally over her enlarged bosom.

“Sure,” I nodded, “a stubby of V.B.’d be lovel, what about you Cess?” But Cess still hadn’t spoken another word unti now,

“I’ll have the same if that’s all right?”

“It’s my pleasure.” Erna gave us a little smirk, turned around and waved the twenty to the bargirl who had just put down a tray of freshly cleaned glasses. “Two V.B.’s and a Bacardi and Coke please.” Erna ordered the drinks then restarted our conversation, “So tell me the Ian story, last I heard you were just about married to that blonde singer?” Fuck ... I thought, that was a long time ago and *Married!* Shit, who’d been saying what around where? So I did my best to recap my missing years in a minute. “We just finished the first demo tape of our own songs, but we went on the road for a couple of years before that, playing the cover scene, but after a while, you have enough of that shit!” Cess finally added something,

“Yeh, it can get you real down.” Erna smiled at Cess acknowledging then quickly directed her attention back to me.

“So are you still going out with ... what’s her name?”

“P-Peta ... no-no, we broke up years ago!” Then she smiled while Cess admitted defeat. It was obvious she wasn’t interested in him, but yours truly. I hadn’t really thought about getting it on with Erna before but thanks to Cess’ tit observation - this Tit might get to see those tits!

Erna told me she was a fully qualified hairdresser and was the manager of her own shop in the next suburb. She offered the band free haircuts while examining my split ends and was getting more and more touchy during our chat, while Cess had retreated to the band room with Joey and Frogdog. I thought it was funny how I was attracted to her so much now and yet at school, not a bit, she was always just a mate.

“I’d better go and tune up, thanks for the beers,” I said, “I’ll buy you one after.” Yeh, and with the piddly amount in my pocket, it would only be one beer, so I gave her a quick peck on the cheek while she grabbed my elbow once again and I made my way to the band room with an I could be in here ... look on my face.

“You fucking bastard!” Joey was cracking up, Frogdog too. “You stole Cess’ woman!” They laughed aloud again so I took a glance at Cess who was smiling, just shaking his head before complaining,

“Fucking hell! It’s not only this prick,” as he pointed to Joey who was getting himself a stubbie from our secret stash of takeaways, “now YOU’RE pinching all the women.” Again he shook his head and I laughed aloud with them all before Cess grabbed me from behind and started dry rooting my arse, “Maybe I’ll fuck you too!”

“You blokes ready? After next song.” Tony the soundman popped his head in the band room with one finger raised and we responded by grabbing our instruments and made our way to the stage. The crowd wasn’t

bad but then again we were supporting *Dragon's Fire* and they did have a top ten hit, back in the seventies. The room was dark and smokey but I still could just make out through the colored light streams where Erna was standing at the bar and she was smiling. The D.J. who was a good looking blonde with a husky voice announced us and the applause was average, so Frogdog hit the hi-hats and we joined him after his four count.

Our set was good, yet the response was still average, no dancers and we weren't used to this type of reaction at all. Joey was looking real serious during our set while Cess was Cess and performed beautifully. Frogdog and I sounded great I thought, as with the side fill cranking his kick, knocking me out. I loved it and it made me groove easily. 'What about Love' pulled the biggest applause, if you could call it big but then again this was only our first all-original gig since our early days and I never expected anything more - Joey did!

"What the fuck was that?" Joey shook his head as he wiped Goldie's strings, before locking her away until next, we played.

"What do you mean Joey?" Frogdog asked.

"We played and sounded fucking great and they couldn't give a rat's arse!"

"Maybe next week'll be better?" I added my two cents worth.

"Yeh, it is our first time here." Frogdog stated the obvious!

“I thought it was fucked!” So now Cess spoke up and agreed with Joey and continued to rant, “He’s right, there wasn’t even one fucking dancer.”

A miserable Joey wiped his miserable sweaty head with a white towel he had in his gig bag.

“Look,” I tried to desperately pull a positive into our conversation, “they’d never heard our songs before plus, they have come to see Dragon’s Fire, not us.” But Joey just raised his hand and left the band room and made his way to the bar, so we did too and never brought the topic up again that night.

“Hi, Joey, you were great!” Erna had known Joey from school too as he was in the dumb-arse classes with both of us.

“Thanks, Love, How ya been?” He gave her a cuddle then shot me a wink over her shoulder gesturing about how two wonderful bazookas were saying hello as well.

After we watched and enjoyed Dragon’s Fire do their stuff, Erna took me home to her place, which was a nice two-bedroom unit she was sharing with some guy who wasn’t home. I must say her breasts were the best set I’d ever laid eyes on, let alone fondled. I believe everybody in this world gets one perfect asset whether it be - eyes, teeth, or arse but in Erna’s case, it was a matching pair!

I really like Erna and enjoyed being with her. There never were any hassles; she was hot, generous, unselfish and total fun. She shouted me everywhere from the movies to drinking my fill at the pub. Mum and Pop loved her too. They thought she was a real catch and my mother couldn't help herself by reminding me repeatedly I let Peta get away and that I should put a ring on this one's finger as soon as possible. I was sleeping over nearly every night and never once did she ask for money towards rent or food as she knew I was penniless; she was a gem. Her flatmate David wasn't a bad bloke either and they were good mates, so many nights we all (David, Julia his girlfriend and the two of us) got drunk as skunks together.

The gig at Trojan's was the same week-in-week-out, with a minute increase in crowd response. We actually had dancers one night, all three! And we joked about this for days about how we'd know when we hit the big time here by having at least five on the floor at once. We were glad to finish there and still hadn't heard a single thing back about Maiden Oz and we couldn't understand why.

By the end of our month stint, I had admitted Erna was now my woman and we were quickly becoming attached at the hip as she was there at all the rehearsals, gigs and constantly with me wherever I went and everyone loved her.

“Hey Honeybun, do you want a beer?” Erna extracted one from the carton before I’d even answered,

“Yeh, sure.”

“Do you want one Dave?” Again she had one out before he had time to answer.

“Yeh, thanks.” Dave reached out over his shoulder while Erna stretched outwards past me rubbing her right breast on my shoulder. Erna then got herself a can and sat on my lap, kissed my forehead then toasted,

“Up your arseholes!” We both replied in unison with,

“Up yours mole!” It was the expected way.

“Ian ... Dave and I have been talking and we think you should move in here.” Dave raised his can in agreement to Erna’s statement.

“Yeh mate, move in, you’re here all the friggin’ time anyway Fuckhead.” Dave chuckled so I gave him the forks followed by a good one knob-end look.

“Yeh C’mon Baby, it’ll be great!” Erna said then whispered, “I love you.”

After half a dozen beers, I’d agreed. Julia arrived and we told her the news. I couldn’t help staring at her tits comparing them to Erna’s but it was confirmed, I had the winning pair. I thought Dave and Julia weren’t that suited but she was well do-able. We finished the carton and Erna dragged me off to her (soon to be ours) bedroom. Beer always made me sleepy and

useless but had the opposite effect on Erna and she gave me a half a head job to get me hard and then rode me to sleep.

Decision-making

The band was flat broke so a meeting was held with PJ to get us some work that actually paid.

“Boys!” The tone of his voice always had that doom and gloom in it and today was no exception. PJ continued, “If you want to earn decent money you’ve got to play covers! I can get you work playing covers easily but if you want to be an original band, and a serious one, you’ll need to go south of the border.” Well, the idea of moving south sounded great to me but what the fuck with? We were all flat broke. “I’ve got a residency at *Kippler’s Tavern* down the Coast, 4 nights a week for a month if you want it? Starting next month, I had *Be-Jesus* booked in but I’ll move ‘em ... if you want it?” I looked at Joey and he was thinking what I was thinking – Money to move!

We all agreed to do it and all believed it was time to get serious about our shit and take the next step in our future, so the southern move was on.

Erna and the rack off!

I'd been going out with Erna for about 3 and a half months when they offered me to move in with them. I thought I'd surprise her with a bunch of flowers and break the bad news of possibly moving to Sydney or Melbourne and not in with them instead. The front door was open so I made my way in, as I'd thought she might be having a well-deserved rostered day-off afternoon nap. I got the surprise of my life when I caught a glimpse of a naked David's back and lily-white arse sweating over my prized boobs! "What the fuck?" And then two hairy balls were bouncing everywhere!

"I can explain ... it's not what you think Ian," Erna tried her hardest! Tears followed near immediately but I left without waiting for an explanation from either. I was shocked and hurt and vowed then, I would NEVER fall in love again!

Mum and Pop were quite upset as they loved Erna but I did spare them the naked truth and just told them we decided to break up because of a mutual understanding that I'd be moving to Sydney. Mum came straight to my rescue with a typical Mum offer of a lovely young lady,

"Gloria, you know, Mrs. Peterson's daughter, she's such a nice girl."

Yeh thanks, Mum ... I interpreted that as ugly as a hat full of arseholes
or an arse with wide load stamped all over it or worse still - BOTH!

Next step - fame and fortune

I got over Erna as best as I could by writing and throwing myself into practice but no matter what I tried to write to complete 'Sweetie' it just never gelled and it shit me to tears! Joey and I were spending more time together than we had in years but we weren't really creating any wonders, we were just hanging out and smoking cones way too much!

"Hey, Joey,"

"What?" As he passed the ready-packed bong and lighter to me.

"I've been thinking about a manager for the band, like when we go to Sydney." I lit the bong and filled my lungs with a cone of smoke while Joey was contemplating my suggestion.

"Do you think we need one?" Asked a red-eyed Joey. I exchanged the smoke for air in my lungs,

"Well, that way all we have to worry about is writing and playing and leave all that other shit to him." Joey was nodding yes in an ever so slight way but I could tell he thought it made sense.

Cess and Frogdog joined us soon after and quickly caught up in the bong-pulling department.

“So do you think we should advertise?” Cess raised a possible problem, “How would we pay ‘em?” Oh yeh good on ya Cess, bring up the hole in my plan ... who was going to want to work for nicks for a bunch of broke arseholes they didn’t really know? Then it hit me! I knew whom we needed and trusted and could talk his way out of a paper bag - and Stiffi was our man! He had even had a little experience at booking bands through Shark Attak under his collar!

I hadn’t seen Stiffi since the fight with Joey. Cess had only spoken on the phone to him once or twice through the agency and Joey had no contact at all since Stiff’s hasty departure. I knew if there was going to be a problem it would certainly be between Joey and Stiff for sure. I arranged a meeting at my folk’s house and invited him over without telling who would be there or why.

I greeted Stiff at the front door while the other boys were inside eating scotch eggs, Pop had made for us.

“Hi Dude,” Stiff got in first and we hugged.

“Come inside, I’ve got a surprise.” I smiled at Stiff as he looked at me out of one eye with his head cocked back and went dead quiet as he followed me in.

“Hey Stiff,” Cess was first up and shaking his hand then cuddled him before he even had time to do a head count, “fuck, missed ya mate!”

“Missed you to mate?” Stiff told Cess.

“God Stiff ... I’ve truly missed your ugly mug!” Cess let go and Frogdog was beaming and they both shook hands firmly and I realized there were no hard feelings between these two, as it wasn’t like Frogdog stole his gig, Stiff did leave first. Joey stood up and Stiff went face to face with him, expressionless. I shit myself as I thought it was on then and there, but Stiff made the first move by grabbing Joey by the balls, kissed him on the cheek and whispered out loud,

“Hello, Cunthead!”

Pop loved Stiff and poured him a scotch and Coke to go with his half-demolished scotch egg then exited to the lounge room to give us some privacy and the banter was crude but light-hearted, then I started.

“Stiff, we’re gonna move to Sydney and try our luck down there,” he was listening, “... and we were wondering if you were interested in being our manager, wanna come with us?” He was still silent and had the Stiff serious face on, so I again continued selling while the others kept quiet. “You’d be perfect Stiff ... you’ve always had the gift of the gab!” This was true if anyone could talk his way into some young lady’s panties or conning free drinks out of the bar managers, then it would be Stiff.

“So I suppose getting paid a wage is out of the question?” Now he was smiling. After his initial reluctance, agreed on two conditions -

#1: We do one more small tour up north to have a kitty, so we wouldn’t be lobbying on Sydney’s doorstep with our arses hanging out and -

#2: That he would be in control (within reason) when it came to bookings and gigs - the vote was unanimous.

We all got legless and polished off Pop's scotch, a slab and then started on Mum's port. Pop was funny as hell and spewed his ring out at about eleven thirty trying to keep up with us seasoned drinkers. Mum rescued him and put him to bed.

Plans were being thrown up left, right and center of our future between us all and I hadn't seen this much enthusiasm in the band since the early years.

It was so good to have my old mate Stiff back in the fold as I had missed him just being there making us laugh, he was always my support rail when I needed him in any band decision or personal issue, such as the time I sat on a broken pot glass at the gig 'Raceys' in the band room. It was him who escorted me to the hospital announcing to the emergency ward staff, loud enough for all to hear,

"Quick get a doctor, he's cut his AARRRSSSEE!!" Stiff then took a special interest in my six stitches,

"Oh Tit ... they're fucking beauties!"

End of an era

We were on our way back to 'The Klub' of all places for our last stint as a cover band and somehow I felt like once again we'd sold out. We would be playing the same old shit we had for years with the exception of a couple of new covers, Chisel's 'Flame Trees' and 'Let's Dance' by Bowie. Stiff had done a great job though as for the first time in my musical life I did nothing! I didn't have to organize a fucking thing. Stiff had done it all and even pulled us top dollar! He accepted an equal cut as his wages, and from now on if we made two cents or a million dollars he would get the same as us - it was unspoken words. He was a member of this band as much as we were (again) and we believed we had made the right move.

"Here's the keys Cess." Stiff threw the band accommodation keys through the hire car window and Cess caught them with his balls. "You guys go ahead, I'll meet the manager and be over in half an hour." Stiff was taking this new role seriously and I was well pleased.

We pulled up outside the band accom and the memories came flooding back, it seemed like only yesterday, we had to tell Joey about Lennon's death here. The house was a little worse for wear since the last time we were here but it still had that old familiar nicotine smell we loved and called

home. I was first in and claimed the single room that Joey had last time. Joey and Cess shared this time round while Stiff would get the poxy box room and the roadies would still get the off-limits roadie room.

Noddy and Bigears had long gone their separate ways and taken their loyalty to other bands. Stiff had replaced them with two new dudes we quickly nicknamed as 'The Spock' and 'Gilligan'. 'The Spock' looked so much like a young Leonard Nimoy it was scary as all hell. He was tall and frightfully boring and the poor prick had to put up with everyone he ever met, telling him he looked like the guy out of Star Trek with the pointy ears. 'Gilligan' was dubbed Gilligan by Frogdog, as he had pointed out to us, how much he was like The Spock's bumbling assistant and not actually doing much, just creating havoc for Spock to fix later.

Stiff returned with a carton of XXXX and we all toasted to our last run of cover gigs, forever.

End of part 2

Part 3

THE NINETIES

Come in spinner!

The ladies

Why the fuck would you put colors in with the whites? Surely it can't be that fucking hard? Could it? So I folded my pink jocks and socks and placed them in the second drawer. Felicity was due to walk in any minute now and then I heard footsteps.

"Hi Daddy, I'm home!" And my angel melted my anger to a pool of watery love once again, while I waved through the screen door to Penny our neighbor who had brought her home from school with her kids.

"How was school Sweetie?" I looked at her beautiful big blue eyes and waited for her response.

"We made these Dad." An excited seven-year-old then extracted from her school bag what I instantly guessed was, a paddle pop version of yours truly playing a pipe cleaner as a guitar and an equally bad paddle pop mum, they were wonderful.

“Sweetheart, they’re great! Let’s put them up here,” I placed them on the fireplace shelf next to the clay version of ‘Dudley the cat’ and in between her stickman portraits of Poppy and Nanna.

We sat down and watched her video of ‘My Little Pony’ for the umpteen time while we ate orange quarters with sugar sprinkled on them (ssshhh don’t tell Mum) at Fel’s request.

“Is Mummy coming home soon?” Fel frowned at me and I saw her mother looking at me once again. She was the splitting image in every way, mannerisms and looks. I loved them both more than life itself.

“Mummy’s working late tonight, remember?” Felicity nodded and said in that irresistible cheeky voice,

“Oh that’s right, Mummy’s buying me a present,” she screwed up her nose just as her mother does then resumed watching the video and sucked on another orange quarter, “can I watch this later Dad? I want to play with my Barbie’s now.” Before I had time to answer she was up and gone. I stopped the video and a film clip was playing on some kid’s arvo show. I didn’t recognize the band and thought that the song sucked arse, anyone of my songs was better than this puerile crap!

“Hi, Hon, what’s for tea? Sorry, I’m late, got held up by a couple that wanted to book a trip to England and the phones were playing up. Is Fel asleep?”

My turn to speak now ... I thought. “Spag bol, that’s okay and yes, fast asleep!” Phew! She looked bushed but still was as beautiful as that first day I had seen her at that band competition, her red jumpsuit had long gone and been replaced with a lovely ‘Travel Plus’ Air Hostess styled uniform. “Would you like a bourbon babe?” Peta responded with a you’re a darl expression while she slipped off her shoes and stockings and took her hair out of that ever so perfect ponytail.

“How was your day Hon?” Peta asked, Just fucking great! I made Fel her breakfast, got her ready for school, took her off to school, did the washing up and then watched my daily soaps just to make sure Marlena wasn’t dead, folded the washing you fucked up by turning my undies pink then I cooked your fucking dinner before feeding, bathing and then putting to bed our daughter ...

“Not bad ... didn’t do much though.” ... Brave aren’t I?

I passed her a bourbon and Coke and she sat back on the lounge with her feet up on the coffee table running her left hand through her unponytailed hair while I dished up a plate of my spectacular bolognaise to be nuked in our brand new second-hand microwave.

“Here you go, Sweetie.” I stood there holding her dinner while Peta was asleep on the couch with her feet on the coffee table. The bourbon was still in her right hand which was just starting to get a lean towards Spillsville. I gently removed the drink from her clutch and transferred it to the coffee table and she stirred a little, so I maneuvered her to a laydown position on the couch and turned the tele down. She was dead to the world, so I

returned the spag bog to the fridge for another day and covered her with our quilt from the bed.

I couldn't help but just stare at her sleeping so peacefully, I just sat on the coffee table stroking her hair and drinking her bourbon. She was the most beautiful girl in the world and she was my wife.

Rob the knob

I was sick of waiting for Rob to get his shit together enough so I could get this fucking duo going. This guy must've been the slowest song learner in the history of music and for Christ's sake, they're only bloody covers! Rob found page 34 in his songbook and placed it on his music stand. The guy had a half decent voice but his memory cells were about the size of a peanut!

"One - two - three - four." We were away at last and actually made it to the chorus without a fuck-up. I was truly fucking sick to death of practicing this crap over and over but I kept imagining the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow and needed to find it soon, as Peta was our life support and it just wasn't fair. We finished and he was satisfied enough to move off of 'Stuck in the Middle' to 'Superstition'.

Peta entered the room and she could tell by my save me glance that I was in pain.

"Sounds great you guys, want a cup of tea and a sandwich?" Thank-you my darling, I owe you my life ...

"Okay, I'm starved, you hungry Rob?" I didn't miss my opportunity.

"Yeh, I am. That would be lovely Peta." He was polite at least.

Rob wasn't my type of guy at all, didn't drink or smoke, actually - wouldn't have surprised me if he was a virgin! I'd found him in the local music shop community wall; you know where every man and his dog put up his own penciled-ad.

Guitar player/Singer - age 25 looking for duo partner phone blah blah blah! - Get the idea?

His voice was no way as near as good as Cess' was, but an eternity had passed since then and I'd given up long ago about being the *Next Big Thing* - it was all about making a quid now.

"So when do you think we'll be ready Ian?" Rob asked. Next century ... sprang to mind.

"We'll need about fifty tunes all up and we've got about twenty-five, so I'd say ... another two weeks at a guess." I lied my arse off, as he wouldn't be ready for another month - at the earliest!

"So do we ring an agent now?" Rob sounded keen but he wasn't quite ready to be unleashed upon the world just yet.

Peta brought in our lunch with a freshly made pot of tea, she poured us both a cup each while we ate the ham, cheese, and tomato on multi-grain. Mine was half-stolen by a hungry seven-year-old who hadn't missed the opportunity to sit on Daddy's lap.

"Ian tells me you're a great singer Peta, how come you don't sing anymore?" Rob questioned.

"Oh, just life I suppose, you know get a job, be a Mum, just the norm." Peta replied in a tone that was so convincing even I bought it.

“Don’t you miss it?” Rob kept on prying.

“A little, I have an occasional sing every now and then with Ian. But Ian’s the real muso in the family,” Peta lent over and gave me a hug and a kiss on my cheek and screwed up her nose at me as she always had.

“She should sing more!” I glared at her with that I told you so look and as usual, she shrugged it off.

I tried ages ago to get a duo going with Peta in the early days down here, but it was a hassle trying to get general shit like vehicles. It was just easier if she did the day gig thing (as I’d never had a day gig in my life) and I played at night. We both agreed it was far easier like this and mostly because Peta hated covers.

“Ian told me you just quit.” *Hey hey boy! You’re moving into dangerous territory now! Cover your gonads as they’re about to be squeezed!*

“Is that so?” Peta glared at me not him; I had just been dropped - smack-bang into a nice pile of shit!

“No, you’ve got it all wrong, dickhead.” If I could pull myself out, this was the time, “Peta sent away demos but never got an answer back, hey Love!” I shot her my old dumb-arse look I’d savored from the seventies and as it had always worked – it did once more!

“Yeh, that’s all. Then I never followed it up, as I said ... just life.” She was smiling again and poured herself a cup of English Breakfast from the pot and left the room.

Good and bad

Rob finally got his act together enough in 3 weeks and was ready to go. I'd pre-empted his early arrival into duo-land and had us a couple nights per week booked at Peta's old stomping ground 'Cassidys'. It was just your average dinner and dance club and the manager was an old friend of Peta's back in the days when she first defected to Sydney when he was just a glassie. Terry bought the place 5 years later, (it was the Cross so drugs had to be in there somewhere – would you ask?) and never looked back but had always remained one of her good friends.

"Ian me ol' fruit gum!" Terry hugged me as we hadn't seen each other in a couple of years and I thought he looked well and the fat pommy bastard had lost a bit of hair but appeared healthy as ever, with his fake tan and more gold jewelry than the Elizabeth Taylor, Err! Not Joey's mum ... he always reminded me of Bob Hoskins so I couldn't help picturing him having a tall redhead named Jessica hanging off his arm.

"Terry, this is Rob." After my introduction they shook hands firmly.

"You guys want a drink? How's Pe?" Terry summoned a barmaid in a black mid-riff cut-off T-shirt with Cassidy's printed in hot pink on the front, she wasn't wearing a bra and she certainly had no reason too!

“Four cowboys, Nita,” Nita, which I presumed was short for Anita poured the shots on the bar and Terry made her have one with us. Rob being a non-drinker was a little reluctant at first but didn’t want to look like a wusser-boy in front of Terry, so downed his with us. After another round we started our gear set up (which consisted of a an eight channel desk (built in effects), one amp and two bins, one shared wedge, rhythm machine, two lights plus a c.d. player for in between music) before Terry pissed off out back saying he would catch up with us later.

About thirty people were in for dinner and the bar could hold about three fifty comfortably but I’d seen him squeeze in five hundred on a big night. We started with a soft set of classics like ‘Imagine’ and ‘Moondance’ keeping the volume low. I really missed playing the bass but the rhythm machine was programmed by myself so it’s what I would’ve played anyway - just poxier. My Maton acoustic was way better sounding than Rob’s Fender but I had paid over a thousand for it a few years ago - so it should! Rob sang okay and we got light applause from the diners. Later in the night we cranked up the volume as per Terry’s wishes and had plenty of dancers. ‘Cassidy’s’ crowd had aged as the bar had, it now mainly catered for thirty-five and over crowd but still pulled the occasional twenty-year-olds in, that loved to come and party with their parents. Terry always had good drink prices and that was a great drawcard for all drinkers of all ages as well as his generous freebies.

“Guys, that was great, thanks for playing Sweet Home for me,” as Terry patted us both on the back standing in between us. I received his right hand while Rob his left.

I was packing up the car when Terry ran and touched me on the shoulder,

“Ian, Pe’s on the phone and it sounds bad, Bud.” My heart jumped from my stomach to my mouth in an instant, I panicked. All I could think of was my beautiful Felicity. What was wrong? Peta never rang me at gigs so this was serious.

“Babe, what’s wrong? Is Fel alright?” I could hardly talk and my left eye had a nervous twitch I couldn’t control.

“It’s not Fel, Ian.” She was crying and now the picture of Felicity turned to Pop, he hadn’t been that well after his heart attack last year so as best as I could, I braced myself. “Stiffi’s had a motorbike accident,” No-No he can’t be dead ... and again I waited for the words I wasn’t prepared to hear, “he’s in intensive care ... he’s in a coma, but ... they took his right leg.” Peta bawled and I went silent, I couldn’t help myself, I was in shock!

Rob drove me home and Peta was a mess, so I made what seemed like a thousand phone calls to Queensland. My best friend and best man at my wedding was a world away and I had to be there for him, I had to be there, and right now!

Tears aplenty

We arrived at Brisbane airport around 10:00 am and Pop was there to greet us. We hugged but didn't say much at all just Pop giving us as much updated information as he knew. Apparently, Stiff had bought himself a new 1000cc Honda racing bike and was giving it some stick down the highway when a fucking wallaby bounced out in front of him. The road was slippery and he flipped the bike trying to swerve instead of running the cunt of a thing over, so an eyewitness reported. He hit the guardrail and the bike followed through and crushed his right leg like a popper; amputation was the only option! Stiff had been unconscious since the accident so they didn't know if there was any brain damage as of yet. He was breathing and all vital signs were good; the specialists were very optimistic.

Felicity was a little quiet as Mummy and Daddy had been crying and she didn't understand why but as soon as she arrived at Poppy and Nanna's House she was her normal self, playing and chasing Felix the cat. Mum was okay, better than Pop; it was obvious he'd been awake most of the night awaiting updates.

"Cess, it's Tit." I didn't know what to say over the phone.

“Tit ... he’s fucked,” then Cess continued, “Frogdog, Julie and I’ve been up the hospital all night ... he’s fucked man!”

“How’s his family?” I remembered my nightmarish thoughts of my child possibly lying there and this made me think of Stiff parent’s anguish and pain.

“Scottie’s handling it but his mum’s a fucking mess,” then he offered, “do you want us to pick you and Peta up on the way?”

“Yeh Man, that’d be lovely.” I said my goodbyes and relayed the call to Peta who was still bawling her eyes out.

Cess arrived about an hour later and after a cuppa, we left while my folks babysat their only granddaughter. We hadn’t met Cess’ wife Julie before as we were flat-arse broke and couldn’t afford to come up for their wedding and they had had it in North Queensland. And now we wished we could’ve met her on better circumstances. She was a bit snotty for Cess I thought, she looked all right but she would’ve been classed as North Shore if she came from Sydney with that private school accent while Cess was certainly Western Suburbs public school, but he worshipped her like a queen, so Frogdog told us. Frogdog was still single but it was hard to forget he was always an ugly prick and with the years not being kind, an even uglier and older prick now. Cess was into advertising these days and making big money, he was the one that came up with the slogan for that environmentally friendly toilet paper – *‘Wipe it! Flush It! Go you good thing!’*

“So you playing Tit?” asked Cess.

“I did my first gig in my duo last night, it went alright.” I had nothing more to say on the duo issue.

“What about you ... you singing?” My question was soon answered by Cess’ new vocal chord – Julie,

“No those days are over! He’s grown out of all that adolescent crap.” Adolescent Crap! Hey love ... that was a fucking put-down to us here musicians ... and Frogdog elbowed me as if to say ‘I told you she was a fucking bitch!’ and probably the instigator of that terrible short back and sides.

I thought Peta had cried all her tears out until we found Scottie outside the Intensive Care Ward while his parents were both in Stiff’s room. We weren’t allowed in but just as well I think we all would’ve lost it. A specialist interrupted Scottie and asked him to join his parents and as the pessimist I always was - believed this was it! Stiff, your time is up!

Scottie came out half an hour later with the biggest smile on his dial. Stiff was awake and coherent.

The hospital kept him in intensive care for the next 24 hours monitoring his progress before transferring him to a normal ward where at last, we would be allowed to see him.

The recovery

We arrived at the hospital at about 10:30, all of us together as the day before. I felt ill and required a drink from the hospital cold (or more correctly - warm) water cooler. We entered together and I don't think one of us took a breath until we saw Stiffi smiling. His parents were still there and looked terrible. They kissed their son goodbye and left Stiff in our capable hands and to go and get their first decent rest since the incident.

"Guys," his voice was fragile and his face was a fucking mess, "look what the cat dragged in!" I was prepared for the missing leg but not the bruising and stitches in his face and mouth. Wasn't he wearing a helmet? Peta was crying again so Stiff of all people, tried to reassure her, he was handling it well.

"Peta," he reached out and grabbed her hand, "I'm alive, Sweetie, I'm not dead ... yet! I'll be all right, don't cry ... please." Yeh, tears came to my eyes but I managed to hold the welling back. Cess was quietest of all and I could see he was having trouble making eye contact with Stiff. Julie was holding Cess' arm and paying her attention to Cess, he looked like he was going to pass out. It was Frogdog who grabbed Stiff's left hand first (as the drip was in his right) saying,

"Good to see your back mate."

Stiff was out of hospital in 2 weeks and we were lucky Peta had 5 weeks leave up her sleeve and was able to use some of it now. She had been with 'Travel Plus' for 5 years and was one of the top girls in the branch so they were supportive of her in every way.

"Want eggs and bacon Peta?" Pop was making the best of a bad situation and as we had now turned Stiff's tragedy into our yearly visit to Queensland was loving spoiling us. We'd stayed here the first week then spent one over Petas's folks and now we were back ... thank God! Her mother no longer looked at me like I was spoiling her daughter's fruits but glared at me all the time with that bludger look she was so good at, *'Get a real job and support your family, loser!'*

"That'd be lovely Pop." Peta was better now; her puffy red eyes had been replaced with her old vibrant baby blues.

"I don't need to ask you if you want some," Pop was looking directly at me (over the top of his new black-rimmed glasses) and I smiled as he ventured back into the kitchen with his frypan in his hand. Pop's heart attack had set him back a bit but you can't keep a good cook down. He had changed his fatty food diet for a much healthier one but he still insisted on bacon and eggs every Sunday. "Now you're sure you're right to get to the airport?" Pop asked from the kitchen happily cooking in his white underpants, while Mum and Fel were playing Snap in the lounge room with the Sunday morning film clips blaring on their television.

"Yeh ... I told you Cess is taking us ... Stiff's coming too!" I answered and he nodded as his fading memory cells kicked in and pushed his glasses up his nose, squinted and then resumed charcoaling the bacon. "Picking us

up around 5:30.” I added before I shot Peta an *oh he’s getting old* frown and she giggled and covered it up by picking up her teacup to hide her mouth, when she was rescued by an excited Felicity yelling out, “Snap!”

Counselling had helped Stiff a bit but I was amazed at his own acceptance of his loss and was truly inspired by his strength. He was handling the crutches okay, but we all knew he’d have a false leg as soon as he possibly could.

“Mr. and Mrs. Thomas, how are you, folks?” Stiff was half turned from the front passenger seat of Cess’ four-wheel drive as we were climbing in, then he bugged his eyes out towards Felicity protruding his tongue slowly, she giggled and did the same back. Uncle Stiff had always had that special relationship with his goddaughter and the ugly face contest was an ongoing thing.

“Uncle Stiff,” Felicity was about to embarrass her parents, “now you’ve only got one leg ... that means you can’t beat me at hopscotch anymore, hey!” Well, she was 100% correct, but I didn’t know where to look so I copied Peta who just was looking down horrified.

“Oh yeh smarty-pants, well I bet you that I’ll flog you in the one-legged race though!” Stiff chuckled and both of us breathed a sigh of relief, Cess laughed.

“Oooh, that’s not fair!” Felicity slumped back into the backseat between us with a screwed up face.

Cess parked the car as close as he could and he helped Stiff into the wheelchair. Peta and I grabbed our three bags that had grown from our original two, which was mainly full of doting grandparent's gifts and clothes. We booked our luggage in and made our way to the departure lounge while Fel got a ride on the wheelchair with Uncle Stiff. We all weren't ready for what was just around the corner.

"The Flair sucks donkey cocks!" It was Joey and he looked terrible!

Reflections

I felt sick on the plane after seeing Joey, he was totally wasted! His hair was greasy, face unshaven and his clothes stunk. He looked old and he had more drugs in him than Keef. He said his mother had told him about Stiff's accident and that we were in town. Joey had rung Cess' house and got the departure details from Cess' mum then got a lift straight into the airport to catch us all ... by surprise. Peta was affected by his appearance too, we talked about how maybe we should've done more for him but then we counter-acted our guilt with Joey's own self-destruction, we had both tried and that was no lie.

I remember the break-up of the band clear as day and I still blamed Joey. No matter how many ways you looked at it; it all came down on Joey!

The Pilot announced we would be landing in approximately 10 minutes and said the usual bullshit, *'Thank you for flying with so 'n' so airways'* speech. Felicity was asleep between us, as all that coloring-in was tiring work. Peta yawned and stretched her arms forward then did up Fel's seatbelt, then her own, she smiled at me and stated,

"I can't wait to go home."

The cabbie pulled up outside the unit and Pete paid him while I retrieved the bags from the boot. Fel was awake now but she looked like she wanted her bed immediately. That first foot in the door felt great, even the stale air smell was wonderful and we all dumped our stuff and hit the beds.

Joey's face was keeping me awake and I couldn't help retracing over the events of old and how it all started.

"Stiff, I don't give a fuck what you want or what you say, give me my fucking money!" Joey was demanding but Stiff wouldn't give in.

"No, this is for the move to Sydney, fuckhead ... not alcohol and especially drugs!" Stiff continued his hard stance. "Joey, you're the one that wants to be the big Rockstar so bad, well it's time to fucking handle it and think of everybody else here," as he pointed to us all, "it's their choice too!" It was time for my back-up.

"That's right Joey, we've got another 3 weeks here and then its Sydney here we come!" I tried to lighten the mood but he didn't give a flying fuck!

"Just give me my fucking money Stiff." He was angry now and his body language was in a striking pose.

Joey lost it and then Stiff and he were at it - and it was full on! Joey's nose hadn't been straight from my breaking it and after one solid hit from Stiff, it would be even more bent. Joey was pumped on something and was

giving it to Stiff but Stiff could handle Joey easily and with one final punch that connected with his left kidney, took him down like a sack of potatoes; Joey was spent!

The sparring partners gasped for air. Stiff recovered first while Joey took a bit longer and looked at me and announced,

“That’s the line Tit, and that fuckwit,” pointing to Stiff, “... has just crossed it! I’m out!”

“Fuck off then you drug-fucked asshole!” Stiff’s yelling didn’t help the situation. “Here’s your fucking money,” and Stiff threw Joey’s split into the air, “go and get yourself a hit, just don’t come back!”

Cess hadn’t said a word as he was the one that only yesterday had found Joey’s piece and leather belt tourniquet in their bedroom and had announced his findings to Stiff and me. Stiff hated druggies and smack heads especially, smoking pot was one thing, even the occasional line we would partake but sticking a fucking needle in your arm – not acceptable! Stiff had no time for Joey’s problem and neither did I - for that matter.

Joey did fuck off that night leaving everything behind but Goldie. A crisis meeting was held and the decision had been made to replace Joey and carry-on but we never did. Cess pissed off back to Ridgetown the next day, hitching a ride with an interstate truckie without even telling us and we were left in the lurch. ‘The Klub’ and PJ were furious and we had let them

both down but there was nothing we could do. No lead guitarist and no singer/rhythm player, it was all too hard!

Peta went back to work while I went back to rehearsing with Rob as our lives were back to normal and no one was more than happy about that than myself - for a while anyway.

The duo was working four nights a week, thanks to Terry putting a good word in for us to 'Wild Things' booking agency, but I fucking hated this; I was dying inside! Maybe it was because I'd just seen the boys and all I could think about was the band and days gone by. I couldn't stop playing all our old demos, looking at all our old photos and even all Cess' drawings that I had in my collection.

Interlude - Peta's secret

Peta took the bus home every day but today, she'd decided to walk and why? It was her emotional day that she had every year where she needed her own space. Today was the eighth one. She reflected back while she walked up the cluttered street not paying any attention to any going-ons around here, like the old man walking his daschund or the two ladies waiting for the number 37 bus. She was in her own mind reliving the events that changed her life eight years prior.

It was a Friday and she was feeling pretty good for someone who had tied a big one on at the gig the night before. Ian was there as he had the night off for a change and was able to come to the gig for the first time in months. It always made it just a little more special to have him there in the audience. She loved him so much as she had the first time she laid eyes on him at that crappy contest. She loved the way he played the bass, he was sexy and a punkrat. The gig was good and she was pleased with the way she sang, her voice was stronger these days and a bit huskier, either from smoking or just maturing she presumed. Her band - Metal Guru was well liked and had a half decent following for a local original band. She very well knew that this dance style wasn't Ian's cup of tea but he supported her and was always polite by turning up to watch and hear her sing whenever he

could. Ian had even helped out the band with the laydown of the tracks, then mixed down their cheap-arse demos for which he pulled a half decent vocal sound with a nice subtle touch of effects.

Ian was still fast asleep, it was only 9:00 and he wouldn't move until at least 11:00. Peta was sitting on the toilet taking a piss when she realized the date, wasn't she due on the 18th? That was two weeks ago and because of the band, she hadn't kept track of the dates. She had often been late before and prayed she'd get her 'Mr. Jollys' real soon.

The next Tuesday Peta still hadn't told Ian, she wanted to know for sure so had a doctor's appointment booked for midday. She wasn't quite sure if she was happy or not? On one hand it was the next step in her and Ian's marriage and she knew her Mum would be over the moon, *'At last that bloody good for nothing husband of yours etc etc etc.'* on the other - the band, can you be a singing Mum? Having a baby would certainly throw a spanner in the works of her future as a successful singer ... but an abortion would fix that.

"Congratulations Peta, you're expecting." She could hardly swallow as reality sunk in as in seven and a half months she would be responsible for a newborn life. She left the surgery in bewilderment. The walk home that day was a slow one as well and something had changed inside as soon as she had been given the news, she knew there would be no abortion and as she walked by the first council rubbish bin, stopped, stubbed out her lit cigarette and threw her very last packet away.

“Hi Babe, where’d you go?” asked a half-awake Ian, hair messed up still in his Superman blue undies with a steaming cup of tea in his hand, “Jug’s boiled.”

“Ian,” Peta burst out crying, as she was terrified of his reaction. “I’m pregnant.” She grabbed the tissue Ian had already dragged from the box that was always kept above the fireplace between the empty bottles of Jack and Johnny and wiped her snotty nose.

“What?” Ian’s face didn’t help the situation, it read - Holy Fuck!

After a nice pot of piss-weak tea, the tears had stopped and Ian’s brain had accepted the announcement.

“What are we going to do for money Ian? We can’t have a baby living like we do ... can we?” Ian knew she was right. The dole and the little band earnings they scraped between them paid the rent and bought food with enough to get the odd bottle or two or a bag every now and then, but that was it.

“I’ll get a day job,” Ian suggested but Peta screwed up her nose and didn’t realize she spoke aloud,

“A job ... you!” Peta quickly continued, “Ian you’ve been writing and playing your bum off lately, the band sounds great and it’s only a matter of time before you’ll get a contract.” Ian knew she made sense, she always did. “I’ll go back to work after the baby’s born, Jo will give me a good reference,” she made even more sense now and he kissed her forehead better.

“We’re gonna have to tell your Mum she’s gonna be an OLD Granny ... let me do it!” Peta smacked Ian’s arm for that comment but it made them both laugh.

Peta came back to the present when a teenager pressed the crossing button and it made that popping sound of time to walk. She was coming up to Watson Park and the gardens were in full bloom so she changed direction and sat on the bench to enjoy the smell of the gardens. Peta closed her eyes, took a deep breath and continued her memories.

Wednesday morning was a spectacular one for Peta, as both her and Ian’s parent’s overjoy of their impending grandchild was a highlight and had put her on cloud nine. The washing hadn’t been done and there wasn’t much there so she stuck it all in the machine (colors, darks, and whites) to save on time and electricity.

“Flowers for my ever-so-beautiful pregnant wife.” Ian had returned from getting some milk with a bunch of red and white carnations.

“Ooh, you’re a darl.” Peta kissed him with her tongue and wrapped her right leg around his and they fucked there on the washing machine while it was still cycling; she came twice!

An old lady sat beside her on the bench and smiled her toothless smile towards Peta.

“Nice day for it,” spoke the old lady.

Nice day for what? Peta thought and she prayed she wasn’t groaning aloud a minute ago.

Peta resumed her walk home after saying farewell to Toothless and again she drifted to the past.

The mailman had been and Peta had stuck her head out of the side window to check if he put anything in their box, he had. Ian had left for the studio where he was recording his latest songs with his new band - Bandana a real Guns’n’Roses type band and she hated the name, for this reason, she felt like they weren’t original at all and even Ian’s songs were unoriginal. But she would never tell him the truth as she loved him too much to hurt his feelings. The letter was addressed to her from ‘Rad Music’ in Melbourne and she instantly was interested, she quickly tore the letter open and read it to herself out aloud without realizing.

Rad Music

Dear Peta,

*Thank you for sending us a copy of your original material by the band **Metal Guru**, at this stage **Rad Music** are not interested in the band **Metal Guru** or current material recorded on your supplied tape.*

*However! We **Rad Music** are very interested in recording you **Peta Kennedy-Thomas** singing in collaboration with other songwriters on the prospect of a possible solo career.*

We must say we were very impressed with your vocal ability and believe there is a marketable quality to your voice and look (as per your attached Bio).

If interested please contact me, Phillip Roscoe on 03 9669 6869 to arrange a meeting between both parties at Head Office in Melbourne.

We again state, we are genuinely interested in the artist

Peta Kennedy-Thomas.

Regards

Phillip Roscoe

Talent Coordinator

Rad Music

Rad Music

Top 5 Current Artists

Body Snatchers

Peter Wonder

The Ball Tearers

Lucy's Dead

Vicki Carter

Peta sat on the top step and read the letter, again and again, she was in shock. Finally, after all these years of hard work, someone was interested enough to give her a go. The only name Peta recognized of the Top 5 was Vicki Carter as coincidently or not this was the girl Joey was playing with years ago when he was trying to get his act together, the first time after getting out of rehab down here. She was really young then, only 16 and

scored a deal as she had a shitty role on that crappy soapie 'Hallo Street'. She was doing pretty mediocre back then before she had a major hit single a few years later. Vicki Carter was now bigger in England than over here and still a bit too girlie pop for Peta.

She made her way to the kitchen and couldn't wait for Ian to get home to announce the news. Then the pregnancy issue reminded Peta, there are no pregnant popstars you know ... and reality soon came crashing down and doubt mixed with a little anxiety and claimed Peta's train of thought.

Ian came home about 6:00 and he was pissed off!

"That's it ... I fucking quit!"

He burst into tears and Peta who had the letter in her right dressing gown pocket comforted her husband, her letter would have to wait, the timing was all wrong.

"What's wrong Hon?" Peta was deeply concerned as Ian hardly ever cried.

"It's just not working, Babe, I lost my cool and walked out ... I told them they're all a bunch of drug-fucked metalheads and told 'em ... to fuck off!"

Ian was devastated, he had tried for the last 3 years to get something half-decent going and he just couldn't get it right, the songs, the players and it was fucking frustrating.

“You’ve got to keep going Hon, you’ve come too far. What you guys have recorded so far sounds great,” Peta lied, “never give up, I believe in you.” This was the truth and Peta made eye contact with Ian and he stared into her effervescent eyes and drew her faith of him into himself once more; he loved her more than life itself!

“Gotta have a wee love ... you know us pregnant woman.” Peta made an excuse to go to the bathroom where she locked the bathroom door behind her. She sat on the toilet with the lid still down and pulled the letter from her pocket. The next 5 minute’s decision-making was the hardest of her life so far, for she knew what she had to do, for Ian’s sake. This letter could possibly destroy his self-confidence at this point in time. Ian had tried to escape the cover scene more times than she could remember and moving to Sydney on his own was the biggest and bravest step towards his desired goal. Peta couldn’t keep count of how many rejection letters he had received since they’d been together and couldn’t understand why no-one could see him the way she did. So with a lump in her throat and a tear in her eye, Peta tore her dream into pieces and flushed it away, convincing herself that they wouldn’t have wanted her anyway. From that moment on Peta Kennedy-Thomas would be a mother and a wife while supporting her husband Ian Thomas, the only struggling musician in this household and that would last forever and no-one would ever know any different.

Party band

“You all right Babe?” I thought she’d been crying, as her eyes looked a little red.

“The dust outside is terrible, a bit windy today,” she kissed me and Fel realized her Mummy was home and came running in for an afternoon squeeze hello, as Peta apologized, “sorry I’m late, just felt like walking home.” She touched my hair and again kissed me harder with her eyes squeezed tight, Gees ... I thought I must have done something right for a change ... as I dished the meatballs over the three plates of bland spaghetti.

I quit the duo after 6 months as it was unbearable and Rob was a real tosser so I put my music career on hold for now. I couldn’t even be bothered practicing anymore, what the fuck for? I needed cash so hired myself out as a sound engineer for shitty bands of all styles, most were fucking useless but as long as I got paid, that was that. Peta was working all the time these days and pulling good money but our relationship was suffering, when I was awake she’d be asleep and vice versa. This went on for a few years and we managed to keep it together, for Fel’s sake. It was Stiff who pulled us out of the doldrums.

“Dale said he’ll play guitar and Cess is keen for it, c’mon Tit it’ll be a laugh!” Stiff wanted to us to come up for his 35th and get the band back together for a one-night-stand. “We’ll call it - The Velvet Flairs for the night and Cess and Peta can sing half a night each!” Stiff made me smile. God, I missed those guys.

“It’ll be rough!”

State the obvious Ian.

Peta was really worried about singing as she hadn’t sung for years and didn’t think her voice would hold out so we started practicing together at home relearning our old songs. My fingers were rusty as old nails and I forgot what blistered fingers stung like. Her voice was still beautiful and she complained about how breathing techniques had been long forgotten so she tired real easy. Learning those old songs was the best fun we’d had in years, it was great for our relationship and we’d fucked more during this couple of weeks than in the past 6 months.

Fel was ten now and things were beginning to be uncool in the parent singing department so locked herself away in her room listening to her Walkman of some top forty compilation crap that was flogged on the television. Fel didn’t realize that she used to sing at the top of her voice with headphones on and both her Mum and I used to listen sneakily outside her bedroom door and we both agreed - she wasn’t half bad for a ten-year-old.

“Hey Everyone, Fucknuckle and Gorgeous are here!” Stiff held us tightly and refused to let go, so we held him too.

“That’s Mr. Fucknuckle to you thanks Mr. Cockhead!” I corrected him.

“Good to see you guys,” Stiff let go and we entered the hall.

“Happy birthday Stiff.” Peta gave him a kiss on the cheek leaving a perfect bright red lipstick mark that would be there for the next hour.

“You’re getting fat!” I thought Stiff was and felt the need to tell him, so I told him and prodded his expanded waistline.

“Fuck off,” Stiffi grabbed his own stomach and retorted, “paid a fucking fortune in beer for this one mate!” We laughed together.

“Is Cess here yet?” I looked around the room at the occupied chairs and then I spotted him and Julie. Cess had his back to us so Julie tapped his shoulder and pointed to us. We waved to each other and I instantly thought his hair was more acceptable at this past shoulder length.

“So that bloody Goddaughter didn’t want to come and see her olds play eh?” Stiffi asked, eyebrow raised.

“Nah, we’re too uncool to be seen with, let alone embarrass the fuck out of by playing and singing, she’s with Penny!” Peta confirmed my statement with a nod and an eye raise back at Stiff, then asked,

“So where’s this new woman of yours?” Stiff shot her a wink and limped with his false leg over to a redhead that had her back to us as we waved to Stiff’s folks who was still laying out table decorations. She turned

and smiled at us when Stiff finally caught her attention. He summoned us over and we were introduced.

“Tit and Peta, as of today, this is my fiancée – Natalie.” Stiff had laid us flat ... Stiff Engaged?

“Congratulations you FAT bugger.”

And there were kisses all around. Natalie was nice, our age but a bit too nice for Stiff. They’d been going out for 4 months now so she must have a thick skin and a nose that doesn’t work.

Pete and I grabbed a drink and went and sat with Cess and Julie, it was so good to see them.

“Ready to play Tit?” Cess was smiling and he looked 17 all over again. Yes, I loved him when he was our frontman – a fucking great frontman!

After doing the social rounds to Stiff’s family, Pop and Mum’s cab had finally arrived and the real olds sat on one table while us younger olds sitting at Stiff’s. There even was a young pup table at the back of the hall where all Stiff’s rellie’s teenage kids were at and I’m sure one of them was sneakily passing a joint and was trying his best to conceal it from us ... if they’d only known and it made me laugh.

The stage in the hall was pretty basic as the p.a. was but it didn’t matter. The hall held all eighty guests easily and Stiff’s brother Scottie was on the bar so the drinks were extra strong. Frogdog and Dale arrived

together and Frogdog looked ancient! He'd had a successful concreting business going and the Sun had not been kind to his skin. He was brown as a berry but as wrinkly as a prune and now he looked more frog than a dog. Dale gave his baby sister a kiss and shook his brother in law's hand (that's me) then sat beside Peta opposite Cess.

Scottie took the stage and I realized how much weight he had put on (twice as much as Stiff) and how much hair he'd lost.

"Test one, two! Now I've been fukin' asked ... oh sorry I'm not spose ta say fuk am I?" Everyone laughed as he carried on, "Nah seriously! Me little brutha's turned firty five eh!" Scottie pointed to Stiff at our table who was toasting his bourbon. "The little cont, Whoops! I meen," and then he put his hand on his chin looking upwards then questioned, "... if yar, not a cont then what the fuk are yar?" We all laughed again while Stiff stood up a grabbed his balls and gave his brother the middle finger. Natalie covered her eyes in embarrassment but was laughing with all of us. Scottie continued, "So anyway, eee's made it to firty five, doen't know the fuk how eh, and I'm spose to say somefing nice, like Fuk!"

And out of nowhere our wanking days were unveiled to the world!

He told everyone the story of us all being 14 and having a wank over finding one of his dad's pornos at Stiff's while no-one was home and him walking in on us. We were all under our own separate blankets doing the monkey spank privately, when he came bursting in from nowhere, ripped off mine and Stiff's blankets to reveal us sitting there with our erect peepees in our hands and to make matters worse, turned on the lights laughing

his arse off. It was embarrassing enough then so with flushed cheeks and by the disgusted look on Peta's face, it was worse now and worse ... my mother was here!

Stiff's mum's speech wasn't anywhere as bad as his brother's or was his dad's. Pop even got up and told the nuclear fart stories and how he always had thought of him as his other son and loved him dearly. There was no way of me getting out of it so I made my way to the stage.

"Ladies and gentlemen, where do I begin?" I paused and took a swig of bourbon and coke then continued after glancing at Peta who was beaming tonight. First off, I toasted to the happy couple's engagement then got down to business.

"Now Stiff and I go back a long way and have gone through a lot together, so you've heard ... thanks to Scottie," I paused again and milked the chuckles. "Well, I've got a little birthday story that only I know about!" I looked at Stiff and he knew what one I was about to tell. He was already laughing and looked at Natalie and pulled a whoops sorry dear face at her.

"Did anyone know Stiff was excellent at cooking?" I cuffed my ear and pointed it to my audience awaiting their response and I was answered with 'No' in unison. I told the story of the night before his 23rd birthday.

While we were on the road, Stiff had met a lovely young lady at the gig named Wendy. Now Wendy had taken a fancy to Stiff this night and they stayed up drinking while all of us passed out. I explained how alcohol can make you do strange things at strange hours, as at 4.00 am in the morning,

they both decided to bake Stiff a birthday cake. As I was the band cook, I had previously purchased a chocolate on chocolate cake mix to make the next day. Well! I'm sure they had started out with good intentions as they commenced to make the cake and we all know how erotic cooking a cake can be ... don't we? After they mixed the cake mix they had to wait for the oven to heat. Wendy decided to pass the time by giving Stiff a helping hand ... job from behind, (there were howls of laughter) there was only one problem, he needed to come ... and he did. Yep, in the cake mix, she went!" The howls of laughter were growing with a few oohs and arrrggghs in there with screwed up facial expressions. I continued, "Now if that's not bad enough they went ahead and cooked the bugger! I was first up in the morning and saw the cake on the kitchen bench. I put the kettle on and thought nothing more, then out came a panicking Stiff screaming, 'Don't eat the fucking cake!' He explained to me why and I fell on the floor. We decided to throw it out immediately and not tell anyone, as there was only one problem, one little problem ... one slice was missing!

Now everyone one was cracking up so I finished up with, "Enjoy the birthday cake." I made a toast and left the stage to a healthy applause and returned to our table. Cess questioned me as soon as I sat down whispering,

"That wasn't true was it?"

"Yeh dude, every word!" I was chuckling still. Then he screwed up his face before revealing,

"I ate the cake!"

It was time for us to go on and I was actually nervous! Cess had passed on the birthday cake and was laying his lyrics on the stage while I plugged my old bass into the hired Fender amp over a bin loaded with a fifteen and a horn, it sounded pretty shitty but it'd do. Frogdog tuned his snare and it was obvious he still had the chops. Dale had dusted off his old Fender Twin and the valves were warmed up and ready to go. His new Rickenbacker had a lovely rich chord sound. Cess was strumming his Tele through his old amp and looked at me as if to acknowledge she was going – amazing! Peta was on the side of the stage with a tambourine in hand she would use my microphone to sing harmonies to Cess and then they would swap. I wasn't singing at all tonight, as it would be hard enough just to remember the chords let alone structures of these songs without a rehearsal.

A fired up Cess yelled out pointing straight at my mum and pop,

“Who's ready for some dirty lovin'?” I quickly glanced down to Stiff who was cracking up and had forgotten Cess' old introduction. Frogdog counted us in and we were actually playing. By the end of the first chorus, volumes of our respective instruments were adjusted to a suitable level. Peta stepped up to the mic and sang spot-on harmonies to Cess. It was so good to hear their voices and they were both powering. Cess sang 'What About Love' next and it wasn't bad, we had the dance floor filled with the party-goers and Mum and Pop were doing their old fifties swing. The only table with people sitting at it were the young pup table and they were too busy pulling bored faces.

We sounded shitty but fantastic, I thought. Dale played and sounded okay but had interpreted our songs to suit his playing style but it just wasn't Joey Taylor by far. It was time for a Velvet song and Peta swapped positions with Cess while I heard Stiff whistling as I heard Pop scream,

“Go you good thing!”

Wasn't that Cess' loo paper ad?

Peta announced the next song, which was written by her and Dale together when they were just 22 and I found it on an old demo in a box ages ago. We started 'Heaven Scent' and suddenly it occurred to me this was the Velvets with me playing bass again as Cess wasn't singing harmonies in this one. From my side of the stage, she looked fantastic! Her hair was out and her arse was still looking good in those jeans, a little more fuller but still egg fryable! Her voice was angelic, the song was angelic and it made me ask the question to myself of how the fuck this girl was never famous? It hit me like a brick on stage, here I was for the last 15 years worrying about little ol' rock'n'roll lonesome and yet if I'd adapted my songwriting skills to suit Peta's voice we probably would've got somewhere together. But it was way too late now and I'd always stuck to my principle of never fuck the chicks you play with - and I fucked her most nights! We were going off and the set was over before we realized. Stiff egged the party-goers to encore one more but we didn't know anymore and that's when I saw him. Being pushed to the front of the stage by Lizzie in a wheelchair ... was Joey.

“Play Full Tilt, Tit.” Joey looked fucked he was half his size. “You sound fucking great!” He raised the thumbs up sign and smiled and I could see

most of his teeth were gone or disgusting yellow and his face was sunken covered with short wispy hair. I quickly told Dale the chords and he heard our demos heaps so knew the song roughly. Peta left the stage and gave Joey and his mum a hello-kiss and chauffeured them to Stiff's table who had made room for Joey's wheelchair.

Froddog counted us in and it pumped hard. I had goosies on my arms and the back of my neck. We finished with the usual big rock ending and Froddog threw the sticks to our table to get Stiff but was way off course by accidentally conking Joey's mum on the back of the head but she was okay and laughed it off. I packed my bass away and Cess patted my back for approval; I hadn't had this much fun in years!

Joey was fucked all right, the drugs had eaten away half of his liver and he didn't have long (so his mum told us), but Joey was still stubbornly optimistic.

"When they find a cure, I'll be better and can't wait to do some writing and recording with you Tit ... if you want to?" He was extremely frail and his mother had told us his body was starting to shut down. We all kept a brave face for Joey and the reminiscing went on forever. We laughed, drank and told filthy stories. It was twelve o'clock before we even blinked and Lizzie was concerned about Joey's health. She hadn't seen him this happy in months and was worried he would come crashing down the next day and end up straight back in hospital. Stiff had pre-warned us of Joey's condition and we ALL didn't expect him to turn up.

Peta, Cess, Stiff and I escorted them both to Lizzie's Ford wagon. Joey cuddled and patted us all goodbye one by one before we helped him into the front seat. Lizzie started the car and he waved us one last time before pressing the upward button of the electric window shouting,

"The Flair lives on forever!"

The car did a U-turn and they drove off with one last horn blast.

That was the last time we (Peta and I) ever saw Joey and we both knew that at the time and Peta was crying, so I hugged her.

Forever yours

We came back for Joey's funeral as I was asked to do the eulogy by his mum. There were only a handful of us there and he had requested to be cremated. I was fine at the cemetery until I saw the coffin. It wasn't the actual coffin but a picture of Joey in his heyday with his flowing blonde mane of hair holding Goldie and in front of the coffin - there she was! Sitting on a guitar stand and now she was alone. After my emotional eulogy, I was supposed to play one of Joey's and my songs 'Forever Yours' with Cess. It was one of the few ballads we had completed and it was Lizzie's favorite. We made it to the chorus but I was feeling sick and the tears were flowing and I had to stop. Cess comforted me and I looked at Peta who was on her way to rescue me. That was by far the saddest morning of my entire life, so far.

Homeward bound

After another year Peta and I had agreed it was time to leave Sydney and come home. 'Travel Plus' had a position opening in the Brisbane office for Branch Manager and Peta was offered the job. Our parents were ecstatic but Fel wasn't! She threw tantrums and told us she wasn't moving away from her friends and that we would be ruining her life forever; she was still coming! 'Travel plus' had paid us a nice relocation fee and gave Peta a month off to find accommodation, move and settle in. We used the money as a deposit on our very first car. It was a red VN Commodore wagon complete with the old luxury - air-conditioning and we packed it to the brim with all our belongings that hadn't already gone on the removal truck and already had been emptied and stored in my folk's garage.

We had thrown a going away party in the empty unit for Felicity and a dozen of her close friends and they ran havoc. How loud can thirteen girls get? Penny next door had become a good friend over the years and she was sad to see us go and we would miss her too, she was Peta's best friend.

Pete and I both cuddled while standing next to the packed car, which was idling and took our last look at the unit that was such a big part of us.

This was where our relationship had blossomed into marriage and the only home our daughter had ever known and we said our goodbyes.

“Now turn left Ian ... then over the bridge, that other way’s Newcastle,” Peta pointed and I followed her map reading directions and it never occurred to me that we’d been coming and going back and forth between Sydney and Brisbane for 10 years and not once had I ever driven it! Marrying a ‘Travel Plus’ girl had its perks – we flew everywhere!

“Dad, I need a pee!” Felicity yelled from the back with her Cd Walkman headphones on.

“Yeh, we’ll stop for lunch.” I pulled into the next petrol station and Felicity and Peta twaddled off (cross-legged) to the ladies. I got out and stretched my legs and then stretched my back. They were in there for fucking ages so I locked the car and made my way to the diner section to suss the menu. The girls finally finished pissing and joined me and we ordered lunch to stay with a nice pot of tea. I was bit concerned when the guy sitting two tables left of us was eyeing off Peta, I had a feeling there might be trouble. He was a big bastard and he must’ve been the driver of that eighteen-wheeler outside.

“Excuse me, lady.” He had come over and tapped her on the shoulder and continued, “Did you use to sing at Cassidys about ten years ago?” He smiled as he knew he was right. He had one front tooth missing and was

butt ugly with the armpits from Stinky-Land. Peta smiled back and answered politely,

“Yes ... gees that was a long time ago! How did you know it was me?”

“I lived in Sydney back in those days and that was my regular watering hole. You were bloody good ... so you still singing?” She instantly looked at me and shook her head and announced,

“I’m a working mum, those days long gone, you know life,” Peta grabbed my hand and then introductions were on while Fel shot me a do I have to be here look and reminded me of me.

Friends and family

We'd both forgotten how fucking hot it gets in Queensland but after a year and a bit we were well acclimatized. Fel had finally forgiven us for moving and we believed it was possibly to do with Casey (her new best friend) and they were inseparable, so we now had an adopted daughter most weekends. Pop and Mum spoilt them both rotten as did the in-laws. Peta's new position was a godsend as she did half as much work as down south and got paid twice as much and as usual, they loved her. I scored a bassist gig in a local band - The Applicators playing rock covers and making a regular wage. Thanks to artists like Pearl Jam, Black Crowes, and Lenny Kravitz, I once again enjoyed playing covers. Stiff was now working fulltime for 'Shark Attak' and was the man who booked all our gigs so work was plentiful. Cess' advertising agency was taking off, so we were all making money and spending shitloads of time together just hanging out and growing older. Dinners, card nights or just a good old barbecue on a Sunday was the norm.

It was now February 1999 and the millennium was fast approaching, time had flown by and not much had changed bar me playing in my third cover band since coming back (but still playing the same songs in all of them) or that Felicity was becoming a young lady and boys were starting to

pay attention to our baby. It was obvious why; she looked like a young Peta with a dash of Tit thrown in (luckily not too much). She had my brown hair coloring but it was still Peta's hair and her eyes were definitely Peta's. Yes, she was my daughter and to my horror, her body was a young woman's in development. Boys might have been chasing her but it was something else that had all of her attention – music! Fel was drilling me for lessons on guitar and singing lessons from her mum. She might have only been 15 but she was writing lyrics far better than I ever dreamt of at her age and she even forced Casey into learning the bass, so one day they could form a band together. I felt sorry for Casey as she didn't really want to play bass but would, just to keep her best friend happy.

“Tit! Throw us the tongs will ya,” Stiff demanded, as who had just admitted defeat to cooking the sausages on the barbie with a kitchen fork. “While you're in the kitchen, get me a beer,” instruction No.2 was bellowed. Peta was in the kitchen already making the salad and had heard Stiff's request and handed the tongs to me before I had time to ask where they were.

“I still can't believe this Ian,” Peta put the salad on hold and grabbed me, hugged me and kissed me lovingly, “I love this place,” she was thanking me but it was her who had saved her arse off for the deposit to buy this house, inground pool included.

“Babe, I love this place too!” I returned her kiss. Fel and Casey entered the room with Fel pulling that embarrassing parents look.

“Mum, can Casey sleep?” Fel pleaded as if we'd ever said no before.

“Of course Sweetie,” Peta looked straight at Casey and ordered, “so ring your Mum and check if it’s alright.”

“Thanks, Mum.” A half-wet Casey kissed Peta (her adopted mum) on the cheek and both girls who were wearing bikinis with towels wrapped around them left the kitchen to ring from the lounge room.

“Where’s my fucking tongs?” Stiff screamed poking his head in the kitchen looking at us still in an embrace position, “Can’t you two leave each other alone for five minutes?” He raised his eyebrows and I threw him the tongs and as quickly as he was there, he vanished. The girls ran by yelling,

“She’s allowed!” they both made their way to the pool area. Cess and Julie were swimming as were Pop, Mum and Peta’s Parents and a game of water volleyball between them and the girls was recommenced. Peta finally let me go and continued with her salad and I grabbed two stubs, one for Stiff and one for myself.

“Here you go you, you one-legged dickhead,” I cracked it open and handed it to him.

“Up yours Cuntlips.” Stiff and I clinked our XXXX Golds together. “This is a great place Tit!” Stiff approved of our house with a swig. Peta placed the salad and all relevant utensils on the outdoor setting under the pergola summoning all while Stiff finished up the steaks, onions, and snags.

“Thank-you all for your kind assistance on moving us in.” I toasted and our first barbie was officially opened.

We drank all day and it was about 11:00 pm and it was only us boys left outside near the pool as Pop and Mum had gone home. Julie and Peta had crashed in the lounge room watching some crappy love story on the television and the girls were in Fel's room playing Cd's. We were well pissed and reminiscing was high on the agenda.

"What about the time Joey knocked off that bird in the car park between sets," Cess chuckled.

"Oh yeh," remembered Stiff, "he came back on stage and he was smirking his arse off. I kept asking him why he was smiling and he kept telling me 'no reason' until the next day ... God, he could pull the birds!"

Our laughter turned to silence as we all individually remembered Joey and that he no longer was with us and that he had contracted Aids from sharing junkie's needles. Then Stiff made the suggestion out aloud we all had kept in our subconscious for years.

"Let's get the band back together."

Velvet Flairs

“How’re you going, mate?” I cuddled Frogdog and he reciprocated. I then grabbed Dale and did the same. I hadn’t been this excited in fucking years. Stiff had the rehearsal room p.a. sounding acceptable with Peta doing her, “test one-twos”. Cess was glowing as much as I was and we all set-up our equipment in record time. It had never occurred to me that everybody had wanted to get a band going again as much as I had, as we all had jumped at the chance. We knew we would be working mainly RSL clubs as Stiff could take care of that now as he owned ‘Shark Attak’. We’d had a band meeting with everyone and decided if we wanted to play gigs then covers was the necessary requirement. We picked a song list of mainly classics with the newer songs being female vocals as there were shitloads these days for Peta to choose from. Since Dale and Peta had been so eager to join we thought it only fitting to call ourselves after the party band – ‘Velvet Flairs’. Cess had taken care of some promo material (posters and stickers) and even organized a photo shoot through his company and they were great! We all had a ball getting organized it was just so much fun.

Our first loud rehearsal was today and we never expected much, but we were all a little nervous.

“I’d thought we warm up with an easy one – ‘Mustang Sally’.” I resumed the position of chief organizer as the gloves fit perfectly. Frogdog

counted us in and we were playing. It was like riding a bike and we rode her perfectly. Stiff was smiling the whole way through. Peta picked 'Boys in Town' by the Divinyls for her first song and we still had it in us - it pumped! It didn't take us long at all to knock up a dozen songs as between us all, had remembered most of the patterns and lyrics. Dale even sang 'Little Wing' by Hendrix and nailed the solo; I'd never seen him play this bluesy before.

"Can we have another fag now, your lordship?" Stiff asked then baited us, "I've got another suggestion."

We all grabbed a drink from the drink machine and went outside to get some fresh air then replace it in our lungs with smoke and to ease our curiosity of Stiff's comment.

"So what's your big suggestion, Stiff?" I asked curiously.

"Okay guys, I'll lay it on the line. I'm not putting you in the RSL's," Stiff shocked us! We weren't that bad, were we? Stiff continued, "Well, I reckon if you guys got a few current heavier tunes, you know like Pearl Jam and Nirvana, I'll be able to slot the band in all the rock clubs, like 'Rainey Place'... no problems at all."

I was definitely shocked now, as I knew this meant a few more dollars to line our pockets than what aging musos in RSL's got. Peta was the first to raise the age issue.

"Stiff, aren't we a bit old? Don't they want young bands?" I thought the same thing and Dale and Cess were nodding; we'd all had our day!

“Guys, I heard what I heard and let me tell you, young bands take years to sound like you already do. As long as you throw in stuff like Green Day and Hole ... you’d kill it! Cess, you could pull off Metallica, piss easy!”

Once again Stiff had tempted our taste buds as I knew I’d rather be playing Metallica than ‘Eagle Rock’ any day. Dale was the one I expected to oppose just because of the heavy guitar style but he agreed eagerly. So we re-entered the room with a new vengeance and I showed Dale the riff for ‘Enter the Sandman’.

Three weeks later we were ready to Rock! We’d pulled in about thirty new songs including a couple of lighter dancey fun numbers like ‘Love Shack’ by the B52’s which sounded great with Dale singing the main vocals and Peta doing the chick bits. I couldn’t believe how good we actually sounded but it was more, much more than the sound, it was the familiar feeling of being a part of something good, a vibe, just something you can’t describe, it was just there!

Rainey Place

“Tit, I haven’t been this fucking nervous in years ... what if I?” Cess then laughed and continued, “Man, I can’t fucking wait!” I grabbed the big ugly bastard around the neck and gave him a big kiss on the left cheek. He shared the moment by lifting me 6 inches off the ground. Peta entered the band room after returning from the car with her warpaint and clothes and shot me a smirk before proceeding to apply the base makeup to her face.

I took the moment to peruse the band room and take a good look at these wonderful people I had the fortune to be here with tonight. Cess was warming up his voice by singing into a folded towel, his hair was way past shoulder length (much to Julie’s displeasure) and he was wearing a black shirt untucked over his jeans with his black Doc Martins, his new updated look, trading in those pointy-nosed cowboys he’d had for years. He hadn’t put on that much weight so for someone close to forty he looked thirty to me. Frogdog looked the same as he always had - jeans and surfy singlet, just wrinklier. True, he looked older but he still could play the arse of most of the young pups around here. I looked at Dale and couldn’t believe the transformation, he was so excited about playing again he went and bought himself a Mesa Boogie with a quad that sounded awesome with his old black Strat and Rickenbacker. I loved his new look too, he went crazy and bleached the tips of his hair so with a little gel, looked like he just come out of new style punk-pop bands. He was wearing a purple muscle T-shirt with

‘Porn Star’ on it and his wire-rimmed glasses were put in his gig bag for the night. He’d always been a fitness freak so was in real good shape. Well my little potbelly was a bit of a worry but Peta had bought a nice hippie type open shirt to cover it, but fuck’em, I thought ... this is me!

My beautiful Peta was halfway done on the eyes and already looking stunning, a few crow’s feet but she still looked rootable in any man’s book. Her body had gained a few pounds but nothing that you’d ever complain about, she used to be a size eight and now she’s a size ten, big fucking deal! Peta’s hair was still blonde but her natural color had darkened so she likes to enhance it with a tint or two every now and then, it was mid-back length and she always had taken care of it and always would, I believed. She couldn’t make up her mind what she wanted to wear so had brought two options, a long red satin top with flowing sleeves that was very low-cut exposing her still perky thirty-eight-year-old breasts. The top was flowing on the bottom also which hung over a pair of tight fitting flared jeans or she could wear a tasseled leather top with tasseled denim which looked very Cowboys and Indians to me; she looked hot in both! The red top and jeans had won as they were being worn. I glanced at myself in the mirror and took a good look at my face. The years hadn’t been too unkind but yes, I had aged. My short bleached hair was probably a mismatch to my eyebrows, dark brown mo and goatee but it sort of gave me that Everclear/Chillies/Nirvana look, I liked it and so did Peta ... Fel hated it!

Stiff had booked us into 'Rainey Place' for our first gig and the place was jammed. Thursday nights went off with a bang here, it was dollar drinks 'til midnight so about seven hundred or so pissed uni students were here. We had three sets to do and they were to be all full-on, no old classics here (except 'Whole Lotta Love' which both Peta and Cess sang together trading vocals, it was a real showpiece). We were expected to - ROCK!

Stiff entered the band room with our rider - a carton of Heineken's and a dozen bottles of spring water. He opened the carton put them into the plastic bin and poured the ice over the bottles.

"You think these dickheads would've done this, eh?" I just raised my eyebrows and agreed but I was mainly thinking of song progressions, riffs, and chords. Peta had finished painting herself and Stiff gave her a looking good glance. Julie and Nat arrived and Cess and Stiff gave them their hello kiss while we all said, "Hi."

"How are we doing team?" Julie asked before pulling Cess' head down to fix his hair that wasn't up to her expectations.

"Not too bad, thanks Jules," Peta replied and gave her a kiss, leaving her trademark lipstick mark.

"How long we got Stiff?" I didn't have a watch so I asked him.

"Twenty minutes, give or take a fly shit, plenty of time!" Stiff lowered his watch and resumed scratching his arse while Natalie whacked his hand to leave the worms be. I tuned my bass and passed Dale the tuner, we were ready now - all we had to do was wait.

I walked onto the stage and plugged my bass in then took a glance towards the dance floor. It was packed with what I would gather to be my or our very first mosh-pit. The punters looked around 18 to 22-year-olds average with the odd old bugger standing out like dog's balls. Frogdog was on his kit and between him and the soundman across the room, they were testing all feeds for the drum mikes and they were working. I had butterflies bad but too late now and was thankful I took that last minute piss. Peta and Cess had acknowledged that the fold-back was acceptable and Dale's Strat sound was filling the stage, blending with the house dance music. And then ... it was time!

Dale started the 'Are You Gonna Go My Way' riff and we were away. Cess sang first while Peta did chorus harmonies and tambourine playing. Dale's sound was great and we finished to cheers that I hadn't heard in at least 15 years; I had goosebumps! 'Celebrity Skin' by Hole was next and Peta wailed it out and sang it way better than Courtney ever could live. The dance floor did become a mosh-pit during Green Day and by the end of our first set, I had witnessed my first stage-diver and crowd-surfer, it was totally fucking awesome!

"That was fucking great!" Dale grabbed me as we walked off stage to the dressing room after our first set, "Man, that was fucking great!"

"Yeh, it was - wasn't it!" We were both beaming and I turned and waited for Peta who had been caught by a couple of punters that were

telling her how good she was. Cess was already in the room as he was first off the stage. Peta had broken their grip and was coming.

“Oh Darl, thank-you ... I missed this!” And she jumped on my back before I piggybacked her to the room.

“Well done Velvet Flairs, management loves ya’s,” Stiff had just put the icing on the cake.

Pass it on

We started playing 2 nights a week soon after as Stiff had pushed us into most of the decent clubs and bars. We were well received everywhere we went, punters loved our music and management loved dealing with professional grown-ups instead of egotistical kids. We decided because of everybody's respective careers (bar mine) that we wouldn't do any more than 3 nights per week - maximum. We were having a ball and I started teaching guitar lessons on the side just for something to do during the week. Fel was actually getting quite proficient herself on the acoustic so I started teaching her the electric and how to use effect pedals. I'd bought myself one of those mini-disc home studios and we laid down a few of her originals, they were pretty basic but I could see where she was heading and didn't mind me suggesting a few chord changes here and there. Casey played bass, real straight and a bit dodgy but she'd improved too. Their harmonies blended okay and I was quite proud of my daughter when she insisted on her mum singing harmonies with them. Fel had seen us play at soundchecks and loved the full sound of a real band so it was time for dad to help her start her own and so we did.

"Dad, this is Kyle." Fel introduced me and we shook hands.

“Come in, mate, don’t be shy,” I offered him a seat in my studio and I took a good look at him. Kyle was about 18, five foot eight with a shaved head, eyebrow pierce and a Celtic tat on his right forearm and by the way, Fel was looking at him, I was already in trouble. Fel had met him through his little sister who was in her class at school.

“Thanks, can I plug into this one?” He pointed to my Peavey practice amp.

“Yeh sure, go ahead.”

He hadn’t smiled once since he walked in and his attitude was the typical you owe me one, which was so present in kids these days. We’d set up an audition and I would be playing bass for the day just so I could make judgment on how bad he really was ... but he wasn’t. He hammered his guitar but had potential oozing out of him. I hated him and I loved him but it wasn’t my band.

“So Kyle what do you want to do?” I prodded.

“Do what?” Kyle looked at me as that was the dumbest fucking question he’d ever been asked.

“With music and your playing?” I clarified it for the dumb-arse factor.

“Oh ... I just want to play guitar hard, smoke drugs ... and fuck 15-year-old school girls!” He got me a beauty when I caught a smirk on the left side of his mouth. Fel looked at me in horror with her eyes glaring, Don’t Dad DOOONNNN’T!! “No seriously man, I can’t see myself working in K-mart, can you?” He asked me a question and the answer I would’ve like to have

answered was, *'No! Cleaning the juvenile detention centers maybe!'* But I bit my tongue and shook my head in confirmation. After he went, the one pleasure I got out of him passing the audition was not that I hated him but I couldn't wait to see Peta's reaction to this arrogant pup. Fel was ripe for the picking so to speak and my ultimate nightmare I believed, would be that he would be the one to pluck it from Fel and I knew Peta would think the same thing and I was spot on - she went off!

Fel found a guy to play drums - 'Fungus' because of his bumfluff on his face and it made me wonder if it was a requirement for all drummers to get a bad nickname? Then I remembered mine. They started rehearsing about a week later and it was painful but I grinned and bore it for Fel's sake. Kyle was the obvious musician in the group and felt compelled to take control in arrangements and just about everything else but I did get a shock when it was Casey that was getting all Kyle's attention and I breathed a sigh of relief. Now the ball was rolling, I pulled away and let Felicity take the reins, it was her band and I would always be there if she needed but I'd played my role for this part in time.

Goodbye 20th century

Velvet Flairs were kicking arse and we were comfortable enough now to have a few too many drinks while playing but we always made it through. Since Dale was the only single one in the band he was pulling all the birds, no matter what age. He even pulled two twenty-one-year-old birds in one night for a threesome ... lucky bastard! Dale was playing great guitar it was like it was his time to rock and I especially liked the way he attacked Green Day and Foo Fighter's tunes. Cess was powering on vocals and his hair was even longer and nearly the length of his seventies style again but thank God for better hairdressers. Peta was a little tired but still had a grip on balancing the two workloads, so I made sure I did all the house chores as much as possible, just like I always had. Stiff had us booked in 'Rainey Place' for New Year's Eve 1999 and had pulled us five times our usual fee - we were stoked! I was concerned about the millennium bug though and would hate to be playing to a packed house, lose power and then there surely would be a riot.

It was 10 minutes to go to midnight and the night was a killer, we had the place jumping and I was sure they'd pumped a few too many into the club and prayed the bug wouldn't take out the air conditioning. The crowd were rowdy and pumped up and Cess even got a tit flash and it had been a

few drinks since I'd witnessed Cess getting one of those. We were pretty pumped and half pissed also but we were having a ball.

“All right Fuckers, here we go!” Cess raised the large digital clock towards the crowd and we all started the countdown, the response was huge.

“Ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one ... Happy New Year!”

It was goodbye to the 20th century.

End of Part 3

Part 4

THE NOUGHTIES

What goes around comes around

Parental understanding

“Fuck my head is killing me! Where’s the fucking Beroccas?” I bellowed down the hall towards Peta who was still fast asleep until my outburst.

“On the fridge where they always are, now piss off Ian, let me sleep!” She pulled her pillow over her head and rolled over onto mine into hamburger position between the two. I made my way to the lounge room after finding and dispensing two next morning lifesavers into a glass of tap water. Fel was watching T.V. and writing simultaneously and just shook her head at me, announcing,

“You’re too old to be doing this every weekend you know!” She was right of course but we had a reputation to live up to - didn’t we? The old age weekend warrior party animal band and we loved it! Then she complained, “DAAAD!” I had let one nasty beer fart escape which was Stiff worthy.

“What you writing?” I asked as she was at it again.

“Just the usual, boy meets girl, girl gets cheated on, girl gets revenge. Porh, you stink!” My little girl smiled and so did I as I knew by all her anguished lyrics she would get revenge if it ever happened to her without a doubt; she could be a bitch when pushed and I loved that.

Fel was 17 in 2 months and boy, had my little girl grown-up, she was a young woman now and looked it, with her full woman's body and multicoloured hair. Her birthday present was already on order and at least she had agreed to our (Peta's and mine) condition's first. We asked Fel what she wanted more than anything and she (to our horror) had asked for a lower back tattoo. Peta instantly said 'No way!' but Fel worked her Dad, you understand don't you - eyes at me. So I reasoned with Peta that at least this way she wouldn't do it behind our backs. We agreed on the condition that we go and pick three designs and have them on her dressing table mirror so she could see them every day for three months before getting it for life, just to make sure she still loved it as much as the day she picked it. The body piercing we didn't mind so much about, as we had earrings ourselves and they could be removed even though we disallowed earlobe stretching after seeing Kyle's monstrous holes. I think I secretly hoped she wouldn't get the tattoo but I remember getting my first earring back in '76 at the local chemist and getting very upset when the Chemist himself asked me if I had a note from my mother aaaghhh!!! Sometimes you need independence and she needed hers; it was her body!

“So have you heard back from Uncle Stiff about getting the band in Hell's Kitchen?” I asked.

“Yeh, he’s got us booked for the 13th, a Wednesday,” Fel smiled and returned her attention to her songwriting.

Her band wasn’t too bad now - Felicity’s Box. Of course, Peta and I were horrified at the name but we had no say in that either. Kyle was becoming quite a good guitarist and was like a bear on speed on stage, bouncing around and his heavy-handed style suited her songs, I was still truly thankful he wasn’t fucking Fel but (again to our horror) Tony the new bass player was.

Peta and I were going to stay in a hotel for my birthday as we were playing down the coast but decided to come home unannounced instead. We caught them in our bed on my birthday and in their birthday suits! There were tits, dicks and rudey bits flying everywhere and to top it all off they left a map of Africa on our bedspread from a used condom but we were very thankful she was using them. That was the time Peta had to calm me down by locking us in our room as I was going to kill him, but she quickly reminded me of when we started rooting and that as them, we would’ve been in our early seventeens. We both weren’t virgins either but the thought of that dirty smelly scruffy looking arsehole sticking his cock in ... Felicity’s box! Yeh I know – bad taste! It killed me and for the first time in my life, made a connection with Peta’s mum adult mind - it’s official, I’m old! We banned him for the rest of the weekend and he wouldn’t cross my path for 2 weeks after, just to be safe. And every time he came over after, I’d try and psych him out by casually walking by him simply smirking and

holding either a hammer or a pair of bolt cutters! They were an item now so Peta did the wise mother thing and stuck Fel straight on the pill. The harsh reality was Fel was now sexually active and there was fuck all you could do about that except push the condom/safe sex message.

“What do you reckon Dad?” Fel handed me her notepad and I perused her lyrics and the first verse was completed.

*Hey there lover, yeh you,
with the I'm so ever cool stare.
Where's that blonde bitch you're screwing now?
Not that I should really care.
But I've just bought myself a handgun,
Now you should be really scared.
There's always an easy fix with just one click,
so push me if you dare!*

Yep! She was my girl all right and I couldn't help the 'Machine Gun Love' comparisons but if I told her that, she'd rip them up straight away, it just wouldn't be, what do they say these days? Oh yeh – “Sick!”

“That’s great Sweetheart. Keep it up, I’m ... gonna take a shit.” I handed her her book back and left the room with her screaming obscenities as I departed her with another suffocating beer fart.

The demos

Stiff arrived with Natalie later that Sunday arvo for our weekly Thomas household barbecue and as usual delegated himself to cook which I never complained about. Cess and Julie crawled in about half an hour later and Cess was suffering from a big one as Peta was. They both looked fucked but any tequila shots will do that to you; I tried to warn them after four. Fel's band turned up for their weekly free feed and a swim and as normal they did nothing to help, just eat for ten, drink our beers and piss in our pool - that Tony would do that just to get back at me, I was sure! We didn't care as long as Fel was still around us and we were still apart of her life. We knew we didn't have that long before she would grow her wings and fly away and we both dreaded that day. As soon as they arrived Stiff handed the tongs to me to take over, he had called a quick meeting with them as he was their manager. I kept out of it as it was too close to home for me and Fel being my daughter first - was my main priority. After 5 minutes Stiff returned and gave me a dirty look like I didn't have a fucking clue how to cook a barbie - Prick!

"Tit, I'm gonna record the guys, so do you want to do it?" I quickly glanced at Fel and she was smiling and nodding. Stiff continued, "They all want you to produce the tracks and be there for mix-down." I was flabbergasted and answered,

“I’d be honored!”

The demos went well on digital format at a great home studio ‘Paper Cuts’ and Kyle’s guitar double-tracked was outstandingly hard and fast and we, Darren (the studio owner) and myself managed to capture his essence. Darren drove the Pro Tools bus while I mainly concentrated on mic set-ups and tearing their songs to pieces and re-gluing the obvious wrong bits or driving Darren mad by requesting this or that sound or effect. I especially liked the second track ‘Projective Obsessive’, Fel’s voice was powerfully raw and not as sweet as Peta’s so it suited the aggressive style of this song. I had to admit Tony was a good bass player and his six-string bass had all the necessary sub-notes to complete their sound and combined with the Fluffmiester (yes, new nickname) on drums, kicked arse! Fel’s guitar playing had improved immensely and even the last slow tune ‘Devil’s Advocate’ was her playing by herself for the first half before the entire band came in blazing. Seven tracks in total were laid down over a three-day period.

We came back after listening to them over the next week to add or delete any missed mistakes or to add final harmonies etc. but they liked the demos raw as they were, so we went straight to mix-down mode. I only ever did two songs per night on mix-down as I’d always believed your ears deceived you after that. We did this over 3 nights straight, left them for a week then listened to them fresh; they were done!

Stiff pulled in a favor from Cess and all artwork, printing, and promo material cost them next to nicks. Fel was the closest thing Cess had to a daughter and felt obligated. Once again his work was faultless!

It was decided a run of five hundred CD's would suffice at first and this way they could be sold at gigs as well; Stiff put the dollars upfront! The CD looked professional and titled 'Banana Bang!' with the cover picture of a corrupt copper frisking someone in the background with another corrupt copper in the foreground holding a loaded banana! Fel was excited when twelve CD's were sold at their gig at 'Hell's Kitchen'. Stiff was pleased too, they had performed and went over well and a small following was already starting to happen. We both (Peta and I) were thankful to have Stiff (Fel's Godfather) looking after her at gigs especially as she was still underage and required a chaperone. No one would get anywhere near her with alcohol when Stiff was in the room, he was way stricter than us.

Fifty demo CD's were sent to various publishers and record companies with a promo pack and Stiff to follow up in a couple of weeks, then repeat the process. The ball had been set in motion.

The emotional gift

Fel's birthday was only 2 weeks away now and the tattoo was still being applied whether we liked it or not. Peta and I had agreed she worked hard on her music this year as well as keeping her grades at school to her usual excellent standard, (those were her mother's genes for sure) so we decided this year a special gift was to be presented at her party. We'd tossed around ideas like a car or a computer with home digital recording or a laptop for school but Peta loved my suggestion and there was no other choice that compared, we just knew she'd love this.

No one else was home, Fel was at school, Peta at work too, so it was time and I knew it would be emotional. I got on my knees in our bedroom and reached under the bed searching blindly until I found the handle, I pulled and she came easily. The case was dusty as and I instantly wiped off the dust to peruse the various road-battled stickers. My favorite was always This is my guitar so FUCK OFF!

I unlatched the brown leather Gibson case and opened the lid ... and there she glowed in all her glory - Goldie.

I picked her up and the weight instantly took me back to that first time I'd played her, she was magnificent. This was the first time I'd touched her since Joey's funeral, I just never could - she was Joey's! I strummed a G and she was way out of tune so I tuned her. The strings weren't too bad surprisingly. I re-strummed the G chord and she took me back to - Joey Land ... where it was all BAD!

"Tit, it's Joey, I'm in jail." This phone call was about to be a bad one, I just knew.

"Yeh," I waited.

"Pricks arrested me on possession and use of narcotics ... Cunts!" The day had come, the one I'd been waiting for, it had only been a matter of time. The rest of the conversation was the normal bullshit about court and bail and I wrote down all the necessary details.

Joey had been arrested for using heroin at a party and was caught doing so. I was pissed off at Joey for this, the band had died 6 months prior and here I was still cleaning up his fucking mess.

The Courts had agreed 'Good Behaviour' if Joey'd seek treatment, so I got the lucky job (as his mother wanted nothing to do with him) to check him in. He was in there for a month and I visited him every week, he was doing great, he was clean. We were both beaming the day I checked him out and it was so good to have the old Joey sitting and chatting next to me in the car on the way home.

We hung around a bit for the next 2 weeks and even wrote a song 'Flairly Decent'. It was pretty simple and nothing you'd write home about but it was the first thing we'd done for ages, a song about the band going through the changes.

As time went on we started seeing less and less of each other until all contact stopped. Joey had repaired his relationship with Lizzie and I was happy about that especially that next time he'd got done shooting up in an alley with a bunch of deadbeats, it was her turn to put him in rehab. She rang me and asked me to visit him and of course I couldn't refuse ... I still loved him! He was fucked the first time I saw him but by the end of treatment he was back to his old self and determined to beat his nemesis. When he got out I never heard from him until 2 and a half months later when he came around to borrow a fifty off of me. He looked like a bum like he'd been sleeping in the street. I refused and he got upset and fucked off and that was the last I heard from him besides that he'd hocked his mum's stereo to buy smack; he was fucked!

My knees were getting sore from kneeling on the wood-grain floor so I changed positions by sitting on the bed with Goldie and I strummed a Dm.

Peta and I had just been married and living happily in Sydney playing music and rooting each other silly and nothing would ever bring us down, until Joey.

He'd turned up on our doorsteps and at first, we didn't even recognize him with his ginger Ned Kelly beard but I recognized his drug use habits immediately. We took him in cleaned him up, gave him clothes, cut his hair and even cleaned his teeth but it was only a makeover and every time we'd leave him alone he'd be back on the juice.

Peta and I wanted our life back but couldn't ignore his problem and weakness; we still loved him! After 2 hours of talking to Joey one morning, we convinced him to try and get help, he agreed. The local doctor booked him over the phone into nearest rehab center across town so we took him before he changed his mind. I personally thought this clinic was way better than the Queensland one and that Joey looked like a new man after 3 weeks.

He got out after two months with the all clear but was required to check in every week for on-going counseling and treatment, it was working. Joey stayed with us for the next few months and was doing great; he was clean, playing great guitar again and ready to join a band.

He scored a gig with Vicki Carter - a young chickee babe who had a single doing not too bad on the charts. She was on the tele and was cute as fuck but nothing you'd rave about as a singer; just a bit young! Joey learnt her songs with enthusiasm and the other players were up to par with Joey so the music was good - very good! Her songs were commercial pop but live they sounded a lot more real and rockier (thanks to Goldie). Joey moved out when the band hit the road to tour the east coast upwards then back through Sydney heading towards final destination - Melbourne, where they would be based to record her new album.

Joey did the tour and the album (which I thought was a bit poppy for Joey but I don't think he had a choice). There was one good rock pop song on there though and Joey had written it with the drummer - 'Satisfy My Love' it was both Peta's and my favorite. Joey only lasted the next tour before being sacked for playing like shit at gigs, looking like the junkie he was again and being off his head. Apparently, he'd started on alcohol than on weed, moving to cocaine, then back to his heroin (before the other 3 were added). We never heard from him again until that meeting in Brisbane airport after Stiff's amputation.

The tears welled in my eyes and I started to sob, I missed him like a brother. I grabbed the can of Mister Sheen and after taking off the old strings, oiled her rosewood neck, gave her a good polish and she shined once again as much as she did at Joey's funeral and suddenly, I was there.

"You okay Sweetie?" Peta cuddled me with Mum, then Lizzie came and hugged me too and thanked me for trying but I couldn't play, it was too hard.

"I'm okay now, thanks." I was back to just sucking air and my eyes were stinging. Cess had restarted the song and finished it by himself playing guitar himself, he sounded angelic. He was the rock today.

After the cremation, we made our way to Lizzie's for the wake. Lizzie was doing better than us all and I believed she was glad his suffering was

over and that at last, he had found peace from his hellish existence. I believed she had mourned prior to his death, many times. Cess was the best of us all and as I said, was our rock for the day. I wasn't the worst either, it was Stiff and I think he felt guilty for Joey's demise. He and Joey had never patched things up fully until just before his 35th birthday when Lizzie had contacted him re Joey's wishes. We had a few drinks at the wake and the stories started flowing but we never expected to actually feel happy and laugh but we did.

Lizzie called me outside for a private chat and I was waiting for another thank-you for Peta and me coming up from Sydney but it wasn't that.

"Ian, you were the closest thing to a brother Joey ever had, he loved you," she spoke and I teared up, "he never stopped talking about you two right up to the end. He knew you loved him and was the only one that was there for him when he needed someone. He appreciated that you tried for his sake. He told me he was sorry, truly sorry for all the pain," Lizzie cuddled me and I let it out as she hugged me but I still couldn't speak so she continued, "Ian, he asked me to give you this." She turned around and behind her against the wall was Goldie in her case. Lizzie picked her up and handed her to me and finished off with, "Joey said she belongs to you." I held her but I felt sick and my knees were wobbling, I would've traded a thousand 'Goldies' just to have him back, I want him back, bring him back but he was gone!

I had to lay Goldie on the bed as I was sobbing and the tears were flowing fast. I walked around the room holding my shoulders crying, I needed to get it out and I did. I went to the bathroom and washed my face and looked in the mirror at my red eyes and I smiled to myself and spoke aloud,

“It’s time!” I nodded to myself in confirmation and made my way back to the bedroom and finished her rejuvenizing for Fel’s unveiling. I just knew she would love and respect her the way that Joey did.

Happy birthday

“Ahoy there Matey!” It was Stiff who was the first guest to show at the Fel’s party and I hit the floor as the stupid bastard had come as Long John Silver and taken his false leg off and was on crutches. He cracked at my costume as Frank ‘n’ Furter from Rocky Horror and couldn’t help himself touching my package.

Fel had asked specifically for a fancy dress but was horrified at our costumes, Peta had come as Madonna with the pointy tits and they were largely over exaggerated. Sixty guests in total were coming and we booked the hall that Stiff had his firty-fifth in (as Scotty put it!). Natalie was behind Long John and was dressed as a chubby Tinkerbell, so I quickly took a photo of them both before directing them to the bar. The guests started arriving thick and fast and I didn’t know most of them and even if I did, had a hard time recognizing them in their costumes. Fel looked wonderful as Morticia Addams and that dress looked like it was sprayed on, she could hardly walk, it was low-cut at the back exposing her freshly tattooed back. Kyle had gone all out and put a leather jacket and dark sunnies on and said he was the Terminator and I didn’t dare mention that he had no hair and Arnie did! Cess and Julie finally arrived and both Peta and I lost it, they were Fred and Wilma Flinstone and Cess had his hair perfect with painted

facial growth while Julie's natural brown hair was sprayed orange and in a bun with a plastic bone through it, they were by far the best costumes of the night and a prize-winning bottle of scotch would let them know that. The rudest costume went to one of Fel's classmate - Andy Jackson who had come wearing only a flesh colored G-string and a green leaf stating he was Adam but it was disturbing having to look at his arse crack all night. Frogdog was dressed as a Cowboy while Dale was Superman and I think he liked wearing the tights as it showed off the size of his not too small penis. Pop and Mum were the Blues Brothers and Peta's folks were Batman and Dolly Parton. I actually couldn't believe that Peta's mum stuffed her tits to make them huge and I didn't miss my opportunity to pay out on her about them.

Naughty nurse Casey was helping Peta serve nibblies while Fel was just having a blast. We knew she was underage and we didn't allow her any alcohol but she was getting it from everywhere on the side. She looked a little too giggly so I called her over and did the dad finger-pointing lecture and threatened to kill the party if she kept drinking, she stopped.

It was time to cut the cake.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, we are gathered here for this joyous occasion of Felicity's 17th birthday," the crowd cheered as I grabbed Fel who was beside me and pulled her closer to me, Peta had her other hand so was pulled as well. I continued, "Now we know you all want to hear one little

embarrassing story, don't you?" The reaction was a huge, "Yes!" So I started.

"This is one of those lovely father-daughter stories." Fel looked at me wide-eyed and yelled,

"No!" But I was on a roll.

"Fel and I were out shopping when she was only 12 and we were having a lovely day when yes, you guessed it, womanhood was bestowed upon her ... she got her very first period." I paused while her face went the deepest purple. "Like the good father I am, I wasn't going to let my little girl down so quickly took her into the chemist to purchase some pads and I was so proud she had finally become a young lady, that I was gladly announcing this to the counter staff and all who were in the shop. Asking all sorts of questions re her first period like, what was the best pad etc." Fel was extremely embarrassed now as everyone was laughing. I kept going. "I didn't realize that the stain was coming through her white pants and I was taking too long. Fel quickly grabbed the pads and ran off to the toilets while I paid." I took a sip of my drink, "When she came back her pants were no longer stained but were wet in the crotch area where she had washed them and it looked like she had wet herself. Again as the good dad, we went to buy her a skirt and knickers. Well!" I paused and Fel had her head down with both hands covering her face, Peta was cuddling her and whispering in her ear; I restarted. "Everyone was looking at her like 'that poor girl wet her pants' but if that's not bad enough the lady who served us in the 'Better Prices' clothing shop patted our Fel on the shoulder and told her, 'Never

mind Dear, we all have accidents'. Fel lost it big time, chucking one of her best all-time wobblies! She yelled 'I didn't wet my pants!' Then stormed off with the new clothes to the toilets, glaring at me because I announced to the lady – 'Don't mind her, she just got her first period!'" I waited for a moment and produced a new packet of pads from under the table and handed them to her, "Here you go Darling, remember always be prepared in life." I gave her a kiss on the cheek and finished off with, "Happy Birthday Fel, we love you!" The guests applauded and I handed her a knife. Peta lit the candles while we all sang Happy Birthday. A chorus of "Speech! Speech!" was happening as soon as the "Hip hip hoorays" were over. Fel's face was finally back to her natural color and was ready to get it over and done with.

"Hi guys," Fel sounded cute and the place erupted, she went on, "thanks for everyone coming and putting such an effort into your costumes. I especially would like to thank my beautiful Mum for working her bum off today and she did a good job, hey?" The chorus erupted again with "Here- here" and Stiff was the loudest in a pirate voice. Peta did a poofier wave with her left wrist. "Also my Dad," she looked at me, sniggered her nose and continued, "not for that horrible story but just because you've been the greatest dad in the world, for teaching me music and talking Mum into letting me get this," she turned and pointed to her tatt, "and I love you ... oh and Mum!" Everyone laughed at her last recovery and she grabbed us both and squeezed us hard. I was so very proud!

I signaled Stiff and Cess to come to the stage as planned and they made their way. When the embrace was over the boys joined us, Fel knew something was up straight away. Stiff became the host and announced,

“Fel, my gorgeous goddaughter, we have a special surprise for you.” Fel looked frightened and concerned as if nudey baby photos were about to be projected on a screen (that was coming later). “You’ve had a big year this last year and your mum and dad have been very proud of what you have achieved in all, school, work and music. They wanted to get you something special and let me tell you, girl, you’ll love this!” Stiff gestured towards me so I took over.

“Darling, I invited these guys up here for this as they are a major part of this gift and it comes with their blessing too.” Cess reached behind the black curtain behind us and found the case. He handed it to Peta who brought it to Fel. We were all beaming our faces off while Cess egged the crowd into cheering and wolf-whistling. Fel instantly recognized Goldie’s case and her hands were over her mouth and they were shaking nervously. Fel knew Goldie’s history and that she was the last connection left to Joey and our history and how much she was roughly valued at today, in her condition about seven times what Joey had paid. She could hardly open the case she was shaking so much but managed and she picked her up like a newborn baby. I helped her put the strap around her neck and pulled her Morticia wig through. Fel acknowledged the weight and Goldie was really low, at arm’s length but Fel looked cool. Her fingers found an open E formation and she rocked out a silent power chord to the cheers of approval from her guests, it was deafening. After it died down a bit, Stiff made another announcement.

“Fel, I have another little surprise I’ve had for a week! Smack me if you must,” Stiff looked at Kyle, Tony and the Fluffmiester who already knew what it was and were raising their left hands in the Hip-hop style of ‘Yo ...

right on' with the two middle fingers crossed. Stiff turned towards Fel and pulled an envelope from his back pocket, he extracted a letter and read to all. Fel's eyes were now wide open as Stiff finished the letter from 'Kingdom Kong Records' who had just offered them a 2-year publishing deal and future prospects of recording after hearing more demos. Now she was crying while still holding Goldie and we all grouped and hugged her from behind; the place went off!

Peta and I were the last ones left as we were doing the clean-up thing at 1:30. Fel had gone off with Tony and we knew she was going to get her birthday nookie, I would've. Goldie was entrusted back to me, in case aliens might steal her on the way home; Fel was already panicking about her. My beautiful wife with the pointy boobies looked as shagged as I felt and we were both sober. I watched her finish sweeping while I had a smoke sitting on the stage, Peta finished up.

"Let's go home, I'm fucked!" Mr. Obvious spoke once again.

"Pleeease ... It went great, didn't it?" Peta smiled and cocked her head. I picked up Goldie while Peta had our shit and we left the hall in darkness after locking up. Tonight was a golden memory.

End of an era (take 2)

Peta wanted to quit the band a couple of months later as she was too tired and our time was almost up. Frogdog had had enough, Dale was starting to whinge and I was once again bored, so we had a band meeting and made a major decision. We still all got on great and that was our biggest priority, friendship but the every weekend thing was too much. We didn't need the money either we were all doing okay. A unanimous decision was reached that we would play for ourselves and that we would record all our old songs - not play covers anymore! Stiff didn't want us to stop but was excited about recording the old songs. We all knew we had to play one more month out and our energy levels were revitalized, as we knew it was the end.

Rainey Place was where we started so decided that it would be our last gig and Stiff had promoted it as such. Even getting ready for the gig was excitable, we were all looking forward to tonight. Peta and I caught a cab in, as we knew a big one was to be had. I grabbed my bass from the boot as Peta paid the cabbie; the punters were lined up the street already! Bruno the security guard let us in after shaking our hands, wishing us luck and we made our way upstairs. The room was half full and we said a dozen hellos on the way to the dressing room. The rest of the band were already in the

band room, they were buzzing as we were. It was good to see band ethics were still around as all our friends from other bands had come to see us and popped their heads in to wish us the best, some even on the way to gigs.

Stiff made a speech and a toast to our past and future.

“I would just like to say that the 20-odd years I’ve had the good fortune to know you all, it truly has been the best 20-odd years anyone could ever have. Firstly, Dale, our newest member of the family, a true gentleman from the day we met you, I’ll personally never forget that time Joey broke a string, we love you, dude!” We all clapped, raised our various drinks and Dale took a bow. “Next!” Stiff turned to Frogdog, “Oh yeh I remember! You’re the bastard that stole my gig!” They both cracked up and had a play sparring match, then Stiff continued. “No man, you are still the best drummer in this town and without you these other guys are ... ” he hesitated, “drummerless, ha!” We all cracked up! Stiff finally finished what he was delaying to say, “No Mate, thanks, truly thanks.” More alcohol was toasted and drank. “Peta, my sexy Goddess of Rock!” She blushed instantly. “Firstly! Why the fuck did you marry this dickhead when you could’ve had the Stiffi? Once you’ve had the Stiff,” he looked at Natalie who was just doing a dream-on face towards him. Stiff went on, “mother of my Goddaughter and one of my closet friends, not only are you the talented one of the two but the beautiful one and the reason Felicity is following in your footsteps in every way. A great vocalist, wife, mother and friend and I’m honored to have known you.” Stiff took a bow and she took a curtsy then kissed his cheek. Stiff took a drink and turned to me glaring with one eyebrow down then quickly spun to Cess. “And you Mr. Suck-Cess Poole!”

Cess was grinning sipping his drink while Julie held his arm. “You’re just a useless prick that sings!” Then Stiff turned towards me while we were all laughing - except Cess who was just looking aghast. “Tit, the short one! The last one ever to get his pubes! The last one to lose his virginity! The first one to get crabs but most importantly ... the first one to marry Miss Right, but as a bass player though – you’re shit!” Again we all laughed and toasted. Stiff had to put us both (Cess especially) out of our misery. “No seriously, you two guys have been my best friends for over 20 years, I love you and I worship you both, I am who I am because we grew together and yes, I’ve seen misfortune,” he patted his false leg, “but I’ve also been blessed by fortune as well.” He pointed to us all and then pointed and blew a kiss to Natalie. “You are my brothers and to still be a part of something with you guys has been a pleasure. Lastly, I love you all and have a fucking great night!” We all toasted and I wasn’t letting him get away scot-free.

“H-hmmm! Stiff, what can I say about Stiff? Obnoxious, loud, smelly, fat, one-legged and a bastard but when we nearly lost you ... we all realized just how important a world with Stiff is! Oh yeh! Now you’re making good money can you give me back that ten I lent you in ‘75?” We toasted and he gave me the forks but we were all on a high and tonight would be great.

Backseat

Three months had passed and we still hadn't got together to do any original stuff so I was just pottering around the house and scored a couple of fill-in bass gigs through Stiff. Peta was doing a few more hours at work and was looking good at getting the 'National Sales Manager' position, which would mean a lot of interstate flying here and there, but she was excited about it. Fel loved Goldie and had even commandeered one of my amps so she could play electric in the band. She was writing heaps for their next lot of demos for the record company interest. I was honored and surprised when she brought me one of my old tapes she'd found, it was my old songs on it with only Joey and myself just tossing ideas around.

"Dad, I was wondering if you'd write a song with me? I've been playing your old tapes and I found this one." Fel put the tape in the portable and pressed play ... it was 'Sweetie'.

"Shit! I haven't heard that in years!" I listened intently and the quality was terrible but the tune was beautiful and Joey Taylor just had it. Fel spoke.

"Dad, that's great music and I've got some words." Fel pulled out her songbook and opened it at her latest entry. She started singing a melody over the top and I could hear the missing lines instantly. I'd never thought about it this way I'd always tried to rock it out, and that was wrong. I

listened and made mental notes of what to change, and the way it was supposed to be.

*Hey, I am alone now,
I'm washed up on the shore.
Trying to find all the answers,
trying to find some cause.
Loneliness and heartbreak
are now, my only friends.
Say goodbye to bitterness,
I left you at the end.*

*Maybe it's the way to say goodbye,
Maybe it's the way we had to try,
Maybe it's the way love dies
Just to fade away ... Just to fade away*

I loved her lyrics, they were perfect and it didn't take long for a bit of reworking and a new middle eight and it was done, it was truly beautiful and we both loved it. We played it to Peta when she got home for a second

unbiased opinion and we passed with flying colors. The band liked the song too, and to my surprise, as it being a ballad and they did it justice at rehearsals, by not overplaying but by leaving it sparse in places.

Fel and I continued writing and came up with a new song 'Loser Loser' a punky, pop song with a really catchy chorus. I put in a key change for the solo and increased the intensity of the playing to make a feature of Kyle's solo, this one worked great at their rehearsal and I knew this would go off live. They picked another four songs that Kyle and Fel wrote and one was a ripsnorter 'Drop Dead and Die' – a typical Fel trademark angry angst song that just happened. Fel's vocals screamed in the chorus and the verses were rapid-fire, just above a fast rap.

They recorded them again this time without me they were ready to do it their way and with their own decisions. I was a little disappointed but hey, I understood; I'd done my bit. The roughs sounded great! They were going to go somewhere for sure, you'd be an idiot if you denied it and they had the magic.

The final curtain

Peta got the new position of 'National Sales Team Leader' so we were in the money now. Cess had dived back into his business as Frogdog had, while I was jumping between being a freelance bassist and sound engineer just to keep busy. So when Dale took a position in Melbourne I faced the fact we would never play together again and our old songs would stay in their respective graveyards (besides 'Sweetie'). I was accepting of this and would never push the issue again.

Deal

'Kingdom Kong' jumped at the Felicity's Box new demos and Stiff slugged them to a two-album deal as he knew he could as other companies were showing interest as well. The album was to be recorded in Melbourne so we knew (Peta and me) Fel's wings were about to take a test flight. Stiff was to chaperone and that eased our minds a little. They would be gone for 2 months and that would be the longest we'd ever been away from her. The day came before we'd even blinked and my two ladies were tears all around. I was okay until Fel had to take me aside.

"Dad," she looked me straight in the eyes, "you know I wouldn't be going if it wasn't for you!" I was welling up as she kept going, "I mean it, you believed in me always, thank you, I love you." I lost it like a wusser-boy and held her as tight as I could. I let go and did the old dad routine.

"Now you ring me as soon as you get settled and if you need any -" Fel cut me off.

"Dad, I'll be all right, we've got Uncle Stiff." We looked over at him and he was putting the last of her stuff in the hired van. Peta was hugging the boys and we swapped roles as I shook their hands and gave them a good luck hug each. I whispered to Tony,

“Hurt her and I’ll have to kill you,” then I patted his back. He replied by saying,

“I love her man.”

They drove off to Peta bawling and me teary-eyed (now that’s a blatant lie! I was bawling too!) but it was her turn now and we were so happy.

Just do it

Peta and I took advantage of being alone and fucked everywhere,

God! How long has it been since we could do this? It was FUCKING wonderful!

My project

‘Travel Plus’ called a crisis conference and Peta was required to go to Sydney for five days so for the first time in years I was totally alone. I loved it for the first day but by the second I was climbing the walls, I had nothing to do. I turned on the computer and started something I’d procrastinated for years; I started a book. I knew I had to write about the years of the band, my life with Peta and Joey Taylor’s demise. I couldn’t believe how easy it was, the words just flowed and I found a great sense of self-satisfaction, something I’d never really achieved through music. Of course, I loved writing and playing music but I’d always depended upon someone else to finish a project, this belonged to me and I couldn’t stop. I stayed awake all night writing just stopping for a smoke and a coffee break, every now and then I’d fall asleep but then I’d come good and start again. I played the ‘Flairs’ old demos for inspiration and memories, as well as playing the ‘Velvet’s’ that I hadn’t heard in over a decade at least; it was truly wonderful!

I started in the 70s and it was tongue-in-cheek and I didn’t have to exaggerate too much and even had Peta’s and my first meeting, as well as getting the band together. I laughed a lot doing this and read and reread until I liked what was typed. Oh, it was so politically incorrect but I knew it was a laugh. Peta came home and I eagerly showed her my new project yet I

was not so eager to be criticised, but when she nearly wet herself and rushed off to the toilet and still chuckling while pissing, I knew I had done something right which only inspired me to write more.

Phone calls and dinners

Fel and the band were having a great time but they were working their arses off, so Stiff reported. We missed her immensely and she us and I dreaded our phone bill with all those reverse charge calls. Cess and Julie still came around for the occasional barbecue but our weeklies were no longer, but it was always nice to see them. Dale popped back one weekend and we (Peta's folks, my folks and us two) took him out to dinner and we all had a ball. Peta's mum and I actually enjoyed each other's company these days and no-one was more surprised than both Peta and her dad. They had a little disco happening after the meal, so I got her up for a dance - yeh, I was bourboned!

It's all happening now

Felicity's Box came home and Fel was beaming, she was pumped up about the recording as was Stiff and the boys, it had gone extremely well. They decided to get Cess to do the artwork, which made me happy that he was a part of this project as well, so they had a meeting to come up with ideas.

The record company went for the self-titled album Felicity's Box and the band liked that idea as it gave you no preconceptions. Cess took a great macro photo of two hands holding what would be interpreted as 'Pandora's Box' it was made of gold with a road sticker OPEN WITH CARE across it. The back cover was the same picture but from a back angle with Felicity's Box imprinted across the lid with song order on the box. Inside was the lyrics and a great shot of Felicity playing Goldie jumping on stage with the movement captured, all the band were in it, it was just a great live shot. I was touched when the first tribute was to Peta and me (Mum and Dad) for just being there and being her heart and soul. The album sounded fantastic and 'Sweetie', apologies - I mean 'Fade Away' was a winner. The producer had ripped the songs apart but he had interpreted their style perfectly, even the added keyboards were a plus. The record company decided to go with 'Drop Dead and Die' for their debut single and film clip, so again she was off

to Sydney to shoot it. This time it wasn't so painful, only a few days away and she'd be home ... but she never came home.

The road to fame

While in Sydney Stiff organized a one-month run of one-nighters supporting 'The Healers' and they hit the road immediately. I had to ship down their amps and drums on a freight company as they had their guitars with them. Peta packed Fel another suitcase and it was painful, her daughter was gone. She rang us every night at first but as time went on, a day or two would get missed until it was a regular twice weekly. The one-month tour turned into two as they were going over well and the Indi stations were starting to play 'Drop Dead' at night. Peta and I must've played her first film clip ten times in a row when we first got it, then excitedly took it to everybody's house to play it there also. We knew it was good news when Peta's mum hated it! Which meant it was ... SICK!

Stiff was doing a great job looking after them but he sounded more burnt out than they did, he was missing Natalie and she him, so the obvious move was to hand them over to a southern agency and come home. He organized them a new manager who would take over almost straight away.

We were very excited as the band was due to hit the Queensland leg of their tour and Fel would come home, even if it was just for a few days. They were playing Rainey Place of all places and I had organized everyone to come along to see my girl play.

Fel arrived home on a Thursday and she looked so much older and a little tired. We drove her crazy with the “tell us, tell us” questions. We had a barbie that night and everyone was invited, it was good to catch up and Stiff was jokingly complaining about Natalie locking him in the bedroom. It was always either Stiff or I making speeches but this time it was Fel’s turn.

“Thank you everybody, I missed you all, Mum, Dad, Pop, Nanna, Grandad, Gran, do I need to go on?” She waited for our reply of “No” and continued, “It’s always my Dad that has a special surprise for me but this time it’s his turn,” Fel screwed up her nose and waved me to join her. I glanced at Peta as if to ask “Do you know about this?” but she just shrugged her shoulders. Felicity grabbed me around the waist and announced, “Dad, ‘Fade Away’ has just been chosen as the next single by ‘Kingdom-Kong’ and they’re gonna push it!” This probably didn’t mean that much to the rest but to me, it was like winning the lottery, one of my songs on the radio with a film clip. I looked across at Peta who was jumping like a jack-rabbit.

Felicity’s Box were excellent! I was amazed at the tightness that 2 month’s constant playing had done for them. Kyle was really kicking arse and the rhythm section was flawless, the paid keyboard player - Gat (don’t ask me where that name came from?) added the missing ingredient and fit their personalities as well, I liked him. Tony and Fel were still going out but I could recognize the cracks of their mixed personal and working relationship; it wouldn’t be long! Fel’s voice cut strong through the band and she looked incredible on stage, every guy wanted her. Her tartan kilt

with the split and her fishnet stockings combined with the ‘Come fuck me’ boots took me back to the first time I’d seen her mum. I had to admit what every father dreads, my daughter was hot just like her mother was! Kyle had taught Fel a few simple lead lines so Goldie once again got a solo or two, it wasn’t Joey by far but she was back in business and sounded fat backing Kyle in his solos. Cess couldn’t contain his excitement and was in the mosh-pit up the front cheering on the young-uns. He was stoked to high heaven when Fel pulled him out of the crowd and got him to sing harmonies on ‘Fade Away’ but it was their night and they went off and received an encore, I thought to myself, not a bad reaction for a support band.

The weekend went quick and she was off again and it was just as hard as before, saying goodbye. The record company flew them down to Melbourne this time to do the clip for our song and a little more money was thrown into this clip and it showed. Fel’s make-up gave her a super-model look and the band came through tough, I was so proud.

Stiff, honest man?

“Tit, Peta!” Stiff had a serious tone to his voice.

“What’s wrong Stiff?” I looked at Natalie and she was holding his hand tightly while she glanced upwards towards his face. Stiff went ahead and asked,

“If you two are free on Saturday 24th of March, we would be wondering if you two would do the honors of being our Best Man and Matron of Honour?” Peta screamed and virtually jumped on top of Natalie while I grabbed Stiff’s hand tightly,

“About bloody time, you old bastard!” Then I let go of his hand and cuddled him before swapping positions with Peta to congratulate Natalie.

“So I gather that’s a yes then?” Stiff smiled while the girls were going ten to the dozen.

“Fuck yeh!” I replied.

The day arrived before we knew and cool calm Stiff was a bundle of nerves so I snuck him a decanter of Jack Daniels to keep in his pocket for a relaxer every now and then. Stiff and Cess looked smashing in their tuxes and I looked “mighty fine” was the exact words of approval I got from Peta

at home. They decided on a garden wedding and booked the local gardens for the day. Stiff's mum was on cloud nine to finally see her son snivel Natalie for good; she was so worried he'd lose her as she was perfect for him in every way. Natalie and the girls looked terrific. Natalie's Dad had passed away 4 years ago so her brother Vince was giving her away. Fel was asked to be a bridesmaid and had demanded that she'd be here and was, she didn't have a date or a boyfriend - it was over. Scottie was her partner for the wedding party as Peta mine and Julie, Cess'. Of course the day was overcast and only a light sprinkle dampened everyone's enthusiasm for a brief moment but on the whole, it went over well.

The ceremony over now meant for some serious drinking and we did really quick. I didn't realize I was half-pissed until I had to read out the telegrams but I survived. My favorite one was from Scottie it was simple and straight to the point.

"Natalie, if Stiffi suggests making love on your wedding night in an unusual place ... don't let him stick it up ya bum, love Scottie"

It went over like a lead balloon with her and her family but Stiffi fell off his chair.

The Bride and Groom were having their bridal waltz or should I say bridal waddle with Stiff's leg and I got up and joined them with Peta followed by the others. Fel was keeping her distance between her lower abdomen and Scottie's to my relief. Peta was glowing, her hair up in a bun

in a light blue tight-fitting bridesmaid dress, which she got to pick to herself. We danced as close as we could get and I did my best for her sake. I felt extremely tipsy and romantic so I whispered to her,

“You look gorgeous, girl!” I broke our embrace and cut in on the couple for a dance and Natalie was peaking, she was having the best time. I finally got to dance with my daughter and my heart melted just looking at her all grown-up. Cess and I ducked out of the reception room for a quick smoke and a top-shelf Chivas Regal in the main bar.

Bittersweet win

“Fucking great eh?” Cess was more pissed than I was. There were about thirty people in the bar just in their separate groups drinking and talking. I was about to start a conversation with Cess when I heard it. I knew straight away that that was my riff and I turned towards the television in the corner above the bar, it was playing a music cable show and for the first time besides our place, ‘Fade Away’ was being aired.

“I’ve gotta get Fel and Peta!”

I left Cess minding the scotches while I dragged them both from the reception room as quick as humanly possible. The girls were stunned, it was the first time any of us had witnessed this and they both were like jumping jack-rabbits this time. I didn’t know if it was the alcohol or the adrenalin rush but I was spinning. The song swilled in my head and my imagination played a cruel game with me and like a morphing effect, Felicity’s Box became The Flair playing the same song. We were all young again and I could see Stiff behind his kit, Cess singing and of course, Joey is playing. We were cooking it up in our 70’s clothes and bad hairdos. I was playing my old Rickenbacker while Goldie was singing sweetly, and as quickly as the vision came ... it disappeared. Fel brought me back to reality when she

grabbed me. The song finished and the V.J. announced that it was number 33 in the top 40 with a bullet. Peta then grabbed us both screaming,

“Oh my darlings, I’m so happy for you both.”

Bitter truth

We had a celebratory drink (and I even snuck Fel a glass of champagne) together before returning to the reception room.

But I was angry with myself for feeling a little bitter and it had taken me to an ungrateful place for a few minutes. So I sat alone while the girls told everyone the good news while I sorted out my drunken brain. Had I been suppressing these feeling for years? I couldn't help the it's not fair, hard done by loser feeling was really getting to me. I was angry at Joey for being a drug addict and breaking up the band, I was pissed off at us for selling out as a cover band and not sticking to our guns as an original one; Christ, our songs were good! But it was too late now and there was no going back, fuck'em all! I skulled another scotch and went outside for some fresh air and to calm down.

I lit myself a cigarette and just stood in the street outside the building, trying to make sense of this, why was I so angry? Shouldn't I be happy for Fel's sake? But it was about me, it always had been about me and I deserved to be a winner, not a loser and that's when Peta found me wallowing, concerned and worried she took me for a walk to sober up.

"You okay Sweetie?" her voice was her angelic one and with genuine concern.

“Nah! I’m fucking not!” I put my head down after dragging on my fag.

“What’s wrong?” Peta pried.

“It was just the film clip, it got to me! I should’ve been famous you know, I had it! But now it’s all too late! Fuck it!” There, I spilled the beans and admitted what had been kept locked inside for so many years.

“Are you serious Ian? Are you saying you think of yourself as a loser? You can’t be serious?” Peta was frowning and the angels had disappeared from her voice as she grabbed the cigarette from my clutch and took a drag.

“Well, I fucking am! If only I’d done it right! Wasting all those years playing fucking covers, then moving to Sydney and getting nowhere. I’m a good bass player, a fucking good bass player and songwriter ... and my songs should’ve been hits! Yeh, I know ‘Fade Away’ will do alright but it’s not me, is it? So close and yet so fucking far!” I was angry again and I was biting my lip. Peta was glaring at me, her cheeks were flushed, and I’d crossed the line of something as she stubbed out the cigarette with her right stiletto.

“Walk this way, please.” Peta turned me around and walked me back inside, she was fired up so I did what the boss ordered.

Eyes open

We ventured back into the reception room but she stopped us in the doorway.

“Take a good look and tell me what you see.” Peta had something to prove so I played along (I’d never cross her when she used that Devil tone of voice).

“Stiff and Natalie chatting to her family, Cess dancing with Julie, Scottie scratching his arse ... I don’t get your point.” I just about had enough of this crap - then I got it! There she was dancing with Pop and it was Fel. Fel was everything, she was Peta, she was me, she was Stiff and Cess and the grandparents all rolled into one, she was my life and suddenly my failures were no longer. I hadn’t failed at all, had I? Felicity was the answer to what I had been searching for, for years and it wasn’t a fucking song, it was to leave my mark on the world and I did it 18 years ago.

Peta knew I got it and put her arm around my waist from behind to hold me tight. It dawned on me then, true success isn’t about being rich or having Gold Records on your wall with no-one to share them with - or being the greatest guitar player like Joey was and to end up dead because of your ill-fated drug-habit - or be in the greatest rock band there ever was and to be found dead after choking on your own vomit from a drunken binge, No! Success is watching your daughter play her first bar chord correctly by

herself after 2 weeks of painful lessons and bleeding fingers - or watch your beautiful wife give birth on the most important day of your life - or watching when your father cries tears of happiness for you when you marry your soul mate. I was a winner all the time, wasn't I! I turned to Peta and I cried, not tears of sadness but tears of happiness, oh how I had been blinded by my own self-pity and selfishness; I was better than that! And how I was blessed on this wonderful journey of life with this gorgeous beauty by my side, still to this very day teaching me lessons in life and now we got to watch Felicity's own journey together from afar. It all made sense and I looked at both Stiff and Cess laughing together and my brothers had come the full distance, along the road with me, they were a part of me too, as I apart of them, even Joey of course ... I couldn't forget my brother Joey.

Peta grabbed my shoulders and looked straight into my eyes and spoke the words that would remain with me forever.

"Do you get it now Ian? Sometimes losers win, I did ... with you and I wouldn't change one moment!"

I embraced my wife and kissed her as hard as I could and didn't let her go for what seemed like an eternity. I was a winner, wasn't I, a fucking Superstar and it was all thanks to this beautiful understanding lady and bumping into her again that fateful day in Sydney in the 80s (but then again, that's another story). So I grabbed my wife and dragged her to the dance floor then summoned my daughter for a three-way hug and thought to myself ...

I love them both more than life itself!

The end.

Jonny Newell

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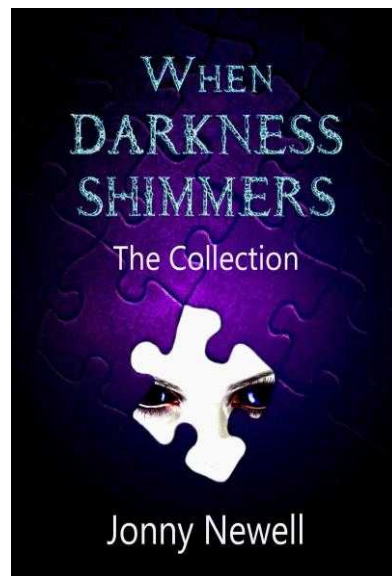
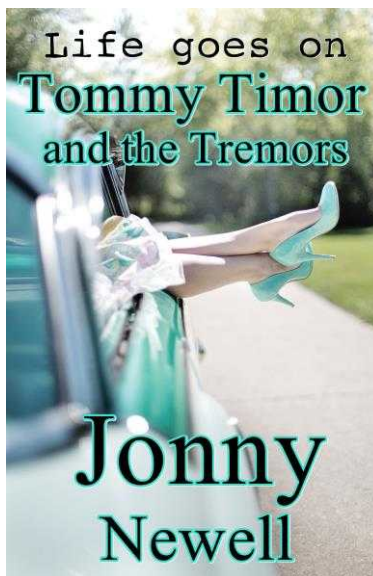
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Jonny Newell's creative imagination inspired him to become a story writer. A working musician for over 35 years, Jonny currently lives in Queensland Australia with his wife Vickie surrounded by the love of their families. When Jonny's not rocking in his various bands you'll most probably find him either recording music in his music room, renovating the house ... or just maybe ... he's swirling something weird and wonderful for his very next story.



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