

Four teenagers growing up in the 60s and 70s

Crossroads: Path Of Gold

**Buy The Complete Version of This Book at
Booklocker.com:**

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/2401.html?s=pdf>

CROSSROADS

Path Of Gold



Larry J. Bristol

Crossroads Part III: Path Of Gold

Copyright © 2005-2006 by Larry J. Bristol
Revision: 12. Mar. 2006

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the author.

Printed in the United States of America

The characters and events depicted in this book are fictitious. Any similarity to real persons, living or dead, is coincidental and not intended by the author.

Booklocker.com, Inc.
2006

Illustrations and cover layout by Christina Cartwright, Digitell Design,
<http://www.digitelldesign.com>

Saturday, October 30, 1971
Monster Mash

Just before her 1:00 o'clock curfew, Larry and Julia returned from their date. He stopped the car in his usual space, and like always, rushed around the car to open her door. They walked slowly to the front door, with their arms around each others' waists, and their thoughts about how sorry they were this evening was now over.

"I had a wonderful time tonight, Larry," she said when they reached the porch.

"So did I," he said. "I'm looking forward to the party tonight. Do you have your costume ready?"

"Yes," she giggled. "It's all lace and chiffon, and I felt like a real princess when I tried it on. Mom found me a little tiara covered in rhinestones. How about yours? Can I talk you into being my prince, or are you still going as a little green frog?"

"I *am* a little green frog, Princess," he grinned, gazing into her eyes. "The costume is almost ready. All I need to finish is the hands and feet. Just wait until you see my tongue! I promise all the other girls are going to be really jealous when they see that!"

"I can hardly wait!" she laughed. She looked into his eyes for a moment, then added, "If you insist on being a little green frog, then all I have to say is I'm glad you're *my* little green frog! I'm so happy to be your Princess."

"Rivet! Rivet!" he laughed. She practically threw her arms around his neck and pulled him closer. The goodnight kiss was just as fiery as the kiss they shared at the library. When it ended, she stood with her arms still around his neck, and her lips against his chest. They heard the grandfather clock in the family room begin to chime the melody it played before the hour. "Goodnight, my Princess!" he said.

"Goodnight, my prince!" she whispered, still not wanting to let him go. As the melody finished, she released him and opened the front door. The clock sounded the single gong indicating 1:00 o'clock. She stepped inside the door and stood there, looking at him.

He brought two fingers to his lips, kissed them, then held up his right hand. She kissed the two fingers on her right hand, and held them up for him to see. With a visible sigh, and without turning, without taking his eyes off of her, he backed down the porch steps. She waved to him, then slowly closed the door. Reluctantly, he turned, walked to his car, and departed. Their second date had been everything he had hoped for.

Even though Julian thought he was prepared for what he might see, he could not prevent himself from laughing out loud when he opened the door. Waiting on his porch was a bright green frog just under six feet tall. A green sweatshirt was fitted with a spiked collar cut from a slightly different shade of green felt. The hands were covered by green gloves with elongated fingers, also cut from the same green felt. More green felt formed a short spiked skirt covering the top of a dark green leotard, stretching down to a large set of webbed green felt feet, with long toes reinforced with some sort of wire.

The most striking thing about this frog was at the other end. A wire frame provided shape to a grotesque head covered by yet more of that green felt. Large plastic buttons sewn to either side formed its eyes. A hinged opening formed its mouth, permanently fixed into a sweet smile described, at best, as sickening. The

inside of the mouth consisted of bright red felt on the bottom, but with an open palette. In that open palette, Julian could dimly see a pair of human eyes staring back at him. If one could use the word “grinning” to describe a pair of eyes, then here was a perfect example.

Julian had planned to say, “I gave at the office,” and quickly close the door, but could not keep a straight face in the harsh reality standing in front of him. So instead, he asked the mundane question, “Are you in there somewhere, Larry?”

The frog replied by sticking out his tongue. Blowing on the party noise maker, Larry made a large red tongue unroll from inside, extending some two feet in front of his mouth, simultaneously making a sound best described as a “raspberry”. When he stopped blowing, the long tongue rolled itself back into the frog’s mouth.

“Genug iz genug!” Julian laughed again. “Get inside before I change my mind.”

Larry opened the frog’s mouth wide to improve his vision, his long toes flopping noisily on the ground as he stepped inside. “Don’t you like my costume, Mr. J?”

“You’re wearing a costume?” Julian replied, feigning surprise. “You might as well come into the living room and relax. The girls will be out shortly. I think they’re making some sort of last minute adjustment to Julia’s outfit.”

“You really know how to hurt a guy, Mr. J,” Larry said with mock despair.

“So where is this party you’re going to?” Julian asked.

“It’s at the Briarcrest Country Club,” he replied, “in their grand ballroom.”

“Do you think you might have any trouble with you-know-who?” Julian asked. “He’s sure to be there. My advice is to avoid him as much as possible.”

“I’ll try, Mr. J,” he said. “I’m certainly not looking for any trouble. He’ll probably be there. Just about everybody is going to be there, and most of them will be in a good mood! Did you listen to the game on the radio this afternoon?”

“No,” Julian answered. “The Aggies were playing Arkansas, right? Who won?”

“We did – 17 to 9!” he smiled. “That’s two in a row!”

“So their record is now...?” Julian asked.

“Only three and five,” he answered, “but if they keep it going, and if they can just beat TU on Thanksgiving, then they can still end up with a winning season.”

“Do you think that’s very likely?” Julian asked, raising one eyebrow.

“Not really,” he replied, “but I’ve noticed dreams really do come true sometimes.”

Jessica came into the living room to announce Julia, but started laughing the moment she saw the rather ridiculous looking green frog. “Oh, my God! Is that you, Larry?” He replied by blowing out the frog’s long red tongue, causing Jessica to laugh even harder.

Julia was supposed to wait for her mother to announce her, but could not wait any longer because of all the laughter. “Oh, shit!” she said when she saw the frog standing there with its long tongue sticking out. A reproachful look from her father brought her hands to her face, not only to cover the bright red glow, but also to hide her giggles.

Larry’s reaction was somewhat different. He gasped at the sight of her, nearly choking on the end of the party favor in his mouth. Before him stood his Princess, radiant in her costume, and more beautiful than he had ever imagined she could be. She smiled for him, turning in a full circle to model her gown, and then stood in front of him. To the others, he was just playing his little green frog part, falling to his knees to worship her. If they could have seen his eyes, they would have known

instantly how awestruck he was.

“I love your frog costume!” she giggled. “But there’s something missing, isn’t there?” she asked, winking at her mother.

“There certainly is! Wait here,” she grinned. Moments later, she returned from the kitchen with the part missing from his costume – a golden crown. Together, she and Julia struggled with the crown trying to make it stay on his frog head, finally resorting to using safety pins.

“Much better!” Julia smiled. “Now come here and kiss me so I can try to turn you back into the handsome prince I know you really are!”

Her slightest wish was his most vital command. It was not an easy feat with the gloves he was wearing, but she placed both of her hands into his, and they then attacked the problem of how she was going to kiss him. Finally, he opened the frog’s mouth as wide as it would go, and she stuck her head inside so she could reach his lips. Julian and Jessica started laughing again as they snapped some pictures to document the incongruous sight of what appeared to be a frog swallowing their daughter’s head.

“How can you drive in that get up?” Julia giggled as they headed for his car.

“I can’t,” he grinned. “I’ll have to take the head off, as well as the gloves and the feet. With those gone, it’s little more than a shirt and a pair of tight pants.”

“I see,” she giggled. “It’s a good thing you have that felt skirt over the leotards.”

“That was mom’s idea,” he smiled. “She said I looked too much like a ballet dancer with only the leotards. I think she wanted to cover my unsightly panty line.”

“No kidding?” she giggled. “Mom’s can be like that sometimes.”

“I either had to wear the skirt or no underwear!” he grinned. “She didn’t like my choice for some reason. That was when she said I looked like a ballet dancer.”

“Information overload!” she giggled. “I didn’t need to know all this, Larry!”

He laughed along with her for a few moments. “Your costume is incredible,” he said softly when they reached the car and he opened the door for her. “The incredible part is really you, not the costume. No wonder everyone who lives in the hills, the forests, the mountains, the plains, and even the lakes and streams think you’re the most beautiful creature in all of the Five Lands!”

“Oh, you are so sweet,” she smiled.

When he reached the driver’s side, he removed the frog head and gloves, placed them in the backseat, and then went to work on the feet. “These are a little tougher to take off!” She watched as he manipulated the wire reinforcement holding everything in place, removed it, and carefully deposited the frog feet in the back. “OK, my Princess. We’re off to the ball! You don’t have to be home before midnight or anything like that, right?”

“1:00 o’clock,” she grinned, “just like always.”

The Briarcrest Country Club was lighted like a sparkling jewel for this gala event. Wanting to make their entrance together, and knowing it would take Larry a few moments to replace parts of his costume, Julia insisted they not use valet parking. Larry drove directly into the parking lot and found a place on his own. She waited patiently as he restored the frog feet, the gloves, and the all-important frog head.

They had to walk a little further, but it was worth it. They created quite a stir at the front door when a beautiful princess, escorted by an incongruous green frog,

arrived and presented their tickets. “What happened, Princess?” the ticket taker smiled. “I see he has his crown, but did your kiss not turn him back into a handsome prince after all?”

“He’s a prince underneath!” Julia replied, drawing laughter from those nearby.

Larry decided he would remain silent for the most part, letting Julia do all the talking for both of them. When addressed directly, he would blow out his tongue in response. Julia explained he would stick out his tongue once for “yes” and twice for “no”. Other times, however, he would blow out his tongue just for the fun of it, especially when he discovered what a great reaction he got from the girls.

Before long, they were joined by John and Valleri, dressed as pieces of M&M candy. Casey and Sam arrived shortly after the others, perhaps more in the spirit of Halloween, dressed as Gomez and Morticia Addams. The gang mixed with the crowd, couples of all ages from teenagers to grandparents, greeting friends and acquaintances, and just generally having a good time. They avoided one particular area of the ballroom, where the high-society types had obviously gathered.

Larry discovered a problem with his frog costume. His long floppy feet made it impossible to dance. Julia didn’t mind. For the most part, they stood talking with their friends (or sticking their tongue out at friends as the case might be), although once in a while they would embrace and “dance” in place, without moving their feet. They created another stir in the crowd when the frog swallowed Julia’s head after one of these dances.

Around 11:00, one of the event organizers stepped to a microphone on a slightly raised stage while the orchestra completed its number. “Ladies and gentlemen, our judges are now casting their secret ballots, and as soon as the results are tallied, it will be time to award the prizes for the best costumes. And there are certainly some wonderful costumes out there. In truth, everyone deserves to be a winner, so let’s give everyone a hand!” The crowd responded with a round of applause, and many took the opportunity to shake hands and complement each other.

“Before we get to that, I want to express my thanks once again to all the individuals who have given so much of their time to make this event happen. We don’t have a complete tally yet, but my sources tell me the amount of money we’ve raised for our charity this year is going to set a new record!” This brought another round of applause, a little more enthusiastic than previously. “Finally, I want to thank all the individuals and businesses who have contributed the wonderful prizes we’ll be awarding for the best costumes, not to mention all of the door prizes already given out this evening. Let’s also give them a nice show of thanks, shall we?” Another round of applause followed.

“OK, so let’s get down to it,” the announcer smiled as he given a handful of envelopes. “We’re going to start with one of my favorite categories. While it may not actually *be* the most expensive, this prize is for the costume that, in the opinion of the judges, *looks* like it was the most expensive. And the winner this year is...” He paused as he made a show out of opening an envelop containing the judges’ choice, “Miss Wendy Tompkins, for her beautiful *Goldfinger* costume!”

The audience applauded as Wendy made her way to the stage. Her “costume” was a rather skimpy gold bikini, much to the delight of the males in the crowd. But every square inch of visible skin was also covered in gold. Larry and Julia agreed she looked like a million bucks, and was a natural to win this prize, a twenty-five dollar gift certificate from one of the local stores. Wendy thanked the judges for their

choice, the audience for their applause, and quickly left the spotlight.

The announcer introduced the next category. “My other favorite category is just the opposite. While it may not actually *be* the least expensive, this prize is for the costume that, in the opinion of the judges, *looks* the cheapest.” His facial expression brought a chuckle from the audience before he corrected, “Let me rephrase that. I mean the one that appears to have been the least expensive. And the winner this year is...” Once again, he made a big show out of opening the envelop. “Mr. Roger Wagner, for his Elvis costume!”

The audience applauded as Roger made his way to the stage. Everyone knew his costume was hardly cheap, and he made a rather passable Elvis impersonator. “Thank you,” he said as his lips curled into a smile. “Thank you very much!” he added perfectly, drawing a chuckle and more applause from the audience as he collected his prize.

Several other prizes were given in bizarre categories. The kids were sure John’s M&M costume would win the prize for being the “most red”, but he was just beaten out by the guy dressed in the bright red uniform of “The Flash”, the comic book superhero.

“Now we come to the more serious categories,” the announcer smiled. “The first one has always been one of my personal favorites, the costume the judges declare as the most beautiful. This year, the prize for the most beautiful costume goes to...” The drummer in the orchestra played a drum roll as the envelop was opened. “Miss Julia Jacobson, for her beautiful ‘fairy princess’ costume!”

“All right!” Larry said as he hugged her. As the audience applauded, she walked shyly to the stage to collect her prize, and blushed brightly when she turned to face the crowd. Larry’s applause was perhaps the most enthusiastic of all, for to him, it was the girl, not the costume, who had won the prize for being the most beautiful.

“Why don’t you stay up here on the stage for a moment, Miss Jacobson,” the announcer suggested, “while we bring up the other winners. The next prize goes to the costume deemed by the judges as the most original. There certainly are some interesting and original costumes this year, aren’t there?” Once again, there was a drum roll as the announcer opened the envelop. “The prize for the most original costume this year goes to... Mr. Larry Bristol, for his ‘frog prince’ costume!”

Larry was taken completely by surprise. Sam and John practically had to push him to the stage, but once he got started, he got into the spirit of the moment. He did not step onto the stage, but rather hopped onto it, drawing a chuckle from the audience as they applauded. The announcer handed Larry his prize, and put the microphone near his mouth so he could express his thanks, or whatever. To the delight of all, he simply blew out his tongue, and went to stand next to Julia.

“OK,” the announcer said, still chuckling, “we have just one more prize to give out this evening. This is the big one, folks! The prize is a complete dinner for two at the Texan Restaurant, donated by the Stelljes family, and it’s given to the couple with the best coordinated costumes. I’ve been told in spite of the fact there are some wonderful costumes to choose from, the vote this year was not even close, and one couple ran away with the prize completely. Or maybe I should say they hopped away with it? The prize for the couple with the best coordinated costumes goes to Miss Julia Jacobson, the ‘fairy princess’, and her ‘frog prince’, Mr. Larry Bristol! Congratulations, guys!”

As the audience applauded enthusiastically, the announcer handed the certificate

for the dinner to Larry, who once more blew out his tongue delightedly. Larry handed the certificate to Julia, then looked to find his friends in the audience, raising his hands into the air in triumph. But when Julia put her arms around him, he quickly brought them down to return her hug, and then swallowed her face as the audience laughed and applauded.

Wednesday, December 22, 1971
I Never Thought I'd Live To Be A Million

A few minutes after 7:00, as Julia and Ruthie were playing a game in front of the fireplace, there was a knock at the back door. When Ruthie looked up in alarm, Julia smiled to her and suggested, "Why don't you run see who that is?"

Ruthie looked at her doubtfully, but Julia urged her onward. She gathered her courage, opened the door a crack, and peeked out. "It's Feter Lahwe!" she squealed with delight, throwing the door fully open, and jumping into his arms.

"Hi, Princess!" he smiled brightly, catching her in mid-leap. This was immediately followed with a big bear hug and a kiss.

"So he's her feter now, is he?" Julian asked Jessica under his breath.

"Hush!" Jessica scolded. She turned her attention to the young man tickling the little girl drawing squeals of delightful laughter mixed with pleas to stop, mercilessly ignored. "Hello, Larry! I don't have to ask how you're feeling this evening."

"I feel great, Mrs. J!" he answered between tickles. "How are all of the Jacobsons and Silvermans doing tonight?"

"The only one under any stress at the moment is Ruthie," Jessica laughed.

"Oh. Ah!" he said gleefully. "Had enough, Princess? Do you want me to stop?"

"Yes!" the little girl squealed. "Stop!"

"Then stop laughing," he teased, continuing to torment her with tickles. "I'll stop tickling just as soon as you stop laughing!"

"I can't stop!" she screamed, trying to wiggle away from the tickles. "*You* stop!"

"What would be the fun of that?" he asked, keeping up the torment.

"Pleeeeeeease!" she screamed between her giggles.

"Oh, OK, as long as you ask nicely," he said, relenting. "But I didn't get enough tickling done. I need to tickle some more. Who am I going to tickle if not you?"

"Let's tickle Tanta Julia!" she suggested gleefully.

"An excellent idea!" he said. He set the little girl down on her feet, turned a wicked look at Julia and started walking towards her.

"Oh, no, you don't!" Julia screamed, trying to assume a defensive position.

"Let's tickle her!" Ruthie squealed with delight as Larry knelt down beside the object of all his dreams, and held up his hands, wiggling his fingers. After a few tentative moves in her direction, finding a weakness in her defenses, he delivered the tickles to her sides, reducing her to the same state of defenselessness Ruthie had been in moments earlier.

"My goodness!" Sarah laughed as she entered the room. "Things certainly get more exciting around here when Larry arrives!"

Even though tickling Julia was the most fun he had all day, Larry decided not to press his luck any further. "Hi, Sarah!" he smiled.

As soon as he relented his attack, Julia unleashed her counterattack. "I'll get you for that!" she announced, launching into a tickling frenzy of her own. Loving every second of it, Larry pretended to be vulnerable, fighting frantically to protect his ribs as Julia moved her fingers from one unprotected spot after another. "Let's get him, Ruthie!" she said. "I'll try to hold him down, and you tickle him!"

Soon they had Larry on his back. Julia sat straddling his stomach, pressing as

much weight as she could against his wrists, which she held apparently pinned above his head. Ruthie attacked his sides, tickling with all the might her little five year old fingers could deliver. "You cannot defeat me! I'm invincible!" he laughed, pretending to struggle.

"Now we have you right where we want you!" Julia laughed, holding him down for all she was worth as Ruthie delivered the tickles.

"Oh, no!" he screamed with mock terror. "You've got me right where I want me!"

Julia quickly realized he was enjoying this game way too much. "You dog!" she laughed. "It's no use, Ruthie. He's having as much fun as we are. We'll have to find another way to get even."

"But you've almost defeated me!" he urged. "I haven't got a chance now!"

"Forget it!" she laughed again, letting go of his wrists, and sliding off of his stomach to sit by his side. "We've caught on to your little game!"

"Rats!" he said with mock disappointment. "Just as I was starting to have fun!"

Julia grinned at him. "Are you going to give me a proper hello tonight?"

"Hello, Princess," he said, smiling warmly.

"That's better," she said, then leaned over and kissed him tenderly.

"I also like this game!" he said with a grin. "Want to play some more?"

"You *are* in a good mood!" she giggled. "You must have aced all your finals!"

"I think I did well," he nodded. "Mainly, I'm just glad it's over. I need a break from school, even if only for a couple of weeks. How did you do on *your* finals?"

"I did OK," she smiled, "and thanks to you, I even did well on my math exam! But I'm also looking forward to a break! I wish the weather was more cooperative!"

"I hear it's supposed to be really nice over the weekend," he said, "and will probably stay nice all the way to New Year's Day!"

"Will the weather be good for the New Year's Eve party next Friday?" she asked.

"With any luck," he smiled. "And for yet another year, the odds of us having a 'white Christmas' are just about nil!"

"That's just fine with me!" Sarah said. "I saw a weather report for Chicago, and it looks even more miserable than when we left!"

"Maybe you should get Joseph to consider moving to Texas," he grinned.

"Don't let him fool you," Jessica laughed. "It's wonderful here in the winter, but just wait until July and August roll around!"

"It's no problem once you get used to it," he said. "As it gets hotter and hotter, you just take off more and more clothes and go swimming as much as possible."

"No wonder people in Texas are so friendly!" Sarah laughed.

"Well, that's only part of the story," he grinned.

"What do you do when the bovine excrement gets nose deep?" Joseph laughed.

"I usually retire to my study and swim in a little scotch instead," Julian grinned. "Would you care to join me?"

"I don't mind it I do!" Joseph smiled.

"You boys better behave yourself!" Jessica warned. "The last thing we need is to have a couple of shickers disturbing the children."

"Oy!" Julian said. "She's this way every time I decide to go for a little getrank. I swear sometimes she'd even stop me from having a good time during Purim!"

"I know the feeling well," Joseph agreed, winking at Sarah and Jessica.

"How about you, Larry?" Julian offered. "Would you care to join us?"

Seeing a look of disappointment on Julia's face, he decided it would be better if he declined. "Thank you for your kind offer, Mr. J, but I think I'll wait until next time."

"Suit yourself," Julian shrugged. The men departed for the study to relax and enjoy some scotch. Jessica and Sarah settled on the sofa to watch some television, while Larry, Julia, and the children sat beside the fire to play games. The children paid more attention to the game than did Larry and Julia, who were primarily paying attention to each other.

After a few minutes, Ruthie asked a question that caught the attention of everyone in the room. "Feter Lahwe, are you going to marry Tanta Julia?"

Without missing a beat, Larry answered smoothly, "I thought *we* were going to get married, Princess, and I can't marry both of you, can I?"

"You can't marry me!" Ruthie protested with a giggle, "I'm too little!"

"Well, I know you're too little right now," he grinned, "but you'll get bigger someday. How old do you have to be before you can get married?"

"I don't know," she giggled. She held up all her fingers and asked, "This many?"

"Wow!" he said. "That's pretty old! How old are you now?" Once again, Ruthie held up all her fingers, but this time only those on one hand. "Hmm. That means you'll be old enough in five more years. That's a long time to wait, isn't it?"

"Yes," Ruthie said.

"Well, do you know what, Princess?" he smiled at her. "When there's something that's really, really special to you, it's easy to wait!" He caught a glimpse of Julia smiling at him and returned her smile. Even as he talked to the little girl, he never took his eyes off of the bigger girl, the one that filled his dreams every night. "When something is really, really special to me, I've been known to wait five years, or even longer. When something is truly that special, you'll wait as long as you have to. At least, that's what I think." He he returned his attention to the little girl, adding, "I'm willing to wait for you, but I'd rather not have to wait so long. Why don't you hurry, grow up to be a big girl and marry me so I don't have to wait so long?"

Ruthie smiled sweetly for him, blushed, and saw the smiling face of her *tanta*. "Why don't you marry Tanta Julia instead? You won't have to wait for *her* to grow up. She's already a big girl. She's very pretty, and you already like to kiss her!"

"You're right about all those things!" he laughed. "She's a big girl, and she's very, very pretty, and I like kissing her a lot! Maybe I should give your idea some serious thought. Why do you want me to marry your Tanta Julie so much?"

"Because then you really *would* be my Feter Lahwe!" the little girl giggled.

"Oh, I see!" he smiled, winking at the others. "That's a good reason, Princess. What do you think about this, Julie?" Without waiting for an answer, he turned back to Ruthie. "I'll tell you what. You go ahead and call me *feter* if you want to. Meanwhile, your Tanta Julie and I need to get to know each other a little more before we make that kind of decision. But if we *should* get married someday, we'll let you be the flower girl at the wedding. OK with you, Julie?"

"Sounds good to me!" Julia giggled.

"Oh, boy!" Ruthie said delighted, but not really knowing what a flower girl was.

"I have a great idea!" he giggled. "Why don't you run tell your daddy and grandpa that Julie and I have decided to let you be the flower girl at our wedding?"

I'll bet they'll get just as excited as *you* are!"

"OK!" she said, getting up to run off into grandpa's study.

"Wait!" Julia said, grabbing the little girl before she could get away. "I have an even *better* idea! Let's let this be our little secret! We won't tell daddy and grandpa until the day of the wedding. Won't it be even more fun to keep a secret?"

"Yes!" Ruthie laughed. "I like secrets!"

Julia looked at Larry and laughed. "You like living dangerously, don't you? I doubt grandpa has drunk enough schnapps to see the humor in this little joke!"

"Amen to *that*!" Jessica laughed.

"What's the problem?" he asked calmly. "Don't you think Mr. J would like to see Ruthie be the flower girl if Julie and I decided to get married someday?"

While Larry shrugged, Sarah, Julia, and Jessica exchanged a grin and a wink.

When it came time for Larry to leave, Julia walked him to his car, just as always. In spite of his jovial appearance, she could see the signs of concern in his eyes. Thanks to her conversation with Sam, she understood the underlying cause. Wanting to alleviate his concerns as much as possible, she elected to make a frontal attack on the problem. At his car, she put her arms around his neck and caught his eyes with her own. Smiling brightly, she announced, "Happy anniversary, Larry!"

"You remembered what today is?" he asked timidly.

"Of course I remembered!" she smiled. "We've been together two months! I think these must have been the best two months in my whole life!"

"They've certainly been the best two months of *my* life," he whispered.

"And the best is yet to come!" she said brightly. "We've celebrated Chanukah together, and now it's your turn. Christmas is only three days away, and I know you. You've got something special planned, don't you?"

"Wait and see," he grinned. "Ask me no questions and I'll tell you no lies!"

"Since you've never lied to me," she smiled, "it would be pointless to ask too many questions. All I would get is silence."

"Maybe you know me too well," he chuckled.

"I know you *very* well," she said softly, then leaned forward and kissed him warmly. "You're my handsome prince, a rich nobleman, my knight in shining armor riding on a magnificent white stallion."

"I'm just a little green frog, Julie," he said softly.

"Oh, no, you're not," she giggled. "My kisses have turned you back into a prince. If I had a mirror, I'd show you. Since I don't, you'll just have to trust me. You do trust me, don't you, sweetheart? I'd never lie to you, either, doncha know!"

"I trust you," he said meekly, grinning at her use of his favorite expression.

"Good!" she smiled. "And after Christmas, we'll bring in the new year together."

"I'm looking forward to that!" he smiled. "Want to know something silly, Julie?"

"What is it?" she asked, returning his smile.

"It's nothing, really, but..." he whispered. "Well, it's just that I've never actually had a date for New Year's Eve before. I'm really looking forward to that!"

"Really?" she asked. "You've never had a date for New Year's Eve?"

"Really!" he chuckled nervously nodding his head. "Unless you count Sam, and I seriously doubt she'd call them dates."

"Then I'll make sure it's really special for you, because that's going to change this year!" she stated positively. "A *lot* of things have changed, a lot of things are changing, and even *more* things are *going* to change in the future, for both of us!"

He looked into her eyes before replying, "I hope you're right about that, Julie."

"Of course I'm right!" She decided to reinforce the message in a way he was sure to understand. "We should start making special plans for January 22. We ought to do something *really* special on our third anniversary. What do you think?"

"I'd love to," he said, "but let's not get too far ahead of ourselves, sugar. I've learned to be... cautious... about making too many plans for the future."

"One day at a time, is that still your story?" she asked with a bright smile. "OK, mister, but I'm going to start making *my* plans for our third anniversary, and I suggest you do the same. It won't be long before Valentine's Day rolls around, either! If you know what's good for you, you'll start making plans for that, as well!"

"*Que será, será!*" he replied wearing a soft smile.

From the warm look in his eyes, she sensed he was getting the kind of encouragement he needed. A little more would only reinforce it. "Oh, Larry! I'm so happy to have you around! I'm so happy to be your girl!"

The look in his eyes said her message had been received. "Oh, baby! I'm so happy you choose to be with me, but I could never own you. I don't want to own you. I want you to be free – free to go wherever you want, free to do whatever you want, free to be with whoever you want."

She looked into his eyes and smiled. "I want to be with you," she said softly.

"And I want to be with you," he replied.

"Goodnight, sweetheart!" she whispered, then kissed him again. "Sweet dreams!"

"Goodnight, my Princess," he replied as they embraced. "And sweet dreams to you, as well. I hope and pray you'll see me in those dreams!"

"You know I will," she whispered. "Goodnight!"

Wednesday, January 12, 1972
Thank You (Falettinme Be Mice Elf Agin)

Kenneth Koffmann, Sr. sat on the edge of his bed listening to the lecture he had heard time and time again for the last eighteen months. “A heart attack, especially one as bad as yours, is not something you can simply ignore,” Dr. Anderson explained for what must have been the fiftieth time. “If you don’t start taking better care of yourself, you’re going to have another and we just might not be able to bring you back next time!”

“So what would you have me do?” Koffmann asked sarcastically. “Stay in bed all day long listening to soft music?”

“Nothing so extreme,” his doctor sighed, “although I don’t think that would actually do you any harm. You need to take it easy. You need to avoid stress, anything that will get you overly excited and cause your blood pressure to shoot up.”

“And if I avoid all this excitement,” Koffmann repeated, “I’ll live a little longer?”

“Yes!” Dr. Anderson agreed enthusiastically. “Well, I can’t really guarantee you’ll live past next week no matter what you do, but if you’ll take my advice, go easy on yourself, and avoid stress, then it is very likely you’ll live a lot longer.”

“Tell me, Doctor,” Koffmann challenged. “Will I actually live longer, or will it just seem that way? You doctors are all alike! Stay in bed, Mr. Koffmann! Take your pills, Mr. Koffmann! Don’t get excited, Mr. Koffmann? Goddammit, Doctor, what sort of life is this for a man? No excitement, indeed! If a man can’t have a little excitement in bed with his wife once in a while, then he might as well *be* dead!”

Dr. Anderson shook his head and sighed. “I don’t think you’re ready for that just yet, Ken. Your heart suffered a lot of damage. I’m happy to see you’re getting stronger, and perhaps it won’t be much longer before you can go back to a more normal, active life. But even then, you’ll have to take things in moderation. For now, I just want you to continue with that exercise program we started, and try to avoid situations causing you stress. And for God’s sake, will you quit smoking?”

“I quit smoking cigarettes a long time ago,” Koffmann grumbled, “but you can kiss my ass if you think I’m going to give up smoking a good cigar now and then! That’s the only thing I can still do for pleasure! The most stressful event of the week is the day *you* come visit! But I’ll tell you one thing, you quack! Just as soon as you stop stuffing those goddamn blood pressure pills down my throat so my poor old pecker can get a woody again, I’m going to start enjoying some *other* pleasures!”

“I’ll make a deal with you, Ken,” the doctor grinned. “If you do what I tell you for a while longer, continue your exercise, eat properly, and take the medicine you need, we’ll get that blood pressure of yours under control, and then we can *talk* about letting you participate in certain other activities.”

“Talk, talk, talk,” Koffmann growled. “That’s all you ever do! Get the hell out of here! Go rattle your beads and shake those magic charms somewhere else, you witch doctor. I’ve got some important company coming.”

“Nothing too stressful, I hope,” Dr. Anderson smiled. “Take it easy, you ornery old bastard, and maybe you’ll still be here when I come see you next week.”

“If I thought you’d shed so much as a single tear over it,” Koffmann smiled back, “maybe I wouldn’t be!”

“You’re so hateful you’d cut off your own nose to spite your face!” the doctor

chuckled. “Go ahead and kill yourself if you want, but please be quick about it so I can get back to my regular Wednesday golf game! So long, you hateful old fart!”

“Good riddance, killjoy!” Koffmann grinned as he watched his doctor depart.

“It’s wonderful to see you again, Bill,” Koffmann smiled as his guests were shown into his study. “You, too, Roger. Have a seat. Can I offer you fellows a drink?”

“Nothing for me, thanks,” Bill Sutherland said pleasantly as he sat on the comfortable leather sofa. “How are you feeling these days, Ken?”

“Oh, you know how the doctors are,” Koffmann replied as if no one should be concerned. “They’re afraid a nice strong fart might cause a man to fall over and die! Something for you, Roger?”

“No thanks, Mr. Koffmann,” Roger replied, snickering.

“For the last time, Roger, it’s Ken!” Koffmann laughed.

“Yes sir, Mr. Koffmann,” Roger said, “I mean, OK, Ken.”

“That’s better,” Koffmann grinned. “Jeez, I just realized what I said. I hope it *won’t* be for the last time!” The three men shared a laugh; two of them considered how they also sincerely hoped it would not be the last time.

“I hope you make it to hell before I do,” Bill laughed. “At least I’ll have a good friend waiting for me. Unfortunately, I keep having this recurring nightmare the only people I’ll find in hell are other lawyers.”

“You needn’t worry about being lonely,” Koffmann grinned. “Not only will you have all your lawyer friends, but hell is undoubtedly full of industrialists and management consultants! Oh, and quack doctors! Let’s not leave them out!”

“By all means,” Bill chuckled.

“You know, Bill, I’ve had a chance recently to reflect on my life. Maybe I plant a tree in Hensel Park, but do they call me *Koffmann, the tree planter*? No! Or maybe I build a stone wall, but do they call me *Koffmann, the wall builder*? Oh, no! Perhaps I raise funds for a new hospital, but do they call me *Koffmann, the fund raiser*? Hell, no! But one time in your life, should you get caught fucking a goat...” Koffmann said, shaking his head with a frown.

To his delight, Bill and Roger doubled over laughing. “How’s that boy of yours doing, Bill?” Koffmann asked when the mirth subsided. “Is he still playing ball?”

“He sure is!” Bill said showing a great deal of pride. “Frank’s on scholarship at UT. A bunch of major league scouts are hanging around, expressing some interest.”

“Excellent!” Koffmann smiled. “Too bad you couldn’t make him stay at A&M.”

Bill grinned at this, and replied, “We’re just lucky he stayed in state! For a little while, I was afraid he might decide to take that scholarship offered by Stanford.”

“I see your point,” Koffmann nodded. “I know how proud you are of him!”

“I would imagine you’re pretty proud of the way Ken, Jr. has stepped in while you’ve been out of action,” Bill said, offering a compliment that might also turn the conversation around towards the point of their visit.

“He’s done quite well in some things, Bill,” Koffmann offered honestly, “and not so well in others, but he’s beginning to learn from his mistakes. He understands the business side, but I’m not sure he has a good grasp on how important *people* are yet.”

“Well, he certainly has a good teacher in that regard,” Bill offered with a smile.

“Oh, shit!” Koffmann laughed. “If you’re going to butter me up like that, then I know the reasons prompting this visit must be serious. So, out with it, Bill! What

brings you boys around to see a dying old goat fucker like me today?”

“It’s about the club, of course,” Bill answered with a soft smile.

“I assumed so,” Koffmann said calmly. “I had my secretary print the financial reports and I looked over them earlier this morning. It looks to me like Roger here is doing his typical bang-up job running the place. While I noted revenue is down a bit, I saw expenses are also way down, meaning the profit margin is still good.”

“Yes, sir,” Roger inserted, “but I’m afraid we won’t sustain this much longer.”

“Why is that?” Koffmann asked simply. The meeting had passed through the pleasantries stage, and they were down to serious business. “I assume you’ve come to this conclusion based on something that isn’t obvious from these reports?”

“If you look at the bottom numbers,” Roger continued, “things seem to be going along fine. But if you look at things in another way...”

“Show him that chart you showed me the other day,” Bill suggested.

Roger nodded his head, opened a manila folder he was carrying, and handed Ken the chart, showing a trend line analysis of revenues and expenses, comparing those resulting from operations on Friday nights to those for Saturday nights. The difference was striking. “As you can see, sir,” Roger explained, “Friday nights have been going along pretty much as expected. I’m a little concerned over the drop in revenues you can see near the end of December, but this is probably seasonal, since so many of our customers were gone for the holidays.”

“Yes, that makes sense,” Koffmann replied, “but Saturday seems to be dramatically different. I take it this is unusual?”

“Very unusual,” Roger explained. “As you know, Saturday is normally our big night. We should be seeing higher attendance and correspondingly higher revenues, but we don’t. In fact, we’re showing higher attendance and revenues on Fridays.”

“So I see,” Koffmann said thoughtfully, “but as you noted, there seems to be a possibility even these revenues may be dropping. I can also see from these charts the only reason we’ve remained profitable on Saturdays is you’ve managed to dramatically reduce our expenses. You’re doing a very good job, Roger!”

“I appreciate you saying that, sir,” Roger replied, “but...”

“But you’re unhappy with these results,” Koffmann said somewhat pointlessly, “and concerned about how things might be going in the future, or you and Bill wouldn’t be here to see me today. So why don’t you let me throw a few thoughts out on the table, and you tell me when I go astray.”

The three men exchanged a few glances. Ken noted Bill merely smiled at Roger and nodded his head as if to tell the younger man to relax. “First of all, Roger, I can see from the numbers you’ve been doing an excellent job of managing expenses and keeping the club profitable. Yet there’s something going on you’re not happy with, and from your analysis, I can see for myself the reasons for your concern. I also suspect you already have a good grasp on the root cause behind these problems. Shall I keep going?”

When Roger smiled sheepishly and nodded his head, Ken continued. “Very good. Now, you’re the general manager of that club, in complete charge of its operation. Under ordinary circumstances, you wouldn’t need to come to me. Nor would you need to go to Bill. You’d simply take care of it. Am I still on the right track?”

Koffmann focused his primary attention on Bill Sutherland, who merely smiled once again, and nodded his head in confirmation. “So since you obviously couldn’t

take care of the problem yourself, it must be something requiring more authority than you have, or more than you *think* you have, anyway. Therefore, you took your problem to Sutherland here. I can follow this far, but what I don't understand is this: You own a ten percent share of the club, and Bill here owns another thirty percent. Old Reinhardt, with his thirty percent, is the only other player involved. Why is it your combined forty percent is not enough to outvote his thirty?"

Koffmann observed Roger looked for Sutherland to answer this question. Bill smiled again. His answer was soft and subtle. "Forty percent isn't a majority, Ken."

There was a long pause before the conversation continued. "Oh, shit!" Koffmann said softly. "I think it's time you tell me exactly what's going on! And don't pull any punches, Roger. Just give me the facts, and I'll judge for myself, understand?"

"Yes, sir," Roger said nervously. "Well, it all started last October. We had two brand new, unknown bands audition for us. The band called Brazos Pits was mediocre, at best. In my opinion, they simply weren't ready to play professionally. The other band, called Riverside, was simply great, polished and professional, with a unique style sure to become a hit. They *have* become a hit playing at *Cane on the Brazos* Friday nights."

"How did you let them get away, Roger?" Koffmann asked calmly.

"It turns out Brazos Pits had some powerful backing," Roger explained. "I was ready to hire Riverside, but then we learned we could have the other band for free."

"For free?" Koffmann asked.

"Absolutely free, Ken," Bill explained, "and I'm ashamed to tell you I fell for that ploy myself! Roger was the only one who objected, but with all of the other owners voting against him, there was nothing he could do about it."

"I understand," Koffmann nodded. "OK, you figured a free mediocre band is better than an expensive good band. Was this Riverside expensive?"

"Not at all," Roger replied simply. "In fact, what they wanted was actually below scale, but of course, it was still more than nothing."

"I'll come back to the question of how this other band was available for nothing later," Koffmann said shaking his head, "but for now, tell me what happened next."

"Well," Roger explained, "opening night was about as good as any Saturday night should be, but as you can see from the charts, attendance started slipping almost immediately. In my opinion, customers were not willing to pay our cover charge to listen to a band below par, so they began to go elsewhere on Saturday nights. We continued to draw decent crowds on Fridays, but Saturday revenues plummeted! We stayed profitable, but not because of any great management skill on my part. Our expenses dropped simply because we didn't have to pay anything to the band."

"Like anything else," Koffmann noted, "you get what you pay for. OK, so now I see why you think this profitability isn't sustainable. The reputation of the club is suffering, the Saturday night crowd is dwindling, and it seems this might even be starting to affect Friday nights. No doubt, the Friday night crowd is migrating over to *Cane* to hear this Riverside. I agree with your analysis completely. The only question remaining is what we should do about it. Roger, I trust your judgment. Tell me exactly what you want to happen."

"Well, first of all, we have to get rid of Brazos Pits," Roger explained, "and get a better band to draw the crowds back. I'd like to go after Riverside. They're currently engaged at *Cane*, but I feel sure we can entice them away, though their

price will certainly be higher now. They've made a name for themselves, and have a nice following. So once we get them, I think we should make a big deal out of it, spend a little money to promote their engagement, announcing to the entire community *Lake Placid* is coming back to its rightful position as the prominent club in the area, the one bringing in the *best* bands."

"Do it," Koffmann said simply. "Oops! Wait a moment. I'm terribly sorry, but I'm guilty of making an assumption. My thirty percent votes to give you full authority to proceed with your plan. Do you also want to vote your ten percent this way, Roger?" When Roger grinned at him and nodded his head, Koffmann sat back and smiled. "But that's still only forty percent. If only we can get one of the other owners to go along!"

Koffmann and Sutherland exchanged a smile. "Well, if you guys really think this is a smart move," Bill began, "I guess I'll go along."

"Then it appears this matter is settled," Koffmann announced. "I'll call Reinhardt and explain it to him. I feel I should be the one to do that. I don't expect much trouble convincing him to go along, and with one hundred percent of the owners approving this move, there shouldn't be any reason for Roger to worry any further. Is there any other club business we need to discuss?" He saw a rather pale look on Roger's face and understood its meaning. "That's not club business, Roger. It's personal, something I'll have to address myself. I would, however, appreciate any insight you might give me as to what has occurred to create this situation."

Roger nodded his head. "Forgive me, sir. I'll tell you what little I know, but in truth, much of it is nothing but hearsay."

"Just go ahead and talk, Roger," Koffmann explained. "Sometimes I have a knack for figuring out not only what's true, but what's relevant, and what's neither."

"I was somewhat baffled about this," Roger explained. "The reason Brazos Pits was available free was that someone offered to pay them out of his own pocket."

"Was that a someone who might just happen to be using a proxy ownership in the club to influence things?" Koffmann asked. When Roger nodded his head, Ken asked a pointed question. "Why do you suppose he would do that? Does he know any members of this band personally, wanting to advance their musical careers?"

"I think he might have known one of them," Roger replied, "but only casually. His name is Ryan Napier, the band leader. But I don't think he did this because of any particular friendship he has with Napier."

"Then what?" Koffmann asked.

"Napier was once a member of Riverside," Roger explained. "As far as I know, that's the only reason Ken knew him. You see, he knows *all* the members of Riverside; he used to go watch them rehearse."

"I've never known Kenny to have much interest in music," Koffmann noted.

"I think his interest in music was coincidental," Roger added. "He was primarily interested in a young lady who happened to be interested in Riverside."

"I see," Koffmann said simply. "What's her name?"

"Jacobson," Roger answered.

"Julia?" Ken smiled. "I met her once. What a lovely and charming young lady!"

"She certainly is," Bill inserted. "I met her a few years ago. Frank was fifteen and Julia was fourteen. I'd occasionally drive them around on Saturday nights."

Ken laughed merrily. "I get the picture! Oh, to be fifteen again, right, Bill?"

Especially if you don't have to rely on dad to drive you and your date around!"

"You said it, Ken!" Bill said, joining in with the laughter.

Still grinning, Ken returned his attention to Roger. "So my Kenny had the hots for this girl, but Julia was interested in this band called Riverside. Was there someone in particular she was interested in?"

Roger returned the grin. "As it turns out, there was! I didn't know this at the time, but I figured it out the night Brazos Pits made their debut performance. First let me turn back the clock a few years. Going back to high school, there was a group of very good friends many of us knew as the *Four Musketeers*. They've been friends since about the time Bill was driving Frank and Julia around! This group consisted of Julia, another girl named Susan, a guy named John Myers, and another named Larry Bristol. Larry and John used to have a little two-man folk band they called the Drug Company. It was a joke based on their last names – Bristol and Myers."

"I think I might have heard of them," Koffmann said. "I also remember meeting an interesting young man named Bristol a couple of years ago, an engineering student who came to the plant on a field trip. Something about him impressed me."

"It could be one and the same, I suppose," Roger said. "I understand he's working on an engineering degree, although he's mostly interested in computers. Anyway, when Napier quit Riverside, it was Bristol who took his place as lead singer."

"Man, this sounds a lot like a soap opera!" Koffmann chuckled.

"You're probably right, and I don't know the half of it!" Roger grinned. "That night when Brazos Pits made their debut, Larry and Julia were at the club on what I later learned was their first date. I don't know anything about why she broke up with Ken, but it seems Larry stepped in immediately when that happened. I suspect for some time, they both had a little more than mere friendship on their minds."

"I think I'm beginning to see things a little more clearly," Koffmann sighed. "Kenny was jealous of this Bristol, and wanted to make sure his standing with Julia wouldn't go up, something that would surely happen if his band was as successful as it seemed destined to be. So in order to stop that, he pushed his weight around to make sure they wouldn't be successful, at least not at *Lake Placid*. Am I getting the right picture?"

Roger merely shrugged and replied, "This is nothing but hearsay, Mr. Koffmann."

"It's Ken, Roger," he said with a grin.

Tuesday, July 3, 1973
Cover Of The Rolling Stone

After staying up late partying with the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band the night before, the *Riverside Gang* planned to sleep a little later that morning. But the lure of another full day on the Frio River called to them, dragging them out of bed earlier than they had expected, especially when Jessica and Sarah knocked on the cabin doors, announcing they were going to prepare breakfast as soon as everyone got out of bed and got dressed.

After breakfast, they were joined by Richard and Malinda as they all sat around the picnic tables outside their cabins, drinking coffee. "That was quite a party the Dirt Band threw last night," Joey said, trying to stifle a yawn.

"I guess it's like that for them every night!" Wayne added. "Man, can you guys imagine what it must be like?"

"Pretty exciting," Robert answered. "Do you think they were serious when they said we were good enough to go on tour like that?"

"As a matter of fact," Richard smiled, "you *are*. I have no doubt that we could find investors to sponsor a tour for Riverside."

"Wow!" Janet exclaimed. "This is exciting!"

"It's an exciting possibility," Casey smiled. He turned his attention to John and Larry. "What do you guys think?"

"It's exciting, all right," John said calmly, turning to look at Larry. Larry merely nodded his head in agreement and smiled. John knew what was going through Larry's mind. After all, they had talked about such a possibility before, even back in the old days when the two of them were known as the Drug Company.

"Think about it!" Wayne said as if daydreaming. "We could have our own tour bus with five bedrooms, just like theirs. We'd sleep all day as the driver took us to the next stop. The roadies would set up all the equipment. All we would have to do is get up on time, do our thing, then throw a party while the roadies packed everything up, and moved it to the next gig. And we'd even get paid for it! Man, what a life!"

"Yeah, what a life," John said as calmly as before. He grinned as he watched Larry slowly shaking his head.

"Maybe we could even get a recording contract!" Robert added excitedly. "Wouldn't it be a blast to listen to ourselves on the radio?"

"Been there, done that, bought the teeshirt!" Larry smiled. "Hearing yourself on the radio is vastly overrated. Don't you agree, John? How about it, Sam?"

"I thought it was fun to be on the radio," Sam grinned. "I happened to know you enjoyed it, too, Larry."

"Yes, I did enjoy it," Larry agreed. "Did you enjoy being on the radio, Julie?"

"Yeah," she said brightly. "Of course, I think the thing I enjoyed the most was it gave me a chance to be around you, even though we weren't actually 'an item' back in those days."

Larry smiled at her. "I think that's the thing I enjoyed about it the most, also. I don't think I'd enjoy being on the radio at all if I couldn't share it with you, babe."

"You're so sweet," Julia smiled.

"I try to be," he said, returning her smile. "That's also how I feel about going on

the road like the other tour bands. I wouldn't enjoy it unless I could share it with you! That's why I'm not too keen about it. I'd miss you too much!"

"You could take me with you," Julia suggested with a grin, winking at her mother and father who were sitting by listening quietly.

Larry merely chuckled. "It might be a great life for the guys in the band, but is it really something you'd enjoy, Julie? Would you enjoy sitting around listening to me sing the same songs over and over every night? Would you enjoy going to a party every night, knowing I had to pay all my attention to the fans instead of you? Would you enjoy hearing some groupie gushing on and on about how much she wanted to share her body with me? Would you enjoy sleeping on a bus every night as it drove to the next stop, where everything would all get repeated once again?"

Julia's smile faded as she listened to him. "I just want to be with you, but it doesn't sound quite as wonderful when you put it that way. Is that what it'd be like?"

"Maybe you should ask the guys in the Dirt Band," he shrugged. "Isn't that exactly what they do? They all have wives or girlfriends, you noticed none of them came along on this tour. How could they? And what sort of live would it be for them if they had?"

"Do you really think it's like that, Larry?" Robert asked.

"I really don't know, Robert," he answered. "I've never been on tour with a road band. I have no doubt it'd be a thrilling adventure, certainly for awhile. On the other hand, I know when you get right down to the nitty gritty, as they say, it's nothing more than the job they do. What can you tell us, Richard?"

Richard and Malinda exchanged a glance before he answered. "Going on tour is lot different than playing a gig or two each weekend," he nodded. "Larry is right about the things he said. After a while, you probably *would* feel like you were playing the same songs over and over. The nightly parties are meant to generate enthusiasm among your fans, and some of those fans may get carried away with the things they offer to give you. Sex, drugs, alcohol - there would be a *lot* of temptations. And girls, it would be very difficult for you to travel with the band, even if you really wanted to!

"There is no doubt this would be a big change! I think you guys have the potential to make the big time. I'll admit that this possibility is very enticing to me personally. I've always dreamed of representing a big name band, and that sort of thing doesn't come along very often. You guys may be the only chance I'll ever have. Perhaps I'm not the person who should advise you. I'm probably a little prejudiced!"

Larry nodded. "You know, guys, we actually talked about this two years ago. I wasn't a member of the band then, but you wanted me to help you take it to that next level. I told you it'd be a lot of hard work. Do you remember, Robert, asking me if this should be any fun? I told you it should be both. I also pointed out we were all going to college for a reason, and none of us was thinking of music as a primary career at the time."

"I remember," Robert said, nodding his head.

"Is that still true, guys?" Larry asked, looking around from band member to band member. "You might also remember I said you could take your music as far as you wanted to take it. I still believe that, but I have to confess, we're talking about making a move into something far beyond anything I've ever experienced. We're at a crossroads, guys. On one hand, we have the opportunity to pursue a real career in music. On the other hand, we can continue to pursue the careers that brought us to

attend the college where most of us met.”

“You’re right,” Casey nodded. “We’re talking about taking a big step here. And it’s not just the five of us involved. You girls are going to be affected by whatever decision we might make.”

“I think we all see the issue before us,” John said. “We’re going to have to give this a lot of thought. I don’t think we ought to make a snap decision either way.”

“I think we all agree on that,” Larry said. “Richard, let’s table the discussion for a few days. Each of us can talk it over with the others involved in our personal decision, and then we’ll all get together sometime later. If we all come to the same decision, I guess it won’t be hard to figure out how to go from there.”

They boys would do a lot of soul searching over the next few weeks, but for the most part, they already knew the answer. Riverside would continue in their current role, performing at various gigs over weekends, but never taking that next step. To go on tour, they would have to give up their chosen careers, and spend a lot of time away from home and the girls they cherished. It was simply too much to sacrifice.

Saturday, June 29, 1974
With A Little Help From My Friends

"I hope you guys remembered what I told you," Larry said as they stepped into the bar. "I don't want to argue with a hooker or some stripper about why I'm not interested in a roll in the hay!"

"Sure, sure," John assured him. "All we're going to do is drink way too much, and watch some stag movies. How are you holding up, by the way? It's been four whole days since you've seen her, right? I'll bet you're starting to get pretty horny by now! Are you sure you don't want us to bring in some hot tang for later?"

"I'm always horny," Larry grinned. "But if things get to the point where I can't stand it anymore, I'll run down to the grocery store and get myself a pound of liver."

"I thought the taste of liver made you sick!" John said with a little surprise.

"I won't be eating it, John," he grinned.

"Oh, shit!" John laughed with sudden insight. "I've always liked liver, but I just got a new image in my head. I don't think I'll ever be able to eat liver again!"

"It serves you right," Larry laughed. "I'm serious about this, John. When I made love to Julie the first time, I promised myself I'd never make love with anyone else ever again. I waited all my life to find her. In a few days, she'll be mine forever, and I'll be hers. I can make myself wait to relieve those urges."

"I admire your dedication to her," John said.

"It's no more than your dedication to Valleri," Larry smiled. Turning his attention to his surroundings, he looked into the smiling face of the bartender. "Hey there, Willie! Long time, no see!"

"You already know the bartender?" John asked. Larry never ceased to amaze him. The guys chose this bar because they figured no one would know who they were!

"Show a little respect, won't you, John?" Larry laughed. "That's Mr. William Fitzpatrick, none other than the owner of this fine establishment! As a matter of fact, it was almost one year ago to the day, wasn't it, Willie?"

"I think you're right! Hello, my friend," Willie said. "Is this party for you?"

"So it would seem, Willie," Larry grinned.

"I thought the wedding was Tuesday," Willie asked. "Is it tomorrow?"

"No," Larry replied. "It's Tuesday. When I told the guys it was my intention to be fasting all day Monday, it convinced them to have this party a little early."

"I must be getting old," Willie grinned. "When these hooligans told me they were looking for a place to throw a bachelor's party, I should have guessed it was you they'd be hauling in here tonight! At least tonight, you won't be buying drinks for that old penny-pitching Jewish shyster!"

"Careful what you say about him," Larry grinned. "That penny-pitching Jewish shyster is soon going to be my father-in-law! Are you coming to the wedding?"

"I wouldn't miss it for the world," Willie smiled. "I'm bringing the wife and all six of my kids. If for no other reason than the fact I want to watch Julian sweat about how much it's all costing him!"

"You're bad!" Larry laughed. "Well, bring the kids, your neighbors, and call in some relatives from out of town if you want to! Mr. J seems to be in a really good mood lately for some reason."

"I can't imagine why," Willie laughed. "What are you having, Larry? Do you want some of that fine Macallan scotch?"

"Maybe later," he winked. "I'll start off with that black and tan I almost ordered last time I was here!"

"One half-and-half coming right up for one limey bastard!" Willie winked back. "How about you other gentlemen, and I use the term mostly in an advisory capacity."

"Whenever *he* orders anything," Casey explained, pointing at Larry, "make it five, one for each of us. We're going to get this smart ass so drunk tonight he won't know which end is up, and won't even care!"

"Hey!" Robert laughed, "I always know which end she has up, but I hardly ever care! Front or back, heads or tails – I like them all!"

"You'd fuck her in the ear if she'd let you, pencil dick!" Wayne laughed.

"Wouldn't you?" Robert fired back.

"It's going to be a long night, Willie," Larry laughed. "I hope we won't disturb the sophisticated and refined patrons who regularly visit your fine establishment."

"Huh?" Willie laughed. "Oh, right! You must be referring to the winos who'll come rolling in here just after 9:00 o'clock when all the liquor stores close! Don't worry about offending their sensibilities. Besides, your buddies have rented our elegant upstairs party room for the night. There's a keg of beer, and several bottles of cheap rot gut. They didn't think you're worth the good stuff, I guess. That should keep them completely occupied, and I'll check up on you every now and then just in case you decide you want to drink something more in line with your style."

"You're a gentleman and a scholar, Willie," Larry grinned, raising his glass in a toast. "Well, come on, guys. Let's get upstairs and see who can drink the most and live to brag about it! I know you've all been looking forward to this for weeks!" The boys shouted the traditional Aggie yell, "Whoop! Whoop!" and headed upstairs. The party was on!

The five girls whooped and hollered as the male dancers strutted their stuff before them. "Check out the tight muscles on *that* butt!" Janet giggled as she nudged Julia in the ribs. "Man, can he swivel those hips, or what?"

"I already noticed," Julia snickered. "I gotta admit that it's... interesting."

"Interesting?" Joey giggled. "I guess that's one word for it."

"What word would *you* use?" Julia grinned.

"Hot!" Joey replied, fanning herself with her hand. "I like his ass, of course, but I'm really more interested in getting a good look at that big muscle he has on the other side. Watch this!" she giggled. Joey stepped up to the edge of the stage and waved a dollar bill at the dancer. He smiled at her and danced closer. Joey lifted the waistband on his costume, little more than a satin jockstrap, and slipped the bill inside, allowing her fingers to run across his pelvis and down to the tight, sweaty muscles on his thigh.

"Oh, man!" Janet said with a little groan. "I gotta get me one of *those*!"

"Do you think you can get Larry to dance like that?" Sam asked, winking at Julia.

"I'm sure he would if I asked him to!" Julia giggled.

"We've seen him in his swimming trunks," Valleri grinned. "He's cute, but I don't think you could say he's got muscles anything like that!"

"You can say that again!" Julia giggled.

“OK,” Valleri laughed. “He’s cute, but I don’t think you could say he’s got muscles anything like that!”

“Can one of you girls break a twenty for me?” Janet asked. “Joey got a nice feel for a dollar. I’m sure I could get a *lot* more for a twenty, but I’ll wait until later, maybe around closing time!”

“Ask the bartender,” Sam suggested. “Right now, I want to see what Julia will get for a fiver,” she giggled, placing a five dollar bill into Julia’s hand.

“Oh, no!” Julia giggled. “You’re not going to get *me* up there to do that!”

“Oh, yes we are! Come on!” Joey laughed, taking Julia by the hand and pulling her towards the stage. The dancer saw how the other girls were pushing the pretty little blond girl to the stage and laughed to himself, knowing she must be too shy to step up to him on her own. He danced a little closer to the group, and grinned directly at Julia. He held out his hand and motioned with his finger, urging her to the edge of the stage.

Slowly, encouraged by the other girls, Julia stepped forward. She blushed brightly as the dancer smiled at her and gyrated his hips, flexing the hard muscles on his arms, shoulders, abdomen, and most importantly, his butt and legs. Nervously, she glanced back to the other girls, who urged her onward. With a big smile on her face, she held up the five dollar bill, silently hoping the dancer would not simply take it from her. He didn’t. Instead, he took the hand holding the bill and pressed it against one of his legs. He then got her other hand and pressed it against his other leg as he danced suggestively right in front of her face.

Julia gave a glance back to her friends for support, and having received that, she turned back quickly to watch the show as her favorite male body part wiggled mere inches from her face. The dancer placed his hands on top of hers and had her rub up and down on his legs as he danced, slowly raising her hands to his hips. Once there, he slipped her fingers underneath his waistband and stepped backward, so her fingers pulled his costume open slightly.

After Julia had admired briefly what this action had revealed, she looked up at his face. He winked at her as he took the bill from her hand, and slipped it down the front of his jockstrap, concealing from her the view of the interesting muscle she had briefly enjoyed. The other girls squealed with delight as Julia turned and walked back to join them. She was wearing a bright red face and a dazzling smile. She puffed up her cheeks as she sighed, and fanned herself with both hands.

“I think she’ll be ready for Larry on Tuesday night,” Sam giggled. “The only problem might be getting her to *wait* until Tuesday night!”

Julia blushed as the girls laughed at her expense. She didn’t really mind. She was having a good time, a great time, actually! And Sam was certainly right about one thing. She *would* be ready for Larry on Tuesday night. Of course, that was true before they had reached this place. Her thoughts turned to him, and she wondered what he and his friends were doing at that moment. *Go Do Be, my love*, she thought to herself, *just as long as you remember to come back to me!*

The guys were drinking heavily, raising hell, and having a good time as they blew off steam. Things got a little calmer when they first started the movie projector, but now they were sitting around making lewd, crude, and rude comments about the action they saw, each one trying to outdo the others with the amount of debauchery he could exhibit.

They were laughing hysterically as each new comment raised the bar to a new level. In one scene early in this current movie, a couple traveling horseback on their way to commit some fascinating acts of fornication in the woods, happened to ride waist deep through a stream. “It’s about time some asshole got his dick wet in this fucking movie!” Robert said, drawing a huge laugh from the others.

Larry enjoyed that sort of comment even more than the movies themselves! The best thing about this party was the way the guys were true comrades tonight, perhaps more so than they had ever been before. It wasn’t merely an excuse for them to get drunk and rowdy. It was a celebration! A member of the gang was having his dreams come true, and they were celebrating his happiness.

He looked at Robert, the one he had known for the shortest time. Robert always seemed to have something vulgar on his mind. He knew Larry’s marriage to Julia meant they could be together even more than before. Larry realized Robert was actually quite jealous! Robert was looking forward to the day when he could marry Janet if only so they could mate like rabbits all the time. That was exactly what they both wanted. Right now, Larry wanted that pretty badly himself! Robert and Janet had become his very good friends.

He had known Casey for the same length of time. Larry thought Casey was a great guy, and was delighted when he and Sam ran off and got themselves married. Casey understood better than any of them what this celebration was all about. Larry realized things could have worked out very differently than this. It could easily have been Sam he was to marry in a few days. Sam had been right all along, of course, just like always. That was never to be their destiny. Casey was the right man for Sam, and she was the right woman for Casey. Sam forced Larry to hold onto his dreams even when things looked the darkest. How could he ever thank her? And the best part of it was through Sam’s relationship with Casey, Larry had gained a wonderful new friend.

Wayne was the quiet one of the bunch, which wasn’t actually saying very much. What a crazy universe it was that Wayne would show up with Joey, the cousin of John’s old girlfriend John had never met because he had been out of town one weekend! Wayne had quietly supported Larry in his quest to win Julie’s hand and heart from the beginning, and now was more than happy to help him celebrate. Yet two more wonderful friends.

And then, of course, there was John. Larry wondered if he could ever hope to find a better friend. John had stuck with him through all those days back in high school when everyone else thought he was nothing but a nerd. John had been his feature guitar player all during the Drug Company days, through the days of the *Top Forty Showcase*, and now with Riverside. John had been the straight man for his jokes, the sounding board for his ideas, and the wailing wall each time Larry’s heart had been broken. John was almost as happy for Larry as Larry was happy for himself. When Valleri had accepted John’s proposal a few weeks ago, Larry celebrated with his lifelong friend, just as John had celebrated with Larry following each victory in his long quest to win Julia’s heart.

And now, his quest was almost over. How strange that thought sounded! He realized his quest was not over; it was only now *beginning*! Nothing would change. The true purpose of his existence was still as clear as always, exactly the same as before. He would sacrifice his entire life to keep her safe and secure. He would spend every waking moment, indeed even moments when he was not awake,

thinking and dreaming of ways he could make her happy. That pleasant task was soon to be his one and only job.

At the same moment as Julia's thoughts were turning to him, Larry wondered to himself what she was doing at that moment. *Go Do Be, my love. I hope you'll always want to be with me. No matter whether you do or not, I pray you'll always be happy.*

A new round of catcalls drew Larry's attention back to the movie screen, where an actress was performing an amazing act of fellatio on her costar, apparently swallowing his over-sized yoohootie. "Jesus, look at how she's sucking that thing! Is this movie the one I think it is?" he asked John.

"Sure is, bud!" John grinned at him.

"How the hell did you get it? Shit, it was only released two years ago!"

"I pulled a few strings and called in a few favors," John smiled. "Enjoy!"

Larry chuckled as he exchanged a high five with John, then returned his attention to the screen. A few moments later, he almost fell out of his chair. "John!" he whispered. "Don't you recognize her?"

"Recognize who?" John asked.

"Her!" Larry said, pointing to the screen.

"Everybody who's ever *seen* this movie recognizes her!" John laughed.

"No, man!" Larry said. "Seriously! Look at her face! Don't you remember seeing that face a few years ago?"

John gave his friend a funny look, then concentrated on the image of the face on the screen. Slowly, recognition began to set in. "Well, I'll be damned! Is that who I think she is? What was it we used to call her? Old Tag-Along, wasn't it?"

"It surely looks like her to me!" Larry smiled. "I was watching her swallow that huge cock of his, fantasizing she'd do the same to mine. When I visualized her lips around my yoohootie, it suddenly dawned on me I'd actually seen that face down there once before!"

John laughed and looked back at the screen, did a little fantasizing of his own, remembering the same thing. "I'm glad to see she found her true calling in life!"

"Everyone has one special talent," Larry laughed. "She always was really good at giving blow jobs, doncha know."

"I guess so," John chuckled. "What was she, about a year older than you, right?"

"Yeah," Larry said nodding his head. "She was born in January the same year I was. Seeing her again brings back some old memories, doesn't it, John?"

"You can say that again!" John laughed. "That was quite a party! I remember she took care of the whole baseball team while we looked on, playing our guitars, and wishing she was taking care of us. Then the baseball team looked on as she played us! Larry, that was the first blow job I ever got in my life!"

"It seems you started with the very best!" Larry laughed. "I've had better since then. In fact, I had a much better one just the other day! How about you?"

"You've always told me gentlemen aren't supposed to talk about that sort of thing," John laughed.

"They aren't!" Larry said with a grin. "What's your point?"

"What are you guys whispering about?" Casey asked.

"We're just reminiscing about a gig we did a long time ago," John smirked.

“Do you guys want to run over to La Grange and get some tang?” Robert asked.

“Get a grip on yourself,” Wayne laughed.

“If you do, please do it in the restroom, OK?” Larry begged. “And please save some toilet paper for me. I may need some myself!”

“I’d imagine you can have all of it, good buddy,” Casey grinned. “Tomorrow morning when the party’s over, I’ll be going home to my wife, Sam! What about you guys?”

“I’m going to get some tang from Janet!” Robert laughed.

“I plan to get some from Joey!” Wayne added with a snicker.

“Valleri told me she’ll be waiting up for me,” John grinned. “She said she was looking forward to spending the next three days in the rack. I’ll be lucky if I can still walk when it comes time for the wedding!”

They all turned to Larry and looked at him intently. “You’re all a bunch of bastards!” he grinned, shaking his head.

Four teenagers growing up in the 60s and 70s

Crossroads: Path Of Gold

**Buy The Complete Version of This Book at
Booklocker.com:**

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/2401.html?s=pdf>