

FOSSILS

Viagra, Snuff, and Rock 'n' Roll

Revised Edition 2018

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No animals were killed during the writing of this novel. However, my Siamese fighting fish, Rambo, sadly passed away during the writing of Track Five. The scraggy hound that chewed one of my flip-flops and got a thrashing with my remaining flip flop, is now walking around with an arse like a blood orange, but it's not dead.

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The Daily Nation

Britains Best Selling Newspaper

Mystery surrounds the 'Pop Phenoms'

Great Britain is in the throes of a musical evolution. A new and exciting band has emerged with a unique brand of music that captures the hearts and imaginations of the nation.

Although the pop sensations only burst onto the music scene several weeks ago, their music has swept through the airwaves with a fresh sound, appealing to old and young listeners alike.

Dubbed the new Beatles; **FOSSILS** is taking the music world by storm and putting British music back on the map with their unique sound.

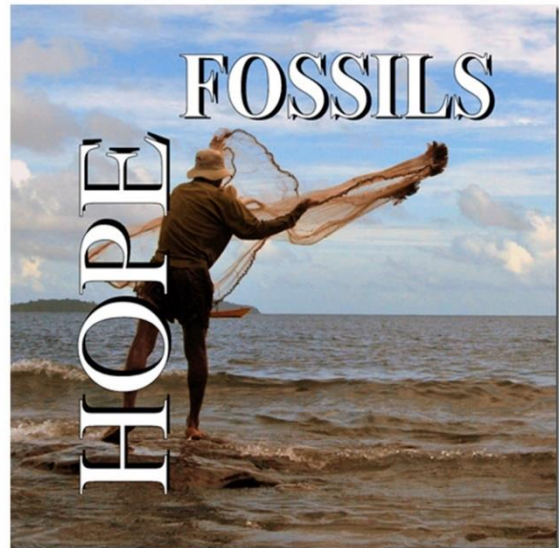
However, a mystery remains!

Since winning the BBC's, Search for Britain's Next Super Group, nobody knows anything about the band. With the country gripped with **FOSSILS** fever, a spokesperson for their record company said. "With the number of pre-orders for downloads and compact discs of their debut album **Hope**, we expect a record number of sales when it is launched."

The band's manager, Kevin G Nutley, was unavailable for comment, and Billy Numan, BBC's spokesperson for their promotions was vague. He told reporters that the band is somewhere in Southeast Asia performing for the underprivileged, and no photographs or information about the band is available.

So who, and where, are **FOSSILS**?

After the **DAILY NATION NEWSPAPER** received information that the band is somewhere in Angeles City, Philippines, they are offering a £50,000 reward for photographs and information leading to the whereabouts of this elusive, vibrant, young band.



-Track One-

Charles felt the walls closing in as his world fell apart. He longed to hold his wife, tell her how much he loved her, smell her fragrance, and hear her comforting voice telling him that everything would be fine.

Standing with his hands clasped in front of him, he glanced over at the gloss wood coffin placed on a conveyor. The faint hum of the conveyor echoed in the chapel as a curtain closed and the coffin moved forward toward the furnace.

Charles's sons, John and Peter, two of the pallbearers, came and sat on the pew beside him. John patted his father's arm, but Charles just stared forward.

Lorraine, Charles's daughter, with tears streaming down her face, gently squeezed his hand as the vicar prayed for the safe journey of Mary's soul. Charles wasn't listening and showed no emotion trapped within his earthly cocoon. Apart from being with his beloved, Mary, nothing else mattered to Charles.

With sobbing heard in the crematoriums chapel on the outskirts of Cleethorpes, the vicar finished his prayer and told the congregation to reflect on Mary's life.

Charles gazed up at a ray of sunlight that shone through a skylight. He gasped and smiled. "Mary," he whispered, as an apparition of Mary's face as a young woman appeared in the sunbeam.

"Hello, my darling," said Mary's voice in his head.

Charles trembled and thought, 'Oh Mary, I am so lonely and sad. I want to end this and be with you.'

Mary smiled and Charles remembered the smile that he fell in love with all those years ago, as Mary said. "We will be together my darling, but now was not your time. You still have plenty to live for, and remember what I always told you. Life is too short to be sad."

"Dad, sit down," whispered Lorraine, as the vicar beckoned the congregation to sit.

Charles, his thoughts interrupted, sat on the pew. The vicar went to the small pulpit and began his sermon, giving details about Mary's life, a woman he barely knew.

"Are you alright, Dad?" whispered Lorraine, noticing Charles smiling up at the skylight.

Charles ignored her, 'Where are you my darling?' Charles thought, watching rays of sunlight dancing through the empty skylight.

"Dad, are you okay?" repeated Lorraine, squeezing his hand.

John, hearing Lorraine's concern, looked at his father and gently nudged him. "Dad!"

Charles juddered and smiled at John and Peter, and with a glazed expression and tears in his eyes, looked and nodded at Lorraine.

Lorraine, relieved to see his tears, wiped them from his eyes with her sodden handkerchief. She kissed him on the cheek, faced forward, and listened while the vicar continued his sermon. Charles now felt warm, safe, and no longer alone. He glanced up again at the empty skylight, and as the vicar's words become a blur, his thoughts drifted into happy memories.

It was a warm summer afternoon when the removal van arrived and unloaded a Steinway Parlour grand piano into the recreation room. Throughout the day, elderly residents came and admired the fine instrument, inquisitive about who was due to move into Albert's old room. Three residents felt very excited by the arrival of the piano and eager to meet its owner.

The following day, a BMW came up the driveway. A middle-aged couple got out of the front seat and helped a gaunt, but well-groomed, elderly man out of the back. They took belongings from the back seat, walked into the residence, and went to the warden's office. The curtains twitched as excited old folk tried to catch a glimpse of their new neighbour.

John, Lorraine, and Charles sat in Mrs Chew's office while she explained about the residence and the rules and regulations that Charles must abide by during his stay.

The office smelled of stale tobacco. Hilda Chew, a small, haggard woman in her early sixties with stern features and a wrinkled face making her look like a constipated bloodhound, had been the warden at Fossdyke since it opened eight years earlier. Charles paid scant attention to the warden's instructions as his mind wandered elsewhere.

Mrs Chew then took them along a corridor. They stopped at a room on the ground floor and went inside. "Here's your room Mr Clark, or can I call you, Charles?"

Charles shrugged as Mrs Chew told him, "This will be your home from now on, Charles. We put your chair near the bay window. The grounds look lovely this time of year."

John put Charles's suitcase on the bed. "It's nice and roomy Dad," he said, opening the case and hanging clothes in a wardrobe.

"You have a television, but most of the residents watch the large one in the recreation room," said Mrs Chew, pointing to a portable television and told him. "Your piano's in there."

"I'll put your socks and underwear in this drawer," said John, but knew his father wasn't paying attention.

"Isn't this nice, Dad? And look, you'll have plenty of things to do," said Lorraine, waving the Fossdyke brochure at her father. "It's not far from the beach and you love the seaside."

"And you'll have plenty of company," said John sniggering, "Did you see all your new neighbours looking?"

Charles sighed, walked over, and sat in his armchair.

"Don't worry," said Mrs Chew and assured them, "It takes time to settle in, and he'll be fine. It might be better if you both leave and give him time to get acquainted with the place. I am sure he will have visitors come along once you've gone." she smiled.

Lorraine nodded and said, "Okay Dad, we are going, we will let you get settled into your new home."

"I will bring Emma and the kids to see you soon," said John.

"Peter said he will come when he is not so busy. I will bring George and the kids to visit once you get settled," said Lorraine, who walked over and kissed her father on the cheek. She felt tears well up in her eyes as she saw the vacant, lost expression across her father's gaunt face as he gazed out of the window. She stroked his grey hair, picturing the vibrant, caring man from her childhood. Here was the same man who picked her up after a fall, taught her to play the piano and appreciate the beauty in music. The man who she could always depend upon and the man whom she never imagined would end up this empty shell.

"Bye Dad," croaked Lorraine, and with tears streaming down her face, walked towards John.

"Bye Dad, see you soon," said John, putting his arm around his sister, and along with Mrs Chew, left the room.

Charles stared out of the window over the manicured lawns. His room smelt like the rest of the place. It had an eggy, musty smell, usually associated with old people's homes. For Charles, it was not, or never would be, home, and he hoped his stay here would be short. He gazed around the garden and watched a bumblebee disappearing into a rose. Reappearing moments later, it clumsily flew past butterflies airing

their brittle colourful wings. Sparrows chased each other, flying low past Charles's window, and while nature went about its business, he reminisced about growing up around the entertainment business.

His mother was an opera singer, so he had gained a love for music from an early age. His father, disappointed by his son's chosen interest, expected Charles to follow him into the army. Charles was twelve-years-old when his father was killed in Ireland. His mother encouraged, and tutored him, into becoming a vocalist, but having deformed vocal chords, untreatable at the time, gave his voice a gravelly sound. She knew he would be unsuitable for classical singing, so she bought him a Steinway piano. That opened up a new and exciting world for young Charles. He practised hard and became a talented pianist. The Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra employed him soon after he left Surrey University.

Charles was twenty-two when he met Mary. She was auditioning for a violinist position in the orchestra. He'd noticed the pretty young blonde in her interview when she played Paganini's Caprice No.24 in A minor. Joseph Fletcher, the orchestra leader, impressed with her performance, and with Charles's prompting, employed Mary. Charles and Mary grew close and after a short courtship, married.

Mary hailed from Cleethorpes on the Lincolnshire coast of England. With property prices being cheap in the seaside resort, they bought a five-bedroom house on the outskirts of town. They performed with the Liverpool Philharmonic for four years before Charles accepted a position in the prestigious London Philharmonic Orchestra. They realised that Charles's new job meant he would spend a lot of time touring, so Mary left the Liverpool Philharmonic to go with him. However, she fell pregnant after their second tour, with their first child, John.

Charles spent the next few years touring the UK and abroad, while Mary remained at their Cleethorpes home raising John. She gave birth to two more children, first Lorraine, followed by Peter, a year later.

The years passed, and with Charles spending most of his time away from home, he and Mary decided that he find work closer to Cleethorpes. He taught music at a local college, where he stayed until retiring.

Their grown-up children had families of their own and life was idyllic for Charles and Mary, who spent their days either in each other's company or with family members. They spent evenings with Charles playing his piano with Mary playing her violin. The couple lived a serene and happy life until the scourge of leukaemia took Mary and Charles's world fell apart.

A knock on the door interrupted Charles's thoughts.

"Hello Charles, the evening meal will be served at 6 o'clock, so you need to go to the dining room." Mrs Chew shouted through the door.

"I'm not hungry," Charles replied.

"Suit yourself," grumbled Mrs Chew and walked away.

Charles relaxed back into his chair and recalled events leading up him living at the residential home. He thought about his uncaring children.

During Mary's wake, John had put his arm around his father and said, "Dad, remember what Mum told you to do when this day came."

Charles glared at his son and said nothing, so John sighed and went over to speak with his brother and sister.

Once Doctors diagnosed Mary's illness; Mary, Lorraine, John, and Peter, arranged for Charles to move into Fosdyke residential home as soon as Mary passed away. They arranged for Charles's piano to get moved to Fosdyke, so he would feel comfortable. The family organised everything without involving Charles, who, although angry when he found out, said nothing, not wanting to accept the inevitable.

After the wake finished, Charles was alone in the house. He played his piano and drank himself into a stupor, thinking about his life and his emptiness without his rock, Mary.

John arrived mid-morning and went over to his father. Noticing the empty whisky bottle and knocked over glass, he shook his father awake and said, "I'll make a cup of tea, Dad. Why don't you go to bed and I will bring one up to you."

Charles got unsteadily to his feet, went upstairs, and got into bed. Family members turned up throughout the day to help with the move. With only a few personal items allowed into the residential home, the family sold the rest of Charles and Mary's belongings and divided the proceeds between them.

While a removal company took his piano and cleared the house, Charles remained in his bedroom.

Several hours later, the house was bare apart from Charles's bedroom furniture. Lorraine had brought food for Charles throughout the day, which went uneaten.

That evening, Charles walked around his empty home, desperately wanting to join his beloved Mary.

John and Lorraine arrived the following morning to collect Charles. They led him from his house and drove forty minutes to Fosdyke residential home.

Another knock on the door disturbed Charles's thoughts.

"I am not hungry," Charles shouted sounding emphatic, assuming it was Mrs Chew.

The door opened and a small rotund man as bald as a bell-end walked in.

"Charlie boy," shouted a jovial geriatric in a gruff voice.

With a cheery grin, he went over to Charles. "I'm Steve, but they call me Strat. Chewy told us you weren't coming to eat, so I thought I'd come and change your mind."

Shocked, Charles forced a smile and said. "No, I'm not hungry."

"Come on, just try some. The grub isn't bad, and tonight it's BBQ rib night, a real treat," insisted Steve. He put his arm around Charles's shoulder to coax him out of his chair. "I'll introduce you to everyone," said Steve, and sniggered. "You can meet the band."

Charles, taken aback, asked, "Oh, you have a band here? I never heard about that. What type of music do they play?"

Steve laughed and said. "It's a long story, but I will tell you about it over supper. Come on, before the ribs get cold or the other old farts scoff them all."

Charles looked at the comical character who resembled a weeble toy. He realised that he was persistent and would not take no for an answer, so he got out of his chair.

Steve said. "It ain't bad here. I've been an inmate for five years and known in most of the pubs in the area. You'll be a big hit with the ladies with that posh accent."

Steve chuckled and the pair made their way to the dining hall.

The chatter in the dining room stopped when the pair went in, with all eyes focused on Charles, who fidgeted and looked uncomfortable.

"I hope you old farts saved us some ribs," Steve growled and led Charles to two empty seats between three other elderly gentlemen.

-Track Two-

Within picturesque grounds in the northeast coastal town of Cleethorpes, Fossdyke Residential Home converted from a guesthouse into a residential home by the current owners, had a two-story building with twenty-three spacious en-suite, furnished studio apartments. The ground floor apartments had large bay windows at the front overlooking landscaped grounds and it was an idyllic, tranquil, location.

Two single-story buildings were a short distance away from the resident's block. One was a kitchen, communal dining area, and staff room, with meals provided three times a day. A larger room served as a recreation room, where the residents could congregate, organise activities, and watch a large TV. This communal room also contained several smaller rooms where residents kept belongings locked away. It now had a Steinway piano placed near one corner of the room. With little happening at the home during the summer months, the old folks would either stroll along the boating lake and nearby beach or relax in the gardens. It was a serene existence and the residents varied. There were several married couples, but it was mainly elderly widowed men and women.

After Charles and Steve sat, the dining room was again full of chatter and clatter. Kitchen staff continued to serve the residents' BBQ ribs and drinks. Even though some struggled to gnaw through the pork with their false gnashers, it didn't stop them from giving the meat a damn good sucking. Charles looked around the room at his new neighbours.

"Charlie, meet Wayne," said Steve as he sat back, and a man leant over and shook Charles's hand.

Wayne looked Latino, with black curly hair and a boyish demeanour.

"Hi Charlie, I'm Wayne Logan," he said, shaking Charles's hand.

"It's Charles, not Charlie," said Charles.

"What?" Wayne asked.

"I said, it's Charles, not Charlie," repeated Charles... louder.

"What?" Wayne asked again and then said. "Yes, I have all my own teeth."

Steve chuckled and said, "Sometimes he is as deaf as a post, and he dyes his hair black."

"What?" Wayne repeated as he turned up the volume on his hearing-aid. "That's better," he said.

"Hello Wayne, what part of America are you from?" asked Charles on hearing Wayne's accent.

Wayne frowned and said, "I am not a yank, I'm Canadian."

"Oh, my apologies," said Charles.

"Allo Charles," said the man to his right in a chirpy cockney accent, "I'm Elvin Stanley, but they call me, Chippers."

"Charles Clark," said Charles, and shook Elvin's hand. He noticed that Elvin had several fingers missing and felt uneasy trying not to stare.

"Right," said Steve, "now you've met the band."

Wayne and Elvin looked puzzled as Steve announced, "After we've finished eating, we can go along to the recreation room and see what you can do on your old piano."

Charles tried to imagine what instruments their band could play, with one as deaf as a dildo and another whose hands looked like lobsters pincers. Elvin and Wayne looked nervously at each other as Steve pointed out several other residents and relayed some of their weird foibles. Andrex Ethel, who walked

around with toilet paper sticking out of her knickers and boring Bill, who people avoided, as all he ever talked about was pigeons.

Charles was eager to see his piano, so after they had finished eating, the four went to the recreation room and over to his Steinway. He sat on his piano stool, lifted the lid, looked at the ivory keyboard, and stroked the keys. The other three stood around the piano.

“So, what kind of music do you play?” asked Steve.

Charles smiled at the three and played Sergei Taneyev concerto in E flat.

Several other residents made their way over to the recreation room, which was usually noisy as they chatted, played games, or watched TV. There was silence as they listened to soothing music as Charles became engrossed in the concerto.

Word quickly spread and a dozen residents came in.

Charles finished fifteen minutes later. He stared at the keys, reminiscing about how the tune was one of his and Mary’s favourites. He languished in his thoughts while the recreation room remained silent for a few moments and then the other residents applauded. Charles noticed his three new friends did not appear impressed.

Mabel, a sprightly eighty-two-year-old, started singing ‘Lily of the Lamplight.’

Steve, looking disappointed, then asked. “Do you know any rock ‘n’ roll?”

Charles looked at the three. “No, sorry, I know some older tunes, but mainly classical music and opera.”

Steve frowned and he, Wayne, and Elvin stood back and talking amongst themselves.

Charles again tinkled on the piano keys and played a short Mozart piece. He stopped when Mabel came over and interrupted him. She barraged him with requests, so he played, ‘White Cliffs of Dover’ with Mabel shrieking along.

Steve then put his hand on Charles’s shoulder and with a mischievous grin, and through Mabel’s toneless warbles, said, “Don’t worry Charlie boy, me and the lads still have high hopes for you.”

Charles watched as Steve, Elvin, and Wayne went over to a room, unlocked the door, and went inside.

With Charles trying to match chords with Mabel’s screeching, the three emerged from the room several minutes later.

Steve carried a beaten up guitar, a small Marshall speaker/amp, and a microphone stand. Elvin had a large double bass, and Wayne carried over two round drum cases.

Mabel stopped screeching and gasped.

Charles saw a look of horror on the faces of the residents in the recreation room as the three came over to him. Steve plugged in his microphone and set up the stand. Wayne set up his drums, while Elvin tuned his old double bass.

The room plunged into panic as Steve adjusted the microphone stand. He tapped the microphone, and after a dull thump came from the speaker, he stood with the devil’s glint in his eye and snarled. “Right you old fogeys,” he paused for effect as the crowd trembled and he growled. “Strat’s back!”

Mabel shrieked and Ethel ran around trailing toilet tissue, while boring Bill headed for the door. Wally, another resident, made a desperate plea,

“Somebody get Chewy... and hurry!”

Steve plugged in his guitar and took a plectrum from his wallet. "Here's my old faithful," he said, showing Charles the old plastic plectrum with an 'S' hand painted both sides.

Elvin stood to the side of his large bass and Wayne sat behind his drums, all smiling as the panicking residents rushed out of the room.

Charles sat at his piano looking confused as Mrs Chew rushed in and hurried over to the four.

She glared at Steve and shouted, "I told you not to set up again after the last incident. Don't you remember our previous conversation?"

Steve smiled and said, "Just making our new friend feel at home, besides, the rec room's empty, so we aren't disturbing anybody."

Mrs Chew became exasperated and yelled, "It's empty because you scared everybody away, the same as before."

Steve chuckled and told her. "This time it will be different. We are playing along with Charlie's classical shit." He turned to Charles and said. "Play her some of your music, Charlie boy."

Charles, looking dumbfounded, played Debussy's, 'Clair de lune.'

Mrs Chew stood with her hands on her hips and listened to Charles play the melodic tune. She knew Steve was manipulating her yet again, but he was the boss's father, so she couldn't say a great deal.

Glowing at the smiling Steve, she snapped, "You have one hour and then be out of here." She glared at the four and stormed out of the recreation room.

"Good, now Chewy's pissed off, now we can start," said Steve and grinned at Charles, "Okay Charlie boy, you can stop playing that crap and we can get down to playing serious music... Rock 'n' Roll."

Steve sang and pouted like a bald teenager as he played, 'Johnny 'B' good.' He rocked away like a space-hopper on steroids.

Elvin struggled to pluck his double bass because he hadn't put on his 'little falsies.' Wayne rocked back and forth, thumping out a beat on his drums, but unfortunately not for the same song.

Charles sat at his piano while they banged out their rendition of the rock 'n' roll classic. He grimaced as he listened and thought he could feel his eardrums bleed. This wasn't music to his ears; it sounded more like cats being murdered. He understood why the others had panicked in the desperate need to escape.

Fortunately, Charles's torture only lasted several minutes. The three finished and looked at him.

"Well, what do you think Charlie, could you add something to make any improvements?" asked Steve, looking pleased.

A shotgun came into Charles's mind as he looked at the smiling faces of the proud wrinkled rockers. He recalled what Mary always told him about not being good or bad music, only music that people either liked or disliked.

"Hmm, perhaps you need to all come together with a little more harmony. You need a little structure." He replied.

The three nodded and smiled at each other.

"Can you 'elp us with that?" Elvin asked.

Steve interrupted, "Yeah Charlie boy, you can help us and join our band. We will give yer a cool stage name."

Charles knew this would be a challenge but relished having something to keep him interested with this motley band of geriatrics, and thought it could be fun. He smiled and said, "I may be able to help, but please don't call me Charlie."

"What do you want us to call you?" Steve asked.

"My name is Charles, so how about you call me, Charles."

Steve laughed. "I'm known as 'Strat', Elvin's 'Chippers' and deaf boy over there," he said pointing to Wayne, "Sticks, so we can't just call you boring old Charles," said Steve.

"Ow about Nobby?" interrupted Elvin.

The three looked at Elvin and asked, "What?"

"Nobby," repeated Elvin, and explained, "That in the military, anyone with the surname, 'Clark,' was always called '*Nobby' Clark."

Charles remembered from his childhood how he had heard people refer to his father as, Major 'Nobby' Clark, although unsure why.

Charles pondered, looked into the faces of the excited old rockers, scratched his chin, smiled, and said, "Okay, Nobby it is then."

The three cheered and patted Charles on the back. "Welcome aboard, Nobby," said Elvin, and walked back to the small room.

"He's gone to get his falsies," said Wayne as Elvin returned carrying an old holdall.

Charles watched Elvin fitting homemade prosthetics to his digitally challenged hands.

"I will sound better playing with these on," said Elvin, waving his small Edward Scissorhands-esque attachments. One had an index finger and a thumb-shaped object set at various angles, which Charles noticed was the perfect shape and design for plucking the strings of the double bass. His left-hand prosthetic was just one small tube, which looked ideal for covering the fret strings at the neck of the instrument. 'Ingenious,' thought Charles.

Elvin, noticing Charles's interest said. "These are me little falsies. I made a few of these for different occasions. These are my 'bass falsies'. I also have me 'eating falsies,' 'card playing falsies,' 'lady pleasing falsies,' and many more, which I will show you in the fullness of time," said Elvin in his cheery cockney twang.

Charles looked at Elvin's tatty old instrument and asked. "That's a Flores, isn't it?"

Elvin, impressed by Charles's knowledge, told him, "Yeah, a Flores Midnight double bass, which I bought many years ago when I saw it advertised for sale. Although it was in dilapidated condition and 'eld together by woodworm holding hands, I fell in love with the tatty old instrument, so I got it restored. I always loved playing the double bass and learned to play years ago before I lost me fingers." He again held up his hands displaying his falsies and proudly announced. "And fanks to these, I still can."

Charles winced and hoped Elvin would not play again.

The four old musicians stood by the side of Charles's piano and Steve said, "Well lads, we still have thirty-minutes before Chewy finished ironing her wrinkles and chases us out, so what shall we play?"

The others chuckled and Elvin replied. "Perhaps Nobby could suggest somefin."

Charles cringed. He looked at the eager trio and suggested. "I suppose our first step would be to find something that we can all play together. I don't know any rock music and I don't imagine you have sheet music for me to follow, so maybe we start with the basics."

“Sheet music,” said Steve. “I don’t reckon that any of us can even read sheet music,” he laughed.

“I can,” said Elvin sounding wistful.

“Me too,” said Wayne. “I have also written a few songs.”

Steve looked shocked; he had known Wayne for almost two years and never suspected that this old Canadian had any musical education.

“You’re a dark horse, Wayne Logan,” said Steve and grinned.

“Perhaps I could look at your songs, Wayne. We may as well learn them. At least then we will all be on a level playing field,” said Charles.

“What?” asked Wayne.

Charles repeated his request but spoke louder.

“Okay,” said Wayne “They are in my room, so maybe tomorrow.”

Charles wanted to find out more about his new friends, partly because he was interested, but more importantly, because he wanted to fill the remaining time to stop them playing more awful, eardrum-bleeding noise.

“Are any of you married?” Charles asked.

“No,” said Elvin, and sighed. “My wife passed away four years ago.”

“I’m single. I got divorced years ago and played the field,” Steve interrupted and chuckled.

Charles looked at Wayne fiddling with his hearing-aid, and asked, “How about you Wayne, are you married?”

“Wayne lost his wife twenty- years ago,” Steve said and shouted at Wayne. “Didn’t you mate?”

“Oh, I am sorry to hear that Wayne,” said Charles.

“What?” Asked Wayne.

“I’m sorry to hear that your wife died,” Charles shouted.

Wayne looked confused and said, “My wife didn’t die.” His hearing-aid screeched, so he tapped it.

Elvin and Steve chortled.

“She didn’t die,” said Elvin. “He just lost ‘er.”

“That’s better,” said Wayne, now able to hear. He looked at Charles, smiled, and related his story.

Wayne was popular among the female residents of Fossdyke with his Latino appearances. When he first moved in, the old women hung around him like a Liverpool postman on giro day. Even Mrs Chew had a crush on old Wayne, even though married and 20 years his junior.

Wayne had lived at Fossdyke now for two years. Originally from Ontario, Canada, he settled in Cleethorpes years ago, after trying to trace his long lost love, Julie.

His family originated from Sicily and owned an Italian restaurant chain in Canada. With his sights set on becoming a musician, he left the family home on his 16th birthday and joined The Alex Gilroy Band, a seven-piece swing band. He studied music at school, and although he could play keyboard instruments, his forte, and love was for the drums. Given the nickname, Sticks, by the band, because he always carried around drumsticks tapping anything that could offer a beat. He toured as the band’s drummer throughout Canada. When the rock ‘n’ roll revolution hit America in the late fifties, Wayne moved to the U.S. where

he joined 'Johnny and the Jeepsters,' a rock 'n' roll, skiffle band. Throughout the sixties and seventies, he moved around with various bands.

During the 1980's, as other forms of music pushed out rock 'n' roll, he tried his hand at rock music. Although ageing, he joined a rock band called, 'Smoking Heads' and dropped his nickname, Sticks, as he felt it was no longer cool, and didn't belong in the rock, pop era. The band never became famous but had a small fan base. They performed many gigs around the world, touring several countries. With the loud music taking its toll on his hearing, it became increasingly more difficult to hear the music as each tour went on. The group did a tour of the UK in the mid-1980's. They decided to get rid of Wayne, who, due to his age, no longer fitted in with their rocker image. They played his farewell gig at the Sheffield Arena, where he met Julie, an attractive twenty-five-year-old woman from Cleethorpes. Wayne prided himself on having no emotional attachment towards women but became besotted with Julie. He invited her to the United States, and she accepted.

Their life was great at first. Wayne found work as a session musician and wrote several songs.

As his deafness became worse, his work sessions got shorter. He became miserable and angry, taking his anger out on Julie. He turned into a violent drunk and Julie felt dejected. One night he came home *spannered. Julie and her belongings were gone.

Over the next few days, he stayed sober while trying to figure out what happened to Julie. He'd phoned friends and acquaintances but to no avail. Julie had vanished without a trace, taking a chunk of money from their joint account and used their credit card to buy a flight to Manchester, England.

He had inherited 25% of the family's business and received an annual dividend. With money being of no concern, he decided to search for Julie in the UK. Wayne knew little about her, he never bothered with that side of their relationship. All he knew that her name was Julie Croft- something, and she was from Cleethorpes.

Wayne arrived in Cleethorpes in the winter of 1991 and spent the next few months trying to track down the Croft family. He came across many people with the same surname, but nobody knew or had ever heard of, Julie Croft. Now in his 50's, his hearing had become impaired and he could only hear on sporadic occasions. Wayne, having spent many years in the UK, hadn't given up hope, and did not want to go back to the USA. He knew his blemished record and age would prevent him from ever being hired, so he lived in a flat in Cleethorpes. He worked as a taxi driver and had an active social life.

In 2002, he read an obituary in the Grimsby Evening Telegraph, of a Mr Ronald Croft-Baker who had passed away. 'Croft-Baker, that's it,' thought Wayne, 'Julie Croft-Baker.'

Excited, he read the list of those who attended the funeral. Wayne noticed the daughter's name, Mrs Julie Braithwaite, nee Croft-Baker. Wayne knew that it was his Julie. He tracked down the only relative who remained in Cleethorpes from the Croft-Baker family, Ronald's elderly sister. She confirmed Julie Croft-Baker was her niece who had spent time in America. The old woman told him that she had seen Julie at the funeral along with her husband, but that was the first time in many years she'd had any contact with her. She told him that Julie only came, paid her respects, and then left. She had no other information. When Wayne heard that Julie had re-married, he gave up his search.

Wayne lived alone until the latter part of 2008. He bought a set of drums and a small Yamaha keyboard to entertain himself. He composed a few songs, although he had trouble performing them. Even though he wore a hearing-aid, some days he couldn't hear the lyrics clearly. His deafness became a burden and he had been robbed several times, as word spread that a deaf old man lived alone. He became afraid to stay at home and felt too old to return to Canada or the States. Cleethorpes was now his home, so he sold his house and moved into the residential home.

"And that's how I ended up here," said Wayne and smiled.

"We only found out by accident that he played in a band a few years ago. He said he was a taxi driver who played the drums and keyboard for pleasure after coming 'ere to look for his missus," said Elvin.

Wayne smirked and said, “Well, I did only play for pleasure... then.”

“You are a dark horse, Logan,” said Steve and chuckled.

Charles looked puzzled and asked, “I thought you dropped the name Sticks. So how come they call you Sticks now?”

Wayne looked at Steve and frowned. “It’s that slap-heads fault,” he said. “That’s how they found out I was in a band. I kept a few mementoes from my younger days and one was an old framed poster from my time with 'Johnny and the Jeepsters,' hung in my room.”

Steve giggled as the story unfolded.

“One day, I was getting ready to go to the recreation room. Steve knocked and just walked into my room.” He scowled at Steve still smirking, and continued, “He went over, looked at the picture, and asked about the band. He said he had never heard of the Jeepsters, which was great, as I didn’t want them to know about my past. I told him I played with them for a short while in the 60’s, but he wouldn’t let it be, and kept asking more questions. He then read the band’s line up and saw Wayne ‘Sticks’ Logan.”

“And Sticks was reborn,” said Steve smirking.

Wayne mumbled and sighed.

Much to Charles’s relief, the four did not play anymore after hearing Wayne’s tale, and Wayne, Steve, and Elvin packed away their instruments.

“It’s early,” said Steve. “How about we go for a couple of pints in the Pavilion?”

“Yeah, good idea,” said Elvin. “It aint far Nobby, only a ten-minute walk.”

Charles wasn’t in the mood, but after the three persisted, and wanting to hear more about them, he agreed.

The Pavilion, a public house near a large shallow boating lake with two small islands at its centre, was a sanctuary for the colourful bird populations inhabiting the area. Surrounded by trees and hedgerows, the Pavilion was a popular watering hole during the warm summer months, with the daylight sun lasting well into the evening. With the lake in view and the flora and fauna in full bloom, the outside seating area looked picturesque.

The four sat outside on a bench enjoying a cold beer, watching ducks idling along the glistening lake, and listening to wood-pigeons repetitive, coo-coo-coo-cu-cu. Familiar fragrances of flowering hawthorn bushes drifted on the light summer breeze

Steve took out a packet of cigarettes, lit one, and with a satisfying grin, blew out a cloud of smoke and said. “I like sitting here, and I can smoke,” he leaned over to Charles. “But don’t tell Chewy.”

Charles nodded and asked. “So Steven, how come you ended up at Fosdyke?”

Wayne and Elvin groaned. They knew Steve’s life story, he had told them many times as he said. “I’m from Scunthorpe, thirty miles away. When I left school, I worked in the steelworks alongside my old dad,” said Steve and smirked, “I got caught up in the swinging sixties and wanted to be a rock star, so I bought an acoustic guitar and learned to play.”

Steve did a quick air guitar demo, smiled and continued, “I saved my wages and upgraded to an electric Fender Stratocaster, adopting the stage name, Strat... because it sounded cool,” he smirked, giving another air guitar demo, before continuing. “Me and two mates from the steelworks formed, ‘Strat and the Steelers.’ We performed in several pubs and clubs in Scunny,” he sighed. “We could have been famous if we weren’t crap... and I wasn’t married to Jane. After we disbanded, I settled down and worked long hours at the steelworks to support my family.”

He coughed, took a swig of beer, and said, "We had a beautiful daughter, Lucy." Steve looked proud and told Charles. "Lucy's smart, unlike her dumb old Dad. She was always an intelligent and independent young woman. She's now a successful Doctor and she and her husband Bernard own Fossdyke," said Steve, took a photograph from his wallet, and showed Charles his middle-aged daughter. Charles felt relieved she wasn't as bald as a bell end like her father as Steve said. "That's my little girl, Doctor Lucy Fossdyke."

"Oh, so that's why it is called Fossdyke?" asked Charles.

Steve nodded and took another swig of beer. "Anyway, after Lucy went to University, Jane and I drifted apart. I worked long hours to pay for the university medical school, and Jane got a job in a bike shop."

He chuckled and said. "The manager wasn't only riding pushbikes, the bastard. I should have realised when she trowelled on her makeup to go to work. When I found out, I went to the shop and punched his lights out, and later divorced Jane," Steve sighed. "I was gutted and spent the next few years skipping work and going out getting spannered." He looked at Charles and said. "In my forties, I realised my life was going nowhere. My dad, even though retired, gave me grief because he heard rumours that the steelworks were about to sack me because I was always depressed, spannered, or both. One morning I woke up and thought, Fuck it! So I booked a flight to Australia. Lucy was then a qualified Doctor with a well-paying job, so I took my savings, a bag of clothes, my old Stratocaster, and flew to Oz."

"Oh," said Charles, impressed by Steve's audacity.

"Yeah, it was great. The years flew by, moving from town to town, city to city, and job to job. I played rock 'n' roll in local bars for drinks and food and lived the carefree life I always wanted, with no ties. I severed all links in England."

"What about Lucy?" asked Charles, "Didn't you at least stay in contact with her?"

Steve shook his head, "No, nobody." He smirked, "But don't worry Charlie my story has a happy ending... sort of. I was almost sixty and alone. I wanted a female companion to take care of me in my old age. I knew that if I stayed in Australia or returned to the UK, I would stay alone. A short, fat, bald, sixty-year-old musician, who smoked three packs of cigarettes a day, would be as appealing to a western woman as Deep Heat on a dildo. Besides, I didn't fancy being lumbered with an old troll with loads of kids or grandkids, so I tried the Philippines."

Wayne and Elvin juddered, they knew what was about to come next. They had heard this many times before as a prelude to one of Steve's repeated tales.

Wayne turned off his hearing-aid as Steve said. "When I was in the Philippines," Elvin's groan went ignored as Steve went on, "I had my biggest regret," he nudged Charles, laughed, and said, "I wished that I had gone sooner, the place made my head spin. This fabulous new culture and lifestyle drew me into a magical existence."

Charles noticed Steve demeanour change as he talked passionately about the Philippines.

"I settled in Angeles City, a raucous, sex-filled place. I worked in live music venues around sin city. Although I wasn't paid much, I reaped the other benefits of being a western musician and lived a carefree life with benefits," he chuckled, rubbed his crotch and continued. "I no longer wanted to settle down, with too many eager young women to choose from." Steve laughed, rubbed his hands together, and said. "They all wanted to please this sex god, although they cost me a lot of money."

Elvin tutted, and he and Wayne went to the bar for more beer while Steve continued. "I spent years living a blissful existence, until one day I woke up in agony. It felt like an alien eating its way through." Steve put his hand on the left side of his abdomen, winced, and said. "I'd never felt so much pain, and having no money, the girl I was with at the time, took me to the local quack, who operated on a strangulated hernia."

"Oh!" exclaimed Charles. "That sounded serious."

“Nah,” said Steve, “It wasn’t too bad, but it made me realise that if something serious were to happen, who could I turn to, and who would look after me with having little money? I decided to contact Lucy, who I’d had no contact with for over 20 years. With no idea where she was, I contacted the British embassy in Manila.”

Elvin and Wayne brought beers outside. Elvin heard the part of Steve’s conversation when they approached and sighed. He looking at Wayne in his silent bliss, nudged him, nodded to his pubic region, and shrugged. Wayne, realising Steve must be on the J-cloth story, smiled, while Elvin groaned. They had heard the hernia story many times. They put the drinks down and Steve and Charles took a drink, as Steve continued. “A few weeks later the embassy contacted me and told me they had traced my daughter,” Steve looked proud as he announced. “Doctor Lucy Fosssdyke M.D., a general practitioner with a practice in Cleethorpes. Lucy and her accountant husband, Bernard, came to visit me in Angeles. It was great to see them, especially my little girl. Bernard’s a bonehead, but a nice bloke.”

“I bet you were overjoyed,” said Charles. “Did you come home with them?”

“Nah,” said Steve, “they kept trying to persuade me, but I was too happy in the Philippines, so they went home without me.”

Steve took another slurp of beer. “About a month after they’d left, I got the same excruciating pain in my gut and they rushed me to the local hospital where a quack opened me up. They found a large mass that they thought was a malignant tumour... I shit myself when they told me.”

Charles looked concerned, Elvin yawned, and Wayne smiled, unable to hear Steve’s tale, as he went on, “The embassy contacted Lucy, who became distraught. She arranged for me to be medivaced to England. I got flown back and rushed into surgery when I arrived in Manchester.”

Steve unbuttoned his shirt, showed Charles a large scar down the centre of his abdomen, and pointed to a smaller hernia scar on his right-hand side. “The operation was a success and the surgeon removed a filthy old J-cloth from my abdominal cavity, festering there from my back-street hernia operation.” He laughed and said, “I made a full recovery, but now have an irritable and uncontrollable bowel, which gives me moments of embarrassment. I let rip pungent-smelling gas, which escapes at the most inappropriate moments when I’m nervous or excited.”

“Pungent,” interrupted Elvin, “It smelled like a rat ate a pile of cow dung, before crawling up yer arse and dying... wait until you smell it Nobby, it will make your eyes water.”

Steve chuckled and said, “As I said, pungent. Anyhow, I was eager to return to the Philippines, but after several long conversations with my exasperated daughter, who kept telling me to grow up. I eventually heeded her advice and stayed in England. Lucy and Bernard Fosssdyke are successful in their respective fields and bought several investment properties, including a guesthouse in Cleethorpes, which they’d developed into Fosssdyke residential home. They told me I could stay there for as long as I wanted and I’ve been there ever since.”

Elvin knew Steve had almost finished his tale and thought. ‘Charles got away lightly. He didn’t mention his Filipina sexual encounters as usual.’

“So Charlie boy, my roaming, carefree days were over, and I am now settled into a boring life in Fosssdyke,” he sighed. “I’m seventy-one now, so I can’t ever see me ever making it back to the Philippines,” he gazed into his glass, took another drink, and said. “Fosssdyke was crap at first, but I entertained myself by thrashing out tunes on my beat up old Stratocaster to annoy the other wrinklies and the old dragon, Chewy,” said Steve, and pointed at Elvin. “My dreary life took a turn for the better when he moved in.”

Elvin, seizing upon the moment to interject, said, “Yes, that was both memorable and amusing,” he chuckled. “However, that story will have to wait.” He looked at his watch. “We had better get back before Chewy locks us out.”

They agreed, finished their drinks, and made their way back to Fosssdyke.

Charles went to his room. The past few hours had been fun, but now he was alone in his room the pain of being without Mary gnawed away at him. He smelt the eggy musty aroma; he chuckled and thought ‘That must be Steve.’

He drew the curtains, leant back in his chair, closed his eyes, and told Mary.

The following morning, the four met at breakfast. Charles noticed the old folks seemed subdued compared to the chatter from the previous evening, and kept glancing at the four as they ate.

A woman put a full English breakfast in front of Charles. He looked at the plate of greasy offerings and tucked in.

“Glad to see you found your appetite Charles,” said Mrs Chew, who hovered around the table.

Charles nodded and shovelled a sausage into his mouth.

“Right,” whispered Steve. “When Chewy buggers off we can plan what to do today.”

He sneered at the other scared looking old folk and played his imaginary air guitar. They cringed and put their heads down, rushing to finish their food.

“So Elvin, how did you end up here?” asked Charles, while cutting up a runny egg.

Elvin was the eldest of the four at seventy-five-years-old. A small solid built man who remained fit and active throughout his life. He had lived at Fosdyke since his wife passed away. Bald as a baboon’s botty, his dry sense of humour made people laugh with his witty off-the-cuff remarks.

Elvin took a slurp of tea and said. “After me missus died, I didn’t want to be alone, so I looked for a residential home and I liked Fosdyke. It was close to the sea with a well-equipped leisure centre and swimming pool nearby, with other seaside amenities within walking distance. It appeared clean, efficient, and well run. I arranged an interview with Mrs Chew, who told me that there was a room available. She showed me around the residents’ quarters and the available room.

She was showing me the dining room when a woman came over and pulled ‘er to one side. Chewy apologised, saying that she needed to sort out a problem, and she directed me to the recreation room, suggesting that I should go and check it out. I went along to the room and as I approached I heard a guitar playing.” He pointed to Steve, who chuckled as Elvin continued. “So I went into the room and he stopped playing and asked me if I was lost... No, I said, Just ‘aving a gander.” Elvin smiled at Steve and continued. “A gander,” he said and taking the mickey out of my cockney accent, asked. “Wot part of London are you from me old cock sparra? The Grimsby part, I told ‘im.”

He laughed, unplugged his Stratocaster from the amp, walked over, and said his name was Steve Baker...or I could call him, ‘Strat.’ I told ‘im, I’m Elvin Stanley... or he could call me, Elvin Stanley,” he chuckled and continued. “I told him I knew the song he was playing, County Jail Blues and said it was a great song and I could play it. He asked if I was a guitarist. I told him I wasn’t, but a dab hand on the old double bass. He must have got the ‘ump, because he couldn’t take his eyes off me Bobby Charlton comb-over, and said I looked like a twat.” Elvin rubbed his bald head. “He said he had Braun clippers and would give me a solar panel for a sex machine.”

“Well I did, but you still look like a twat,” interrupted Steve chuckling and rubbing his head.

Hmm, grumbled Elvin. “Then the cheeky git said, Elvin, that’s a stupid name for a rock star. I didn’t understand what he meant, so I said, I’m not a rock star... I’m a geriatric.”

Steve interrupted. “I wanted to liven the place up, so I wanted to tell everyone he was a rock star. I knew it would give old Elsie an orgasm. Her tubes won’t have been lubed since her old man snuffed it. She’s probably got moss growing from her flaps,” said Steve and chortled.

Elvin laughed, pointed at Steve, and said. "He then glared at me and announced. I'll call you Chippers! Short for chipmunk, because one of the bloody annoying chipmunks on T.V.'s called Alvin, which sounded like Elvin, so he said Chipper's sounded good."

Elvin looked at Steve, smiled, and said. "He made me feel right at home before Chewy came back into the rec room. She gave him a filthy look, dragged me away to her office, apologised, and hoped that Steve hadn't put me off the home. She assured me that the other old residents were far more relaxed." Elvin laughed. "I paid my deposit there and then, sorted out the paperwork, and a few days later me and my old double bass moved in."

"Yeah," said Steve, "there was hell on over the next few months for the old codgers."

Elvin chuckled and said, "Which only got worse for them when Wayne arrived wiv his drum kit and Yamaha keyboard."

"Great for us, though," said Steve, "we were now a trio."

Charles cringed, as he recalled the dreadful noise made by this trio.

After breakfast, the four went to the recreation room. Residents who milled around in there were about to leave when Mrs Chew walked in and stood guard over the door to their instruments.

"We've got bingo at 10:00 am, so none of your antics today," she said and scowled.

The four sighed, went to the coffee machine, took their beverages outside, and sat on a bench in the grounds.

"What did Mrs Chew mean last night when she mentioned about what happened last time?" asked Charles, looking intrigued.

The three looked uncomfortable and Charles thought he had hit a raw nerve, but after a moment's silence, Steve said. "You tell him, deaf boy. After all, it was your fault."

"What?" Wayne asked, feigning deafness and fiddling with his hearing-aid.

Steve sniggered and said. "Okay, I'll tell him."

Steve took a drink of coffee and said. "Old deaf boy hadn't told us his full story, and always became selectively deaf when we questioned him about his life. Although strangely enough when we are in a pub his hearing becomes clear when offered a pint of beer," he said, and he and Elvin chuckled.

Wayne, knowing he had been rumbled and his hearing was okay now, took over telling the story, which happened over a year ago. "Toward the end of my first year at Fosdyke, I noticed small spots of grey hair."

"Small!" Steve interrupted, "you're a lying twat Logan. You looked like Santa's dandruff." he chuckled.

Wayne glared at Steve. "At least I have hair, baldy," said Wayne, running his fingers through his hair. "Not bad for a seventy-two-year-old," he smirked. "Anyhow, I was applying a dab of black hair dye to a small patch that looked lighter than the rest." He pointed at the giggling Steve and Elvin. "Those two knocked on my door wanting me to go to the recreation room to rehearse. They kept banging on the door, so I slipped the small plastic hair dye bottle into my pocket and answered. Steve pestered me to hurry, so in my haste, I forgot about the bottle."

He took a slurp of coffee and continued, "We did a sound check after Elvin fitted his little falsies, and we played. Engrossed in beating out a rhythm, I didn't notice the bottle of hair dye slip out of my pocket and lodge under the foot pedal of my bass drum. I stamped on the pedal and the top of the bottle popped off."

“A stream of black hair dye spurted over the cream-coloured, shag-pile carpet,” interrupted Steve. “And the worse thing is, old deaf boy didn't see it and carried on stomping on the pedal... You should have seen his face when he realised what happened and picked up the empty bottle.”

Elvin sniggered as he recalled the event, remembering how Steve warned Wayne about how Chewy would crush his knackers unless he serviced her.

“Well you made matters worse, buddy,” said Wayne smirking.

Steve looked embarrassed as Wayne continued and pointed at him. “Because old ripey was laughing so hard, he farted.”

“It was too much excitement for my uncontrollable dysfunctional bowel and it belched out foul smelling puffs of gas,” said Steve, smirking.

“Foul smelling puffs of gas. That's a goddamn understatement. It smelt like putrid eggs blowing out of your ass” interrupted Wayne smiling.

“It was like being gassed,” said Elvin, “it wez ‘orrible.”

Charles was enjoying every moment of this light-hearted banter, as Wayne told him. “Chewy walked into the rec room, saw the black stains on the carpet, and smelt the pungent air around old ripey. She pinched her nose and accused us of letting off stink-bombs and throwing paint over the shag pile.”

“She wuz livid,” said Elvin, “and glared at us with 'er 'ands on 'er 'ips, screaming about wilful acts of vandalism, calling us senile destructive old men, and she called the boss, his daughter,” he pointed at Steve.

“And her crush on old deaf was over,” chuckled Steve.

“We felt like scolded schoolboys when the furious doctor and Mrs Chew came into the recreation room and bollocked us. We had tried scrubbing the dye off the carpet, but only spread the stain around,” said Elvin. “They threatened to kick me and Wayne out.”

“Yeah, but fortunately they only banned us from playing music again,” said Wayne.

Steve chuckled and said, “But now that you're here, Charley boy, I'm sure I can persuade Lucy to let us rehearse again.”

Charles cringed, and through grated teeth said “Oh, that would be nice.”

“So what's the plan? We can't sit around here all day and I don't fancy bingo,” said Elvin.

“I'll call Lucy,” said Steve, taking out his mobile phone.

Elvin looked at Charles and in a soft voice said. “When we saw you yesterday, you looked like you had just lost someone very close, was it your wife?” he asked.

Charles nodded.

Elvin gently squeezed Charles's arm and said, “My world collapsed and I felt lost and alone when my missus died. I wanted to end it and I fink about her all the time,” he looked at Charles, smiled, and told him, “It gets easier, Nobby, and we are always here for you. The band of wrinkled brothers,” he chuckled and said, “Life's too short to be sad.”

Charles gasped. “That's what my wife Mary always said.”

Elvin smiled. “And she was right.”

“Great news lads,” interrupted Steve looking pleased, “Lucy will have a word with Chewy. We can start rehearsing again tomorrow.”

“Great, well done, buddy!” exclaimed Wayne.

Elvin put his hand on Charles’s shoulder, smiled, and said, “Now the healing begins Nobby.”

The four spend the afternoon in the gardens planning for the next day and Charles told them about Mary.

Mrs Chew came outside on occasions and glowered at the four after receiving Lucy’s instructions. Apart from Steve terrorising the old folk and warning them what lay in store, it was a sedate day for the old musicians.

After the evening meal, they strolled along to the Pavilion.

They sat on the same bench around the table and while Steve lit a cigarette, Elvin leaned over to Charles and said. “I suppose you want to know what happened to my fingers and me little falsies, and 'ow a cockney ended up in Cleeforpes?”

Charles had been wondering about Elvin’s lack of digits since they first met, but felt too embarrassed to ask. Now Elvin had offered to disclose the fact, he wanted to know and nodded. Elvin held up his pincers and said. “I lost these many years ago when I was a stoker in the Royal Navy. They selected me for the Portsmouth *Field gun crew and I spent the next few years shore-based at H.M.S. Nelson in Portsmouth, training for the royal tournament at Earls’ court. During one training session, while running with a 12-pound gun, the wheels slipped as we tried to lift it over the wall. I made a grave error of judgement and ignored the warnings from me training and grabbed the wheel to stop it slipping.” He held up his hands. “I trapped me bloody ‘ands underneath and it cut me fingers clean off.” Elvin sighed and looked sullen. “That was the end of me service career.”

He then chuckled and continued, “Never mind, it worked out for the best. I got pensioned out at thirty-five and came to Grimsby to look for work on the trawlers. I got a job on a fishing boat and met me missus, Anna, and we had three great kids. When they laid me off from the trawlers in the 80's, I built a workshop on a large piece of land at the back of our ‘ouse, which I kitted out with tools and machinery. I started making medical prosfetics, starting with me own ‘little falsies.’ Then I made prosfetics for the surgical department at the general 'ospital. I turned me little 'obby into a lucrative business.” He smiled. “The money I saved plus me pensions will last me out.”

The four chatted, drank, and apart from Charles, who knew his eardrums would be tortured again, felt excited about the next day.

Charles felt comfortable around these three miscreants and by 10:00 pm, the four old timers, merrily spannered, staggered back to Fosdyke.

Charles, feeling unsteady, flopped into his armchair. He felt the room spinning so closed his eyes and told Mary about his day, before dozing into a blissful slumber.

-Track Three-

After breakfast, the four hung-over old men went to the recreation room.

Steve, Wayne, Elvin, and Charles sat around the piano. Several other residents milled around but knew they were safe for now, as their nemeses were talking and had no instruments.

Wayne opened his briefcase and took out sheet music. He went through his handwritten tunes with Charles, who read the music to one song, which he played, while the others listened.

Steve and Elvin looked impressed, as did Charles as he played the melancholy ballad Wayne had entitled, 'Vulnerable.' Charles finished playing and they looked at Wayne.

"That sounded good mate," said Steve, and looking at the sheet music, asked, "Are there any vocals?"

"Sure," said Wayne, and handed him a separate sheet of paper with lyrics scribbled on it.

"Play it again Nobby," said Steve, looking at the words.

Charles played the song again and as Steve picked up the tune, he sang.

Halfway through Charles stopped playing, much to the relief of Elvin and Wayne. Steve was out of key, sang in the wrong tempo, and his gruff voice made the ballad sound terrible.

"Sorry lads," said Steve, "it's too slow for me, but I can think of a guitar riff which would go great with this song."

"What about the vocals?" asked Elvin. "I can't sing well and Wayne can hardly hear, so we can't do them."

"How about you, Nobby?" Steve asked.

Charles told them about his vocal chord problem and how he didn't have the voice for classical music or opera. "But I'll try," he said and put the sheet with lyrics next to the music on the rack of his piano. He then played and sang 'Vulnerable.

Charles finished to a stunned silence. The three looked at him, agog.

"That sounded different," said Steve.

"You sound great Nobby!" Elvin exclaimed, "You may not have the voice for opera, but it was perfect for this ballad. Yer gravelly tenor twang made you sound a cross between Andrea Bocelli and Joe Cocker."

"Outstanding, buddy," said Wayne.

"Right, let's get our stuff and see what we can do," said Steve, smirking at the other residents, who made a hasty retreat as Wayne, Elvin, and Steve went to get their instruments.

They set up next to Charles, plugged in their instruments, and went to stand around the piano.

"Play that song again, 'Nobby,'" said Steve.

Charles played and sang Vulnerable again.

Once they'd finished, Charles and Wayne discussed how to incorporate electric guitar, double bass and what drumbeat, and Charles jotted down chords and the beat.

They spend the day rehearsing the song, adjusting, and tweaking, carrying on after supper and well into the evening.

Steve, Elvin, and Wayne felt a renewed vigour for music thanks to Charles, who tutored and directed them. Vulnerable took shape over the course of the next few days as the four came together.

Charles and Wayne incorporated all their instruments and melodies that Elvin, Steve, and Wayne sang in the song, and by the end of the fourth day, they performed a decent rendition of Vulnerable.

“That sounded fantastic lads,” said Steve as they finished playing.

“I agree, you have all done excellent,” said Charles and continued, “It is a lovely song, well done Wayne.”

Wayne smiled.

“Shall we go to the boozier and celebrate? It’s only 8 o’clock,” said Elvin smiling.

“Great idea, Chippers,” said Steve.

“I agree,” said Wayne, “great idea, buddy.”

“I’ll get my hat,” said Charles.

Elvin, Steve, and Wayne packed away their instruments and Charles went to fetch his light summer trilby from his room, before heading to the Pavilion.

Dressed in short sleeves, shirts and slacks, the four sat on their regular bench outside and chatted.

“I fink we have a band,” Elvin announced and chuckled.

“We have,” said Charles. “So what are we going to call ourselves?”

They pondered for a moment and Steve announced, “The Four Old Fogey’s from Cleethorpes,” he laughed. “The Fossdyke Old Fogeys.”

“That’s a bit of a mouthful,” said Elvin.

They laughed and Charles suggested, “We are ancient old fossils, so how about, The Fossdyke Fossils?”

Considering Charles's suggestion, Elvin said, “How about, the Fossils?”

They thought about the name.

“Although with the ‘The’ added, it sounded like a throwback to the 60’s,” said Charles, so suggested. “What about just, Fossils?”

Steve grinned and said, “I like it.”

The three nodded their agreement and Steve raised his glass. “To Fossils,” he announced.

The four chinked glasses and repeated aloud.

“Fossils!”

Other customers, thinking the old fellow’s ruckus was due to them discovering multi-coloured incontinence pants, glared at them and went back to their conversations.

“Right gentlemen, we have Vulnerable almost cracked, so once we perfect that, we could learn more of Wayne's songs,” said Charles.

“I’ve got one,” Steve chuckled and warbled.

“Mary, Mary your fanny’s hairy, your tits are heading south; I’ve something here that tastes of beer, so shove it in your m...”

“That’s enough!” shouted Charles, interrupting.

Steve put his hand over his mouth and realising he'd upset Charles, became embarrassed and apologised. "Sorry Charles, I forgot your wife's name was Mary. I was only joking," he said and extended his hand.

Charles shook his hand, smirked, and said. "So, how did you know her fanny was hairy?"

Steve looked into the smiling face of Charles and realised that he wasn't as stuck-up as he seemed as Charles said. "It was a fine old bush before it turned grey and wispy," he joked. "One time I could have sworn I saw Doctor Livingstone wandering around lost in there."

Wayne, Elvin, and Steve looked shocked and then burst out laughing.

The conversation then turned to the old women of Fosssdyke and their pubic hair or the lack thereof. The four laughed and joked all evening.

They went back to Fosssdyke and Charles spoke to wispy fanny Mary before drifting off to sleep.

Over the next few weeks, Fossils rehearsed and played songs from Wayne's repertoire. The music varied from ballads and soft rock to up-tempo rock 'n' roll. Charles and Wayne spent time incorporating or changing notes, lyrics, and melodies, to suit the newly formed band. With Charles's tenor raspy voice and the other three harmonising, it sounded different from any other music. Their sound was unique.

They practised long hours alone in the recreation room as the old residents scurried out when Steve, Elvin, and Wayne set up their instruments. Mrs Chew was still angry at Lucy Fosssdyke's decision to allow them to rehearse again. Fearing that it was still a noisy racket, she kept clear of the recreation room.

The four felt pleased and surprised by how well they came together under Charles's tuition.

The next song they tried had no lyrics. Although Wayne had written several versions, he wasn't happy with the results. Charles liked the tune and played the melody several times before a title popped into his head. He and Wayne worked on the lyrics while Elvin and Steve went to the pub.

The following day they rehearsed, 'Life is Too Short to Be Sad,' Wayne and Charles wrote lyrics based on Charles's title. Charles added notes and toned down the tempo. The beguiling song had several parts, needing all four to sing in harmony. It also had a solo tenor crescendo in the chorus. It was a soft rock ballad with thought-provoking lyrics, which the four loved.

One evening, after packing away their instruments, and about to go to the Pavilion for their evening libation, Steve said. "How about going to The Wellow for a change? They have a band playing tonight."

Charles looked puzzled.

"Wellow's another pub close by Nobby, but it's noisy and full of youngsters," said Wayne, much to Steve's amusement.

"Why do you care? You're deaf!" shouted Steve.

"Not all the time," Wayne replied and smirked

"What do you reckon Nobby, it will be a change," said Steve.

Charles looked at Wayne and Elvin, who shrugged.

"Why not," said Charles, "Perhaps there's a good group on, so we can pick up some tips."

The four walked along the beach road and headed to the Wellow.

The Wellow public house, situated close to the town's small bowling alley, was only a short walk along the main beach road from Fosssdyke. Although slightly smaller than the Pavilion, it attracted the younger crowd, making it a lot more raucous. The Wellow's landlord, a middle-aged man named David Corrigan, was an unmarried, stocky individual, with a friendly disposition. Known as Cosmo because he resembled English comedian Benny Hill's character, Cosmo Smallpiece, he had run the successful brewery owned

public house for 15 years. Cosmo occasionally did the odd dodgy deal but prided himself on never breaking the law, although he'd bent it on occasions.

When Charles, Elvin, Steve, and Wayne arrived at the Wellow, they went around the back to the lounge. It was a warm summer evening and people stood outside in groups holding pints of beer, chatting, and smoking. A sign on the door read: Live tonight - Tony S.

The lounge bustled with people stood chatting, and while Wayne, Charles, and Elvin sat at an empty table, Steve struggled through the crowd to get to the bar and get the drinks.

Eventually being served, he jostled his way back to the other three. They saw the band's equipment set up and waited for them to play.

Only seeing a guitar and electronic equipment, Charles said. "It must be just a man with a guitar."

Tony S went on the small stage and fiddled with buttons and knobs on his equipment. The Stevie Wonder tune, 'I Just Called to Say I Love you' played, as Tony S strummed and sang.

"It's a bloody Karaoke!" Steve shouted above the din.

"Not good Karaoke either," said Elvin, "it sounds awful."

Wayne just thought, 'I told you so,' and switched off his hearing-aid.

The four sat through the painful set of Tony S and felt relieved when he took a break.

"Let's have a beer in the Pavilion," said Elvin. "At least we can hear ourselves think, without that bloody awful racket."

"Agreed," said Wayne, after switching on his hearing-aid.

They finished their drinks and were about to leave, when Steve said. "You go on ahead, I will join you later. I just saw somebody I need to have a word with."

Elvin, Charles, and Wayne walked the short distance to the Pavilion and sat outside at their regular spot.

They waited for Steve, who hadn't shown up by 10:00 pm.

"He must still be chatting to his mate," said Elvin.

"He would probably go back to Fosdyke when he realised the time," said Charles and Wayne and Elvin nodded.

The three headed back to Fosdyke.

Steve grinned like a Cheshire cat through breakfast. They went into the recreation room and set up their equipment.

Wayne counted them in and they played, 'Consider Me Gone,' another of Wayne's songs they wanted to try.

After finishing the song, Wayne and Charles got together to iron out the wrinkles, while Elvin and Steve, plucked, strummed, and chatted.

"Why don't you try an electric bass mate?" Steve asked, sounding aloof.

Elvin looked at his beat up old instrument, shook his head, and said. "I like my old double bass. I tried an electric one several years ago. It was easy to play, but I much prefer my old faithful Flores." Elvin plucked a fast tempo piece to demonstrate.

“How about you Nobby?” Steve shouted, interrupting Charles and Wayne’s train of thought. “Can you play something smaller? Wayne has a portable Yamaha keyboard that does everything and has all the bells and whistles.”

Charles frowned and said. “I know he has, I use it to revamp songs while you're down the pub.”

“So you can play it then?” asked Steve.

“Yes, of course,” said Charles and becoming suspicious, asked. “Why?”

Steve smiled and played a rapid riff. He felt the others staring so stopped. Now he had their attention, he said. “I spoke to Cosmo, the Gaffer at the Wellow last night. We're performing there a week on Friday.”

He nonchalantly continued his riff.

The three gasped.

“What?” asked Elvin.

“Fossils are playing at the Wellow a week on Friday,” Steve repeated.

The three stunned musicians looked at each other, agog.

They then looked at Steve smiling.

“Hang on Steven. Are you crazy? Who mentioned anything about us being a performing band?” asked Charles.

“Why not?” asked Steve, pointing out. “Why do we rehearse? Surely we all want to take pleasure from a live performance again?”

The other three fell silent and glared at Steve.

Wayne scratched his chin. He remembered the rush he felt performing to audiences in his younger days. He broke the silence. “I suppose he’s right... it makes sense.”

“We're too old and knackered to hump around gear at our age and too droopy to be sex symbols,” said Elvin.

Steve, seeing them considering his plan, said, “It’s not far. I will get the gear moved and set up. My mates have a van, so all we have to do is stroll along to the Wellow and play. They will bring our stuff back the next day.”

The three looked at one another, then at Steve strumming his guitar.

“I’m up for it!” exclaimed Wayne.

Steve stopped strumming and said. “Nice one mate, what about you two?”

Charles and Elvin pondered.

Elvin had never played to a live audience and always felt it was something he had missed out on. He smiled and said, “I suppose there’s no ‘arm in trying.”

All eyes turned to Charles, who although nervous about the prospect, looking at his band member’s happy, hopeful faces and, remembering his fond memories performing with the London Philly, smiled and said. “Fossils live at the Wellow in Cleethorpes, next stop the Royal Albert Hall!”

They cheered and then nervously looked at one another.

“Hang on,” said Elvin. “A week on Friday. That means we only ‘av ten days.”

“Yeah,” said Steve. “So we better get cracking.”

Charles and Wayne went to the store cupboard, brought out Wayne’s Yamaha PSR-180 electronic piano keyboard that Wayne set up. Charles played Vulnerable and the others joined in.

After lunch, Elvin caught a bus into Grimsby and went along to a musical equipment shop. Elvin bought a new electric, Fender four-string bass guitar and amp. He knew it would be easier than lugging around his old Flores and thought the smaller electric version looked cooler.

‘I will ‘av to dig out my electric bass playing falsies and practice,’ said Elvin, becoming excited about their upcoming gig.

Deciding not to learn new tunes, they spent the days until the gig practising with the new instruments and perfecting the songs they’d already learned. Charles tidied up old rock ‘n’ roll classics they already knew Steve could sing. They came up with a playlist and rehearsed feverishly over the next few days.

They felt worn out, aching in places that hadn’t hurt for many years. Elvin and Steve’s finger tips stung, Wayne’s wrists felt like lead, and Charles’s throat felt like he had gargled sand. They persisted, and with only a few days left, they ran through each song on their playlist. They finished their last song and smiled at one another.

“We’ve cracked it, we sound great,” said Steve, and the others smiled and nodded.

“It’s 8 o’clock, shall we ‘av a break and nip to the Pavilion for a pint,” said Elvin, looking at the welts on his fingertips.”

“Good idea,” said Charles sounding hoarse, “I’m parched.”

They went to the Pavilion, whistling and humming their tunes.

While drinking beer, Steve said, “I know we think we sound great, but I’d like another opinion,” he smirked. “I have a plan.” He leaned forward and announced, “Let’s put on a show at Fosdyke before we perform at the Wellow and get feedback from the wrinklies.”

The others frowned.

“Chewy won’t allow that,” said Wayne.

Steve smirked, “Leave her to me. I’ll call Lucy,” he said.

The others agreed if Steve could pull it off.

Steve called Lucy and told her about their impromptu gig, telling her it was important. Lucy had never heard her father play, but from reports that she’d had from Mrs Chew, glad she hadn’t. However, Steve was insistent that she came along with Bernard, telling her that she was in for a big surprise, and they would arrange everything if she cleared it with Mrs Chew.

Although getting late, Lucy called Mrs Chew, who said that the band was a noisy, raucous, bunch of old louts, whom the residents constantly complained about and still avoided the recreation room. However, Mrs Chew agreed when Lucy told her if that was the case, she would stop them from playing once and for all.

Elvin knew his children always made excuses why they were too busy to come; they seldom came to visit and when they did, the visits were brief. Charles still felt angry with his family after Mary’s passing, so neither he nor Elvin contacted their families.

The four sat in silence around the table. They hardly touched their beer as they waited on tenterhooks for a phone call. They jumped when Steve’s phone rang.

He spoke to Lucy for several minutes, hung up, looked at the anticipation on the faces of his band mates, grinned, and announced, "Right lads, we better get an early night, we have a busy day tomorrow, we have a concert to perform," said Steve.

The next morning, Steve, Wayne, Elvin, and Charles placed several rows of chairs a short distance from the band's speakers, leaving floor space in front of their instruments. Unsure of how many would attend, they'd figured ten chairs should suffice.

Steve felt delighted that his daughter would be coming. He knew Lucy had a good sense of humour. After all, she had married Bernard the Bonehead.

"My daughter will be coming to see us later, so let's put on a good show," said Steve looking proud.

Not wanting to strain themselves, they sat around their instruments and hummed the tunes, going over each song in their heads.

Later that morning, a sign writer came with vinyl letters for Wayne's drum. After 30 minutes, 'FOSSILS' in black vinyl letters, arched around the top of the bass drum skin.

The four stood and admired the work. They now felt like a band, albeit a wrinkly one. They nodded at one another.

After lunch, Mrs Chew came in, stomped over to the four, and with a stern look, announced, "Mr and Mrs Fosdyke will be here at 7 o'clock. Mr Chew and I will come to watch you make fools of yourselves, and then we can stop this music nonsense and everyone can get recreation room back without you terrifying them."

She then looked at Wayne's drum and read out the vinyl print. "Fossils," she groaned and sneered. "Dopey Old Codgers would be more fitting."

She turned, strode out of the recreation room, and went into her office for a cigarette. She puffed away smiling. 'Tomorrow we can be back to normal, and the other wrinklies would stop complaining. I'd better get the afternoon bingo organised.' she thought and looked at her watch. 'Arthur will be here soon and want a sub,' she stubbed out her cigarette and left her office.

Arthur Chew, her husband, worked mornings cleaning the local council offices. Although seldom seen at Fosdyke because if he wasn't at work, he frequented the local pubs and working men's clubs, and an avid domino player. Arthur frequently popped into Fosdyke to get money off Hilda, as he was always skint and liked afternoon domino sessions at the British Legion club. He waited for his wife in her office.

Mrs Chew came in smiling. She lit a cigarette, gave Arthur £20, and told him, "Be home early, we have to come here tonight. I want to witness my problem old farts making fools of themselves and get banned from playing their racket here ever again."

Mr Chew frowned and looked puzzled, so Mrs Chew explained, "I told you about those four old idiots playing their racket and upsetting everyone, especially the boss's Dad, Steve."

Arthur nodded, although he couldn't remember because his wife constantly grumbled, so he seldom paid attention.

She told him, "They've got a stupid group called, Fossils. They're playing at the Wellow tomorrow, but want to torture us first," she sniggered, "but after tonight it will all be over."

Arthur shrugged. He had seen flyers and posters in the British Legion about a band called Fossils playing at the Wellow on Friday, but nobody had ever heard of them. Smiling, he thought, 'this could be fun, wait until I tell the lads down the legion that Fossils are a band of old codgers at Fosdyke on their last legs.'

He chuckled, kissed his smiling wife on the cheek, and left.

The four decided not to play their full playlist and chose four songs. Starting with, Life is Too Short to Be Sad, followed by the ballads, Vulnerable and Cry alone. They would finish with Rolling Thunder, a fast beat rock song.

Bernard and Lucy arrived at 7:00 pm and went into the recreation room accompanied by Mr and Mrs Chew. Lucy and Bernard went over to the four. She kissed her Dad and said hello to the others.

Several other residents saw the Fossdyke's arrive, and, seeing them and the Chew's going into the recreation room, they decided to risk venturing in. A few brave old souls nervously sat down and waited to hear the music, hoping it would be a piano recital. They became unnerved when they saw Charles's piano in the corner. Steve glared at them, shook his hips, and curled his top lip.

Wayne counted them in and they played, Life is Too Short to Be Sad. When they finished, they went straight into the ballad, Vulnerable.

Fossils, engrossed in their song, did not see the shocked expressions on their audience faces. The melodic ballad made the hairs on the back of their necks stand on end. Bernard filmed the performance on his camcorder; flitting around the room, getting shots from different angles, imagining himself to be Steven Spielberg until Lucy motioned him to sit down.

Charles's croaky, melancholy tenor voice echoed around the recreation room.

Pearl and Svend Neilsen, a lovely old couple in their eighties, went to the floor in front of the band and waltzed to the tune. Doreen and Stan Bullen, another loving elderly couple residing at Fossdyke, joined in with a waltz. Other residents wandered in after hearing the music and were now dancing or stood behind the seating area bobbing their heads and tapping their feet.

"We should have put more chairs out," said Steve, through a musical interlude.

The old musicians couldn't stop smiling when they saw the small crowds reaction.

They continued playing as other people, including Bernard and Lucy, got up to dance. Even the Chews joined in.

They finished, Cry Alone. Charles, seeing people dancing in front of them, didn't want to up the tempo, so nodded to the others and played Vulnerable again.

Amazed, they performed their ballads twice before playing Rolling Thunder. They assumed that the small crowd of dancers would all sit down. However, they carried on dancing, just changing their steps and movements to keep in beat with the music. It looked like a geriatric head-banging convention.

The band finished and the small audience stared at them in awe.

Lucy rushed over to her father and planted a kiss on his cheek.

"That was great, Dad," she said, as the others in the room gave the band a rapturous round of applause.

Even Mrs Chew looked impressed. She smiled and winked at Wayne, who cringed, hoping Mr Chew had noticed. Mr Chew hadn't, but didn't care, he couldn't wait to tell his mates he had heard Fossils play, and they were great.

The impromptu gig was a tremendous success.

The following morning, the anxious four looked on as Steve's friends pulled up outside the home in a white Ford transit van. They loaded the band's equipment for the two-minute drive to the Wellow. Fossils then took a steady stroll along to the pub to set up their equipment. They did a sound check and had an afternoon libation.

The felt trepidation as they ate their evening meal before heading to the Wellow. Dressed in well-creased summer slacks with collars, ties, V-neck pullovers and with Charles wearing his trilby, they strutted along

the road. The four elderly throwbacks from Saturday Night Fever arrived at the pub. Crowds of youngsters were already inside as the four ordered drinks and sat by the stage near their equipment.

The old musicians sat and watched as the bar filled with people who had come to watch the live music, and by 7:40 pm, the lounge bustled with customers.

At 7:55 pm, the four took to the stage and went to their respective instruments.

Cosmo went to Steve's microphone while sporadic chortles echoed around the room from people who had seen the old codgers sat drinking. They assumed they were just old relics who come to see the live music; nobody imagined that THEY were the live music.

"Ladies and gentleman," said Cosmo and waited for the audience to settle, before announcing. "Please put your hands together for the fabulous... Fossils,"

With butterflies in their stomachs and ignoring the chattering and laughter coming from the young audience, they began playing.

They kicked off with Eric Clapton's 'Layla', deciding that their first song should be a well-known classic and give the crowd a familiar sound. Although looking around at the ages of those present, Steve wondered whether half of them had ever even heard of Clapton. 'They probably thought it was a venereal disease,' he thought.

Steve felt nervous; it had been many years since he had played to a live audience. He heard laughter and jibes about their ages coming from the youngsters, so he avoided eye contact with the crowd. He played the opening riff and his uncontrollable bowel reacted to his stage fright, performing its own symphony in, 'G' Fucking Rancid Flat Major.

Noxious, foul-smelling, gaseous flares emitted from Steve's rectal trumpet, wafted around the pub's lounge by the stage fans. Within seconds, the foul odour filled the room, with the crowd engulfed in the disgusting smelling emission.

"Some bastard's letting off stink bombs," said one of the fine patrons of the establishment.

"Fucking Yorkie bastards," said another, pointing to a group of upstanding young individuals from the white rose county, who smashed bottles and threw them at the other youths.

The pub became a free for all. Fists, bottles, Yorkie's, and furniture flew around the room as pandemonium broke out. Fossils stopped playing and the frightened old men stood behind their equipment, cowering. Steve apologised for his windy pops and the others said they would forgive him if they got out of the violence unscathed. The police arrived and cleared the pub, although most of the perpetrators had already scarpered.

The four terrified old men made their way off the stage and sat at a table, trembling.

After order got restored, Cosmo came over and apologised, blaming the Yorkies with their stink bombs. He gave the four a whisky and a pint of beer each and cancelled the gig.

With disappointment etched upon their faces, the four old men packed their instruments away. Wayne, Charles, and Elvin threw Steve dirty looks. They knew that he could not control his bowels, but couldn't figure out why he had been nervous. He had always claimed that he was a rock 'n' roll legend, who played to packed venues.

After packing away their instruments, they sat in the now deserted lounge. The bar staff had almost cleaned up the damage from the brawl, but remnants of the foul smell lingered.

Cosmo gave the old men more beer and whisky, hoping that they would understand that he couldn't afford to pay them the agreed fee.

"We don't care about the money," said Steve.

“We just wanted to perform,” said Elvin, looking sad.

Cosmo looked at the faces of the disappointed old men, and feeling sorry for them, made them an offer. “How about I let you use the room to practice in during the week? We don't book entertainment for Tuesday or Thursday's, so how about you practice here? I won't be able to pay you, but you're welcome to use the place, and who knows, you may attract some fans.”

The four looked at one another.

“That's a great idea,” said Steve and the others agreed.

Cosmo's offer meant that they could practice twice a week at the Wellow. Fossils felt pleased because it meant the old Fossdyke residents could use the recreation room undisturbed for two nights a week, so they wouldn't moan as much. It also meant the band would get used to playing in front of a younger audience and it sounded an ideal solution. They chatted with Cosmo throughout the evening as he brought them more beer and whisky.

The old farts got merrily spannered and staggered back to Fossdyke, arm in arm.

Charles lay on his bed, closed his eyes, and chuckled as he told Mary.

-Track Four -

Fossdyke residents enjoyed the balmy summer days in the gardens or strolling along the beach. With a relaxed atmosphere following the Fossils performance, residents now went into the recreation room to hear them rehearse. Fossils had a hectic, but productive few weeks. The four old musicians arranged, rehearsed, and played their tunes, with eight original songs now in their repertoire. Under Charles's musical tutelage and leadership, they had become a well-honed band. The evening practice sessions at the Wellow turned out to be beneficial for both them, and Cosmo.

At first, perceived as a joke, their music now appealed to Cosmo's regular customers, who, after listening to them rehearse, were amazed and told their friends. Cosmo felt overjoyed because Tuesday and Thursday nights in the Wellow were always quiet, but thanks to the Fossils, his weeknight trade exceeded his weekend takings.

Cosmo, always on the lookout for an opportunity to make money, arranged for his young disc jockey friend, Kipper, to make a compact disc of Fossils music. Kipper worked for a local music shop, so had the equipment and expertise at his disposal. With the Wellow's lounge having good acoustics, Cosmo closed off the lounge and Kipper set up a makeshift recording studio.

Cosmo said he would cover the production costs, and they agreed to share any profits from sales, 40% for Cosmo, with 60% to share among the group and Kipper.

Both Charles and Wayne had been in recording studios before, but the methods they used now, with all the new technology at Kipper's disposal, seemed far simpler. They recorded their original songs over the next few days and Kipper tweaked, equalized, cleaned up, and added a few musical effects that the band found suitable.

After finishing the final track, and as Kipper packed his equipment away, he looked at the four and asked, "What's the album title?"

The four looked at one another and shrugged.

"We'd forgotten about that. We haven't thought of one," said Charles and chuckled.

"How about, Fossils, live at the Wellow?" said Steve and tittered.

"Boring" shouted Wayne, and the others agreed.

They pondered. Elvin chuckled and said. "Three sex machines and a J-cloth."

Wayne, Charles, and Kipper sniggered. Steve glared at Elvin and growled, "Sex machines; in your dreams, Stanley."

"Well, we can live in hope," said Elvin, chuckling.

"That's it... Hope!" announced Kipper.

The old men stared at Kipper and smiled.

"Sounds good," said Wayne.

"I like it," said Charles.

"Hope, it is then," said Steve, looking at their empty glasses, "Well done Kipper. Now, where's our drinks, we need a toast."

Kipper spent a few days producing a demo disc, and once completed, they all met up in the Wellow function room one afternoon. Cosmo played the disc through the Wellow sound system. The old musicians looked astonished by the sound quality of the recording. Although they played the songs every day, they had never heard them from the audience's perspective. They listened with wonder and pride at their album as it played several times over the course of the afternoon, with Cosmo lubricating them with beer and whiskey. Kipper had a flair for computer design graphics, so designed a compact disc case cover that he showed them. They all agreed that it looked fantastic. Kipper told them he would have one hundred copies made for Saturday, so Cosmo could sell them over the weekend.

Saturday morning, Kipper came to Fossdyke's recreation room carrying a box of compact discs. Fossils stopped rehearsing and gathered around Kipper as he opened the box and they saw the shiny plastic DVD's neatly stacked. Kipper took the cellophane wrapper off one, went over to the DVD player under the TV, loaded the disc, and pressed play. They, along with a small crowd of Fossdyke residents listened. Melancholy ballads, soothing soft rock blues, and hard-hitting rock music, filled the airwaves of the recreation room.

Kipper, already blown away by their music, looked excited and wanted to let a larger audience listen to this unique sound.

The old men each took a copy, admiring Kipper's handiwork on the glossy cover. They had made eight tracks for the album. The 46-minute recording included the ballads, 'Vulnerable' and 'Cry Alone.' For upbeat soft-tenor-rock, they had 'Life is Too Short to Be Sad' and 'Song for the Traveller.' They did an extended version of 'Consider Me Gone,' with two tenor-blues numbers, 'Make the Pain Go Away' and 'Cold, Cold Steel,' along with their hard-hitting rock song, 'Rolling Thunder.'

Kipper fidgeted and unable to contain his excitement said, "I can put it on iTunes; it will go out to a worldwide audience. I know nothing about promotion or advertising, but I can learn, and then..."

"Hang on young, Kipper," interrupted Steve. "We know nothing about this new stuff, and we don't want to be known worldwide. We are too old for all that nonsense and just want to have fun in our old age."

Kipper looked at the old men smiling back at him. He felt disappointed, as he knew this music would be a big hit and touch people's souls. He sighed and said. "I suppose you're right. I'll take these to the Wellow and see you later."

Cosmo sold the initial batch of DVD's within hours, with customers wanting more. He was overjoyed, as were Fossils and Kipper.

Kipper made another 100 copies for the following week, which again sold out within hours.

As word spread, Fossils became a roaring success. The Wellow bustled with customers on the nights they rehearsed. Offers came in from other live music hostelrys in the area, and even though they offered them money to play, the old men declined, as it meant lugging equipment around town. They were content to be only five minutes away from home, much to Cosmo's relief. The old musicians had grown fond of Kipper and always sided with him when the tight-arsed Cosmo tried to rip him off.

Kipper was thirty-years-old. His real name was Kevin Gascoigne Nutley, and he had been performing as a D.J in venues around Grimsby and Cleethorpes since he was sixteen. With his nickname Kipper given to him at school because his football-mad family owned a herring fish smoking plant on Grimsby docks. Young Kevin helped with the business before he went to school, so his clothes always smelt of kippers. Although hating the nickname as a child, now known around the clubs and pubs as 'D.J.Kipper', it was something he felt proud of.

Kipper was tall, slim, and always impeccably turned out. He lathered himself in aftershave as the childhood memories of his kippery smell still haunted him. With short well-groomed, jelled hair, he was popular amongst the ladies. His biggest problem was that he could not control his finances. He had tried his hand with a few ventures throughout the years that failed. Money seemed to burn a hole in his pocket, with him buying the latest records, designer clothing, and large American cars to keep up appearances. He

had frittered away and wasted any money he'd earned and, although a good entertainer and a sociable character, was constantly pursued by creditors and always broke. He worked for a large music shop in Grimsby, selling music equipment to local disc jockeys and bands around the North East Lincolnshire area. The work suited Kipper as he became knowledgeable in all aspects of the most up to date equipment, and on occasions borrowed the new gear. Kipper's job suited his lifestyle; he worked during the day in the shop, with weekends and occasional weeknights, working as a disc jockey. He worked most Saturday night's at the Wellow as the DJ support for the live music, but after Fossils popularity grew, Cosmo added Tuesdays and Thursdays to his work schedule, keeping his techno whizz-kid close.

It was almost Christmas and Fossdyke residents prepared for their usual celebrations, with the recreation room decorated with a large Christmas tree and trimmings. Steve and Wayne stayed at Fossdyke while Elvin and Charles went to spend the festive period with their respective families. Elvin stayed with Christine, his daughter, and her family. Charles went to stay with John's family in his large house in Laceby, a rural village in North East Lincolnshire. The landscape around John's house looked bleak with bare trees casting sinister shadows over the property.

On a cold Boxing Day afternoon, Charles received a phone call from a drunken Steve, and from the noise in the background, realised that he was calling from the Wellow.

"Merry Christmas Nobby," slurred Steve.

"Merry Christmas, Steven," Charles replied.

"Are you close to a radio?" Asked Steve

Charles replied, "I have one in my room. I listen to radio four during the eve..."

"Well turn it on, and tune into BBC Radio Lincolnshire," Steve interrupted.

"Why?" Charles asked.

"Listen to the programme at 4 o'clock," Steve slurred, sounding aloof. "I have to call Chippers and Lucy and tell them to do the same. I'll call you back later." Steve chuckled, said goodbye, and hung up.

Charles, intrigued, went up to his room and switched on the radio. It was 3:58 pm and the programme now broadcasting was about to finish. Charles poured himself a whiskey and sat on his bed.

At 4 o'clock, a disc jockey came on and announced his hour-long segment. 'Search For Britain's Next Super Group.'

The D.J. radio presenter explained about the competition, which had been running now for several days. Ten selected BBC radio stations from regions around the UK would play a track from unknown bands in their area. Each station would play one track per day at the same time over seven days. After which, all the songs would be played in a one-hour show and the listeners for that specific region would vote on a regional winner. The ten winning regional bands would compete against one another on BBC Radio One, and be judged by a panel of experts. The winning band would be chosen by a nationwide vote and receive £20,000 in prize money, plus a record deal with Virgin records and BBC Radio.

Charles listened with interest as the programme's presenter read out the details. 'What has that got to do with us,' he grinned, 'Steve obviously has a crazy drunken notion about us entering a competition like this,' he thought.

He chuckled to himself and drank his whiskey as the D.J. announced, "From the piles of entries; today's choice is a four-piece band from Cleethorpes. I only received their entry yesterday and even though the submission for the contest closed last week, once I listened to the album, I had to include it... I think it's phenomenal; see what you think."

He paused as he prepared the DVD and continued, "The album is called Hope, and the track that I have chosen is called 'Consider Me Gone,' and the group... Fossils."

Charles coughed out his whisky and looked stunned as the introduction to, 'Consider Me Gone,' played on his radio.

Speechless, he wiped the whisky off his shirt, knocked back what was left in the glass, and listened as their song blasted out. "How is this possible?" he said aloud and sat in stunned silence until the record finished.

The D.J. gave the audience time to savour the moment, before announcing. "I HOPE that blew you away, the same as it did me when I first heard it." He chuckled and reminded the listeners, "We still have two more bands to hear, and two days to go before voting started, but if you want to vote for Fossils, they are number five so..."

Charles didn't listen to the presenter giving details on how to vote. He called Steve.

"Nobby!" Exclaimed Steve, "sounded great, didn't we?"

"H... how did you get us into the contest, and why didn't you tell me sooner?" Charles stammered.

"You can blame that on young Kipper. He knows the radio disc jockey presenter, so he pitched us one night while out on the piss with him. The presenter told Kipper that he had trawled through loads of demos and most of them sounded crap. Kipper never mentioned it to us because he thought that his friend would have forgotten, with them both being spannered. However, he called Kipper earlier and told him he had listened to Hope many times and it had blown him away, so he put it in the show." Steve paused and said, "He reckons we could win."

"Do they know we are old men?" Charles asked, sounding concerned.

"No, but that's no problem. It is after all radio, and we all have perfect faces for radio," Steve chuckled and asked. "When are you coming back to Fossdyke?"

Charles thought for a moment. He planned to stay with his family until after the New Year, but after this revelation, he rethought his plans and said. "I'll be back in a few days. I will ask John to bring me back on the 28th."

"Good, we can listen to the one-hour show together on the 29th. Oh, hang on, I've another call waiting."

Buddy Holly played through the phone as Charles was put on hold, and after a few minutes, Steve said. "Chippers will be here on the same day. The little fellow sounded drunk but excited."

Charles could hear people congratulating and toasting Steve and Wayne.

"I got to go Nobby, it's hectic here. See you soon," said Steve and hung up.

Charles spent the next few days in quiet meditation. He reflected on his past with Mary and the loneliness he felt, especially at this festive time. It was the first Christmas he had spent without her in almost 50 years. Although he stayed with John and his family, and his other children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren visited him, he felt lonely and miserable. He not only missed Mary, but he also missed his friends at Fossdyke and felt excited to return, but did not mention the radio show to his family.

John drove him back to Fossdyke at lunchtime on the 28th. Charles joined Steve and Wayne in the dining room and waited for Elvin, who arrived an hour later.

At 3:00 pm the following day, Strat, Sticks, Chippers, and Nobby held onto each other as they walked along the icy road toward the Wellow. The lounge, packed with noisy customers, applauded the old men as they walked in and went over to a table. Cosmo played the broadcast through the pub's speakers and at 4:00 pm, silence ensued as the radio show started. The D.J. announced he would play all seven songs before the phone lines would open for people to vote. Another band's song entry played and the Wellow crowd jeered and shouted about out how crappy it sounded. This jeering continued until it came time for song number five. The DJ presenter announced that the radio station had been inundated with requests to play more Fossils music. The airwaves went silent for a moment. 'Consider Me Gone' played and the Wellow crowd erupted with cheers. The four proud old men felt like rock-stars as the Wellow's customers

sang along with the lyrics blasting out over the radio. After all seven songs played, the presenter announced that the phone lines were now open and voting could begin, and the winners announced on the next day's show. The old men felt like royalty as customers came over and plied them with drinks and compliments. Several hours later, customers helped the four wrinkly, wobbling, *wankered rockers, back to Fosssdyke.

The following morning, with each of them hung-over, the old band tucked into their greasy English breakfast, hoping Steve's bowel would behave itself.

They spent the morning in the recreation room on a brisk winter's day; feeling ill, and blaming each other for their hangovers.

Four delicate old codgers made their way to the Wellow at 3:00 pm. The pub was crowded and Cosmo gave the old timers each a whiskey, 'the hair of the dog.' They sat at their usual table with Kipper and Cosmo, who giggled at their vacant, hangdog expressions. The Wellow fell silent with an air of tension as the broadcast began. The presenter announced that there was a clear winner. He stalled for the first 30 minutes and played other records to build up the tension. The Wellow crowd shouted at the radio, calling the DJ a wanker, and telling him to get a move on. At 4:30, jingles played, before a drum-roll and the presenter announced the results in reverse order.

"In 3rd place, with 12% of the votes," he announced. "Blow Torch; from Scunthorpe."

He played their entry, the Wellow crowd booed at the radio until the song finished, and the presenter announced. "In second place and runner-up, receiving 17% of the votes... From Louth; The Interbreeds."

He played their song and again the Wellow crowd booed and jeered, which went on until 4:45 pm when the presenter, sounding excited, announced, "There is a clear winner, with 71% of the votes." The airwaves went silent, and then there was a drum-roll.

The introduction from 'Consider Me Gone' played and the D.J announced. "From Cleethorpes... Fossils; Consider Me Gone."

The Wellow erupted in pandemonium. Customers shouted and jumped up and down cheering, with people showered in beer as glasses swung around.

Four old men looked stunned as people came over and bought them more drinks.

The revelry went on for several minutes before Cosmo noticed the show had finished. He turned off the radio and wondered which bastard had let off another stink bomb.

The lounge smelt ripe, but fortunately, it was only a small emission from Steve, which people caught up in the excitement ignored.

Kipper received a phone call from his friend, the disc jockey from the radio station. It was noisy, so he took the phone outside. Glad to be in the fresh air; he listened to details of the next stage in the competition. The conversation didn't last long and the presenter told Kipper that he needed to go to the Radio Lincolnshire offices and get details for the nationwide competition on BBC Radio One.

Fossils returned to Fosssdyke, again wankered by the afternoon's celebrations. The following day they nursed their hangovers. They all knew that the celebrations were not about to end as New Year was only days away. They agreed to take it easy on the booze over the next few days and concentrate on the national competition.

Kipper arrived at Fosssdyke on a frosty afternoon. He had been to the radio's offices that morning, and all they sat around the gas fire in the recreation room where Kipper gave them the details for the next stage of the competition. The national competition would start on January 2nd and be broadcast throughout the UK. on BBC, Radio One. The show would air for one hour a day. Four songs from one of the ten winning regional bands would play in each segment and a panel of three judges would then comment on the band's

material. After ten days, there would be a two-hour special, with each band's songs played before voting opened nationwide. The following day would be another two-hour special to announce the winner.

Elvin, looking nervous, asked. "Do we 'ave to go to London and perform?"

"No." replied Kipper, "They only need the C.D. and information about the band."

Steve rubbed his head and grimaced. "Do they need photographs," he asked.

"Leave all that to me," said Kipper and smirked.

"So, buggerlugs," said Steve, as he jokingly referred to Kipper. "Do they know that we are four old codgers?"

Kipper laughed and said, "Not exactly. My mate at Radio Lincolnshire just assumed you were a boy-band."

"What made him assume that?" asked Charles, sounding concerned.

Kipper grinned and said, "There may have been a miscommunication when we got drunk and I handed over your C.D."

"That's okay," chuckled Elvin. "We are perfect for radio; suave, debonair, young, and 'andsome... who'd know the difference?"

"The problem would be if you win the nationals," said Kipper puckering his brow. "You might have to go to London to collect the prize." He paused and told them, "But we've done nothing illegal."

"Maybe not, but we will be a laughing-stock when they see how old and wrinkly we are. They would expect four Justin Bieber's and they'll be getting four Just-in this-mortal-coils," said Elvin.

"What's the matter, Charles? You look worried," said Wayne, sounding concerned.

"I am," said Charles, "We should all be worried. We'd already decided this was only a bit of fun. I agree with Elvin, we could become the countries laughing-stocks, and I don't want to deal with that nonsense at my age."

"Relax Charlie boy," said Steve. "We won't win. Kids today like that rap crap, not our type of music. We would have our moment in the spotlight and enjoy the free booze at the Wellow." He grinned, looked at Kipper, and asked. "What are you laughing about buggerlugs?"

"Rap music died decades ago Steve. It's hip-hop now," he said.

"Whatever," said Steve and asked. "Who are the judges?"

Kipper told them. "Jimmy Hand, a record producer, and critic; Gary Barlow, front-man from the popular group 'Take That'; and Susan Boyle, a television national contest winner and now an international superstar."

"I like that Gary Barlow, he's been in *Coronation street for ages," said Elvin.

The others looked confused.

"That's Ken Barlow you senile old goat," said Steve and burst out laughing.

Charles, still apprehensive, joined in with the laughter.

The five were making plans when Lucy Fosdyke and Mrs Chew came into the recreation room and went over to them. Lucy had heard the radio programme and looked overjoyed.

Lucy kissed Steve and said. "I'm so proud of all of you, your record sounded wonderful. You must be excited about winning and going to the finals... who knows Dad, I might be the daughter of a rock star," she chuckled.

They smiled at Lucy. "Who knows," said Steve, and glanced at the others.

Mrs Chew was unusually courteous and kissed them all, including a shocked Kipper.

They spent the rest of the afternoon talking and joking about the band and the competition. At 4:00 pm Lucy left Fossdyke. Mrs Chew invited Kipper to stay and have a meal with them at the home and arranged for the kitchen to open early for the superstars. Kipper accepted the offer, much to the relief of Wayne, who could see Mrs Chew's lusty attentions now focused on Kipper.

Cosmo arranged the transportation, and that evening the van arrived to take their equipment for their practice session at the packed out Wellow. The old men put on their overcoats and took a gentle stroll, and even though the evenings were dark and the pavements icy, they felt happy sliding along like school kids.

Over the next few days, things became hectic for Fossils. Kipper organised all aspects of the national competition. He made promo literature which came as a relief for the old men as they understood nothing. Cosmo appointed himself and Kipper their managers.

Kipper hadn't sent photographs of the band; his disc jockey friend informed him that although the promo material should contain pictures, it never actually stated that they had to be photographs, so Kipper made a collage of dark blurry faces. Kipper told his D.J. friend to let Radio One know that the blurred pictures would add to the mystique of Fossils. The BBC's producers were amused and accepted this. Kipper liaised with the show's producer who told him that Fossils was due to feature on day seven of the competition and needed to choose four songs to enter. Kipper, Cosmo, and the band considered which songs they would put forward. 'Consider Me Gone' was their first and obvious choice, as it had got them this far. 'Vulnerable' was their ballad choice to show their range, and they all agreed that 'Life is Too Short to Be Sad' was to be the third entry. They took a vote among the customers at the Wellow, and 'Cold, Cold Steel,' was voted the fourth song to represent them at the national contest. Kipper told the Radio Lincolnshire office which four recordings from the C.D. they wanted to enter and the radios production team made the demo entry for the national show.

Everyone felt excited as the competition drew closer. Fossils spent their time rehearsing and playing until their spot on the show. They listened to the radio broadcast daily when the show started and heard their competitors' entries. Although they knew they couldn't compete with modern day bands and the new music culture, they still felt nervous as their big day approached. They noticed a pattern emerging among the judges.

Susan Boyle spoke with a chirpy Scottish monotone voice and the songs she commented on were either 'greet' or 'not quite my cup of tea,' and sounded like a pleasant woman. Gary Barlow gave honest opinions and criticism, commenting from a musician and successful songwriter's perspective. He gave credit to the bands that he thought were good and pointers to the ones he felt lacked something. Jimmy Hand slated most of the bands in one way or another. This nasty critic, who nobody had ever heard of before, was trying to make a name for himself as the next untalented gobshite. The show's presenter was the popular 70's, 80's, and 90's Radio One host, Steve Wright, who constantly made fun of Jimmy Hand; telling listeners that it was the only hand he would be glad to see the back of, and reminding them that it was their votes who decided the winners.

At last, their day arrived. The Fossils trundled through the snow to the Wellow to listen to the live BBC show. The pub was packed as customers ventured along to support their wrinkly rockers.

"Look," said Steve, holding up his shaken hands. "It must be the nerves."

"It's probably the D.T's," said Elvin, "we've supped too much over the past few weeks."

Charles, Wayne, and Elvin looked at Steve knocking back a whiskey, and in unison said, "No bloody farting."

Steve put down the glass as Cosmo came over and sat with them. Kipper arrived several minutes later and joined the motley crew.

The atmosphere in the Wellow felt electric and there was silence in the lounge as the show started. Steve Wright went through the usual formalities and played records. The old-timers became nervous when he mentioned there were over three million listeners tuning in.

A record finished and Steve Wright announced. "Today's band is representing BBC Radio Lincolnshire and is a young band from Costa del Cleethorpes," he said and chuckled.

Fossils looked at one another, and then at Kipper, who threw up his hands and shrugged.

"Young band, I don't like the sound of that," said Steve frowning and feeling nervous as Steve Wright continued. "This is their first track taken from their album, Hope... Vulnerable."

Vulnerable played and the Wellow crowd were in an uproar, shouting and cheering. The air around one certain member of the group became ripe, which sent Cosmo on an investigation as to which bastard had let off a stink bomb... again.

The record finished and the judges gave their opinions. Susan Boyle thought it was greet. Gary Barlow gave high praise to the melody and lyrics and said that the singer had a mature and unique voice. Jimmy Hand thought it was okay, but lacked something, as he did not like boring ballads.

However, they became more excited after each of the other songs played, and after 'Cold Cold Steel' finished they all raved about Fossils. Gary Barlow summed them up as an amazing young talent that brought back renewed life and vigour to rock music, with a refreshingly unique sound. Jimmy Hand said that the Hope album could become a 21st-century iconic ground-breaker and made comparisons with Meatloaf's, 'Bat out of Hell.' Susan Boyle, who had been bopping along to the tunes, said. "It wey greet!"

Everyone was delighted with the show's outcome. The Wellow customers chanted Fossils... Fossils... continuously and brought drinks over to the old-timers. Once again, the wrinkly rock sensations, and pride of Cleethorpes, needed escorting back to the residential home, wankered.

The next three days dragged for Fossils as the final three bands songs played and judged. They went to the Wellow for the two-hour special and heard each band's music played again. At the end of the show, Steve Wright announced that voting was open and would close three hours before the next day's finale.

The Wellow filled with chatter as customers called the show's free phone lines to cast their votes. The old men remained calm after listening to all the bands featured. A few hip-hop bands stood out from the others, easing their concerns about winning. They staggered back to Fossdyke through the snow.

Judgement day: They congregated at the Wellow and the show played through the bar speakers to a packed, but silent, Wellow crowd. Cosmo had Fossils T-shirts, small flags, and banners made, with logos. He did a roaring trade with sales of his merchandise and the band's C.D.

There was a serious mood in the Wellow as the show started. Steve Wright went through the formalities and explained the format, saying, "The three finalist's songs would be played throughout the show with a siren preceding it and then the winning band announced towards the end of the show with their winning songs played. Let's kick off the show with this classic from the eighties," he chuckled as the birdie song played.

The show had been running for forty minutes when the first siren wailed.

The lounge became silent.

There was a drum-roll, and then a trumpet fanfare as Steve Wright said, "In third place" he paused, and as hip-hop song played, he announced, "Arena, from the BBC Radio Merseyside area with one of their entries, Ragman"

Ragman blasted out over the airwaves, which bought a groan of disappointment from the Wellow crowd as the song played.

“I faught they might ‘av won,” said Elvin, “They were good.”

“Stop yapping and get drinking,” said Steve “It’s probably our last day of free booze.” he took a swig of beer.

“One down, two to go,” announced Cosmo when the record finished. The Wellow crowd cheered and chanted, “Fossils, Fossils!”

Steve Wright then gave details about Arena and played other music to entertain the listeners.

After ninety minutes, the siren sounded again.

The Wellow crowd went silent as they held their breath and waited for the fanfare and drum roll.

Steve Wright then announced. “The second place runner-up is...” Another hip-hop tune played and Steve Wright said. “The Sky Pilots from BBC Radio Hampshire with... Don’t let it Rain.”

Groans went around the lounge, with disappointment edged across the customer’s faces and Fossils smiled at one another.

Elvin whispered to Steve, “Looks like we didn’t even make the top three. I feel relieved about that.”

Steve nodded, smiled, and grabbed another whisky from the piles of glasses on the table.

There was a nervous tension in the air. It was almost time for the show to end. Everyone knew that when the siren sounded again, it would be to announce the winner. The venue room at the Wellow went silent as they waited. The siren suddenly wailed. They waited with baited breath as a drum-roll played. Steve Wright recapped the third and second place winners, followed by another drum-roll and a trumpet fanfare. Steve Wright sounding excited, announced. “The winner of ‘Search For Britain’s Next Super Group is...”

Cold, Cold, Steel started playing.

Bedlam ensued, as the crowd in the Wellow erupted into a wailing crescendo of rapturous cheers. Fossils sat at a table with their mouths open, looking stunned. It was like a bomb had exploded in a public house in the small seaside town of Cleethorpes, as the sound of uplifting emotion erupted, raising the rafters. Nobody heard any more of the radio show as the noise drowned out Steve Wright, announcing Fossils as the winners. The four trembling old victors, a smartly dressed D.J., and a haggard pub landlord sat in the centre of all the attention looking stunned. Cosmo ignored that someone had let off another stink bomb.

The band looked at one another in silence. They realised what started as a joke was now something serious. Kipper enjoyed the moment and signed autographs. Cosmo laughed and with a smile a mile wide, watched his tills open and close.

It was almost an hour before the hysteria and revelry died down and the pub returned to some semblance of order.

A woman made her way through the crowd gathered around the band, and shouted. “Dad!”

Steve stood up and asked people to move aside to let his daughter through.

Lucy congratulated them all and said she’d heard the radio show on her car’s radio on the way there, and felt delighted and proud. They chatted with Lucy until Cosmo excused himself and went to open more boxes of Fossils merchandise. Kipper received a phone call and checked the number.

“It’s a London code, it must be Radio One,” he said.

He pushed through the crowd and went outside.

Kipper returned to the table twenty minutes later, looking pale.

“We should have listened to the end of the show,” he mumbled, as he sat down.

“Why, what’s wrong Kipper?” asked Steve, seeing the concern on Kipper's face.

“Oh yes Dad, you’re going to be on BBC Radio One, live,” said Lucy looking excited.

“What!” exclaimed Charles, “When?”

“It didn’t say,” said Lucy. “Steve Wright announced they would give details later.”

Kipper then told them what the BBC had said. “The show was so popular and attracted so many new listeners wanting to hear more Fossils music that the producers decided to reschedule the programmes to have an hour-long special, featuring you, with a live interview and performance.”

The nervous geriatrics and new superstars looked at one another.

“Bollocks,” said Elvin. “What have we done?”

Lucy, unable to understand their dilemma, said, “Why do you all look so worried? I think it’s wonderful what you have achieved at your ages.”

Steve looked sullen and told her, “Buggerlugs there.” He pointed to Kipper, “never told the show that we're geriatrics, and listening to Steve Wright and the judges, they believe we are a young band.”

“So what?” Lucy asked.

“We are too old and worn out to follow this path, my dear,” said Charles. “Musical stardom is a young man’s game. The BBC will think we duped them and could prosecute.”

Wayne was the only one who considered that this was a positive opportunity, as he felt sure the publicity surrounding the band could alert Julie and she may search him out. The other three however, had their old feet set firmly on the ground. They knew they would become a national laughing stock and the repercussions would affect their families and friends when the press ridiculed them.

Steve sighed and asked. “So what happens now?”

“They told me that we have to go to London and meet with Virgin and Radio One executives, who would instruct us on the show and promotions. They would arrange photo shoots and press conferences, issue you the cheque for twenty grand, and discuss the record deal,” said Kipper.

“Could you do that as our manager Kipper and tell them we are unavailable?” asked Steve,

Kipper looked confused and mumbled, “I don’t know, what excuse can I make about you not being there and what about your live performance?”

Steve had a glint in his eyes, and said. “I have to make some phone calls, but I might have a cunning plan that could solve our little quandary,” he finished his beer. “I will let you know later.”

He and Lucy left the Wellow.

Charles, Elvin, Wayne, and Kipper continued drinking.

“I wonder what hair-brained scheme Steve was coming up with to get us out of this embarrassing situation,” said Charles.

It was 10:15 pm when Charles, Elvin, and Wayne returned to Fossdyke spannered. Steve wasn’t in the recreation room, so the others went to their rooms, feeling scared but intrigued.

Charles did not speak to Mary; he had other things on his mind.

Steve had spent the evening in his room telephoning various people. He had been making calls and scribbling down notes until 10:00 pm when he fell asleep.

It was a chilly morning, Steve sat in his room and organised his notes from the previous night. He then went to the dining room and joined his hungover colleagues for breakfast.

“What’s your cunning plan then?” asked Elvin.

Steve swallowed his mouthful of egg and said. “I still have calls to make and I need to see Kipper. I’ll tell you later.” He smiled and stabbed a sausage.

The others grumbled.

Steve wanted to keep them in suspense, so when he announced his plan they would be more receptive to his idea. It worked, and throughout their morning rehearsal, they kept badgering him to reveal all. Steve refused and at 4 o’clock went to his room to make more phone calls, which irritated the others.

Steve arranged for Kipper to meet them at Fossdyke that evening, asking Mrs Chew if he could join them for a bite to eat. Mrs Chew agreed and scurried off to get her hair done.

Kipper arrived at 6:00 pm and after eating with the rest of the residents, he and Fossils went into the recreation room and sat by Charles’s piano.

“Kipper, can you represent us in London as our manager, without us being there?” asked Steve.

“Yes, I think so,” said Kipper, who nodded and added, “When I spoke to them today, they said I could as long as I had a bloody good excuse for you not being there, but they were adamant you did the live show.”

“So, did you tell them you had a good excuse?” asked Steve, like a barrister, questioning the accused.

“No,” stammered Kipper, “I don’t know of any bloody excuse they would accept, so I turned off my phone.”

Steve smiled, looked at Kipper, and said. “Call the BBC and tell them that Fossils are on tour in Southeast Asia and you don’t know when they are coming back.”

“What?” Kipper gasped.

“What!” Elvin, Wayne, and Charles exclaimed.

Steve grinned and repeated, “Fossils are on tour in Southeast Asia,” he threw out his hands, shrugged, and added. “What better excuse is for us not to being able to attend than not being in the country?”

“What will happen if they find out you’re lying and still here?” Kipper asked, sounding surprised.

Wayne thought and answered, “They will sue our asses, that’s what.”

Steve let out a throaty laugh, gazed at them all, and with a mischievous grin, said. “Who’s lying? We will be out of the country touring Southeast Asia, the Philippines to be precise, with no way to be contacted.” He paused, looked at the shocked faces of the four, and announced, “We leave on Thursday. I booked four tickets for the afternoon flight from Manchester to Manila. We can go to Angeles City and stay there until all this media hype and pop star nonsense has been forgotten about, and then we can return to being grumpy old geriatrics, with nobody any the wiser.” Steve looked at the four as their jaws gaped in disbelief as he continued. “Kipper can cover as our manager and tell them we’ve been gone for weeks and doesn’t know when we will be back.”

“What do you mean you booked our flights for Thursday? That’s only five days away,” said Elvin.

“So there is no time to waste,” said Steve. “We have a lot to arrange. Kipper, call the BBC and tell them.”

Charles interrupted, "Wait a moment!" He said with an air of authority. "Hold on there, bald-eagle. Are you mad?" He glared at the excited Steve. "We can't drop everything and fuck off to the Philippines."

Steve sniggered and replied, "Not only the Philippines; we can also go to Thai..."

Charles cut Steve off and sounding angry, said, "It was not the point of where to go. It was the fact that we can't go." Charles glared at Steve and asked, "What right do you have to book our tickets?"

Steve looked at Charles. "What ideas do you have to get us out of this mess, hmm?" He asked sounding indignant.

Charles thought and replied. "They don't know who we are, so ignore them, forget the money and prizes, disband Fossils, and go back to our normal lives."

There was tension in the air, followed by a strange calmness as the old men pondered. Kipper liked Steve's idea of them going away. It would be easier and more beneficial to him as he could get his foot in the door at the BBC.

Charles and Elvin considered their families and although not liking Steve's plan, neither could come up with an alternative apart from trying to ignore their newfound celebrity status. However, they knew the press would eventually discover their identities and hound them and their families. People would know them as senile geriatrics that conned a nation and the BBC and Virgin would prosecute them.

Wayne had never been to Southeast Asia, but from the many tales he'd heard from Steve about this amazing continent and his experiences, he was keen to go. "I want to know more about your plan, but you can count me in... I'll go," he said.

"Well done mate, good choice," said Steve, and told them. "We can't just go back to being senile old geriatrics. We started something that we no longer have control over and this was our way out of our predicament. Besides, you've never experienced the Philippines... so what do you have to lose? The worst case scenario was that we have a few weeks holiday until the dust settles, and we can play our music to a different audience while experiencing the, erm... culture," he smirked.

Elvin sighed and said, "I suppose we could tell our families we are going on 'oliday. After all, we are family now, and our other family will still be 'ere when we get back. We don't want 'em subjected to any embarrassment, so if we aren't 'ere, there would be no reason to investigate. I imagine that in a few weeks the radio people would just assume that we are a young hippy band who freeloads around the world. Hopefully, we would become yesterday's news and forgotten about." Elvin thought for a moment and said, "Okay, I'll go, but what do we do there?"

Steve grinned and told them, "Last night I called my mate Gus in the Philippines. He owns Freeway where I used to play. I told him about what happened and said that we're coming to Angeles and maybe play at Freeway. He said he would be delighted to see us and happy to let us perform at Freeway. We all have money and we'll have a great time. I can't wait to see him and my other mates and I have arranged everything."

Charles felt angry and glared at them.

"Well, I am not going," he said and stormed out of the room.

"Okay," said Kipper. "I spoke to the man in charge of promotions at the BBC, someone called Billy Numan. He said he wanted me to go to London and sort things out and made me an appointment for Thursday."

"Great, then go to London, pick up the prize money, and explain to the show's producers that we are in a remote area of the Philippines with no phone signal. Tell them that we entered the competition before leaving England, and not due to go to a major town until the weekend. They could call us then if they want to confirm your story," said Steve.

The three rushed around preparing. Although disappointed that Charles would not be going along, they could manage as a band without him as Wayne would play his keyboard.

Lucy was apprehensive about her father going back to the Philippines, but she accepted the fact. She knew the three old timers would look out for each other.

Steve advised on what clothing they would need and told them it would be hot. They felt stupid going shopping in the middle of winter for t-shirts, shorts, and factor 90 sunblock.

“Only buy a few things, we can buy more out there, it’s cheaper. Here Chippers, we’ll need these to protect us from the sun, otherwise, we will end up looking like Satan’s bollocks,” said Steve, putting a baseball cap on Elvin’s head.

“Fanks mate, what does it say?” asked Elvin removing the hat and reading the front of the pink, My Little Pony hat. He glared at Steve chuckling, put it back on the shelf, and chose another.

Charles felt an outsider as his three friends planned and organised their adventure, but he was concerned about how his family would react to him going so far away. He felt sad that he would be alone at Fossdyke.

The evening before their flight, the excited old men went to the Wellow to say goodbye to Cosmo. Charles stayed at Fossdyke, expecting a visit from his son, John.

Elvin, Steve, and Wayne drank beer until 9:00 pm and were about to leave the pub when Charles came into the bar and rushed over to them. Catching his breath, he announced. “I’m coming with you.”

Charles explained that he was worried about his family’s reaction and angry with Steve, which was why he had refused to go. However, when he told John that his friends were going on holiday without him, John insisted that he went.

The three were delighted. Charles then frowned and said, “Damn, I haven’t got a ticket.”

The others smirked and Steve said. “We hoped you would change your mind.” He took out a ticket from his pocket, “which was why I never cancelled it.”

Charles sighed with relief, took the ticket, and said, “thank you, Steven, and I am sorry for getting angry.”

“No problem mate,” said Steve. “As Elvin said, we are family now and families bicker from time to time.”

They ordered another round of drinks and chatted for another hour before going back to Fossdyke. Charles packed a suitcase and spoke to Mary before falling asleep.

Early the following morning, a Mazda M.P.V. taxi turned up to take them to Manchester airport.

They loaded Steve and Elvin guitars and Wayne’s keyboard, and Wayne took his drumsticks. Steve told him he could borrow a drum kit in the Philippines.

They boarded the plane for the 14-hour flight to Manila. They felt excited as they left a cold, gloomy, Manchester airport, embarking on their Southeast Asian adventure.

Kipper arrived in London and felt overwhelmed by the big city. Following his GPS, he arrived at the BBC’s Broadcasting House and parked in the underground parking. He walked into the large reception area, through a security check, and up to a desk.

“I have an appointment with Mr Numan; Sorry I’m late, I had trouble finding my way through London.”

The woman behind the reception smiled and made a call.

Since the competition, Radio One listeners had increased as word spread about a new boy band. Kipper, told to take as much time off work as he needed by his boss, had made Fossils DVD's for the shop, which sold like hotcakes. Cosmo told him not to come back until he sorted things out. Kipper hoped that he could sort things out and drive back to Cleethorpes that evening.

A security guard escorted him up an elevator and along to an office with a sign on the door: Mr Billy Numan: Head of Production.

The guard opened the door and Kipper walked into the plush office, where a man and woman came over. Kipper thought the office looked larger than his Cleethorpes flat. A desk was by a window with computers, and bookcases along the walls. There was a separate lounge area, with a leather three-piece suite, a large coffee table, and surround sound flat screen TV. Photographs of Billy Numan with various celebrities adorned the walls, with antiquities on shelves positioned around the office.

"Hi Kevin, it's great to meet you. I'm Billy Numan, and this is Susan McHale from Virgin records."

'She's pretty and has a nice smile,' thought Kipper as he shook Susan's hand. 'I like women with short hair wearing suits.'

"Nice to meet you, Susan, and although my name is Kevin, everyone calls me Kipper."

Billy Numan was a go-getter within the BBC, who had already produced and headed several successful programmes. Susan McHale was successful within her field of promotions within the Virgin records group. After a record-breaking number of people tuning in for the Search For Britain's Next Super Group competition, and inundated with calls about Fossils; BBC, and Virgin executives teamed up the pair to manage the record deal and promote the band. They had to produce and sell the Fossils album and increase radio listeners, which due to iTunes, uTube, and other forms of online entertainment had diminished over the years.

They sat around a large coffee table and Billy ordered his secretary in the next room to bring them two lattes and an almond mocha. The Hope DVD that Kipper had made was on the table. Billy picked it up and waved it at Kipper.

"Awesome," he said. "We had this sent from BBC Lincolnshire. Our tech people tweaked it a little, but Fossils sound awesome. Once we get them in the recording studio it will sound even better."

Billy looked at the DVD case and said. "It will need a new cover, so we need a photograph of the band. Have you brought any with you?"

"No, sorry." said Kipper, "I haven't got any. They entered the competition before they went abroad and didn't expect to win, so they'd had none made."

Kipper felt nervous. He played with his tie and fidgeted. Although Billy Numan was small, his piercing blue eyes and sharp tone gave him a menacing demeanour. Billy carried on looking at the cover.

"We have been put in charge of promoting Fossils." said Susan and smiled, which put Kipper at ease as she continued. "You told us on the phone that you are the band's manager."

"Yes, well, one of them. David Corrigan's the other, but he couldn't make it."

Susan jotted down notes and asked. "Who produced the Hope DVD; a local recording studio?"

"No," said Kipper, "I did." he chuckled. "In Mr Corrigan's pub lounge"

"Impressive," said Susan smiling at Kipper.

"You told my secretary over the phone that Fossils are not in the country, could you be more specific?" interrupted Billy.

Kipper told them what Steve told him to say.

“Oh, so they are a humanitarian band putting on free performances around poor towns and villages around Southeast Asia?” asked Susan.

Kipper nodded, although not understanding what she meant.

“Yes,” said Kipper “And that’s why they can’t be contacted until the weekend when they get into a town with a phone connection. We arranged it before they left and they will call me when they get there.”

“If they are coming back soon then we need to organise a date for the live performance and get them into a studio to remix Hope,” said Billy, frowning.

“Err... No” said Kipper, “They said they would be gone for a long time, months, maybe even years.”

Susan and Billy looked at one another, which made Kipper nervous, as Billy looked angry. He leant across the coffee table, glared at him, and snarled. “Kevin, Kipper, or whatever your name is. You have come here to tell us that you cannot contact the band until the weekend. They are not coming back soon, so there won’t be a live show. You have no photographs of them and they cannot come to the studio to make an album.”

Kipper gawped at Billy, who yelled. “I suppose you just came for the money and thought that would be the end of it.”

Kipper, taken aback, threw up his hands.

“Well, you can go back to bloody Skegness. You aren’t getting a bean from the BBC, and you will hear from our lawyers. Do you know how much it costs us to reschedule programmes?” Billy raged.

“Cleethorpes,” Kipper corrected him, trying to avoid eye contact and Billy scowled at him.

A woman brought in a tray of coffee and placed a cup of creamy latte in front of Kipper.

“He won’t be drinking that, he’s leaving,” snapped Billy.

Kipper got up to leave.

“Hold on Kipper,” said Susan. “Can I speak with you a moment, Billy.”

Billy glared at Susan and they went and sat at Billy’s desk.

Kipper sat back down, drank his coffee, and watched as Susan and Billy looked at sheets of paper and talked.

At first, Billy kept glancing over and glowering at Kipper, but after ten minutes, he looked over and smiled.

They came over to Kipper fifteen minutes later with beaming smiles.

“I am sorry for my rudeness before Kipper. No hard feelings I hope,” said Billy extending his hand.

Kipper felt confused and shook his hand.

Billy and Susan sat next to him and Susan said. “You told us that you and Mr Corrigan represent Fossils and that you produced the Hope album.”

Kipper nodded and then said. “Yes and I came up with the title, Hope.”

Susan and Billy’s eyebrows raised and they smiled. Susan jotted down notes as Billy asked, “Do you or Mr Corrigan have anything in writing?”

Kipper shook his head.

Billy smirked. “And when did you say that the band will contact you?” He asked.

“I’m not sure.” said Kipper, “they said at the weekend, so maybe Saturday.”

“Okay,” said Billy. He got up and went into his secretary’s office.

“Don’t look so nervous, Kipper. You will be pleased to hear that we will tell radio listeners why we have to cancel the live show,” said Susan and smiled. “We will still pay you the prize money and promote the band in their absence, and still give them a record deal for Hope. You will receive a substantial amount of money as their manager.”

Kipper looked shocked as Susan continued. “I just need a few details so we can get the ball rolling. I have their names here but no other details. So, Strat, Nobby, Sticks, and Chippers are their stage names?”

“Yes, said Kipper, but they are o...”

“So what are their real names?” interrupted Susan.

“Err, I don’t know their surnames, but Steven is Strat, Charles is Nobby, Wayne is Sticks and Elvin is Chippers. But they don’t want a recor...”

Susan again interrupted him, “And how long have they been a band?”

“Not long, a few months, but they don’t...”

“Can you find out their surnames?” asked Susan.

“Probably, but you need to know that they don’t...”

“Okay Kipper,” interrupted Billy returning from the office. “I booked you into the Hilton for a few days, courtesy of the BBC. You can leave your car in the secured parking here. Have you been to London before?”

“No,” said Kipper. “But...”

“A chauffeur driven limo will pick you up at the front. We will call you later and go to Fabric nightclub. There should be celebrities there tonight, so I will introduce you to a few. They will want to meet the manager of the new music sensations.”

“The car is waiting for you out front sir,” announced Billy’s secretary.

A security guard came in and Billy told Kipper. “Go with him and he will take you to the car. The Hilton is expecting you. See you tonight. Oh, and that’s a nice suit, is it Armani?”

Kipper shook he head, “No,” he said.

“Your next one will be,” said Billy and smiled.

Kipper sat in the plush limo as it drove through the London Streets. “What happened there?” he thought.

Billy and Susan relaxed on the sofa. “Good call Sue. You were right and the figures don’t lie. If the trend of people tuning in continued to soar, our bosses will be ecstatic. We need to get this Kipper character on board as the Fossils representative and keep our ratings skyrocketing. I will have all stations blast out tracks from Hope that Nutley made and we can broadcast about the band and announce the release of the Hope album. We can build up the media hype before Virgin release it,” said Billy.

He picked up the DVD. “I’ll get our tech department to clean it up to sound better, and you can get your design department to change the crap cover,” he said, picking up two glasses of champagne and handing one to Susan.

“I hope Fossils aren’t planning to return soon,” said Susan.

“It won’t matter, once we get Kipper assigned as their representative, he will work for us. When people buy the album and more people listen to Radio One, we will earn a nice bonus,” said Billy and smirked.

Susan nodded and smiled. “It sounded like Fossils were kids travelling around playing gigs for money to fund their travels.”

“I agree,” said Billy, “They would be easily swayed if their so-called manager is anything to go by.”

“And the best part,” said Susan. “We won’t have to tolerate egotistical young pop stars.”

Billy smiled, took a drink of champagne, and looked at Susan.

“We make a great team,” said Billy.

Susan placed her glass on the table and shuffled to her side, sliding her legs onto the sofa. Her skirt rode up giving Billy a glimpse of her white lace panties. She took the glass from Billy’s hand and placed it on the coffee table. She moved her legs wider, slid closer to Billy, gently pushed his head forward, and whispered. “Yes, we do.”

Kippers head spun. He spent the rest of the afternoon looking around the Hilton. Early evening, he relaxed in a Jacuzzi in his plush suite. He daydreamed about walking around a huge luxury apartment, smoking a fat Cuban cigar, drinking champagne, and surrounded by bunny girls. He ate at the hotel's five-star restaurant before being picked up by the BBC limo and taken to meet up with Billy and Susan.

Later that evening, Billy introduced him to celebrities, including his DJ idol, Ben Thomson, AKA, Ben UFO, at Fabric.

The following day, he got driven around London and shown the sights. He saw things he had only seen in books and marvelled at the spectacular buildings of the capital city. He was introduced to other executives and lawyers at the BBC during the day, but they didn’t say much as Billy and Susan chaperoned him everywhere around the broadcasting centre. They convinced him that he was about to become rich, and Kipper felt he was on cloud nine and didn’t intend to come down. Whatever it took, he wanted this life.

-Track Five-

Manila airport bustled with people when the old men arrived. Feeling drained after their long flight, they cleared customs and headed outside to the arrival area to meet Steve's friend, Gus.

Gus, an American, had lived in the Philippines for many years. He owned Freeway, a popular music venue in the entertainment heart of Angeles City where Steve had played many times while in the Philippines. They became great friends, being around the same age. Originally from California, Gus had made a fortune in the United States before moving to the Philippines. He had tried many business ventures during his years in the country but had lost most of his money before buying Freeway, now regarded as the top live music venue on the Fields Avenue strip. Gus had two sons with his Filipina wife and was a happy family man.

Wayne and Elvin heard many stories from Steve over the years about the Philippines, but unbeknownst to them, hearing tales and experiencing them was about to be entirely different. They would soon be in for a sudden, yet amazing, culture shock.

With the time zone difference, it was mid-afternoon when they arrived. Wayne, Charles, and Elvin felt uncomfortable from the heat once they stepped outside the cool air-conditioned airport lounge. Steve felt overjoyed to be back. He inhaled familiar odours in the warm Philippine air that triggered fond memories. He took out a carton of duty-free cigarettes, opened a packet, and took one out. "No stupid no smoking laws here," he said, lighting it up.

They wheeled their luggage trolleys to the pickup area.

"Hi guys," said a smiling grey-haired American, who stood in front of a group of taxi drivers. "Wow, you came prepared," said Gus noticing their stacked trolleys.

Steve's face lit up as he wheeled his trolley over to Gus.

"Gus!" exclaimed Steve, who walked up and gave his old friend a hug.

"It's great to see you, buddy," said Gus, patting Steve on the back.

"Yeah, it's been too long. I've missed you mate," said Steve. "We've bought our music equipment."

Charles, Elvin, and Wayne could see the joy etched across Steve's face as he introduced them to Gus.

The four then wheeled their luggage trolleys to the car park and got into Gus's air-conditioned Range Rover. The ancient newbies sat together in the back seat and observed the scenery of the Manila metropolis and the stunning countryside along their route. Palm trees lined the road, and once out of Manila, it was lush green pastures for most of the three-hour journey to Angeles City, and Steve and Gus chatted in the front seat.

They arrived in Angeles City, where Gus stopped at a money exchange, so the Brits could change pounds Sterling (GBP), into Philippine Pesos (PHP). He then drove them to the Swagman, a popular guesthouse familiar to Steve. Gus, knowing they would be tired after a long arduous journey, arranged to meet them later. He told them he would put their equipment in the store room at Freeway and left them to get settled.

The Swagman comprised of two sections. One section having the accommodation block with small air-conditioned rooms on one side of the street. Opposite, it housed more rooms, a large restaurant, and an open-air swimming pool.

It catered for tourists and long staying old ex-pats, having activities such as bingo, quiz nights, and other forms of subdued entertainment.

Two *Filipino boys at reception took their luggage to their rooms and the four went into the restaurant and ordered tea.

“Cor, it’s bloody hot,” said Elvin, and wiping beads of sweat from his forehead, said. “I’m sweating like a paedo in a playground.”

Steve watched his three friends ogling the pretty *Filipina waitresses. Wayne sat back and smiled like a contented cat as the ladies hurried about their work.

“I wish I was thirty-years-younger,” said Wayne.

“I’d better learn Filipino so I can chat ‘em up,” said Elvin, chortling.

Steve tittered, “You don’t have to be thirty years younger,” he said, “and you certainly don’t have to waste your time learning Filipino to chat them up.”

The three looked confused. Steve smirked, deciding not to fill their heads with too much information yet, knowing that they would learn about Filipina’s soon enough. He’d taught them some basic language on the plane, such as Hello, *Hoy*: Toilet, *Banyo*: and the most important word, Beer, *Serbesa*, but he told them that most Filipino’s spoke English.

“What are we going to do for the rest of the day?” Wayne asked.

Steve looked at his eager but exhausted friends and said. “We should have a nap and relax before seeing Gus. We will need to save our energy for later,” he smirked.

They agreed and drank Lipton’s tea while still ogling the girls. Ten minutes later, a Filipino came into the restaurant and made his way over to their table.

Steve gasped as the man approached. He stood up and smiled. “Oggie!” he exclaimed, as the smiling Filipino put his hands on Steve’s shoulders and gazed into his eyes, now filling with tears, “Hello my old friend, it’s been too long,” said Oggie with a quake in his voice.

“It seemed like a lifetime,” said Steve, holding onto Oggie’s arms.

After a happy and emotional reunion, Steve introduced the three to his closest Filipino friend. Oggie was a tall slim middle-aged Filipino with a cheerful demeanour. He smiled at the three as he shook their hands and sat down. Oggie spoke fluent English and chatted with them about his family and Steve.

Oggie first met Steve not long after arriving in the Philippines many years ago. Even though Oggie was a lot younger, the pair had been like brothers throughout Steve’s stay. Oggie loved western music, and it was thanks to him liaising with the Filipino Doctors and the British Embassy that Steve’s medevac went smoothly.

Oggie looked at Steve. “I couldn’t believe it when you call a few days ago and told me you were coming home,” Steve, with a smile a mile wide, held onto Oggie’s arm and sniffed back a tear as Oggie told him. “Gus told me you’d arrived and he’d dropped you off here. I knew you would be tired, but I had to come and see you.”

Oggie looked at the others, smiled, and told Steve. “I have a welcome home present for you.” He looked around at the other customers in the restaurant, slipped Steve a small package under the table, and nodded.

“Thanks mate,” said Steve, taking the package and putting it in his pocket.

Oggie stood, put his hand on Steve’s shoulder. “It’s nice to meet you all; I will see you later,” he said and walked out of the restaurant.

Bewildered, Charles, Elvin, and Wayne looked at Steve.

“I’m going to the toilet,” said Steve and left the table.

“Wot do you think that was?” Elvin asked, looking puzzled.

“I don’t know,” said Charles, frowning. “Maybe it’s nothing, but it seemed suspicious how Oggie handed the package to Steve under the table.”

The three fell silent as a grinning Steve returned from the toilet several minutes later looking invigorated. He wiped his nose and announced, “Right, you go take a nap, while I go for a stroll. I’ll meet you here at 6 o’clock.”

The three concerned old men headed to their rooms.

The receptionist woke them at 5:30 pm. They showered, changed, and met up in the restaurant around 6:00 pm.

Steve was already in there, and, after taking the mickey out of Elvin’s hairy little white legs in his shorts, they sat around a table and ordered food.

“What’s the plan Steve?” asked Wayne.

They leant forward and Steve said. “We will have something to eat and go to Freeway to see Gus and where we will be playing.” He pointed at Charles in his summer slacks. “Nobby, you can buy a pair of shorts on the way; it’s too hot for long trousers. Then I will show you around some of the quieter bars on Fields Avenue,” he smirked, “I’ll break you in gently.”

They looked at Steve, who seemed full of vigour.

“What have you been doing all afternoon Steven?” asked Charles.

Steve took something out of his pocket. “I spent a few hours shopping and visiting old friends,” he said and smiled. “Look what I bought.”

He showed them a decorative mother-of-pearl pillbox and continued “I bought this little pill box, it looked nice and it was cheap.”

“What’s in it?” Charles asked.

“Nothing,” said Steve, and put the box back in his pocket. “Here,” he said, “I also bought you little cherubs something you’ll need.” He gave each of them a packet of four Viagra tablets.

They looked aghast. “I certainly won’t need these,” said Charles sounding indignant.

“Me neither,” said Elvin, although hoping that he would.

“Nor me,” said Wayne, thinking that he still had enough power to get it up with no help.

Steve smirked, put the Viagra back in his pocket, and said. “Wait and see. I have a box of rubber Jonny’s in my room. I will hand them out later when required.”

“We’re too old for condoms. I bet we are all firing blanks,” said Elvin chuckling.

“Maybe not all of us, Chippers,” said Wayne, smirking.

“No, but we aren’t too old to get nasty diseases. Better to have one and not need it; than need one, and not have it. Always better safe than sorry,” said Steve smirking.

Charles glared at the three, shook his head, and sighed.

After they ate, Steve took them to the international phones in the small travel agency section in the Swagman. With the seven-hour time difference, it would now be lunchtime in the UK. Steve called Lucy and told her they had all arrived and everything was fine. He said that she had nothing to worry about as her old Dad was about to go out for a shag. Lucy, no longer shocked by her father’s antics, just told him to enjoy himself.

Charles and Elvin called their families with the same news, apart from the shagging part.

They met back in the restaurant and chatted until Steve said that it was time they went to Freeway to meet Gus. They went outside into the warm dark evening air and caught the free Swagman *tuk-tuk to Fields Avenue.

Freeway was a large building at the start of Fields Avenue, an area with over a hundred bars, restaurants, nightclubs, and other buildings. It resembled the glitz and glamour of Las Vegas, a raucous mix of unashamed, lively, joyful entertainment, and considered the heart of Angeles City.

Spotlights illuminated the front of Freeway, focusing beams on murals of singing icons, such as the Beatles, Elvis, and others. A small arch-shaped gold awning covered the entranceway. The door painted gold with white stripes, made the exterior look classy. Inside the large air-conditioned hall had a raised stage at the front with a wooden dance floor. Behind the stage, there was a changing room for the night's entertainment and a storeroom for musical equipment. Several small tables and chairs were set out on a carpeted area at the side of the stage, reserved for the bands and Gus's guests.

In front of the dance floor, four rows of velvet upholstered bench seats set out semi-circular at different levels, which gave customers a clear view of the stage. In front of the benches were rows of chest-high shelves, used for drinks and snacks, with platforms at the front for staff to walk along serving food and drinks.

Freeway had live music seven nights a week. The entertainment did not start until 9:00 pm, but customers arrived around 8:00 pm to get a seat, as Freeway was usually packed.

Stage lighting was at the front and two large fans were on either side to keep the performers cool. The illuminated dance floor had light-boxes positioned around, which displayed that night's entertainment. That evening's band was the 'Harpier, a popular Filipino band that covered western songs from the 1980's.

The old men arrived and Gus met them at the door. He showed them to the stage and changing area. He then went to order drinks while the others sat at a table to the side of the stage. Gus returned with a waitress and several bottles of Red Horse extra-strong beer, one of the Philippines popular local brews. Steve complemented Gus on how good the place looked.

Harpier went on stage to get ready.

The audience was a mixture of Filipino's and foreigners. Gus told Wayne that he could use their drum kit and advised them to come along during the day to rehearse and get used to Freeway's sound equipment. Gus gave Steve a cell phone with a Philippine phone card, and they chatted until the band started and performed 'Rio' a Duran Duran number, followed by a medley of popular songs from the 1980's. Fifty minutes later, after playing, 'Message in a Bottle' by The Police, they took a break.

The old-timers drank several of the strong bottled beers and, as background music played, Steve said that it was time to move on.

They arranged to meet Gus around lunchtime the following day and Steve popped to the toilet to get his fix.

They left Freeway, excited about being able to play to a packed house. Although Steve had played Freeway many times before, he knew Fossils would blow the audience's socks off; if they survived the nights planned debauchery.

They went onto Fields Avenue and Steve said. "To put us in the mood, I know a great little bar that's not too far away in Santos Street." He smiled and strode off towards Santos Street. A.K.A. 'Blow Row.'

The three followed Steve through the hot noisy streets, trying to avoid the beggars, Viagra sellers, and tuk-tuk drivers, who pestered them relentlessly.

Wayne, Charles, and Elvin gazed around streets at the brightly lit bars and restaurants.

“It ain't wot I expected,” said Elvin. “It looked modern. I fought it'd be a dump full of wooden shacks and girls jumping out saying, Love you long time... \$10.”

“You've been watching too many Vietnam movies, buddy,” said Wayne, and the pair chuckled as they arrived at the Black Orchid.

They went inside the dimly lit bar. Jenny, the mamasan, was an old friend of Steve's and recognised him immediately. Looking shocked, she went over, kissed him, and asked where he had been for all those years.

They ordered beer and Steve spoke to Jenny, telling her a little about his time in England, and that they were performing at Freeway the following night. Jenny looked at the old men, and knowing Steve from old, she thought he was bullshitting about them being English superstars.

The other three looked at girls stood around or talking to customers. Steve then whispered something to Jenny, who went to the bar.

Charles was curious. “Where do those stairs lead?” he asked, noticing large wooden steps in one corner. “Do the staff live up there?”

Steve grinned as three girls came over to their table, introduced themselves, and sat down beside Wayne, Charles, and Elvin, who appeared taken aback.

“There you go, lads. These three nice ladies wanted to meet you, they think you are sexy,” said Steve, who chuckled and added. “Don't be shy and buy them a drink.”

Jenny came over, smiled at the girls, and sat and chatted with Steve.

Wayne spoke to the woman next to him and ordered her a drink, and Charles and Elvin followed suit. They chatted with their new companions for several minutes, astounded by how well the Filipinas spoke English. The three relics couldn't believe how interested these attractive girls seemed to be in them. The girls kissed and stroked the old men with familiarity, considering they had only just met. Steve broke off his conversation with Jenny, leaned across the table, and grinned.

“I suggest you take a Viagra's about now. I told you that you'd need them,” he said, handing them each a box of the wonder pills and a condom.

The girls smiled and went back to smothering Wayne and Elvin with kisses.

Charles didn't take ‘the old codger's starter pack’ and ignored the girl sitting with him.

“Suit yourself,” said Steve. He popped a Viagra in his mouth, swilled it down with a bottle of San Miguel extra light pilsner, and said something to Jenny. She left the table, went to the bar, and spoke to another girl, who smiled, came over, and sat next to Steve, who groped her.

The three confused newbies were gobsmacked with their female companions, who had been fiddling with their wrinkled old todgers for several minutes.

Wayne and Elvin took a little blue wonder pill while Charles looked uncomfortable and kept moving the girl's hand off his flaccid old soldier.

Steve stopped swapping spit with his companion and leaned forward. “Do you like the women?” He asked.

“Oh yes,” stammered Elvin and chuckled like a nervous teen.

“Right then,” said Steve. “This will be my treat.” He nodded to the girl with Elvin, who smiled, stood up, took his hand, and led him upstairs; followed by Wayne with his new female friend.

Charles, realising what was happening, exclaimed. “This is a brothel!”

Steve smirked. “No it’s not; it’s a short time bar. It’ll relax you for the evening ahead.”

Charles threw Steve a stern look and said, “I don’t care what they call it here. It’s a brothel and I will never go with a prostitute.” He then ignored both Steve and the woman sat next to him and carried on drinking.

Steve laughed and said. “I bet you go with a working girl before we leave the Philippines.”

“Never,” said Charles furrowing his brow, “and if I do I will kiss your backside.”

Steve chuckled and said, “I’ll hold you to that... Anyway, I’m off for a quickie, so if you change your mind just tell the girl.”

“That’ll never happen,” Charles grumbled and looked disgusted.

Steve took the girl, along with his bottle of beer, and went upstairs to the short time rooms.

Twenty minutes later, they came downstairs and sat with grumpy Charles. Elvin was the first down, and sweating, ordered him and his sack-emptier a drink. Wayne followed about two minutes later. He looked smug and happy as he bought his smiling girl a drink. Steve came down five minutes after Wayne, and sent his girl to fetch him a drink and then sent her away. He looked at the two now besotted old men. “Was everything okay, lads?”

“Perfect,” cooed Elvin, looking gooey eyed at his new love. “But it was bloody hot in the rooms, they only ‘ad fans.”

“Great buddy,” said Wayne, as his new little fancy nudged closer and kissed his cheek.

“Right then, drink up and we can go party. The night is still young and we’ve been relieved, except for old grumpy bollocks,” he said, looked at Charles, and smirked. “We can have a relaxing night pussy watching.”

Although Elvin and Wayne felt miffed to be leaving, they wanted to explore more of what this laid-back city offered. Steve called Jenny over and gave her 2800 PHP.

Jenny thanked him and told him she would go along to the Freeway and watch them play the following evening and bring Elvin and Wayne’s ladies. Elvin and Wayne were delighted and kissed the women goodbye as they left and headed back onto Field Avenue with renewed vigour.

“How much did that cost?” Wayne asked.

“2800 Pesos, that’s about £40. Jenny gave me a discount because we’re old friends, and it was only a short time.”

“Can’t we take them out, maybe for a meal or somefing?” Elvin asked, sounding disappointed.

Steve grinned and said, “You can take them for as long as you want you dirty little sod, but it will cost you a lot more, about 1300-1500 Pesos each night for them.”

Elvin did some calculations and said, “That’s not much, and it would be worth it, she was lovely.”

Steve chuckled and said. “Steady your roll, Chippers. We don’t want you having a heart attack on your first night. There’s a lot more to come.”

Elvin and Wayne giggled, Charles grumbled, and Steve grinned as they walked down Fields Avenue to their next port of call, Champagne nightclub and go-go bar.

“Ah, that’s better,” said Elvin, feeling the cool air from the clubs air-conditioning system as they walked into the plush nightclub. Although the same size as Freeway, mirrored walls and ceilings made Champagne appear massive.

The club was full of scantily clad Filipinas. Some walked around serving customers, while others danced on a stage. Three happy old men and one grumpy old fart sat down around the stage in the centre of the club and watched as the girls gyrated.

'This seems okay, it's a go-go bar, but at least it's not a brothel,' thought Charles, who smiled at the hostess serving them.

Elvin and Wayne giggled like schoolboys, bragging about their recent sexual conquest. Steve had done, seen, and heard this many times before. He listened and smiled as the newbies spoke about breaking their Filipina cherry.

Charles looked unsettled until a hostess came over, stood next to him, and said, "You look bored."

Charles looked at the lady and replied, "No, I am okay."

"My name is Danni. What's yours?" asked the woman.

Charles looked at her and said. "Charles."

Danni smiled and said, "It's nice to meet you, Charles. Can I sit down please?"

Charles nodded and Danni sat next to him and said. "I'm nervous. With it being my first night as a hostess, I don't know what to do."

Charles looked at Danni who trembled, appearing scared.

Danni asked the usual questions; where was he from? How long was he staying in the Philippines? Did he have a Filipina girlfriend?"

Danni intrigued Charles and he bought her a cocktail, watched by the ever-present mamasan.

Wayne, Elvin, and Steve played with the girls and bought them cocktails.

Charles told Danni what they were doing in the Philippines and invited her along to their first gig at Freeway. Charles drank a few beers and champagne cocktails and, as the evening wore on, he felt more at ease.

He felt guilty about Mary, but as the evening progressed, he knew Mary would have wanted him to enjoy his life and she had told him not to be sad. *Shitfaced, he plucked up courage and nervously put his hand on Danni's knee. Danni jumped and looked surprised.

Charles moved his hand away and said. "Oh, I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to do that. It must be the alcohol."

Danni smiled, took his hand and put it on her thigh, kissed him on his cheek, and said, "That's okay Charles, I like you," she leaned over and whispered. "I like you a lot."

Steve eavesdropped on the conversation. He chuckled, thinking Danni was certainly a professional and doing a great job on the boring old fart.

"Okay, time to go," announced Steve, and asked a hostess for their bills. Charles offered to pay for all the drinks, but he looked shocked when the bill came and it was double from what Steve paid earlier, which had included three shags. Charles saw the exorbitant price of the cocktails, cringed, paid the bill, and asked Danni. "Can I see you again?"

Danni knew that Charles was a gullible newbie, but she was aware that Steve was an old hand at the game. She threw him a cautious look, before she smiled, nodded, and told Charles that she worked at Champagne every night, and she wanted to see him again. "Maybe I will come to watch you play at Freeway."

The four left Champagne and went outside. Danni watched them leave. Then, after a mamasan nodded, she took off her clothes and danced with the other girls on the stage.

Shitfaced, the old men walked along Fields Avenue. The aromas coming from the streets food stalls smelt delicious. They bought BBQ satay chicken impaled on wooden sticks and walked towards a tuk-tuk.

“It's almost midnight, so let's head back to the Swagman and have an early night. We're meeting Gus in the morning,” said Steve and told the driver where to go.

During the ride, Charles would not stop talking about Danni, much to the amusement of Steve, who smirked and thought. ‘I'll let him wallow in his fantasy of finding the perfect twenty-two-year-old woman, who was apparently smitten with the wrinkled, almost seventy-year-old, Charlie boy.’

They arrived at the Swagman and Charles slurred. “Tomorrow, I will go back to the Champagne bar and ask Danni out. I think she may still be a virgin.”

They staggered into the reception. Steve went to his room and burst out laughing, making his botty burp.

The others remained in reception and chatted for several minutes about Steve's frequent toilet visits. They felt concerned and knew that there were strict drug laws and harsh punishments in the Philippines. They decided to ignore it for now but hoped Steve would realise he was too old and kick his new drug habit before it took a firm hold.

The following morning, they met in the restaurant, ate breakfast, and planned for the day ahead.

Steve looked at his watch and said, “We said we'd meet Gus at noon. I'll call Kipper around 4 o'clock and find out what happened in London.”

They relaxed by the pool until lunchtime and caught the Swagman tuk-tuk to Freeway. They noticed the dirt and grime during the day around Fields Avenue. A few people milled around, which was a vast contrast from the lively, illuminated street at night.

Gus let them into the Freeway. They took their equipment from the storeroom and Gus showed Wayne a set of drums he could use. The sound equipment in Freeway was unfamiliar to them, but they soon figured it out and set up their instruments. Gus brought over a coffee and sat down at a table.

The Freeway staff went about their cleaning and stocking shelves for the evening trade. With it closed during the day, Freeway looked different with the lights on and no crowd. The sound echoed around the large empty club as Wayne tapped his sticks together, counting them in. “One, two three.” They played ‘Consider Me Gone.’

Gus looked surprised. He had heard Steve play before many times at the Freeway and always considered him a good entertainer, but he rarely varied his rock ‘n’ roll songs. He presumed that the Fossils were just an extended version of Steve, but soon changed his mind after listening to their first few songs, and when they performed, Rolling Thunder, he was hooked. Fossils stopped for a break and Gus stood in front of them and applauded.

“God damn, you guys sound fantastic!” He said.

Steve laughed and said, “I bet you weren't expecting that.”

“Damn right,” said Gus and went over to the fridge to get them each a beer.

They rehearsed until 3:30 pm., unplugged their instruments and sat with Gus. Thirty minutes later, Steve called Kipper.

“Morning buggerlugs; how are things in sunny Cleethorpes?”

“Hi, Steve... erm, I'm still in London,” said Kipper.

“London! What are you still doing there? And what's happening?” asked Steve.

“I'm staying at the Hilton, the BBC are paying,” said Kipper and chuckled.

“What’s wrong Kipper? You sound nervous.”

“Nothing’s wrong Steve, everything’s fine. I met the people in charge of the BBC, Billy Numan, and Susan McHale. They believed the story about the band being abroad and can’t be contacted yet. Although Billy was angry at first, but calmed down, and cancelled the live show. He even apologised for assuming you would do the show. He said he wanted me to stay until they could speak with you. They said they would give me your cheque before I leave and I will give it to Doctor Fossdyke when I get back to Cleethorpes.”

Steve heard a woman’s voice in the background, “Here is your buck’s fizz, Mr Nutley.”

“Rough going then,” said Steve and chuckled. “Have you got a pen and paper.”

“Yep, hang on, I’ll write on a napkin.”

Steve read out his phone number.

Kipper repeated the number.

“Okay buggerlugs, keep us informed on what’s happening,” said Steve.

“I will, but I’ve got to go, Steve. I’ll call you later,” he said and hung up.

Steve frowned and glared at the phone.

“What’s happening?” asked Charles.

Steve chuckled and told them, “Buggerlugs is drinking champers for breakfast... at the bloody Hilton.”

“What’s he still doing in London Steve?” asked Charles, sounding surprised?”

“He said he was told by the BBC to wait there until they spoke to us, but he told me they believed our story and he said he would call us later.”

“Oh well, we’ll just have to wait,” said Elvin.

“How about we treat the lad and give him half of the prize money?” said Steve. “It looks like he’s pulled us out of the shit.”

“Good idea,” agreed, Wayne, Elvin, and Charles.

Steve looked at his watch and said. “I’ll phone Lucy and tell her.”

They left Freeway and went back to the Swagman. They showered, changed, ate, and returned to Freeway..

Gus was looking forward to hearing them perform. He had been humming Vulnerable all afternoon. Fossils went on stage at 8:45 pm to a mixed reaction. Foreigners tittered at the ancient old band members, and the Filipinos sat quietly, so as not to offend.

They got settled with their instruments. Wayne tapped his sticks. “One... two... three.” and played Consider me Gone.

Gus smiled as he looked at the faces of the gobsmacked audience.

The atmosphere changed dramatically, and by the end of their first set, the audience were on their feet, applauding.

During their second set, Steve saw Jenny and the two girls from the Black Orchid standing in the audience. He nodded at Wayne and Elvin, who noticed them and smiled. Charles also saw a figure that made his heart flutter as Danni stood amongst the crowd.

Word soon spread through Fields Avenue about the fantastic new band performing at Freeway. They finished their second set with, Life is Too Short to be Sad, and Charles saw Danni leave. She mouthed, "See you later," on her way out. Charles smiled and nodded as he carried on singing.

Rapturous applause echoed through Freeway as the band left the stage and sat with Gus.

The three girls from the Black Orchid came over. Jenny said. "You sounded fantastic Steve, much better than I remember. We have to go back to work now." She looked at them and asked. "Will we be seeing you all later?"

"Too right," said Wayne and Elvin, which brought them each a peck on their cheeks from their two ladies, while Charles remained silent.

"Yep Jenny, we'll be there," said Steve, who winked at the old mamasan, and continued "And who knows, tonight could be your lucky night."

Jenny laughed and said, "Oh Good, it's been a long time."

They went back on stage for their final set of the evening.

Tired, but elated by the response of the audience to their first gig, they finished the set with Cry Alone, which received another standing ovation. They hurried off the stage to shower and change. The crowd dispersed after Gus announced over the microphone that the fabulous Fossils would play again the following evening, telling everyone to get there early. The old-timers came back into the main hall and sat with Gus who couldn't sing their praises enough. He handed Steve a small paper bag and said, "Oggie came in earlier and left this for you. You were playing and he had to rush off, his daughter's having a baby. He said that all being well, he will see you at the Swagman tomorrow."

Steve smiled, put the bag in his pocket, and went to the toilet.

Shocked by how brazenly drugs were handed out in the Philippines, it seemed to Wayne, Charles, and Elvin that everyone had a flagrant disregard of the law.

They left Freeway and headed for the Black Orchid but Charles had other plans. As they got onto the strip, he excused himself and headed for the Champagne go-go and the others went to the Black Orchid. Steve decided that he would check on Charles at Champagne later.

Wayne and Elvin wanted their ladies to spend the night with them and paid Jenny 1300 Pesos each.

After an hour, Steve left Wayne and Elvin smooching and swooning over their sweethearts in the Black Orchid. He went to the Champagne and saw Charles sat at a table full of cocktails surrounded by women and Danni who had her arms around him.

Steve went over and glared at Danni and the other girls who looked nervous, grabbed drinks from the table and walked away.

Steve took a seat next to Charles.

"Where are your friend's going Danni?" asked a shitfaced Charles "oh... hello Steven."

"Hello, mate. I came to see if you were okay," said Steve.

"Perfectly fine old boy," said Charles as he took a slurp of champagne cocktail and asked. "Where's Wayne and Elvin?"

"We are heading back to Swagman, so I came to take you back."

"Oh," said Charles, and kissed Danni. "No, I am fine here. Why don't you stay for a drink? The champagne cocktails are delicious."

Steve knew as soon as he left, the girls would return to the table and carry on fleecing Charles. He took Charles's bill from the pot at the centre of the table, and considering he had only been there for about an hour, his bill was 14000php. £200.

Steve beckoned over a mamasan, and while Charles's attention focused back on Danni, Steve took the mamasan to one side.

She glared at Steve and said. "Your friend ordered every drink."

"Bullshit, I know how that works," said Steve, "Danni called over your other working girls and introduced her so-called friends to Charles. She would order overpriced lady-drinks and put them on his bill." Steve glared at the woman and asked. "Now, do you want a problem with me, or do you want to speak with my friend, Oggie Santos?"

The mamasan stared. She knew Oggies reputation as a fixer and he had powerful friends. She had heard rumours that one of Oggie's foreign friends was back in town and she looked at Steve.

"No. I don't want any problems," said the mamasan.

"Good, well fuck off and bring his proper bill," snapped Steve.

The shaken woman asked, "How about I let him take Danni... no charge?"

Steve glanced at Charles.

"Okay, but tell her not to pester him for money," snarled Steve.

The nervous mamasan nodded, went over, spoke to Danni in Filipino, and scurried off to rectify Charles's bill.

"Are you okay darling? What did that woman say to you to make you look so worried?" said Charles seeing Danni looking shaken.

Danni looked pensive when Steve came back over to the contented, dopey old twonk, wrapped around Danni like a rash.

"Danni and the mamasan are concerned that you have had too much to drink, so Danni wants to take you back to the Swagman and take care of you," said Steve.

Charles looked at Danni who nodded.

"She will take you back to the hotel now. We will meet you there," said Steve.

Charles chuckled like a nervous schoolboy as Danni kissed him on the cheek and said. "Let's go sexy."

Charles paid the revised bill, left arm in arm with Danni, and caught a tuk-tuk.

Steve returned to the Black Orchid, where the two happy couples still canoodled. Steve told them they should take their sweethearts to the Swagman while they still had enough energy to roger them senseless. Wayne and Elvin paid their bill and Steve grabbed Jenny. It had been a long time since Steve had been with the mamasan; even though she had aged, she was always one of his favourites.

They arrived at the Swagman and Steve asked the receptionist about Charles and Danni. The woman told him they had arrived ten minutes earlier and had gone to Charles's room.

Wayne, Elvin, and their companions went straight to their rooms while Steve and Jenny went to the restaurant bar and drank beer.

Twenty minutes later, they went to Steve's room.

"What's that noise?" asked Jenny as they walked past Elvin's room.

Steve sniggered as he heard buzzing and a woman's whoops of joy. He realised that old Elvin had fitted his legendary woman-pleasing vibrating little falsies.

"Don't ask, you don't want to know." Steve chuckled and he and Jenny went into his room.

The Filipino *bar fine system works by paying the bar all the money up front, as opposed to the girl. Unless you wanted to tip the girl something extra, the night's shag was already paid.

Steve knew that Wayne's and Elvin's girls would not ask for a tip, as mamasan Jenny would bollock them. However, he knew Danni would take advantage of dopey bollocks Charles, and try to fleece him.

Wayne and Elvin had partied too hard. They played with the girls for a while, but when their two ladies showered to prepare for a good rooting, the wrinkled old rock gods, now Viagra'd up, had fallen asleep.

Charles felt content lying clothed on the bed next to Danni. It felt good to have a woman's touch and smell close to him again after Mary and he fell asleep embracing the pretty Filipina.

Steve recollected his earlier times with Jenny many years ago. After a snort of pick-me-up and an oval blue marvel pill, he serviced the mamasan and they both fell asleep.

Late morning, they came down for breakfast around the same time. Jenny and her two Black Orchid girls had left earlier. Unfortunately, the effects of last night's Viagra had kicked in, leaving Wayne and Elvin with embarrassing boners, which they hoped breakfast would cure.

Charles was the last to arrive for breakfast. He appeared pensive but had a twinkle in his eye as he greeted his three friends and sat down.

"Did you 'ave a good night, mate?" asked Elvin.

Charles nodded. "Excellent!"

"Has Danni gone home?" Steve asked, wanting to probe Charles to see if he had paid her any more money.

Charles didn't reply and smiled at Danni as she came into the restaurant and walked over to join them. She kissed Charles and sat down.

Charles looked smug as he announced. "I thought we'd enjoy breakfast together before we go shopping."

Elvin, Steve, and Wayne relaxed by the pool. Wayne and Elvin kept jumping into the refreshing water every time a waitress smiled at them, trying to quench their ardour. They wondered how long the effects of Viagra took to wear off.

Oggie came to the restaurant with a beaming smile early afternoon.

"Hello, Grandad!" Exclaimed Steve as a smiling Oggie approached.

"My daughter Rima had a baby girl," said Oggie with a smile a mile wide.

They congratulated Oggie, who didn't stay long as he wanted to get back to the hospital.

They relaxed until 4:00 pm when Steve's phone rang. He looked at the number.

"It's a UK number," he said, seeing the +44 code and answered. "Hello buggerlugs. Where are you now, and what's happening?"

Wayne and Elvin sat in the swimming pool listening while trying to conceal their boners.

"Hang on," said Steve. He moved closer to the pool and pressed the speaker on his phone so they could all listen.

"Right, what's happening?"

“I am still in London Steve, but going home soon. Everything is okay and there’s someone here who wanted to speak with you,” said Kipper and a man said. “Hello Strat, or shall I call you Steven?”

“Steve will be fine,”

“Hi Steve, I am Billy Numan from the BBC. Congratulations on winning our competition. I understand from Kipper that you are touring Southeast Asia and won't be returning to the UK anytime soon.”

“Yeah,” said Steve. “We are touring for a long time, so any record deal will be a waste of time, and we don’t want one.”

“I understand,” said Billy. “Are all the band members there?”

“No, Nobby is out with his, err, girlfriend,” said Steve and chuckled.

“But can you speak on behalf of the band?” asked Billy.

Wayne and Elvin nodded.

“Yes,” said Steve.

“That’s fantastic. I am about to give Kipper your prize money, but I need your full names for our records,” said Billy

Steve gave Billy their full names and Steve’s phone went silent for a moment.

“Okay,” said Billy. “Kipper will receive your cheque and be on his way home soon.”

“Great,” said Steve, and Wayne and Elvin looked at each other and grinned.

“Oh,” said Billy. “We still need to promote the show, so we might need to produce material relating to the show's winners. Can Mr Kevin Gascoigne Nutley represent you in your absence? He told us that he is your manager and produced Hope.”

Steve looked puzzled and said. “Mr Kevin Gascoigne Nutley... Oh, you mean, Kipper. Yeah, he did. It was also him who called it Hope and made the great cover.”

Steve looked at Wayne and Elvin, who shrugged and then nodded.

“Sure,” said Steve “Kipper, I mean Mr Nutley can represent us.”

“Thanks Steve. It was great speaking with you. I look forward to meeting you one day. I love your music... okay later.”

The phone clicked off.

“Billy sounded a nice bloke. It looks like we can go home anytime,” said Steve. “But not yet, we need to give the dust time to settle, and we still have many women to please.”

Steve looked at Elvin and Wayne and said. “You two better get into the shade. Chippers, you look like a boiled lobster.”

Five people sat around Billy Numan’s conference phone.

Along with Billy Susan and Kipper, there were two company lawyers.

Billy looked over at one lawyer. “Was that enough?” he asked.

The man nodded, carried on filling out the form, and said, “Yes, we heard verbal confirmation given by Mr Steven Baker AKA Strat, the bands representative; authorising Mr Kevin Gascoigne Nutley, the producer

of the Hope album, to represent the band known as Fossils. I put their address down as no fixed abode as Mr Nutley couldn't remember where they were squatting."

Kipper frowned. He had never mentioned they were squatters. He said they lived together in Cleethorpes, but didn't know Fossdyke's address.

The lawyer slid the form over to the other lawyer who signed it and handed it to Billy and Susan who also signed as witnesses.

Kipper sat and watched, his hands felt cold and clammy, and his heart raced when Susan said. "There must have been a bad connection. Steve sounded old."

Kipper fidgeted.

"Yes, it's probably all the cheap weed they're smoking," said Billy, smiling, "Isn't that right Kipper?"

Kipper, nodded, chuckled, and sounding nervous, said, "Wait until I tell our mates that Charlie has a new girlfriend."

Billy handed Kipper the form. A lawyer took two pre-typed contracts from his briefcase and put them with the first form. He pointed to where Kipper needed to sign on all three. Billy saw the apprehension on Kipper's face so took a cheque for £20,000 from his pocket and slid it in front of him.

"Sign the forms Kipper and then you can take the cheque and go home. We will see you when you come back in a few days," said Billy and smiled at Kipper.

Kipper didn't read the forms. He looked at the cheque and signed his name on the dotted lines.

They all stood and shook Kipper's hand. Billy said, "Congratulations Kipper. You now work for the BBC and represent Fossils." He picked up the cheque, handed it to Kipper, and said. "There will be plenty more to come."

While driving back to Cleethorpes, Kipper reflected on the strange events of the past few days. Although not fully understanding what was going on, he felt happy about what the future held for him.

After Steve called him to give him his phone number in the Philippines the previous day and Kipper had done as instructed and called Billy. He presumed that he could now go home, as he had not brought a change of clothes.

Billy told him he couldn't leave until the next morning, as he wanted him to call the band and told him to go and wait in the hotels reception.

He sat and waited in the plush foyer at the Hilton.

Cosmo then called. "Where the bloody hell have you been, and what's happening?"

"I'm still in London, Steve called, and gave me his number and everything's fine. The BBC needed to speak with him tomorrow before they give me their prize money and I can come home."

"So you will be back tomorrow? That means you can do the gig here Tuesday night. The DJ over the weekend was crap. Where are you staying?"

"The BBC put me in a hotel, so I don't know about Tuesday, I have a lot to sort out," said Kipper.

"Like what?" asked Cosmo

"Oh, I have to go Cosmo; the car has arrived to pick me up. I will come and see you when I get back," said Kipper and hung up.

Cosmo looked at his phone, ‘Why did he sound so bloody nervous?’ he thought.

Ten minutes later, a man arrived in reception and went over to Kipper.

“Hello, Mr Nutley. I’m Ronald from the BBC. I’ve been instructed by Mr Numan to take you shopping. You have a £10,000 spending limit.”

Kipper loved fashion and spent the day like a kid in a candy store. Apart from the occasional coffee in the malls, he and Ronald went around clothes shops all day, with Kipper trying on designer clothes. He spent that evening in his room at the Hilton, watching a large flat screen TV. He kept trying on the two shirts and a suit he’d bought with the BBC’s money.

The following morning, feeling like a million dollars, Kipper got into the limo to take him to the BBC. He felt trepidation, as he still wasn’t sure what was going on.

A security guard escorted Kipper to Billy’s office where four people sat at his desk, Billy, Susan, and two men.

“Good morning Kipper,” said Susan.

“Sit down Kipper,” said Billy, directing him to an empty chair.

“Hello Mr Nutley,” said one man. “I am Gerald Highgrove, from the BBC’s legal department.” He shook Kipper’s hand.

“And I am Walter Sharples, a senior lawyer for Virgin records.” said the other.

Billy looked at Kipper, pointed, and said, “I told you that your next suit would be Armani.”

Kipper smiled and tugged the sleeve of his Armani jacket.

“If all goes well today, when you come back from Cleethorpes you can buy more made-to-measure designer suits. You will have plenty of time,” said Billy, and told him. “If the band allow you to represent them, you would work here for the BBC, with a salary and large bonuses.”

“Come back, I don’t understand. What would I be doing?” Kipper asked, puckering his brow and sounding confused.

“You will help Susan and I with the band’s promotion,” said Billy.

“We still have to promote the competition winners,” said Susan, and smiled, “and if you are here representing them, it will be far easier.”

“Excuse me, Mr Nutley. Do you know the addresses of the band members?” Gerald interrupted.

“No, they live together in a home near Cleethorpes beach but I don’t know the address.”

Billy looked at his watch. “It’s almost 9:00 am,” he said and showed Kipper the number that he had given him for Steve.

Kipper nodded and Billy dialled the number on his conference phone

Following the call to Steve, Kipper then drove to Cleethorpes.

After Kipper left the office, Billy, Susan, and the lawyers relaxed with a glass of champagne, looking pleased.

“Cheers gentlemen,” said Billy raising his glass. He smiled at Susan, “and lady. Here’s a toast to us owning the rights to all Fossils material.”

They clinked their glasses together. Billy sculled his and announced. "We have a lot of work to do Susan. Please excuse us, gentlemen."

The lawyers left and Susan smiled at Billy. They felt confident in their abilities to propel this absentee group to the top and make a fortune for themselves in the process.

Kipper was almost home and drove the final stretch of the M180 motorway. He thought about what he needed to do before returning to London. He planned to stay in Cleethorpes until the weekend, giving himself plenty of time to sort things out, and hoped his boss wouldn't be angry about the short notice to quit his job.

'What am I going to tell Cosmo?' he thought and shrugged. 'Why am I worrying, there was nothing to tell him. I accepted a job offer in London, that's all there was to it.'

He smiled as he drove along the motorway and listened to Radio One,

A light snow fell onto his windscreen, and he watched the wipers sweeping it away as he listened to the radio and when Consider me Gone played, he smiled and tapped the steering wheel in time to the beat.

The song finished and the excited DJ said, "Okay, lovely listeners. I know you enjoyed that because all our BBC stations have been inundated with calls over the past few days about Fossils. A trumpet fanfare played and the DJ announced. "I have the news you have all been waiting for in front of me. I will read it out after this," and Vulnerable played.

Kipper's heart pounded. He pulled over to the hard shoulder and turned up the radio. Vulnerable finished, and the presenter announced, "Right lovely listeners; the breaking news you have all been waiting for... Fossils are young humanitarians, who are now touring third world countries entertaining the underprivileged, and trying to raise money for the impoverished towns and villages in the regions."

A sound FX played, with people saying, "Aww."

"So there will be no live performances by the band in the foreseeable future."

"Aww."

The airwaves went silent for a few moments and then another FX played of people cheering Hurray! The DJ spoke faster sounding excited.

"Don't despair lovely listeners; there is Hope for all you Fossils fans out there, literally," he said and chuckled before announcing. "The Hope album will soon be released, thanks to those lovely people at Virgin records. The royalties will go to the band's manager to help support them."

Hurray!

"The BBC, wanting to help support the guys with their worthy cause, and tracks from the Hope album will be played on all BBC radio programmes daily. The BBC has already made a sizable donation to the band's manager and will continue to do so."

Hurray! Hurray! Played again; followed by, Cold Cold steel.

Kipper, flabbergasted, stared at the radio and looked at his suit... the BBC's sizable donation. His stomach churned, and he didn't know what to do.

'Shit, what if Lucy or Cosmo heard the radio broadcast or someone tells them about it?' he thought.

His phone rang.

"Hi Kipper, it's Billy, are you home yet?"

“No, not yet. but I’ve just heard the broadcast on the radio and…”

“Yeah, and it will be played on every show, with a slot on BBC television news before the albums released. That’s fantastic isn’t it?” Billy interrupted.

“No,” said Kipper. “Steve told you that they don’t want a record deal.”

“Don’t worry Kipper, they’ll would soon change their minds when the money rolled in. The boys will be overawed,” said Billy.

“No, they won’t, and they are…”

“Listen Kipper,” interrupted Billy. “The reason for my call was to tell you that I negotiated your salary with the top brass. You will be on £200,000 for your first year, plus a percentage on the royalty on CD sales. That’s great news, isn’t it? Oh, and you have been given one of the BBC’s apartments in Mayfair. You will be living in an apartment in the same block as my penthouse. It will be ready in a few weeks, so you can stay at the Hilton until then at our expense. I am sure you won’t mind that.”

“B… But…”

“Yeah, I know, great news, so get back here A.S.A.P. We need to make Fossils the biggest thing to hit Britain since the Beatles… okay later.”

“Billy, Billy,” said Kipper sounding anxious, but he talked to fresh air as Billy had hung up.

Kipper arrived in Cleethorpes, still shaking.

He drove to Lucy’s and gave her the cheque.

“What’s wrong Kipper? You look pale,” said Lucy.

“I’m fine,” said Kipper and smiled.

“It is a long journey and I imagine the lad’s tired,” said Bernard.

“My father and the others wanted you to have this,” said Lucy smiling as she handed Kipper an envelope with 200 crisp £50 notes inside. “They told me to thank you.”

Kipper spent the rest of the day and night packing his belongings. He was in a daze as he planned what to do next. Cosmo rang several times, but Kipper ignored his phone. After a sleepless night, he went to see his boss, who was delighted for him, as was his landlord, after telling them he had accepted a job in London.

At 4:00 pm, he sat in his empty flat. So far, it appeared his luck was holding out and nobody had heard the radio broadcasts. However, he did not want to hang around in Cleethorpes just in case. He was about to call Billy and tell him he was on his way back to London when his phone rang. He looked at the number, sighed, and answered Cosmo.

“Are you still lording it up in London? You didn’t answer your phone and I was worried,” said Cosmo and chuckled. “I thought my favourite DJ had been kidnapped.”

“I’ll come over and see you soon,” said Kipper, sounding flustered.

Thirty minutes later, Kipper walked into the Wellow.

“Welcome back, mate,” said Cosmo who came from behind the bar and they sat at a table.

“How were things in London? Did you sort everything out?” asked Cosmo.

Kipper nodded and said. “Everything’s fine and I gave Lucy the prize money.”

“You look pale Kipper; everything okay?”

Kipper nodded and asked. "Have you been listening to the radio?"

"Nah," said Cosmo, "not since we won the competition, no point... why?"

Kipper shrugged.

"Here, let me get you a brandy, you look terrible. You sound like you have the flu," said Cosmo who got up and went to the Brandy optic.

"I don't have time Cosmo. I have to drive back to London tonight."

Cosmo turned and looked at him. "What?"

Kipper smiled and told him. "The BBC offered me a job, and want me back there as soon as possible."

Cosmo was gobsmacked. "What, you've got a job with the BBC?"

Kipper nodded and looked at the floor.

Cosmo poured two measures of brandy in two glasses and went back to sit with Kipper. He put a glass in front of him.

Kipper felt nervous until Cosmo smiled and said. "Well done Kipper, I know it has always been your dream to be a radio disc jockey. You will be okay driving with a small tot of brandy before you leave; so cheers."

Cosmo sculled his brandy and said. "I will be sad to lose my best DJ and friend, but you earned this opportunity and I am happy for you. I know the old lads will miss you when they get back."

Kipper, taken aback, saw tears well up in Cosmos eyes before he poured himself another brandy.

The warm glow of the brandy had almost worn off as Kipper got on the motorway at Grimsby. Kipper felt relieved as he followed a slow-moving ice gritting truck along a cold foggy motorway. He knew the journey would take time and called Billy and told him he was on his way back. Billy said he would call the Hilton to expect him in the early hours. Kipper didn't mind the long journey ahead because it would give him time to fantasise about his new life of wealth. However, his first priority when he got to London was to change his phone number.

END SAMPLE

Novels by Robert A Webster

Siam Storm:

A stolen holy relic from a secluded Thai Buddhist Monastery sends a combatant monk on a quest to retrieve the sacred item. Three English lads who are having the holiday experience of a lifetime in Thailand, become inadvertently embroiled in the deadly pursuit.

Enjoy the first adventure of Nick, Spock and Stu as they assist in the recovery of the relic and the subsequent voyage of discovery.

Chalice - Siam Storm 2

The discovery of a mysterious corpse leaves law enforcement agencies baffled. This adventure sees the lads join forces with their new friend, the mad monk, Pon, as they once again attempt to recover a holy relic, which has this time stolen for a completely new and sinister reason. The chase takes them into Cambodia, as they thwart plans that could affect the planet and change them into fruit based drinkers.

Bimat - Siam Storm 3

A kidnap and ransom demand lead our hapless heroes into a pursuit through Vietnam. They encounter an old foe, driven by obsession in his revenge driven quest. This time, they face many challenges in both their adventure and their personal circumstance and although they almost lose everything, they never lose hope.

Trilogy:

The three Southeast Asia adventures.

Protector – Siam Storm 4

The adventure continues in, Protector, the fourth book of the Siam Storm Series...

When descendants of Siddhartha Gautama arrive at the Royal Palace in Bangkok; Prime Master Pon assembles a team to discover who is responsible for the murder of the other descendants, along with their age-old protectors.

The fun begins when Spock and Stu join the team, and as usual, they find trouble. Even with Spock and Stu underfoot, the team uncovers evidence of a plot with worldwide implications.

Protector follows the hazardous journey through unfamiliar terrain as the team races the clock to stop further killings of their brethren, only to discover that things are not always as they seem.

Siam Storm – The series

The complete four-part series

Spice

Ben Bakewell is a master baker with a unique gift, making him the grand master of his culinary craft. More commonly known as 'Cake' he meets up with Ravuth, a Cambodian man residing in England and who has spent the majority of his life trying to trace his long lost family.

Jed Culver is a disgraced D.E.A agent whose bitterness for his old employer and lust for revenge lead him along a deadly path, as he also pursues the plant, although for a far more sinister gain.

This thrilling, but yet sometimes hilarious quest, takes you from the glitz and glamour of the fashionable London restaurant scene to the wild, untamed tropical forests surrounding the Cardamom mountains region of Southeast Asia, as the participant's race to discover the whereabouts of a remarkable plant and locate a misplaced family.

Fossils

Enjoy the hilarious antics of an elderly four-piece band as they embark on a whirlwind tour of several countries in Southeast Asia, unaware of their amazing worldwide success. The four musicians are inadvertently united and form a band named Fossils, whose unique sound filled an auditory hiatus lacking for decades in the modern day music industry. Pursued and hounded by ruthless record producers, this unassuming rock band discovers a new, exciting and carefree way of life, which they enjoy to the fullest, or at least what remains of it. Viagra, snuff, and Rock 'n' Roll.

The Gob's - Fossils 2

The Wrinkled Rockers return for their second hilarious action-packed adventure.

With a sensational new album in production; a bird watching tour that goes horribly wrong; a devious duo returns seeking revenge; a flatulent Spook and a perilous rescue attempt in a foreign, but familiar, country.

What is there not to love? A fantastic adventure you need to read before they get too old for this shit.

P.A.T.H

A team of three psychics use their unique talents to provide a link between the mortal world and the celestial. Commissioned by lost souls; they find lost treasures for the troubled spirits, which they give to the mortal beneficiaries. One particular case finds the team caught up in a plot conceived during world war two, which is instigated in the present day. The team has to solve a mystery that threatens to split the delicate fabric joining the two worlds.

Return of the Reich.

NEXT - PATH 2 – Covenant of the Gods

With the fate of humankind resting on their shoulders, the PATH team, along with the mortal Keepers and Guides around the world, are sent on various quests. Each individual test will push them all to their limits as time slowly ticks down towards Armageddon and their destiny.

Ratchet and Stench – Animal Sleuths

Dog Gone Mystery

When Cruft's Best of Breeds Champion mysteriously disappears; the finger of suspicion points at the owner of a rival kennel.

Somerset police find the missing Scottish terrier's dermal tracker but cannot find further evidence of a crime. Having no proof they are unable to do anything and drop any investigations.

The other dogs call in Ratchet and Stench, and even though they uncover clues that suggest a brutal murder, the animal sleuths aren't convinced.

Non-Fiction

Diabetes Type 2 – Help safely lower your blood sugar with the Tree of Life.

This book is not written by Physicians or anyone with PhD's, but by medically trained diabetics who stumbled across pills capsules and powders made from the leaves and seeds of the Moringa tree. Dubbed The Miracle Tree or The Tree of Life. They found it reduced their blood sugar levels. This prompted research into this remarkable tree and its health benefits, which you will find outstanding. The tree grows in many parts of the world and indigenous people have been using its health-giving properties for generations.

Moringa pills, capsules, and powders are now readily available worldwide, This publication will tell you about the research gained and the benefits to diabetics, along with Moringa's other health benefits. It will let you know the current suppliers, and where you can research for yourself this amazing tree. It will also tell you how to grow organically for yourself and a few simple recipes you can use to enjoy the health benefits of Moringa.

Something to Read While Travelling-THAILAND.

Is an informative and entertaining companion to accompany you on your travels, which contains useful information about Thailand, some of which you won't find in travel guidebooks. While comprehensive travel guides will go into more detail on specific areas of Thailand; this publication will only briefly explain about popular tourist hotspots, giving you plenty of time to read and enjoy the Useful Tips. The Thai Language Made Simple: Popular Thai Recipes: Fun Quizzes and Brainteasers: Hilarious Jokes: Short Stories: and the full comedy adventure novel, SIAM STORM – A Thailand Adventure.

Leave your cares and woes at the arrivals section of the airport. Make sure you pack a big smile and this travelling companion in your suitcase. Open your heart and mind, and enjoy your wonderful time in the Land of Smiles.

