

FOSSIIS



VIAGRA, SNUFF & ROCK 'N' ROLL



ROBERT A WEBSTER

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Fossils

«Tektite S.r.l.s.»

Webster R.

Fossils / R. Webster — «Tektime S.r.l.s.»,

Age is just a number and getting old doesn't mean you can't have fun. It just means you know how to get away with it... Viagra, Snuff, and Rock 'n' Roll Fossdyke Retirement Home has seen its fair share of quirky characters, but it's never seen the likes of these four geriatric musicians who form a band called Fossils. Chaos erupts after winning a national competition, when a local DJ who entered their recording into the contest labels Fossils as a vibrant young rock band. Fearing the English press persecuting them and their families when they find out the truth, the four flee England until they can resolve their situation. Follow the madcap adventures of Britain's most irreverently lovable elderly rockers as they trip, stumble, and fall into one situation after another while traveling around Southeast Asia evading adoring fans, journalists, and a ruthless record producer. Viagra, Snuff, and Rock 'n' Roll

Fossils

Written by Robert A Webster

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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.



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-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 her gloss wood casket and heard the faint hum of the conveyor echo in the chapel as a curtain closed and the coffin slowly moved toward the furnace.

Charles's sons, John and Peter, two of the pallbearers, then 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 he fell in love with all those years ago, as Mary said. "We will soon be together my darling, but now is not your time. You still have plenty to live for...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.



ON A WARM SUMMER'S afternoon, a 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 moving into Albert's old room. However, three residents felt excited by 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 see 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 then 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 near to 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 in 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 with having deformed vocal cords, his voice sounded gravelly. 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 found work closer to Cleethorpes. He taught music at a local college, where he stayed until retiring and with their grown-up children now having families of their own and life was idyllic for Charles and Mary. They spent their days either in each other's company or with family members and evenings they spent alone with Charles playing his piano and 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 starts 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 to 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 Fossdyke residential home as soon as Mary passed away and 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 at 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 Mary.

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



ANOTHER KNOCK ON THE door disturbed Charles's thoughts.

"I am not hungry," Charles shouted, sounding emphatic as he 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 and 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 grinned and said. "It's a long story, but I will tell you over supper. Come on, before the ribs get cold or the other old farts scoff them all."

Charles looked at the comical character resembling a pear with spindly legs and, realising he was persistent, got out of his chair.

"Don't worry Charlie, 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 empty seats between two other elderly gentlemen.



-Track Two-



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

A short distance away from the resident's block in another building was the kitchen and communal dining area, where meals were provided three times a day. Another large 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, which now had a Steinway piano in a 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.

Wayne looked confused and then said. "Yes, I have all my 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 a lobster’s 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 felt 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. However, 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 talked 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 anything.

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 as 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, “Maybe I can 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, “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 dilapidated 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,” 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, popular among the female residents of Fossdyke with his Latino appearance and 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, he loved playing 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 1980s, 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-1980s. 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 his 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. His deafness became a burden and he was 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 '60s, 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 three 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 ain't 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 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 Fossdyke?"

Wayne and Elvin groaned. They knew Steve's life story because he had told them many times.

"I'm from Scunthorpe, thirty miles away," said Steve, "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 that she wasn't bald 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 felt gutted and spent the next few years skipping work and spannered." He looked at Charles and said. "In my forties, I realised my life was going nowhere and my dad, even though retired, gave me grief because he heard rumours that the steelworks were about to sack me. 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 my stomach.” 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 sounds 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 no money? I tried to contact Lucy, who I’d had no contact with for over 20 years and 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 looked 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 Fosdyke 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 lengthy conversations with my exasperated daughter, who kept telling me to grow up. I eventually heeded her advice and stayed in England. Lucy and Bernard Fossdyke are successful in their respective fields and bought several investment properties, including a guesthouse in Cleethorpes, which they’d converted into Fossdyke 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 Fossdyke,” 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. “Fossdyke 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 Fossdyke.

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 terrified 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 Fossdyke 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 Fossdyke. 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 while showing me the dining room, 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 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 sounds like Elvin, so Chipper’s it is.”

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, recalling the dreadful noise he’d heard from 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 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, took over telling the story, which happened over a year ago. “Toward the end of my first year at Fosssdyke, 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 soundcheck 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 ‘err ‘ands on ‘err ‘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 boy 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. Pensioned out at thirty-five, I came to Grimsby to look for work on trawlers and met me missus, Anna, and we had three great kids. When they laid me off from the trawlers in the '80s, 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 Fossdyke.

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.

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-Track Three-



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

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

Wayne opened his briefcase, took out pages of handwritten music, and handed them to Charles, who smiled and looked through the pages. He 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 when 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, sung in the wrong tempo, and his gruff voice made the ballad sound like grating sandpaper.

"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, so 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 a drumbeat, and Charles jotted down chords and the beat.

They spent the day rehearsing, adjusting, and tweaking the song and carried on after supper, 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 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 sleeve 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 Fogey’s.”

“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, “or just, the Fossils?”

They thought about the name.

“Although with the ‘The’ added, it sounded like a throwback to the ‘60s,” said Charles, so suggested. “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 because they just discovered that someone invented 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 Fossdyke and their pubic hair, or the lack thereof. The four laughed and joked all evening.

They went back to Fossdyke 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 Fosdyke'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 beach road from Fosdyke. 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 Sugden, 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, Wayne and Elvin nodded and the three walked 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 then plucked a fast tempo piece and grinned.

"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 so 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 fingertips 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 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 bandmates, 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 come. He knew Lucy had a good sense of humour because she had married Bernard the Bonehead.

"Lucy will come 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 signwriter 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 Fossdyke 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 their 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 Fossdyke 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 Fossdyke 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 Fossdyke 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 risked venturing in. A few brave old souls nervously sat down and waited to hear the music, hoping it would be a piano recital. However, they became unnerved when they saw Charles’s piano in the corner behind the four at thier instruments.

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 various 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 living 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 crowd’s reaction.

They continued playing as other people, including Bernard and Lucy, got up to dance with even the Chews joining in.

They finished performing Cry Alone and Charles, seeing people dancing in front of them, didn’t want to up the tempo, so nodded to the others and they 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 because 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 soundcheck and had an afternoon libation.

They 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 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 Fosssdyke 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 Fosssdyke arm in arm.

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

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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