

## Chapter 1

It was a time of celebration. The promotional poster for *Rogers & Clarke Live in Concert!* was right in the very *Sam Goody's* window where Chuck & Lyle frequently looked on in awe at the images of those acts fortunate enough to have had the industry success they so coveted. They had arrived. Our boys, still exuberant from their triumphant performance at *Chez Casablanca*, started writing a batch of *new* songs, including *Hello Miss Liberty*, as the Statue of Liberty appeared in the Chuck Clarke's coach-seat window. It was unusual for Chuck to take the window seat, given his fear of heights, but Lyle needed the aisle space for his keyboard. Despite his phobia, Chuck did, again, what was best for the duo. They sing:

*Hello Miss Liberty*  
*It's good to be back.*  
*How's your huddled masses?*

Some poor bastard had the misfortune of having his seat assignment between them, having the *pleasure* of hearing their songs the whole way home from Athens. And, if that weren't enough, he took it in the ribs a number of times, as the flight attendant repeatedly bumped into Lyle's keyboard.

Behind them sat a CIA agent in drag (as a nun) sent by Jim Harrison to find the map of Ishtar that, in his words, would inflame the Middle East if it ever surfaced. The agent whispers into a microcassette: Note to Jim, I think they've hidden the map somewhere *inside* the Statue of Liberty, up near her *huddled masses*, whatever the hell *they* are.

Chuck & Lyle are anxious to return to New York. With a new album, and with the prospect of some club dates, soon to be set up by their agent Marty Freed, the future's so bright, they gotta wear shades, as the song goes.<sup>1</sup> Who knows, Lyle wonders, maybe they'll even win a *Grammy* someday. Mixing high altitudes with bourbon & beer and a shot of success can produce a euphoric tonic.

While *they* had anticipated a huge welcome<sup>2</sup> at JFK, the *only* ones who had come to meet them were the Clarkes, Marty Freed, a few fans (believe it, or not!), and a couple of CIA agents poorly posing as Hare Krishnas.

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<sup>1</sup>By the band *Timbuk 3*, *Gotta Wear Shades*, 1986 — remember that one?

<sup>2</sup>Chuck and Lyle had become, as Clint Eastwood said, legends in their own minds. Thanks, Clint; it *made our day*.

Hawk<sup>3</sup> convincing himself the airport kept it quiet for *security reasons*, reassured Lyle, Hey, remember when the *Beatles* landed at La Guardia?

Lyle, who was, at that time, a teenager in Ponder Texas, of course, didn't remember, but responded, No, but I'll bet it was like the time Tex Ritter flew into Dallas!

The Hawk had to think about that one for a second, then replied, Close. . . Don't you see? Airport Security *had* to keep it quiet, Lyle. Think of the *pandemonium* if all the *fans* knew we were here!

So after some hugs, some autographs, and even a couple *dirham* (Moroccan currency) from Lyle's pocket given to the Krishnas (as if they could *spend* it), the Clarkes brought Chuck and Lyle home to have dinner and celebrate the boys' return.

Later, at dinner, Chuck's mom tells him how excited she is that he can now give up this songwriting-thing, take a job at his uncle Augie's accounting firm, (even Marty thought he had a good head for figures) and find a nice girl. Whatever happened to Carol, Charles? She envisions how lovely holidays would be with children running about, and breaks into song,<sup>4</sup> *Rogers & Clarke, why don't you settle down, Ishtar ain't your kind of town* . . . (Now you know where Chuck gets his talent.) The family's old friend Rabbi Pierce rings the doorbell and joins them. Charles, *you* remember Rabbi Pierce? Mother Clarke asks.

During this little family discussion, Lyle, feeling left-out, sulks his way into a daydream. Unlike Chuck, he'd returned to no one. With the tune of *Hot Fudge Love* providing the soundtrack for his thoughts, Lyle sees himself again with Willa. She's working in the garden, and he's getting home from a hard day at the gas-station pumping gas, fixing flats. Being a mechanic gave Lyle a lot of time to crank out songs. He'd finish them at home on his \$300 Casio, while Willa pretended not to notice. He never had come to grips with her disdain for his music; he just pretended to himself, that she *liked* his songs.

And, as Lyle pounded out one of his tunes-in-the-works, Willa, who just couldn't take it anymore, cried out, Lyle! Lyle! . . . (sound transforms into Mrs. Rogers' voice) . . . Lyle! Lyle! Your soup's getting cold, dear.

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<sup>3</sup>Chuck's nickname *The Hawk*

<sup>4</sup>To the tune of Dave Loggins *Please Come to Boston*

Still reeling from the dream, Lyle says to Chuck, Maybe your mama's right, Chuck. Our records aren't sellin' all that well. Maybe people don't like 'em. I guess Willa was right maybe we *should* call it quits . . . (keeps rambling)

LYLE! , pleads the Hawk, Our songs are as good as *anything* that *Simon & Garfunkel* ever wrote. We're just *misunderstood*, like all the great artists. . . You know, like Van Gogh and David Lee Roth. Someday, the public will understand the genius of *Rogers & Clarke*, you'll see. . . Hey, this is the *Hawk* talkin' here!

It worked. Chuck had returned Lyle's favor from the time *he* had contemplated *the end*, on the ledge of his apartment, and Lyle's words of *encouragement*<sup>5</sup> pulled him out of his depression. Again, the Hawk's highflying ego would keep Rogers & Clarke together.

Wednesday morning, 3 A.M. <sup>6</sup> : Chuck is roused by the sound of his angry old neighbor Mrs. Fushman's banging on the wall. TURN THAT AWFUL SHIT DOWN!! DO YOU TWO SCHLEMIELS KNOW WHAT TIME IT IS?? , she exploded.

This woman absolutely loathed Chuck, and had no time for Lyle, either. Though Chuck had always gone out of his way to be nice to her, it had been to no avail.

Lyle, still buzzing from Chuck's pep-talk last night at the Rogers' home in Queens, awoke with a *Bad to the Bone* kind of song banging around in his head, and wanted to get an early start.

(da-Da da-Dum) *Shirra or Willa*  
(da-Da da-Dum) *Im so confused*  
(da-Da da-Dum) *One's so innocent*  
(da-Da da-Dum) *And the other slightly used.*

(BAM! BAM! BAM!) Chuck: Lyle, keep it down, okay? What time is it? Je

Sorry, Chuck, . . . guess I was a little anxious.

Well, go back to sleep, we'll work on it in the morning. By the way. . . it's not *bad*.

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<sup>5</sup>From the movie *Ishtar* Lyle: Most guys would be *ashamed* to be like you. But, you just say The hell with it! You'd rather have nothin' than settle for less.

<sup>6</sup> Speaking of Simon & Garfunkel (S & G album title)!

Hours later, bacon sizzles in the pan, and the aroma fills Chuck's small apartment. Lyle, who had just returned from the market, asks, "Chuck, how 'bout some breakfast?"

"No, no, not for me," a groggy Chuck refuses. Lyle then remembering Chuck is Jewish, says, "Oh, I see, . . . it's because of your faith, right?"

Chuck shrugs it off, "No, no *nitrates*. Very carcinogenic." Chuck, in a flash of inspiration, says, "Hey! That might work! Listen to this:"

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Hawk: *I'm so bad for you baby,  
I'm like a Bacon Triple Cheese  
Take a bite of the good life*  
(Lyle contributes a line)

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Lyle: *You know you want it, so eat me.*

What'd ya think, Lyle?

After taking a big slurp of coffee, Lyle adds,

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Hawk: *Yeah, your love is so deadly  
It's colder than a taste-freeze  
and sweeter than an Osmonds medley.*

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Lyle: *I'll take seconds, please.*

They congratulate each other on another fine job, and toast their success. Lyle holds up his mug of black coffee, and Chuck, his bottle of *Evian*.

"We gotta call Marty," says Chuck. "Last night he said he had some dates for us."  
(phones)

Hello, Marty? Chuck Clarke. . . . yeah, it feels good to be back. . . . yeah. . . . hey Marty, about those club dates you mentioned. . . . uh-huh. . . . what? . . . Honduras? Aw, Marty. . . . Scranton Pennsylvania? . . . Fort Gay West Virginia?! Where the hell is that?!<sup>7</sup>. . . You've gotta be kidding! . . . What about a gig in *The Village*? . . . See, we're working on some new material for the next album, and we wanted to try it out to a New York audience; you know, *they're hip enough to get our material*. . . . ok, I'll call you. (click)

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<sup>7</sup> You don't want to know, Chuck. Ok, it's a place on the Kentucky border and the nearest bar is 30 miles away. The owner says he can't figure out why all the other bars mysteriously burned to the ground. When you go there, just ask for the waitress called "Skin It Back." (I am not making any of this up—as Dave Barry says.)

Lyle: What d he say?

Chuck: Marty thinks we should hit the road again.

Lyle: Oh, no.

Chuck (again, convincing himself): He probably wants us to *refine* the new material in some backwater dump before we do the New York clubs.

Chuck tries to reassure Lyle, who would soon, again, choose to follow Chuck s lead.

But, what about our *current* album? We re *ready* to play those songs in New York, aren t we Chuck? asked Lyle.

The Hawk, again, skillfully handles Lyle s query, I think Marty has a pretty clever strategy, Lyle. He knows New York *wants us bad*. He s just *teasing* them holding out for more money!

Wow! , exclaimed Lyle, Is *that* ever brilliant or what?

Yeah, some marketing! chuckles The Hawk, actually *believing* it, himself.

But, did he say anything about *the map*? , questions Lyle.

Sh-sh! Keep your voice down, Lyle. cautions Chuck. (very softly) I think Marty wants us to get outta town, you know, to throw the CIA off the trail. , Chuck surmises.

Oh, . . . good idea. agrees Lyle, who asks, But do you think it s *safe* with . . .

Chuck interrupts, Lyle! Be quiet! You never know who s listening! We promised we d be *very* careful when we talked about the M-A-P,

. . . as if Harrison couldn t spell.

For once, he was right. The F# key, two octaves above middle C on Chuck s piano had a very tiny transmitter embedded within it. Jim had chose F# because he knew Chuck preferred to play in C, rarely playing that note. But Harrison miscalculated. Chuck would often *flub* when reaching for the G above, inadvertently *hitting the F#*, So when Chuck sat down at the keys that morning to write, he soon stumbled onto that key, sending a sonic surge into Harrison s headset. As usual, Harrison had forgotten

the *human* factor, and now had a ringing ear to go with his ailing foot, stepped on by Lyle's blind camel in the desert. How ironic it was that a man, who had cleverly outwitted KGB assassins and their bullets, could be confounded by a couple of hacks. While he had heard everything, he heard *nothing*.

Shit! Those idiots almost told us the map's location! Damn it! exploded Harrison. Put a tail on them. I WANT THAT MAP! he ordered.