

Chapter 2

It was surprising that no-one from the CIA even thought that the map could be with Marty Freed. How obvious! The boys had sent the map to Marty, not via some undercover courier, but through the men and women in blue from the U.S. Postal Service. The map was tucked into a plain manila folder in an old file cabinet stuck behind old promo pictures of acts that Marty used to manage. There were pictures of Tony Bennett, Anthony Newley, and Brad Butler (?). In the Forties and Fifties, he had booked them in little clubs, in and around Manhattan, and when bigger opportunities came their way, they all said goodbye to Marty. But he understood. He did all he could; then, when they were ready, he'd make a call to friends at Phillip Morris. Each of them *still* send him a card for the holidays.

Then, why was this man who had handled greatness willing to manage Rogers & Clarke? Frankly, his roster had dwindled. What had once been a thriving talent agency, was now an office where the phones didn't ring, the door didn't swing back and forth, and typewriter keys weren't snapping out contracts. The air wasn't as smoky, nor was the coffee pot constantly fueling a frenetic staff tripping over themselves to cater to the likes of Sinatra wannabees.

It wasn't Marty's fault. Times had changed. The 1970s weren't very kind to singers whose repertoire included *That's Amore*, *Strangers in the Night*, or *Little Darlin'*. And, Marty wasn't getting any younger, either. He *hated* the new acts. It sure wasn't like the good old days—a young agent, in his prime, booking crooners for the World War II generation. Being an agent was all he ever knew, and he was good at it. So, when he first heard Chuck and Lyle at *The Song Mart*, he knew they were no Steve & Edie. But he could tell that what they lacked in talent, they made up for with sheer chutzpa. Marty thought to himself, They might be *bad*, but hell, they're *good enough* to sing schmaltz to those over-the-hill, tin-ear audiences in *my* rooms. Besides, he kind of felt sorry for them. That first night, as he said to them, You're old, you're white, you've got no schtick, he knew they, too, were left behind as the merciless music business relentlessly marched onward.

Rogers & Clarke were the best thing that happened to Marty in a long time. They had an album which, though it wasn't selling well, it didn't matter. He put together a ridiculously lopsided deal with Jim Harrison, that forced the CIA to eat all the costs of recording, distribution, and even of paying modest stipends to Chuck, Lyle, and himself. He also found himself wearing a new hat. He was now in charge of Artists & Repertoire for *Blind Camel Records*. This was the label that Chuck & Lyle had set up for their debut album. Marty was going to ride that camel as long as he could. But what could he do with *Rogers & Clarke*? He couldn't make them stars—he knew that. Marty figured

he would do with them what he originally had planned: stick them in airport lounges and backwater holes, where actual talent was not a prerequisite for acts. All they had to do was show up, sing some old favorites for the Geritol Generation, smile a lot, tell some corn-ball jokes, and get em to buy lots of booze. *They* could do that--the only catch being the boys' tendency to want to throw in their *own* material.

So, on Thursday morning, Chuck and Lyle loaded a stack of *Rogers & Clarke* albums, and their bags, into Lyle's 1982 Chevy station wagon, and set off for the Holiday Inn in Scranton, Pennsylvania. Marty set them up for four nights in the hotel's lounge. The hotel's agent admonished Marty: whoever played the room *had* to know *Shake Your Booty*. Marty, being unfamiliar with the *K.C. and the Sunshine Band* hit, had thought the agent said *Sheik Yurbuti*. He explained that the act had just returned from the Middle Eastern leg of a World Tour to promote their album, and were familiar with a lot of prominent people in Ishtar-- even Emir Yousef, so he was sure they probably knew the Sheik, too.

The two hours it took to get from New York to Scranton, just flew by, as an enthused Chuck and Lyle talked about how they were going to introduce themselves to the rest of America, get airplay for *Dangerous Business*, and take the entertainment business by storm.

Chuck: When we get to the hotel, let *me* do the talking, Lyle. I'm going to ask the check-in clerk for *pink sheets*.

Why?, asked a baffled Lyle.

That means that it's ok for the desk to send groupies to our room. Chuck revealed. I read it in a *Rolling Stone* interview with Rick James.

Lyle: Oh, the *Superfreak* guy?

Chuck: Yeah. *Nobody* knows more about getting chicks than Rick James.

I don't know, Chuck; there's only *one* girl for me-- well, maybe *two*. swears Lyle.

Within minutes of getting onto I-380, Lyle saw the Holiday Inn sign from a distance, and stirred a dozing Chuck, There it is! Lyle pulled into the parking lot, and moments later, the boys entered the lobby through the revolving door. Of course, Lyle had a bit of a hard time, having trouble getting his suitcases through.

Hawk rolled his eyes as he muttered, Ponder Texas, it figures. Chuck puts on his New

York attitude as he approaches the front desk, clears his throat and rings the service bell. . . (waits). . .

Finally, a clerk comes out of the office eating a turkey drumstick, and asks, *before* swallowing his mouthful, Can I help you gentlemen?

Chuck gives Lyle a remember what I said look, then replies, Yeah, hello, I m Chuck Clarke, and this is my partner Lyle Rogers. . . (waits for clerk to make a fuss, like, Oh! *The Rogers & Clarke?* Well, right this way. . .). . .

And? , replies the clerk (as if to say who the hell *are* you, anyway?).

Chuck awkwardly resumes his pitch to impress the man, We re the featured performers this weekend. We just got back from the Middle East, recorded a live album, and . . .

The desk clerk interrupts (and yawns), Room 102, (lightly slams keys on desk) meals at half price, you ll get paid Sunday night. Showtime 9:00pm-- don t be late!, dinner set until 10. Any questions?

While The Hawk was stunned by the desk clerk s curt manners, he did manage to ask his *Rick James question*, Yeah, could we have *pink sheets*?

Pink sheets? chuckled the clerk. And would *you two* like the honeymoon suite, as well? With that, he abruptly did an about-face and vanished into the back-office, laughing all the way.

An insulted Chuck grumbles, I should ve known, Lyle. These stupid rednecks here they don t understand *anything!*

Lyle knew that Chuck s *New York-ness* could be a little abrasive for folks like these. They weren t too fond of New Yorkers in Ponder, either. But, to his credit, he stood by strong and silent, seeing, beyond Chuck s bravado, a heart as big as Texas.

Meanwhile, in another part of the hotel, Senator James Danforth Quayle, from the great state of Indiana, and wife Marilyn are checking into their room. They had been invited to visit with Pennsylvania Senator Arlen Specter and others in New York City to discuss the 88 Presidential Election and Republican Party strategy. On their way back to Indiana, they decided to take a scenic drive through the Pocono Mountains, and stopped in Scranton to spend the night. Searching for stationery in the Holiday Inn Guest Folder on the room s desk, Dan leafed through several items, including the room-

service menu, regional attractions, the cable channel listings, and the promo picture of *Rogers & Clarke*. Hey! Are *these* guys here? (confusing them with *Rodgers & Hart*) Wow! I love their music! a jubilant Quayle exclaims. (sings) *Because the La-dy is a Tramp*. . .

Marilyn cuts in: Dan, Richard Rodgers has been *dead* for almost ten years. You re confused (*again*, she thought).

You really have to forgive Dan. His closest brush with the classics was partying to the *Doors*, as a junior at DePauw in 1967.

Well, it says here that they (reads) . . . just got back from the Middle Eastern leg of their World Tour, and have a new album. Let s go down to the lounge tonight and see them!

Chuck and Lyle had planned to perform selections from their album, including: *Hello Ishtar*, *Hot Fudge Love*, and *Dangerous Business*. They would fill the rest of the time with old favorites, like *That s Amore*, *Feelings*, and *What Kind of Fool Am I*. Even a *new* song, or two, might find its way into the show, too. However, they weren t suited at all for the booking. The room was *disco*. But, Marty s failure to understand that they needed to know *Shake Your Booty*, not *Sheik Yurbuti*, for this crowd, would set up their good fortune. From their vantage point, *Rogers & Clarke* would, again, have to adapt at least through Sunday.

Neither Chuck, nor Lyle had any love for the whims of the modern music market. In fact, neither had listened to the radio much since they were teens. Chuck, at 42, and Lyle, at 40, cut their teeth on the songs of Sinatra, Johnny Mathis, and all those serenaders that Marty had booked in his heyday. By the time the Beatles came along, our boys tastes in music were pretty much established. They didn t take to the rock & roll of the era, identifying, rather, with the styles of Cole Porter, and the Gershwins. Lyle Rogers and Chuck Clarke, had lived in different worlds for almost 40 years Chuck, from the streets of New York, the cultural, financial, and commercial center of the world, the home of Broadway, the Metropolitan Opera, and the New York Philharmonic, and Lyle, from the prairies of Ponder, a proud region, sharing in the rich Texas heritage, . Yet, together, this unlikely duo had a remarkable musical affinity.

Chuck went down to check out the lounge early, to become familiar with the stage, dance floor, and lighting. After a quick inspection of the stage, he called Lyle right away, Lyle, bring down your portable. There s *no* piano!. . . Yeah, I know its a little strange. . . Ok, bye.

Chuck walked over to the bar, and sat down.
What'll it be? asked the bartender.

Gimme a bourbon and water, straight-up. Chuck answered, and then introduced himself, Hi, I'm Chuck Clarke, of *Rogers & Clarke*; we're performing here through Sunday.

Nice to meet you, Chuck. I'm Kevin, and I can't wait to hear you guys! replied the bartender, whose handsome youthful appearance called into question if he, himself, was of legal age.

Chuck leaned into the bar, a little closer to Kevin, and asked with care, So, . . . Kev, . . . what kind of music do the people like here?

Kevin, who had been the lounge's head bartender for about 13 months, was quick to offer his expert point of view: Oh, they *really* like to dance. Just do the stuff that's on the dance charts. . . you know, . . . Prince, Whitney Houston, and . . . oh! . . . don't forget to play *Shake Your Booty*. We have, like, this special *club dance* we do to it, and, you know, like, *all* the DJs play it.

Chuck looked like he was up the proverbial creek without a paddle. Damn it! Damn that Marty! he thought to himself.

Just then, Lyle showed up with his Casio tucked under his arm. Chuck, show me the house's sound system so I can plug it in for a soundcheck. requested Lyle.

Wait a minute, Lyle we got a problem. warned Chuck. This club is a *disco*, Lyle a damn disco!

What're we gonna do? We don't *know* any disco! lamented Lyle.

Wait a minute. Chuck pauses. Did you bring that drum machine with us?

Yeah, but. . . ? asks a still frantic Lyle.

Ok, don't worry, Lyle. Here's what we're gonna do. We'll just play our regular songs, *but*, . . . we'll just put a steady 4/4 120 beats per minute beat to them. We'll *turn them into disco!*

Hey, that might just work! adds Lyle, but then retreats, But, the songs *they* want are

nothing like the originals and classics we play.

That's not really true, assures Chuck. Do you remember that version of *Beethoven's 5th* that somebody recently put to disco?

Yeah, it kind of sucks.

Yes, but it *sold*, Lyle. These people like it! And if we do it to our classics, they'll like us too, and we'll *get through* this damn weekend and get back to New York!

Chuck had, once again, sold Lyle, and *himself* in the process. They had no need to worry from that moment on.

The hour approached nine, as our boys made their way through tables and chairs toward the small stage in the corner of the room. The lounge and restaurant were connected; a group of diners were feasting on a sumptuous Oriental buffet, as another group of party people enjoyed the remaining minutes of happy hour.

Lyle lightly tapped out the chords to *Dangerous Business*, their scheduled opener, as Chuck softly cleared his throat and nervously paced the tiny stage.

Kevin moved to the far side of the bar at *exactly* 9:00, and dimmed the house lights, while fading-in a set of red and blue stage lights. He also picked up the house mike behind the bar, and softly announced, Ladies and Gentlemen, appearing here in Scranton for the first time, please welcome *Rogers and Clarke*.

Like a paratrooper just before the jump, Chuck said, Here we go, and as Lyle began the song's intro, Chuck announced, Thank you, Scranton! It's good to be here. We just returned from the Middle Eastern leg of our World Tour to promote our new album, which we will be featuring tonight, so sit back and enjoy the show! They begin to sing:

*Tellin' the truth can be dangerous business.
Honest and popular don't go hand in hand.
If you admit that you can play the accordion,
No one will hire you in a rock & roll band. . .*

Having a second plate of pepper-steak over fried rice, Dan Quayle sits seven tables from the stage, enjoying the opening number almost as much as the food. Marilyn savors her wonton soup, oblivious to her husband and that awful music.

Dan can hardly contain himself, Marilyn! These guys are *fantastic*! I *knew* they'd be

good.

Seemingly, the rest of the crowd didn't share Quayle's fondness for Chuck and Lyle. But, unlike the New York crowds, they didn't boo. They just sent notes up to the stage.

It wasn't so much the boys' apparent lack of talent, it was the *material* they were playing. Marty was right. He always told them, Fellas, sing songs people *know*. That way, if they don't like you, they'll still have something to applaud.

So as the first song ended, and no applause followed, except for that of a lone clapper seven tables back from the stage, Chuck was stunned. The ten seconds of silence seemed more like ten minutes.

Lyle unfolded and read one of the audience's notes: *Play Shake Your Booty.*

Lyle responded, *We'll get to that one soon, right after the dinner set. But for now, let's feature the talented Chuck Clarke doing his rendition of the Frank Sinatra hit Strangers in the Night.*

I love this one! Could we dance, Marilyn? Dan proposed.

Instantly, the mood of the room changed. Couples gazed into each other's eyes, as Chuck's shoo-by-doo'd them into an almost trance-like state. That was it. They had hit a nerve with the dinner crowd. All they had to do was keep it up.

Dan and Marilyn continued to dance as the duo segued into *Something Stupid*, another Sinatra hit (which lives up to its name when it's performed by *Rogers & Clarke*). Senator Dan was having such a good time. He was on his third sloe gin fizz.

Honey, these guys would be *perfect* for next month's party for Vice President and Mrs. Bush—don't you think?

Marilyn was a bit hesitant. Was it the *booze* talking here? , she wondered. She had become leery of Dan's choices for entertainment. After all, wasn't it *he* who booked *Hurricane Smith*¹ for their wedding reception? What the hell was he thinking, anyway? , she thought.

While the time may have *stood still* for some in that crowd, the clock eventually struck ten, putting an end to the *serenade of schlock* that was the dinner set. Chuck

¹*Oh Babe, What Would You Say?*-- from the great Hurricane Smith, 1973. Remember?

and Lyle were feeling confident. Now they could play the dance set. They were aware of the disco they would be expected to perform, and had their plan. It was all under control, as the waitress handed Chuck a note.

Oh my goodness, Lyle! There s a *Senator* in the audience, and he loves our show!

As they look for him in the crowd, they spot Senator Quayle waving them to his table.

Chuck, he wants us to join him! exclaimed Lyle.

For the next fifteen minutes, It was break time for Chuck and Lyle, who stepped down from the stage, and made their way to the Quayle s table.

Dan stood, patiently waiting for our boys to get through the six tables en route to his. Moreover, they were delayed by several of the club s patrons who had requests.

When they finally got to Dan and Marilyn s table, Dan extended his hand, first to Chuck, and said, Hi fellas, Dan Quayle, U.S. Senator from Indiana, how are ya? This is my wife Marilyn. What are you drinking? Waitress? (signals her to come over) Guys, that was one hell of a set no, no, I mean it. You guys are terrific. *Aren t* they, Marilyn?

Chuck graciously accepts Senator Quayle s (more than) kind words, Thank you very much, Senator, . . . (Chuck nods). . . Mrs. Quayle.

The waitress arrives. Dan points at Lyle, and Lyle takes the cue, Just a beer, please.

Chuck orders his usual, Bourbon and water, straight up. Thanks.

Dan gets to his point, Guys, let me tell you straight. Next month, Marilyn and I are giving a party at our home in Indianapolis in honor of Vice President Bush, who will be visiting Indianapolis to dedicate something or other, and play golf with Bob Hope, Gerry Ford, and myself. We would *love* to have you entertain. Could you do it?

Chuck and Lyle looked at each other, almost in shock. This was a chance to have an audience with, it seemed quite likely at the time, the future President of the United States! Who knows maybe they would even be invited to the White House!

Wouldn t Mom and Dad be proud? Chuck thought.

I ll bet that would show Willa. Lyle imagined.

Senator Quayle, Mrs. Quayle, It would be an honor to perform for you and the Vice

President, we accept! volunteered Lyle.

Here's our agent Marty Freed's number. an elated Chuck said as he handed Dan the business card.

On that triumphant note, our boys shook hands with the Senator and his wife, and bade them a good night. The break was over, and the dinner/happy hour crowd exchanged places with a dance crowd.

Chuck and Lyle should have been sweating it. But, though they were ill-prepared for the dance set, you wouldn't have known it; they were riding high, and rightly so. They were to give a command performance for the future President and Vice President of the United States.

Can you *believe this*, Lyle? asked an astounded Chuck. That ain't poverty, baby!

Lyle: Hey! Let's *do* that one!

Lyle, was referring to the little ditty they wrote in the Sahara, while crawling in the heat of the desert sun, searching for an oasis, just before their luck was about to change for the better. *Rogers & Clarke*, and *Bush & Quayle*, would soon show all that the *prize* does not *always* go to the swiftest, nor mightiest contender.

Throughout the intermission the room had been assaulted with the sounds of an obscure dance music mix that droned, *thump-thump-thump-thump-thump-peasoup-peasoup-peasoup-pea-thump-thump*. . .Chuck's voice, then, came as a welcome change.

Ladies and gentlemen, before we begin the set, let me introduce a couple of *dear friends* (truly, Chuck was meant for Vegas, don't you think?) Senator Dan Quayle and his wife Marilyn, visiting the area tonight, from the state of Indiana. Stand up please.

Let's give 'em a warm Scranton Pennsylvania welcome! chimed-in Lyle.

With the honors out of the way, the boys got down to gettin' down.

Ok, Lyle. Do you know the chords to *Shake Your Booty*?

Yeah, I think it just *vamps a Cminor 7 to F thing*, over and over to the chorus.

Again, Lyle came through on the technical end. While Chuck may have been, by his nature, the *artist*, Lyle was like the *scientist* of the pair.

Chuck: OK, I'll just make up some words. These schmucks won't know the difference. KICK IT!

Lyle starts the drum machine, and vamps the chords. Once the groove is established, Chuck begins:

(Sings, to the tune of *Shake Your Booty*)

*Oh, there's a guy in Ishtar who's very rich yeah.
He has quite a harem full of chicks.
Aw, Sheik Sheik Sheik Sheik, Sheik, Sheik.
Sheik Yurbuti Sheik Yurbuti . . .*

The Hawk was right they even *loved* it!. And, the rest of their stay in Scranton would be as inconsequential as that song. However, the chance meeting with the Quayles *would* prove eventful.