

## CHAPTER 2

I would never forget my roots and my life growing up in Elway. I joined the Army one month after graduating from high school. My friend and fellow graduate Carl Tomlin learned about a new plan the Army was offering which guaranteed the school of your choice if you enlisted. I wanted to go to college and study journalism but didn't have the necessary funds so this Army thing sounded like the way to get more education and get paid too. \$97 a month wasn't much better than my first job at Elway Drug soda fountain but it had benefits.

The third week in basic training I received a visit from a trainee in Platoon Four Barracks. He informed me that my friend Carl had decided he'd had enough of the Army life and was getting ready to head back to Elway. So I left my Barracks Three to check on my friend.

"What's eating ya Carl?" I asked as I walked up to his bunk. He was getting his few little personal belongings together and had a distant look in his eye as he turned to see me.

"I've had it here. This is not what I expected," Carl said with a matter of factness in his voice."

"Carl, you know if you leave you'll be charged with AWOL and spend time in the stockade?"

"Yeah Carl that's right," the other guys in his barracks were helping me all they could to talk Carl into staying.

About an hour or so later, we finally convinced him that leaving Fort Jackson basic training was not a good idea. That settled him down for another three weeks

"Hey Scott!" I heard coming from the back door of the barrack, "You gotta come talk to Tomlin. He's packing to cut out for home again."

So here we go from my barracks to the one next door to talk to Carl once more. We only had a couple of weeks of basic left and we would get a week's leave before reporting to our guaranteed schooling. I would be going to Fort Slocum, New York and Carl was headed for signal school in Fort Monmouth, N.J.

"Carl, you ready to graduate from basic in a couple of weeks and go home on leave?"

"No, I'm ready to go home right now for good."

"You know that won't happen. The MP's will pick you up and bring you back here to the stockade, Right?"

It only took 30 minutes to convince him this time and here's the irony, Carl stayed in the Army over 20 years and retired a master sergeant. I, on the other hand, gave them three years and cut out. During my last week I had to visit the Recruiting Officer for a pep talk on why I should reenlist.

"You ready to reup Scott?" he asked

"You don't take one-arm men do you."

"You've got two good arms Specialist."

"I know but you'll have to pull one off to keep me."

"Get out of here Greg, and hey, good luck on your career."

After basic training, Carl and I rode the bus home to Elway for our leave time. It was good to see Elway again and visit some of our friends. Our almost-no-hair-left GI haircuts the first week at Fort Jackson had gown out to a butch cut.

It was fun visiting one of my favorite teachers Miss Maggie Marlo and her English class. I wore my uniform and was feeling a whole lot of importance. I joined the National Guard while in high school and had a stripe on my sleeve already.

I spent the entire time in her first period class telling them about the Army, basic training, and being a guidance counselor for Carl. They all knew Carl too but they were more interested in where I was heading for my schooling, New York City.

"Fort Slocum's journalism and broadcast school is located in the Long Island Sound on David Island. It's a small island and the only way there is by ferry or chopper or if you're a really good swimmer. The school is in ivy covered red brick buildings and it has a college atmosphere. They teach creative writing, photography, and radio/TV broadcasting." I was giving a speech about a place I had only read about in the Army brochure that enticed me to enlist for three years. I had never been to New York City and was about to see it for the first time. Having the opportunity to talk about New York made me even more anxious to get there.

The week leave was soon over and I was on the dog again, riding the Greyhound bus from Georgia to New York. It seemed to take forever on what was supposed to be a non-stop express bus. It turned out to be a no-town-passed-up trip.

At last we arrived on a New Jersey hilltop to get my first glimpse of the nation's largest city, the Big Apple, New York, New York. It didn't

look that big from afar but as the bus snaked through the maze of city streets toward the downtown bus terminal you realize this place is huge. There were very few personal vehicles, mostly taxis, city busses, and trucks. Some people live all their lives in this city and never learn to drive a car. Being from the red hills and wide open spaces of North Georgia that was hard to comprehend.

Another bus trip from the city to New Rochelle was just 19 miles and once there, I obtained directions from the bus station to the dock for a boat ride to the school on David Island. There were a lot of firsts for me that day, including riding a ferry boat that carried passengers and cars. Altogether about a hundred service men and women like myself would be arriving about the same time for the next school session.

I went to the bow of the biggest boat I'd ever been on and watched the ripples made from cutting through salt water. My mind flashed back to the rippling waters of the branch behind my house in Elway as a child. The ferry slowed down by reversing the propeller screws and made a smooth entrance. The passengers debarked first, then the cars. The 15 to 20 minute cruise was enjoyable the first time but became old shoe after using it once or twice a week to get to Times Square and take in some weekend sights and activities with the girls we met.

The military has some of the best schooling in the country. In basic training the instructor would tell you first what he was going to teach. Next he would teach and finally tell you what he just taught you. This was a triple whammy system to instruct you three times in one session. It was different at Slocum. The classes were like attending college. The instructor stood before the hundred or so students and lectured. You better take notes and get it or else ship out for advance infantry training. We made sure we got it. The incentive to succeed was way greater than the dreaded alternative. To put it more bluntly, nobody in that class wanted to be a rifle, artillery, or tank expert.

So we all made it to graduation day, received our certificates of completion, and were given our permanent duty assignments. The student with the highest grade was rewarded with his choice of assignment. Most of the students in my class went to Korea, ten went to Europe, and two for the Army Pictorial Center in New York City. The head of the class picked APC, and yours truly got the other APC assignment. How lucky can one dogface trooper be? I got the same choice assignment as the head of the class. Life is good and that night back in the dorm, one of the students, a sergeant, began trying to entice me to swap assignments. He had Korea and tried his best to convince me

a troop ship was like a pleasure cruise with a swimming pool, and all types of games to play on board. I led him on until lights out thinking he was convincing me to trade assignments.

Two days later I was at APC ready for my assignment which turned out to be ultra boring duty as an assistant script proof reader for training films. But hey! I was still in the big city and I drew per diem to live like a civilian. APC had no barracks only the studios, sound stages, and offices on Long Island. We had to pay for housing with the per diem.

After settling in for a few weeks, I asked for a week's leave and rode the dog back to Elway. I'm thinking each trip is taking longer than before on the Greyhound.

Imagine leaving the greatest city in the world that breathes heavy and never sleeps to return to lazy little Elway where the sidewalks are rolled up each night at nine? It was good seeing my folks and my long time friends, but I was more than ready to ride the dog again and this time I had my tenor sax with me to earn some extra money back in the Big Apple. Even with per diem it was hard to make it on the Army pay.

On this trip we had a two hour delay in Raleigh and I went across the street where there were a lot of people mulling around going from one store to the other. I opened the case, took out the silver tenor and put it together. I left the case open with a dollar bill inside and started playing. In no time I had a crowd and they began dropping bills, mostly dollars in the case and this went on for almost two hours till it was time to reboard the bus for the rest of trip. It didn't hurt that I was wearing my uniform while playing my horn. Plus, Greyhound gives a discount when you wear it. While counting the nice people's tips, the two-hour layover had earned me more than enough for the round trip, One lady emptied her purse of all loose change and it was over five dollars. Altogether I earned about half as much money in two hours as I did for a whole month in the Army.

Back in my tiny New York apartment, which was so small you had to go in the hall to change your mind, I Finally got all the extra stuff I brought with me up to the apartment. It was four flights up with no elevator so my basic training at Jackson came in handy climbing stairs especially when your arms were full. The walls were paper thin and you could hear everything that was said in the next apartment. Lucky for me there was an old lady on one side that had a hearing aid but never wore it. The other side was used by a wife cheater who only occupied the apartment every Wednesday from 4 to 6 in the afternoon. His partner was also married to someone else so the rest of the week the place was

empty. That was good because I could practice with the saxophone all the time including Wednesdays. The lovers in 4-D weren't bothered by my sax playing. It probably added to the heated atmosphere of their third rate romance. When I knew they were over there I gave them that low register slow sexy sound only a tenor sax can produce. John Coltrane's style of playing was my favorite. The first Wednesday back in the pad, I found an envelope stuck on my door knob with a ten dollar tip when I went out. "Who can knock New York City?" I thought. This place is the best there is.

I stayed up late the next Sunday making plans where to go and find a place to play the sax. I had practiced every night for three weeks. I also did some cleaning on the old Selma. It was in perfect condition and a jewel to play.

Getting in from work at APC early on Monday afternoon, I grabbed my mail from the box at the entrance foyer and ran up the steps two at a time. Thirty minutes later I was back on the stairs with my horn in hand. The bus stopped only 50 feet from my building front door and that was a big plus but today I was going to check with a club a couple of blocks from my pad. It would be really convenient if I could find part time work there. It was Autumn in New York and a fun-filled place to be.

It doesn't take long in the city to learn to play frogger and get through all the traffic without getting squoshed. With the population of New York we frogs had to use all the manual dexterity at our disposal.

Chicken n' Blues was the name of the place but when I checked it out previously they played mostly jazz. I was hoping to become part of the house band that played Monday through Thursday. Big names were booked on the weekends. But during the first part of the week you never knew who might show up to sit in just for fun.

The double doors were painted dark blue with a rooster's picture painted on one door clearly chasing a hen on the other. These fine feathered friends welcomed a steady stream of thirsty fun lovers to this favorite haunt of many. Mostly the well-heeled upper crust crowd filled the place regularly.

The house band, in practice session, could be heard as I entered the inner door to a dimly lit piece of musician's haven. My sax case got stuck in the fast action inner door and I had to turn around and free it. The blended smell of left over perfume and tobacco smoke from the night before still lingered heavily in the place. In the dimly lit main ball room, paintings of beautiful women adorned every wall illuminated with low wattage spots. There was little left to the imagination as they were

wearing nothing but come hither smiles. The wall laden lovelies were clearly visible up to and including happy hour from 5 to 8, but a heavy black curtain was lowered on all walls for acoustics when the band began to play. I made my way straight for the band stand and opened the case, slid the business end of the horn in place. I already had the strap on my neck. The three piece house band consisted of piano, drums, and bass. They were all Afro-American first class musicians. The piano player was a fat man with a cigar and was running those keys without missing a note. I stood watching and marveled at his playing.

He turned and saw me standing there with a sax in hand and said, "You gonna play that horn or just stand there looking stupid?" while showing a perfect set of teeth in a big grin.

Well now you don't have to knock me down to get my attention. I brought the horn to my lips, gave the reed a good licking and nodded to the fat man when I was ready to take a lead. He nodded the go ahead and I blew the hello out of my Selma Silver Saxophone while the fat man laid chords on his piano. I thought he would never give me the sign to pass the lead back. He just sat there smiling, puffing on that smuggled Cuban, and I knew right then and there I had a job with the house band.

I felt a hand on my shoulder and when I turned around the club manager was standing there also smiling.

"I like the way you blow son. Are you playing anywhere?"

"No Sir, I'm stationed at the Army Pictorial Center on Long Island and I'm looking for a place to play in the evenings."

"Are you free every night Monday through Thursday?"

"I am. I have an apartment near here and I'm very much available to play any night you want me.

"My name is Bill Boroska, what's yours?"

"Greg Scott. Sir."

"You don't have to sir me. Just call me Bill." Then he turned to the band and asked, "You guys want to add a skinny sax player to the group?" They all glanced at each other nodding yes. At 6 feet tall and 175 pounds I really wasn't skinny but he could call me anything he wanted I was so glad to get the gig.

"The big man on the piano is the leader and what he says goes. His name is Fred Johnson. We call him Fats. The bass player is Willie Wiles, and on the drums is Robert Farley."

"Hey guys, thanks for having me. I won't let you down."

"OK, Greg Scott, you can start tonight. Be here by a quarter to eight and you can leave your horn in the band room if you like."

“Thank you Sir, er’ Bill, I appreciate this a lot.”

“My pleasure son, I think you’ll become a real crowd pleaser with that horn of yours. By the way the pay is \$75 a night and you play from 8 to midnight.”

“I’ll be back and on time too. Thanks again Bill. See you fellers tonight.”

I broke down the Selma and took it to the band room feeling a little apprehensive. I had never left that horn anywhere before but I was elated to know I would earn three times my monthly Army pay every week.

On the way back to the apartment, I kept thinking how fortunate I was to be blessed with God given talents. The script proof reading assignment was not what I had hoped to get but the new part time job would more than make up for the drudgery at the APC. It was four hours until show time and so I decided to grab a two-hour afternoon nap since I would be up late and had to be at APC bright-eyed and bushy-tailed in the morning.

I didn’t know how the other guys in the band would be dressed so I wore dress slacks, matching shirt, and coat sweater along with my sunglasses. Autumns in New York can be pretty chilly at night and I had my olive drab Army top coat in my hand just in case. I think I whistled a happy tune all the way to the Chicken N’ Blues Club.

I got there an hour early at 7:00 pm. the place was already half full with the happy hour crowd. They had heard about a sax player coming and were waiting for the band to do at least one song before heading home. On the way toward the back room where my sax was waiting for me someone asked me if I could play their favorite song “Misty.”

“Yes I can but the band will have to know it too.” I was pretty sure this band could play any song you asked for. I remembered to bring my sax stand so I grabbed my instrument and headed for the bandstand. While I was setting it up someone asked me to play a sample.

“I’ll have to wait for the rest of the band.” I told him. I noticed everyone in the place was looking at me expecting some form of entertainment to begin. I didn’t think Bill would mind so I went over to Fat’s piano and started playing soft easy music beginning with the requested song, “Misty.” The crowd all turned to look and the din of chatter began to subside. Fat’s mike was on a boom stand so I pulled it closer and gently tapped it to see if it were live. It was.

After a couple of verses on piano I started to sing in my low baritone voice, “*Look At me, I’m as helpless as a kitten up a tree.*” All of a sudden couples began to ease toward the dance floor in front of the stage

and started dancing. It wasn't long before it was crowded. Couples danced by and requested songs. I nodded in answer to the requests and for the rest of the happy hour it was great. Just me and the piano and slow easy listening music.

During the last song. Willie and Fred went to the bass and drums and accompanied me. "Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Willie Wiles and Mr. Robert Farley." I waited for the applause to subside and added, "Happy hour is now over and the band led by Mr. Fats Johnson will be your entertainment tonight. I will move over to the tenor sax and of course you are all invited to stay and enjoy the stylings of Fats Johnson and the Chicken N' Blues Band.

Willie and Robert went into a bass and drums duet while I moved off the piano bench of the Steinway Grand for Fats and his magical fingers. With the drum and bass in the background Fats made an announcement.

"Ladies and Gentlemen give a big chicken n' blues welcome to our newest band member Mr. Greg Scott on tenor saxophone.

As the applause faded Fats cued me to take first lead, so I grabbed a deep breath and began some improvisation on the basic rhythm the group was playing. The happy hour crowd stayed with us.

The patrons applauded even louder and everyone in the place tried to get on the dance floor at the same time. The group played for an hour before taking a break.

At the table reserved for the band and their wives or dates Fats was the first to speak.

"Let me shake your hand Greg Scott. You've given this band a whole new class." Before I could say anything Bill was at the table and asked me to come back to his office.

"Look that thing you do on the piano with the happy hour crowd is something I've been looking for a long time. Can you do it every night Greg? And how about Friday night too. Of course there's more money involved"

"Well, I really don't know..."

"How about an additional two hundred a week?"

I know my mouth had to drop when he made the offer.

"You got it Bill."

"Fine, now what do you drink? I know you're on break."

"Oh, a beer will be fine."

"I'll have it sent to your table and thanks for helping me out."

Wow, and I thought Bill was the one helping ME out. I love New York. This has got to be the greatest city in the world I was thinking as I made my way back to the band table wearing a happy face.

It was just before the ten o'clock break when Fats asked me to sing a song.

"How about Coltrane's My One and Only Love in Bb?"

"Lead it off solo and I'll join you on the 4<sup>th</sup> bar."

So I walked up to the extra singers microphone and tapped it and began to speak to the audience in my low broadcast trained voice,

"I'd like to play and sing one of my favorite John Coltrane songs called My One and Only Love." I was a little taken back when the crowd began to applaud even before I sang the first note. I looked at Fats and he gave me a thumbs up.

The song starts slow in low register and you can hear the breathing sound of the tenor. The first verse is instrumental, the band joined me, and played exceptionally, complimenting every note I played. I had my eyes closed during the instrumental and when I opened them there was one of the most beautiful brunettes I had ever seen. She was just standing there watching me and slow dancing by herself. When we reached the vocal I began to sing directly at her,

*"The very thought of you makes my heart sing, like an April breeze on the wings of Spring. And you appear in all your splendor my one and only love. The shadows fall and spread their mystic charms, In the hush of night, while you're in my arms, I feel your lips so warm and tender, my one and only love."*

When the vocal was over she stepped up on the stage and took my sax from the strap caressing it like it was her lover and placed it on the stand. She held my hand without uttering a word and led me down to the dance floor and we began dancing. I thought at that exact moment I had died and gone to heaven. Her warm soft body moved in slow enchanted rhythm with mine and made me shiver a little. A sweet smell of just a hint of cologne reached my mind with a welcomed delight. My six foot frame towered over her 5'7" petite body that was perfectly proportioned. Her eyes were sky blue and she wore a flame red lipstick that seemed to glow in the dim light and whisper, "Kiss Me with deep passion."

"What's your name?" I finally asked

"It's Lonelle but call me Loni." She replied with the soft voice of an angel and then added, "What's yours Mr. Sax Man?"

"Greg Scott." I'm from the South.

“I knew that from the way you asked my name,” she replied with a grin.

“Are you here alone Loni?”

“I’m here with a couple of girl friends. We heard about a new sax player coming to the Chicken N’ Blues, and we had to come check you out big guy.”

“So what’s the verdict Ms. Loni, do I meet your approval?”

“You’ll do for a Georgia Boy.”

“I didn’t say I was from Georgia.”

“The bartender told us all about you soldier boy”

“Maybe That bartender talks too much.”

“Everything he said was good. You might be just a little too squeaky clean though,” she implied with a sheepish grin.

“Look Angel, why don’t you sit with me at the band table when I go on break at the end of this song and we’ll get acquainted.”

Both her girl friends were dancing with their new found companions next to us the whole time and were hanging on to our every word. They both agreed she should sit with me.

I escorted her to the band table pulled the chair back for her to sit.

“I’ve heard about those nice Southern Boy manners you have.”

“Oh yeah, we’re taught from diaper age about good manners and being nice to the opposite sex.”

“I wondered how long it would take for that word to sneak into the conversation.”

“What word?”

“The S- E- X word,” she answered spelling it out and ribbing me all the time. I grinned and said nothing. I just sat next to her sipping on a Blue Ribbon very slowly. I really didn’t care for the taste of beer.

“Look,” she said, “It’s been a long time since I met someone totally honest like you. I’m not sure I ever did. You’re a nice boy, shy, decent, and I want to know more about you Mr. Greg Scott.”

“OK Loni, where would you like for this acquaintance to take us?”

“Why don’t you order us another drink and play some more on that soul arousing saxophone of yours. We’ve got plenty of time to get to know each other.”

I had never met another girl like this Loni. She had a mystique about her. It was like she only wanted you to learn so much. I began to have a gut feeling that some guy had hurt her and she was careful whom she let back into her life. I ordered another drink only for her since I still had

most of my beer still in the bottle. We continued to talk until the break time was over.

“OK, youse Chicken N’ Blues Band Brothers, let’s get back to work and earn our keep,” Fats ordered us back on stage. Loni leaned over and gave me a long and luscious kiss, and I gave her a big grin and said, “Thanks, I liked that.”

“You be sure and sing another song and bring that mike with the long cord down on the dance floor and dance with me while you sing.”

“Yes Mam! You got it Sweet Thang.” I replied with a real long overdone southern drawl that made her smile.

Fats picked the perfect first song, “This Could Be The Start Of Something Big.” I turned and gave him a big ole grin and a thumbs up. He showed me his pearly whites as if to say “You’re welcome.”

The next set was even better than the other two mainly because I had someone special to play my horn to. On a couple of the songs I walked over to her at the band table and played just for Loni. It went over big with the crowd so I began going to other tables playing for individuals and on the dance floor too. That’s when to my surprise, they started dropping folding money in the sax bell housing. These folks loved the sax and were I ever glad for that. I saved all the tips in a jar for the band to split.

“Hey Greg, you ready to sing another song?” Fats asked about half-way through the set.

“Yeah man, how about Unforgettable in the same key, Bb?”

“Kick it off Horn Man.” I played about 8 bars of the song, placed the horn on the stand, and headed toward Loni with the mike in hand. She met me and we held each other in a close intimate embrace while Fats played Nat King Cole style of piano that was out of this world. At my time to start singing I held Loni close as we slow danced in front of the bandstand. Then I raised the mike and sang.

*Unforgettable, that’s what you are  
Unforgettable though near or far  
Like a song of love that clings to me  
How the thought of you does things to me  
Never before has someone been more*

At the beginning of the second verse to my surprise Loni pulled the mike down to her lovely mouth and began singing to me.

*Unforgettable in every way  
And forever more, that's how you'll stay  
That's why, darling, its incredible  
That someone so unforgettable  
Thinks that I am unforgettable too*

Whoa, what a voice! This girl should be recording professionally. Everyone in the club was applauding the duet but mostly for her singing. I escorted Loni back to the table leaned over and gave her a long kiss.

“You were wonderful Sweetie. I betcha Fats will want to hire you to sing with the band. Why didn't you tell me you could sing so well.”

“Greg, you'd better get back on stage. We can talk on your break.” She was holding out both hands toward me making a move-it motion. I reached down and kissed one of those lovely nicely manicured hands and headed back toward the stage, stopped half way, then went back and kissed the other hand. Then I ran to the stage and started playing with the band an old standard called “Dream.”

The last break arrived and we were all sitting around the band table. Loni and I were chatting when she asked,

“Do you have a car Greg?”

“Not with me. I have one back in Georgia.”

“How far do you live from here?”

“About 700 miles.” I said with a straight face

“No Silly where is your apartment?”

“Just a couple of blocks away.”

“I'd like to see your apartment.” She was holding my hand looking down at the palm and tracing the lines with her index finger.”

“OK but let me warn you first. It's four flights up, no elevator, and very small.”

“That's fine. I'll go over and tell my two friends I'm going with you when you get off work at twelve.”

“Sure, that'll be super. Do they have a way home?”

“Looks like it's been taken care of,” she pointed her finger at the two guys sitting with them.

I thought the last set would never end. I was ready to get away from the Chicken N' Blues and spend some quality time with Loni. She kept looking at me over her drink which she held close to her lips giving me that warm sensuous smile.

“OK band members,” Fats called out at the end of a song. It's time for the close out tune. What's it gonna be?”

“How about Dream” Willie suggested and from that moment on, our theme song was Dream which didn’t bother me it was one of my favorite tunes and it was written for horns.

I didn’t see any reason to take the horn back to the apartment. I had three more nights to play it at the club, so Loni and I walked back to my apartment holding each other. It had gotten colder.

“Well here we are Lonikins. Get ready to climb four flights of stairs. Would you care to carry me up?”

“Yeah, sure, why not?” she kidded me right back. I learned she was sharp as a box cutter and I could never get anything on her.

Opening the door to my apartment I then reached over and picked her up. Whoa she was heavy to be such a petite little Miss.

As I started to carry her inside I noticed my neighbor with a hearing problem peeking out the crack of her door. She must have been wearing her hearing aid tonight of all nights.

“Hello Mrs. Shultz.” And she grinned at me and poked out a thumbs up for approval of my newly acquired lady friend.

“Loni, that was Mrs. Shultz my neighbor who I thought was hard of hearing. She must have been waiting up for me.”

“Got a secret admirer huh Grego?” she poked me gently.

“Lots of them my dear, lots of them.”

“Are you going to put me down Saxy man?”

“No, I kinda like holding a fine foxy sweet young thang.”

“I’m 28.”

“Nawh, no way.”

“Yes way.” She reaffirmed but Loni looked my age almost 19.

I put her down, we embraced, and kissed a long long time. There’s only three small rooms in my apartment and it’s not difficult to find the one with the bed. She grabbed my hand and led me to the bedroom.

She held me with both arms at the bedside and leaned backward. As we made contact with the bed, a relic from Noah’s Ark, collapsed and we found ourselves on the bed on the floor, me on top, and she was still holding on.

“Did you hear a noise?” she asked

“You broke my bed darling”

“I’ll buy you another one.”

“But I was really attached to this one, a family heirloom you know.”

“So, you’re related to Chris Columbus?”

I didn't tell Loni the wonderful experience that night was my first time. The alarm went off on schedule at 6:00 and it seemed like I had just closed my eyes.

Loni did a little snuggling movement and opened those cold sky blue mysterious eyes.

"Morning Saxy Man. So, you're no longer a virgin are ya? How does it feel?"

She knew it was my first venture. I felt somewhat embarrassed so I fluffed it off.

"Like I'm not really sure, let's try a little more consummating our relationship," and I reached out and pulled her close to me. I never knew what pure bliss was but this had to be it." Afterwards, we smoked one of my cigarettes passing it back and forth.

"I'm not going to work today Loni, you have worn me to a frazzle."

"Don't blame me, Stud Muffin, you're the one who wanted to consummate three times last night," she gave me a barrage of winks leaning over real close eye to eye and then she patted my face gently and said,

"I think I'll call in with a different excuse. I was in the clutches of a 19 year old nymphomaniac."

"I thought only girls could be one of those."

"Not in your case Rapid Rabbit?"

"Come here you..." I reached for her and she was off the bed and running toward the bath room, her round little booty bobbing back and forth. One hand over her shoulder was waving bye at me as she ran.

"I think I'm in love." I said to myself in an inaudible tone.

We both showered but not together although I kept trying to get in with her.

"Get away you sex maniac," she teased from the other side of the curtain.

We dressed and went downstairs to greet the day. I felt like I was the luckiest guy in the world as we made our way to a neighborhood café in front of the bus stop for some breakfast.

"You don't cook do ya Greg?"

"I can make sandwiches and soup, fry an egg, and pop bread in the toaster, if I had a toaster."

"Remind me to get you one for Christmas."

"You know I will or you could bring yours and move in with me. I'll even fix that heirloom you broke last night."

“Oh you silver tongued devil. You would do that for little ole me?” trying to sound like a southern belle with her Brooklyn accent. Sometime during the night Loni told me she lived in Brooklyn with her parents and she had never been married. She said she was having too much fun to be labored with a husband.

After breakfast we headed for the bus stop. Both of us had called in to get out of working for the day.

“I’m going to take you on a site seeing trip Georgia Boy,” and did she ever. We went up in the Statue Of Liberty, on top of the Empire State Building, rode in a Hanson Cab pulled by a white mare through Central Park, and did a little shopping in Macy Department Store where I insisted on buying her a complete outfit from skin out to wear that night to the Chicken N’ Blues Club. The dress was a knockout too, bright red skin tight with a slit on the right side. The top gave a little more than a hint of bosom and the back was, well, backless. We selected for her a pair of matching red velvet high heels.

“Greg, I’ll be right back I’m going in the dressing room to try all this on.”

As she opened the curtain to the room, I was right behind her.

“Now where do you think you’re going?” she asked with a grin.

“Don’t you need some help with zippers or bra straps?”

“No, you dummy! Don’t you know that women put ON clothes to impress other women and take them OFF to impress hairy-legged rascals like YOU.”

So I settled with a pat on her booty and let her have some privacy.

“Are you still out there?” Loni asked when she had finished dressing.

“No! I’m out on the street hailing us a cab.”

“Get ya butt back up here cause I’m coming out.” She opened the curtain and stepped out with “Ta TAAAAAH.”

“Wow, wow-wow,” I kept saying. She looked like a movie star. “Did I ever tell you that you’re gorgeous?”

“I bet you say that to all the girls Saxy Man.”

On the way out we stopped at the jewelry department and picked out an inexpensive necklace to go with her attire. I carried the bags for her and she gave a ear splitting three block whistle for a cab. It was getting late and we wanted to get back to the pad for some relax time before heading for the club.

Back in the apartment we deposited the new duds in the bedroom closet and lay sideways across the bed which was still on the floor.

“You need to take better care of your furniture.” Loni said then poked her tongue at me.”

“I would but I spent all my loose change on some dark haired chick’s evening dress.”

“And I bet you want her to extend her favors in return for such a beautiful outfit?”

“Oh Yeah, and right now too.”

“Duh! she exclaimed with a grin, I thought we came home early to relax. What you want Saxy Man is work.”

“But nice work when you can get it Doll.”

“Go to sleep Georgia Boy.”

She won, I set the clock for one hour, and we both fell asleep with Loni in my arms.

Just before the alarm went off the phone rang. “Hello!”

“Greg, this is Bill at the club. Will your friend Loni be with you tonight?”

“Oh yeah, she’s with me right now.”

“Good, I want to offer her a job singing here Monday through Thursday nights. Do you think she’ll do it Greg?”

“I’m not sure. I’ll wait and let you ask her. I think it’s a fantastic idea Bill.”

“Great and Hey! I’ll pick you guys up in my car. It’s getting pretty chilly outside.

“What is a fantastic idea?” Loni asked not fully awake.”

“Bill wanted to know if you were coming to the club tonight. He wanted to ask you something.”

“Did he say what?”

“Yeah, but I didn’t know what to tell him. Say, do you want to shower first Miss Loni?”

“Yeah, I do, but without you.”

“Ah shucks, and I was so hoping...”

Bill picked us up at 6:00 and wanted to treat us to dinner at the club. Loni had forgotten about Bill’s question so we talked mostly about the sight seeing day that Loni gave me as we rode to the club.

Loni had on a long coat and Bill couldn’t see how great she looked in her new dress.

Once in the club we went to the band table and Bill went in the kitchen to prepare the special meal he had planned for us.

“What do you think Bill’s cooking for us Loni?”

Whatever is fine, But I hope he's not bringing you oysters." She grinned real big as she spoke, "I wonder what he wants to ask me Greg."

"Whatever it is you say YES."

"Then you already know don't you?"

"Well, yes but I think you should hear it from him first hand."

"Now you've really got me wondering."

Before she finished Bill arrived with a bottle of white wine and two glasses.

"Here we are giving honor to my two newest friends Greg and Loni who have brought new life to the Chicken N' Blues Club. So Loni my special meal for you will be fresh Maine lobster."

"Wonderful!" she exclaimed, "I love lobster."

"And for Greg I have a bowl of fresh South Carolina low country oysters."

I thought Loni would fall out of her chair she laughed so hard. When she finally caught her breath,

"Does this have something to do with your question for me? Greg won't even give a hint as to what it is."

"Oh no," Bill assured her. "I want to hire you as a singer the same nights and hours that Greg is here on a full time basis."

Loni was in awe, "Do you really want me to sing in such a nice place as this?, I'm not sure I'm good enough."

"Believe me you're good enough. I've had customers calling me all day long asking when you were going to sing here again. Now what do ya say? I hope it's yes."

"What much does it pay?"

"Seventy Five a night to start. More as the crowd builds and I know it will."

"What do you think Greg?" Loni asked me.

"I think he likes you better than me. You get lobster and I get oysters."

"Oh, quick kidding and give me a straight answer Sweetie."

"Loni, seriously, you would be foolish to turn it down. This could be the stepping stone to something big for you. Take it. OK?"

"Well alright, I'll try it for one week and then we'll see."

"Super!" Bill almost shouted with exuberance.

"When do I start Bill?"

"As soon as you finish the lobster."

Bill was happy but not nearly as much as me.

When the waitress arrived with the food, we both were treated with the most delicious lobster I had ever eaten.

“You know Loni, a lobster is really nothing more than a crawfish with a growth problem.”

“You taking about the crawfish from New Orleans?”

“No, the crawfish from Georgia. I used to play with crawfish when I was a little boy at a branch behind our house. I thought they were too ugly to eat.”

“You’ll have to tell me about little Grego when he was just a small lad.”

“Well, at thirteen, I started chasing girls.”

“Apparently you didn’t catch one”

“*I got a woman mean as she can be,*” I began mumbling Elvis style.”

“Eat your crawfish with attitude and save the singing for the stage.”

“Yes Mam, and I thank ya, thank ya very much.”

Later when we had finished our delicious meal I reached over and held her hand on top of the table, “It’s five till seven are you ready to start your singing debut Dah’lin?”

“I’m a little jittery.”

“You’ll be fine. I’ll go up first and do a couple of instrumentals and then call you up, okay?”

“Can I sit beside you during my first song?”

“Sure, that would be a nice touch.”

There were only a few vacant seats in the Chicken N’ Blues at 7:00 on the dot as I made my way to the stage and the Steinway. The applause began as they saw me heading for the stage and swelled to loud by the time I sat down and did a run on the white keys in A-minor from a lower “A” note all the way up then immediately into the lead-in for New York, New York. Everyone began clapping including some of the waitresses. After playing two more numbers, I pulled the mike on a boom stand over and played some soft background fills as I spoke, “Ladies and Gentlemen, tonight is a very special night because it is my pleasure to introduce a beautiful young lady with the voice of an angel who will be a regular with me every night Monday through Saturday. Put your hands together for Miss Loni Arillos.” Everyone applauded from the time she rose from her chair to joining me on the piano bench.

“Break a leg, Sweetie.” I said off mike as she lifted her mike to her lips and began her first song, very slow and very sultry.

*Fly me to the moon and let me play among the stars.*

*Let me see what Spring is like on Jupiter and Mars.*

Then I came in singing harmony with her on the next line.

***In other words, hold my hand. In other words, hold my hand.***

*Fill my heart with song let me sing forever more.  
You are all I long, for all I worship and adore.  
In other words, please be true. In other words I love you.*

This was followed with an instrumental break and then we repeated from the beginning. The further into the song the more relaxed Loni became.

“How am I doing she whispered to me?”

“If you were any better I couldn’t stand it Loni. You’re fabulous.”

As she began singing again she stood and ran her fingers through my hair and slithered around the piano caressing it as she moved displaying a well-proportioned leg and her amazing olive complexion. Mercy! was she a beauty. She was also very talented and I extended that one song to almost ten minutes taking turns singing a verse here and there. I sang harmony with her on a couple of verses.

So our first night singing and playing together was a hit. She became an instant success that was destined to grow. We could not begin to know just how far she would really go in the world of entertainment before the end of the year.

At first, It was hard for me to work at the club every night till midnight except Sundays and be at APC on my Army proof reading job by 8:00 am Monday through Friday. Loni Moved in with me and that helped a lot.

During the day she worked on her songs for that evening, did the cleaning and other household chores. It was like being married only without a ring and a piece of paper.

“Hey sleepy head, it’s time to rise and shine.” She was always up first, with coffee made and holding a cup in her hand as she nudged me back to life every morning. The five hours sleep from 1 am to 6 am plus an afternoon nap settled into routine and life was better than I could ever dream it to be.

As a bonus to Loni and me, Chicken N’ Blues Boss Bill ran across a deal on a little Metropolitan convertible, bright red and black top. I called it our “Loni Car” in recognition of our first night performing at the club. Loni with her long black hair and red dress sitting on the Steinway bench next to me in a color photograph was the only picture we had in the apartment. It was winter and we couldn’t let the top back just yet but we talked about it every time we went for a drive.

Back in October I saw the biggest snow fall of my life while at Fort Slocum. The entire island was covered with a foot of it. Most of our snows in Georgia came during the night and usually melt by the next afternoon. I kept thinking that I could live in the Big Apple for the rest of my life. Everything was like living in a classic love novel.

But then one Thursday at the club Loni and I were on break and seated at the band table. In walked a dude in a leather jacket and holding a motorcycle helmet. I was looking at Loni's face when she suddenly became stone cold.

"Oh No" she exclaimed with fear in her eyes.

"What's the matter?" I asked thinking she might be ill.

"That's my ex boyfriend Duke," she returned with trembling lips. It didn't take a shrink to analyze that she was deathly afraid of this Duke.

I turned to look, Duke was making a beeline across the dance floor coming straight at us, all 6 foot 3 or 4, and about 30 pounds bigger than me.

When he reached the table he put his hands on his hips to spread out and appear even nastier looking.

"I was told you'd be here Loni. I've come to take you back to Brooklyn with me."

I stood my 4 inch shorter and 30 pounds lighter self up,

"Maybe she's not interested in going anywhere with you."

Duke looked at me like he could reach over, bite off my nose, and spit it on the floor, "My advice to you little man is to sit down and shut up. This ain't none of your business."

"Why don't you and me go out back and make it my business."

"I'm right behind you. Lead the way if you got the guts."

"Loni grabbed my arm, "Greg don't go. He'll hurt you. He's evil."

"All the more reason to deal with him. I'll be OK. You just stay here at the table."

I started for the back door, Duke following, and then Loni following. She had no intention of staying at that table. I didn't see them, but Fats and the Chicken N' Blues band were taking up the rear. I guess they were figuring on stopping the face-off before Duke rearranged mine.

"You wanna back off and let me take Loni with me?" Duke asked standing next to the Dempsey Dumpster. It was like he was having a change of heart once this push became a shove. That's the way a lot of bullies are, mostly loud talk.

What Duke didn't know was, I had recently finished a grueling 8 week's Army basic training and in the best shape of my life. He on the other hand was a belly-poking beer guzzling bag of wind.

"Too late Duke, you're going down big mouth."

That remark triggered a spark and he takes a long circular swing that a granny could duck. He missed me by a mile then stood straight in front of me legs apart trying to puff himself up to something he wasn't.

At that instant I raised my left hand up to distract his attention and reached hard at his dangling family jewels and squeezed with a death hold that will bring any man to a teary eyed beggar in a heartbeat. The louder he screamed in pain the harder I squeezed.

The Chicken N' Blues Band was cheering me on. "Get him Greg, you da man, give'em something to remember you by."

I began to feel sorry for poor ole Duke so I grabbed his neck with my free hand and began spinning him around in a circle and gave aim for the dumpster. At the right moment I released both hands and BAM he smashed the end of the garbage collector, flipped, and landed in the garbage screaming to the top of his lungs.

After we all laughed at the expense of the deflated bully Duke and headed back to the band table, one of the busboys came over and said he saw Duke riding away on his Harley Davidson in a standing position.

"Did you learn to fight that way in Army training Soldier Boy." Loni asked

"Only part of it Dahlin'. The snatch and grab was learned growing up with some big tough guys who loved coming to our mill village and starting fights."

Later at the apartment she continued to teasingly flutter her eyes and say, "My Hero and the love of my life, my Honey Lamb."

"And don't you forget it Ms. Lonikins."

Duke never returned to the Club or bothered Loni again. I'm sure after that night he was a little more selective in whom he picked on.

Later in the bedroom Loni gave me the best reward I could ever receive and I would never forget the entire incident.

The club became overflowing and Bill had to hire a front man to control the number of people allowed in. The fire marshal said the limit was 400 but that number was overly extended another 100 or so with the passing of some dead presidents on green paper to the fire marshal to miscount his checking.

With all the increased business, Bill was wearing a permanent smile all the time. One Saturday as we reported for work he was wearing a sneaky expression, “Hey you two money makers, follow me.”

Leading us back to one of the empty storage rooms Bill opened the door and there was a shiny apple red Harley Davidson motorcycle.

“This is your new bonus.”

“Wowieeee,” Loni yelled and grabbed the boss with a tremendous hug, “Thankes Bill you are the best boss man in the whole world.”

It was now the middle of April, the weather was unseasonably warm, and we had a brand new toy to play with.

“Greg, let’s ride it to Coney tomorrow?” Loni asked with gleaming eyes.

“Sounds like a plan to me. Let’s go.”

At Midnight the band helped me get the bike out the back door and I rode it around to the front where Loni and Bill were waiting.

“Hop on Loni and I’ll ride up the street and back.”

She had changed to a pair of shorts and left her cocktail dress in her private dressing room Bill had fixed up for her. There were two helmets in the bonus so we put them on and made a little ride up the street turned around and came back to the club.

“Bill she rides like a dream. We both thank you more than you know.”

“Yeah Bill, you are a honey.” Loni adding to my appreciation remark.

“You kids, be careful on that thing and stay in one piece.”

“We will. Loni you drive the convertible back to the pad and I’ll follow you on the bike.”

“OK, Saxy Man. See ya Monday Bill.”

Our pad was in a well-protected neighborhood so we had no reservations about leaving the car and bike on the street in front of our building.

“You ready for me to carry you up the stairs tonight big boy?” Loni teased.

“Only if you run all the way.” I replied taking the conversation from ridiculous to wacky.

I unlocked the door to our pad and as Loni passed by I gave her a little love smack on the booty.

“Oooo, you are such a fresh boy,” she came back, “and may I please have another you handsome GI?” Walking behind her I held on to her bare shoulders as she directed me to the kitchen for a nightcap.

“What’ll ya have handsome?” she asked in a low sultry tone.

“You!” I answered.

“Not on the menu Horn Man,” she turned, embraced me with a kiss and afterwards added, “At least not right now.”

“I think you’re trying to wean me oh woman of mystique.”

“No Sir! Just making you appreciate what a nice playpen you got here.”

“Is that what this is?”

“Of course Mr. Greg Scott.”

“Then I’m ready to play.”

“Not right now! Here’s a scotch on the rocks with a lemon twist just the way you like it,” and she changed into one of my tee shirts.

“OK lover girl. One quick drink and then to the game room Lady Luv.

“Are you planning on having your way with me again.”

“All night long Babe, just all night long.”

Without another word I turned up the glass and killed the scotch on the rocks, and made a little frown.

I leaned over, picked Loni up, and pretended I was going to drop her all the way to the newly remodeled bedroom ie, reparation of a broken bed.

“Oweee! You better not drop me Greg Scott. I laid her down gently on the bed fearing my repair job was inadequate. She rolled over on her belly and I straddled her and began tickling her sides. She went ballistic, kicking my back with her feet and squirming like a woman possessed. I finally let her up and as soon as she was free she was on top of me and giving me the same treatment I gave her. I raised myself up with her on my back in a crawl position. She was riding me like a rodeo bronco buster and laughing like a wild woman. I couldn’t believe how strong Loni was to be so small. I finally managed to buck her off and the bed hit the floor again. We both began laughing uncontrollably.

When we could finally speak, I said, “I guess this bed wishes we would move out.”

“You think?” she replied with a crazy disfigured look on her face and we began laughing again. If Mrs. Shultz could hear better or if we had neighbors on the other side we would probably be evicted from the building. We finally settled down and made love once more on the bed on the floor. “We should get a waterbed,” she said afterwards.

“Yeah and we’d probably flood the building.”

“You are just too passionate a lover Greg Scott.”

Neither of us could go to sleep from all the excitement on the bed

“Let’s go raid the refrigerator Senor Grego?”

“Race ya to the kitchen.”

Like two scared rabbits we hit the floor skinny running. She beat me but barely. I went back and got two fresh tee shirts.

“So what will it be Senor Greg? We got cereal and milk and some peanut butter and five pieces of bread,” she said in a Spanish accent.

So there we were sitting at the kitchen table in my tee shirts, devouring the cereal and peanut butter sandwich like they were a fancy steak dinner.

“I say my dear, would you please pass the Grey Poupon Mustard?”

“I would but we don’t have any kind sir.”

“Well, Rats!”

“We have plenty of those. Want some?”

“No thank you Darling, I’m trying to cut back.”

This went on for at least a half hour joking and carrying on. We always had a lot of fun no matter where we were.

The more I was around Loni the more I loved her. She was intelligent but with a sense of humor that was always turned on. Loni could talk about anything whether she knew beans about the subject or not. If not, then the humor would go into high gear with her runaway imagination.

She always got a kick out of my stories about the happenings in my hometown. She would say, “Hey Greg, tell me some more about the Evils of Elway.” So I began to tell her another Elway story.

There was a Manager of a local news media who lived in Athens, a short little feller who thought he was somewhat of a ladies man. He had a high pitch squeal for a voice when he became excited. Well he and his wife divorced shortly after he went to the doctor for a rash on his nose. The doctor took one look at his snoot and said,

“You have a yeast infection.”

Loni began laughing so hard I thought she would fall off the bed.

Well Shorty left for work with a bandage on his nose unaware the doctor called his wife to tell her she needed to come in for treatment.

“I don’t have a yeast infection,” the wife replied somewhat angered at what the doctor implied, “Why do you say that?”

The doctor told her about the office visit with her husband. Shorty was locked out of the house that night and received divorce papers three days later.

Loni finally stopped laughing and said, “Hey Georgia Boy if we’re going to Coney tomorrow we’d better get some sleep. OK?”

“I’m right behind you Toots.”

For a couple of minutes Loni would be as still as a mouse, then start laughing all over again. I thought she would never go to sleep.

When she did, I lay there on my side with my head propped on my elbow just looking at that beautiful face, her long black hair flowing like waves on a white sand beach.

She was in a deep sleep but her luscious red lips would move like she was speaking inaudibly. Occasionally she would stop and smile. I would have given anything to have a device to see what she was dreaming.

She was unknowingly putting on a late night show for me and I never told her about it.

That wouldn’t be the only time I would just lie awake admiring this beautiful girl I loved so dearly while she lay sleeping.

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