

12) Law and Order

It really never was intended for our latest studio project a “tribute” to Eric Anderson. In fact, I was probably talked out of the idea three or four times. The executives at Capitol needed us to hit a home run on this project, and I think if they could have stopped us they certainly would have. We didn’t start out with an agenda to enshrine Eric, and I hope that we actually did more than that. If we had wanted to make a posthumous release we absolutely could have; there were enough tracks that didn’t make the cut on our previous projects to do a couple of those, had that been our mission. Besides, it was the ZigZag custom to entitle our projects with a phrase that summarized the entirety of the body of work, and there isn’t a single reference to Eric Anderson in any of the lyrics, let alone a song with his name in the title.

Part of the irony of this label also included the name selection for Scott and Franchesca’s baby boy. Anderson Charles McNaughton was born September 9, 1995. Obviously, he was named after his “uncle Eric” and a tribute to Scotty’s respect and gratitude to our fallen keyboardist. Anderson McNaughton came into this world about six weeks before he was expected and was immediately placed in an incubation chamber in the neonatal intensive care unit of San Raffaele Hospital in Milan. Needless to say his mother and father were both quite distraught. The biggest issue was that Anderson’s tiny lungs were not fully developed, and a regimen of pure oxygen and steroid injections was implemented shortly after his delivery. It was touch and go for a few days, but little Anderson is a fighter, and after three weeks in the NICU, Scott and Franchesca were able to take their child home. Although undersized for his age, at eight months old Anderson was now healthy, happy and showing few signs of the trauma of his early days. His parents were extremely over protective of their young son, but that posture was understandable, given the circumstances.

Somehow christening the project “Anderson’s Lament” just made sense on a number of levels. Our first notion actually was to use no keyboards on any of these songs. It only took a couple of days to realize that wasn’t going to work. Both R.L. and I kept going back to the long engrained formula of conceptualizing every song, and part of that process had always included space for the keyboards and led us to ask on multiple occasions “what would Eric have done here.” It was simply part of who we were and how we had always done things, and to abandon this model would have been a compromise to our core process as a band. Yes, this was in fact a ZigZag project that wouldn’t physically include Eric Anderson, but the reality is that Eric’s way of integrating his parts into everything we had ever done was never going to change. It didn’t just define us as a band; it was part of our DNA.

We also toyed briefly with the idea of using a single keyboardist on the entire project. Benmont Tench was the obvious choice here, and we could have made that work. Ben was certainly capable of the imitation, but there was something

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unsettling about this notion, and none of us wanted to paint Benmont into that corner. He did play on a couple of the songs, specifically “She’s Gonna Have Her Way (With Your Heart)”, which I had written partially in response to the Heartbreaker’s “Don’t Do Me Like That”, and had planned all along to be a duet with Tom Petty anyway. A number of fine players offered to assist, and we could have gone quite a few different directions. In the end, four things happened.

First was the use of Benmont. The second was to reach out to Bill Payne of Little Feat, who both Eric and I had idolized for many, many years. Bill’s unique piano style and mastery of the Hammond B3 organ fit quite nicely into our mix, and pushed us into considering things in a very different light. With Bill, blues based songs like “Silent” took on a new coat of paint. Phil Lesh of the Grateful Dead made this connection for us, and I think it was a good thing for both parties. In the wake of Jerry Garcia’s death, Phil was in somewhat the same boat as we were, and personally I was glad to have the company.

The third tact was a bit like jumping off a cliff. Bruce Hornsby was brought in at the request of Tom Dowd, and we didn’t know until the day of his arrival that Bruce was coming. Leave it to Mr. Dowd to throw a monkey wrench into the works just to see how we would respond. This initiated a series of events that at first were quite painful. Relying on his trademark spontaneity as a live performer, Bruce took over the sessions for about a week. He reworked everything, making suggestions for tempo and progression changes, infusing a jazz feel to some tunes and being rather sacrilegious to the typical ZigZag sound.

For a couple of days I had the feeling that we were playing second fiddle on our own project, and it was being done in our studio. It was like we were the session musicians on an effort of Bruce’s design. The immediate result was the creation of a monster. There was a lot of infighting and second guessing on our part. Scotty and I both resisted the suggestions – which really came across more like demands from Bruce – and there was considerable grumbling and talk of scraping the whole thing and starting over. More than one shouting match ensued, and the low point was the day I told Tom to “get that guy the fuck out of my house.” Greg and R.L. pulled me back down out of that tree, and I later apologized to Bruce for making the comments. I think everyone was quite shocked that in an environment where I had always been the coolest head in the room, others were having to fill that void by necessity. Which was exactly what Tom Dowd was trying to accomplish.

In hind sight, Bruce showed us the potential for redefining ZigZag into a more sophisticated and unpredictable unit – one that was quite capable of escaping Eric Anderson’s shadow and the notion that we had to keep playing by the same rules we had established fifteen years earlier. The results of Bruce Hornsby’s work on “Anderson’s Lament” included turning a placid love song, “Out of Sight, Out of Mind” into a filibuster of sounds – and a Billboard number one and Grammy

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winner. I hated what Bruce had done to me, but loved him for what he did for ZigZag. That was certainly a hard pill to swallow.

The fourth and final piece to the keyboard puzzle on this project was someone that I had totally unexpected. Me.

It wasn't like I was learning a new instrument, and it was certainly never my intention to be Eric's replacement in the band. I took two years of what was called piano instruction for non-music majors at the University of Kentucky and got A's all four semesters. It was probably the only class, other than a sociology class entitled "The History of Illegal Drugs" (really, that was the name of the course), where I invested any time or energy. There was a baby grand piano in the recreation area in the basement of the dormitory commons, and I used to spend hours sitting there working on my scales and chord progressions.

Even in college, where almost everyone sleeps until afternoon on the weekends, I was, and still am, an early riser. And since I couldn't sit in the room and play the stereo or bang on the guitar while my roommate was still asleep, most mornings I would grab a couple of quick bong hits, smoke a cigarette on my walk across the breezeway from the resident hall to the commons, and sit at that piano until I was either hungry or needed another smoke. Technically, I could play. I understood the theory and the mechanics. But other than a couple of classic rock tunes – the Beatles "Let It Be" and Neil Young's "After the Gold Rush" – I never learned any songs, just exercises from a book. During the recording of my first solo project "Habeas Corpus" we included a piano piece called "Oh Diane", which was an homage to my high school sweetheart – but it was very stark and basic, a lot like the simple chord blocking I was doing in my college years.

The truth is I never really work at playing the piano. Given the opportunity for personal practice time at home or on the road, my first instinct is always to pick up a guitar. It's the tool that I've used for twenty five years now to soothe my soul and spur my creative juices. In some ways it's probably a crutch. It's like driving on the right hand side of the road - just the way you do things. To extend that metaphor, I guess losing Eric was like relocating to Europe and having to move to the other side of the street.

This shift did change the ZigZag collaborative dynamics in a very positive way. We spent more time together, banging ideas off of each other, rather than just listening to tapes and bringing in our individual parts. Scotty and Franchesa had rented a beach house in Malibu for two months while we did the studio sessions. Franchesa was four and a half months pregnant, having a difficult time emotionally, and the center of attention for all of the "studio widows" that this process created. Leah, Joy, Alicia, and to some extent Patty were with her much of the time. In an effort to appease Scott and make him more available to his wife during non-recording sessions, we devised a plan that revolutionized the way we did our business.

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Since the very beginning of ZigZag, our modus operandi for song creation had been fairly static. I wrote them, R.L. reviewed them, Scotty, Greg and Eric got tapes or CDs with the basic tracks and then we would hash things out sitting in a circle with acoustic guitars in our laps. Eric would almost always go off on his own, create the keyboard lines after these discussions, and bring his input back during ensemble run throughs. For obvious reasons, that wasn't going to work anymore.

We had an upright piano delivered to Scott and Franchesca's house, and set up "ZigZag Central" in one of the back bedrooms. In my mind I envisioned Mother Maybelle and the Carter Family huddled around the "88's" working out the harmonies on "Will the Circle be Unbroken." That was pretty much how we created "Anderson's Lament". I would take my place on the piano bench, Scotty to my right in a chair with a Gibson J-200 Super Jumbo acoustic guitar. R.L. spent most of these sessions standing across from me and occasionally banging out rhythms with his hands on the top of piano's sound box. Greg was on my left, sometimes seated with a guitar in his lap, other times standing beside me pecking out bass runs on the low end of the keyboard while I played in the middle registers. It was during these sessions that we all fell in love again with the notion of being in a band. The song "North Bound Train" was written and entirely arranged utilizing this process.

North Bound Train

"Things they just got crazy,
There in Nashville, Tennessee.
And I swear the snow and the boredom,
Were gonna be the death of me.
Bein' broke and blind and restless,
Tryin' to stay sober and stay sane.
But you can't get back to Texas,
Ridin' on a north bound train.
No you can't get back to Texas,
Ridin' on a north bound train."

The song spoke to our roots, and the yearning in our collective souls to get back to the point of reference that was central to the creation of ZigZag and everything that followed. Tom Dowd called it a "compass song." I visualize in the lyric a displaced heart – a refugee of his own making. A portion of the words are based upon a magazine article I had read while on a plane during the last Beefeaters tour. It talked about Nashville being a town where country music had become an export, a commodity shipped worldwide but not so much a way of life in Music City anymore.

Well against your mother's best advice,

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You wallow in disgrace.
Line your pockets with lechery,
And paint a pretty smile upon your face.
Craving the attention,
Then finding solace in the pain.
See you can't get back to Texas,
Ridin' on a north bound train.
No you can't get back to Texas,
Ridin' on a north bound train."

The second verse speaks somewhat of our reaction to Eric's mother's request that we not be part of his funeral service. It was something that we talked about openly within the band and as our anger over the situation resolved into a more gentle disappointment and remorse we reconciled the facts of the matter and found a way to move on.

A lot of things changed after Eric's death. If Melanie's suicide was a wakeup call, Eric was a full blast alert. The first thing we did was close the ranks a bit. Pee-Tee became a lot more focused on the fringe folks that were always around and apparently in never ending supply. The Pop-Op Place became a closed set, and there were less backstage passes for concerts issued to unknown requestors, regardless of how good they looked. The contract roadies and transportation crew were the only ones interested in scoring with these ladies anyway. Most of the rest of us were in steady, solid relationships and our partners traveled with us. We abandoned the stage extension with the attitude that the media and record company folks could just buy a ticket or hang out back behind the stage.

I know I'm tired and weary,
Feelin' like a stranger in this town.
Heard there was work up in Chicago,
Though that thought brought me even further down.

So you learn through trial and error,
To wear your heart out on your sleeve.
Wishin' for that one big break,
Learnin' to settle for a reprieve.
Full of graphic verses,
With no hopes of a refrain.
Still you can't get back to Texas,
Ridin' on a north bound train.
No you can't get back to Texas,
Ridin' on a north bound train."

Said you can't get back to Texas boy,
Ridin' on a north bound train."

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The release of “North Bound Train” established two major milestones in our career. As the first single offering off of “Anderson’s Lament”, and by this song spending three weeks in the Billboard top ten and eleven weeks in the top forty, ZigZag was once again considered an active participant in the popular music game. It was a natural for the Pop-Op venue, and made it much easier to persuade concert promoters that we could still fill a basketball arena. Second, it was our first ever crossover hit. When we first learned that country stations in the Midwest were getting requests for the song I was astounded. This swelling of support continued and during the first week of April, 1996 “North Bound Train” was number nine on the Pop charts and number four on the Billboard’s Country countdown. Never anything that we had ever considered, and certainly not intended by any means, the recognition was incredibly satisfying.

Since the day that Pee Tee and I destroyed the first set of surveillance cameras that we found on the property in Topanga Canyon, we had from that point become progressively more aware that we were being watched. We assumed it was the Feds at first, but when the second more sophisticated camera model appeared, we drew the hypothesis that perhaps more than one entity was attempting to keep an eye on activities in and around the ZigZag compound. Confident in the reality that nothing of major illegal consequence was transpiring in our midst, it was decided to just leave them alone and try to ignore them as best we could.

The FBI was indeed monitoring our movements. At first it was due to suspected drug trafficking, which they never had any real evidence of, although certainly if they had decided to raid the facilities they would have been able to haul off pretty much the lot of us on minor possession charges. These days the Feds were more interested in who was coming and going on a regular basis, working on the premise that all of the bad things that had happened in and around the band were bound to be more than a coincidence.

The Handler had a set of eyes wired into our business as well. The boys in Cleveland requested this at first just to make sure that The Project’s cover was intact. After the incident in Fukuoka they wanted to see if we had any notion of their involvement. These days the mission was more logistical. The Handler wanted to be prepared in case there was need to plan an operation in this locale.

The investigation into the death of the young broker Kenechi Takahashi happened almost accidentally. The Japanese authorities had closed the case after the coroner ruled his death an accident. While vacationing in Hawaii a couple months back Kenechi had mentioned to a friend and fellow Wharton School graduate that he was having issues at the brokerage house, and alluded to the odd behavior of the partners regarding the preferential treatment of one of their clients.

After Kenechi’s untimely death his friend called a cousin who was employed as a junior litigator with the U. S. Securities and Exchange Commission. Her boss

contacted an associate with the Tokyo Stock Exchange. The ensuing investigation of Wei Yang Brokers revealed a client list that included R. J. Jones, Inc., a registered American corporation. The Federal Bureau of Investigation was now involved. The day the general counsel for R. J. Jones received a visit from FBI special agent Trevor Welch, Don Joseph Amaritto suffered a heart attack and had to be hospitalized. His last order before being placed into the ambulance was "Terminate The Project."

The Voice was on the phone with The Handler within the hour. The Handler's first call was to his contact inside the FBI. He needed to know what they had. They were certainly aware that the Feds were surveilling in Topanga Canyon and there was some rumbling about video footage provided by the band, and ZigZag's cooperation in the process. His second call was to another one of his clients, known to him only as General Cho. A preliminary plan was laid out, and a timeline established. But The Handler wanted more intelligence information first. He needed to know how many dots the Feds had connected.

When it came time to discuss cover art design for "Anderson's Lament" we had a problem. Obviously we couldn't take any new photographs of Eric, so it was Scott Silversteen's task to look back through over a dozen years worth of photos and find what I was looking for, discarding anything that had been published previously. I rejected everything he showed me the first two times he presented proofs, and sent Scott back to look through his archives again. I thought I knew what I wanted, but couldn't quantify it for our photographer supreme.

Leah, Mike and I talked though this process on several occasions, and my loving wife volunteered to help Scott find what I was looking for. She spent hours poring through book after book of proofs and came up with a list of nearly fifty shots that she wanted to see on five by seven photo paper. After reviewing these she went back to the proof book and asked for three dozen more. Of these eighty plus shots she then requested color eight by tens of twenty seven to talk over with me. I got to the third page of this book and found what I was looking for. It was actually a group shot that had Eric off to the side and musing over something that Scotty was doing in front of him. I think it was from our tour as the opening act for Queen. We had Scott blow up just the section with Eric in it and print that on eleven by fourteen paper. He resisted, but agreed under the premise that he could veto the idea if the print wasn't to his standards.

The enlargement was both grainy and a bit out of focus. Scott hated it. I thought it was perfect. It made the statement I was looking for. I left it to Leah to convince Scott that I knew what I was doing. He went back to the darkroom and created seven different images, each with a little different filtering and exposure rates. I picked three and told Scott that any of them would work - and instructions that he couldn't veto all three.

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The shot presents Eric in one of his fringed shirts, this one a pale turquoise, with arms extended and a wry smile on his face. You can tell from his expression that he doesn't have a care in the world. A world that is a bit out of focus. A world that gifted Eric (and the rest of us) with an existence that he probably didn't deserve. A ZigZag kind of world. Reminded me of the PBS series "Nature" and their three part episode "Flight of the Condor". In hindsight, maybe that's what we should have subtitled of the project. The statement was perfect. As usual, the folks at Capitol hated it. I made it quite clear to the record company execs that they could kiss my lily white ass. According to our contract with the record company, I had complete artistic control. I think this entire process allowed a bit of healing for my wife. If nothing else it certainly provided a distraction from the madness swirling all around her.

We went back out on the road in May of 1996 in support of our latest project "Anderson's Lament". The tour was actually titled "One Brick at a Time" and was themed around the popular children's toy – LEGOs.

When we purchased the house in Topanga Canyon that was converted into our recording studio The Stitchery, one of the items we discovered during an initial cleaning was a small set of plastic bricks in a zip lock baggie. It had been left in one of the pantry cabinets by the previous owner. Being the excessive-compulsive control freak that I am, I sat down immediately and put that little brick set together. Probably my contribution to the cleaning endeavors. It took about five minutes. As I remember, it wasn't actually a LEGO brand set, but an inferior knockoff. I believe it was a little house with flowers in the yard.

When Leah and I went shopping that year for Christmas presents for her younger brother and sister, I discovered the LEGO display and found a cute little package that contained Santa on his sleigh with a reindeer. I put it together as soon as we got back to The Stitch, and placed it in the window next to our very first Christmas tree. Leah told my mother, and the next thing I knew I was getting little race cars, construction vehicles and small cityscapes as birthday and Christmas presents.

Then the ultimate occurred. Someone bought me a small pirate ship, complete with a plank, cannons, Captain Redbeard, and a parrot. I was addicted. Operating under the premise that everybody needs a hobby, I began the quest of collecting the Pirate series LEGOs. I rationalized that if Neil Young could play with model trains (he would later become part of the ownership group for Lionel LLC) then I could certainly have my LEGOs.

Today I have over fifty LEGO Pirate series sets, ranging from the small bagged kits containing twenty or so pieces to massive ships that required the assembly of over six hundred pieces. Totalling more than ten thousand individual LEGOs, these kits adorn the walls of the office and lounge in The Stitch, displayed on shelves that are six feet in the air – well out of the reach of inquisitive children. I

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also have the Pirate series comic book that LEGO released in 1989 – in five different languages. My soon to be six year old son Billy loves LEGOs as well. I read to him from the collection of Ladybird books that were released in 1990, and we relive the tales of Governor Broadside's Imperial Guard and the crew of the Dark Shark nearly every night when I'm at home. My son had his own LEGO sets, as he (nor anyone else) is allowed to play with daddies.

Probably not surprising to anyone, I had an ally and fellow LEGO maniac in Ollie Harrelson. Ollie is the only other human on the planet who has permission to touch my prized possessions. From time to time Ollie will take them apart, clean them, and put them back together. In that regard his devotion to the collection exceeds even my own. When I shared with him the set ideas for the "One Brick at a Time" tour, he was ecstatic. The very next day Ollie was out in The Palace making sketches and researching construction methods. The idea was less than twenty four hours old, and he already had a plan. I had to temper his enthusiasm a bit, reminded him that the tour was nearly three months off, and we were still awaiting the go ahead from the legal department regarding any issues the LEGO folks in Denmark might have with trademark infringement.

We started the east coast tour with nine stadium shows and a two week Pop-Op run at the Beacon Theater in New York. Scotty played all of the concert shows and then headed back to Italy to be with his wife and now eight month old son. It was funny to listen to Scott talk to Franchesca on the phone, and I was impressed at how much his Italian had improved. While in California during the recording process he and Franchesca had conversed primarily in English, with his wife beginning to grasp the language but sporting a very heavy accent. We used a studio musician and off-Broadway actor to sit in for Scott during those Beacon shows.

Of course Ollie did his typically incredible job creating the LEGO sets for the stadium show staging. The legal issues wound up being of little concern, as the specific patents that dealt with the brick design had expired in 1988 and since that time a number of manufacturers had come out with products of similar design. The drum riser, keyboard platform which included an incredible arched bridge that extended into the middle of the stage, amplifier stands, and even a short runway out into the audience were built out of oversized, multicolored bricks. A couple of the structures were actually added to during the performance, and for "Freedom Fighter" a small fortress was built on stage during the song. Ollie was right all those years ago. He didn't need to "get" a real job. He already had one. Rolling Stone used part of the set as the backdrop for our most recent cover shot, and I insisted that Oliver Harrelson be pictured with the band. He was holding a picture of Eric Anderson in one hand and an Ollie's Fried Pie in the other.

While in NYC Leah and I stayed at our apartment in the San Remo and did some more sightseeing, including a visit to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. I appeared on Dave Letterman's show, this time posing as a customer at Hello Deli,

which is located next door to the Ed Sullivan Theater and one of sites for the occasional skits on The Late Show. Through a collaboration with a wonderful man named Geoffrey Canada and his organization the Harlem Children's Zone, Patty Townsend and I were able to establish Love's Labour NYC. Greg was also in tow and played the Pop-Op shows before we all headed back to Topanga Canyon and Montecito respectively.

The ultimate Pop-Op song may be "Good Dream, Bad Dream". Recorded for our "Ultimate Reality" project, the song describes the ups and downs of relationships. But given the most recent sets of events that ZigZag had encountered, after further review the lyric can, interpreted in a broader sense, be about our lives in general. The nature of the lyric, and the light and dark of the story both fed the "dream sequence" that became the Pop-Op roadmap for the song.

Good Dream, Bad Dream

"Raindrops fall to drown my sorrow,
Tears you cry leave me no tomorrows.
And it's not easy to try and make a love work out,
When you're the only one who hasn't cast a doubt.
Oh it's so hopeless feelin' empty inside.

Good dream bad dream,
They're all the same to me.
Good dream bad dream,
Isn't that what life was meant to be."

We also went into a "business" mode on the road. Do the show. Travel to the next city. Get some sleep. Do the next show. Almost any time we had more than a couple of days between events we would all jet back to Topanga Canyon and our families. The kids really became a focal point for Leah and I. I think at this juncture in our lives, we needed the children more that they needed us. Our parents were around a lot as well. I'm sure they could sense the strain that the trauma of Eric's death had placed on all of us.

The landscape changed dramatically after Eric's death. There was always going to be me and R.L. Without either of us, it wasn't ZigZag. The incorporation documents say so. Greg was only touring about half of the time now. He never went with us out of the States. There were now seventeen children and young adults living in Montecito. Patty wanted, and needed, for Greg to be at "home". Scotty and Franchesca were spending more and more time in Italy. Franchesca's film career was starting to take off, and her schedule required that they be "in country" a majority of the time. Having a newborn in the family generated an understandable desire for more stability in their lifestyle as well.

"Tuesdays come Thursdays all the same,

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We'll take the world and make it all to blame.
Where will this lead me when I can't find my way?
How can I turn to you you always turn away.
And there's a lot of darkness out there looking for the day.

Good dream bad dream,
They're all the same to me.
Good dream bad dream,
A true life fantasy."

In order to keep Scott in the process, the touring schedule had to be shortened, and we would do two or three weeks of Pop-Op and stadium shows, and then take a month or so off. We brought in a "Naughty Double" to do some of the Pop-Op dates, but we weren't going to do any stadium shows without Scott. We also didn't "replace" Eric. Purposefully, we utilized different keyboard players, both on the road and in the studio.

"How many rainbows have to own a pot of gold?
Are these stories you want left untold.
But then I catch a glimpse in my mind's candlelight,
Of your blazing fire it shouldn't burn so bright.
And can I see you maybe later on tonight.

Good dream bad dream,
They're all the same to me.
Good dream bad dream,
Isn't that what life was meant to be."⁷⁶

When Stephanie had her daughter Cara there were lots of questions. She wasn't married. For that matter, Steph had not even been in a meaningful relationship in a very long time. The girl just seemed to always live in the moment, and never beyond. Having a child was going to change her lifestyle considerably. At least for a little while. Those on the inside already knew the answers. Steph's pregnancy wasn't any surprise. We had been talking about and planning this "blessed event" for the past three years. We were talking about it even before Leah and I had our third child. Hell even the house staff were involved in the discussions. At first I was totally against the idea, and I think deep down Leah was as well. With three children of our own, and finally our youngest Jessica out of diapers, we thought we were done with babies in the house. We had even discussed the notion (actually Leah talked and I feigned to listen) that I should get a vasectomy.

At some point the argument turned, and the reality was that if Stephanie wanted to get pregnant, there wasn't much (reasonably) that could be done to stop her. On top of this truth was the honest assessment that ZigZag, in some fashion or another, was going to raise this child. Stephanie didn't work. Never had. The

band was always her best retirement plan. What other options were there for a career groupie? Leah, of all people, provided the final piece of logic to sway my decision. If “just anyone” was the father of this child, Stephanie would be more likely to treat her baby like every other temporary pleasure in her life. If we were going to pay for, support, and provide for this child, we might as well be in control of the process. I agreed to be the baby’s father.

Interestingly (or perhaps not), I had a feeling with each of the kids Leah and I have that I knew the exact moment of conception. It may sound weird, but I did. I had sex with Stephanie six times in a two week period and never had a clue. She was pregnant; I just couldn’t pinpoint the moment. Two weeks after Cara Louise was born I got my snip job. And I haven’t had sex with Stephanie since. I just prayed that this little girl didn’t look too much like me, and that she wouldn’t grow up to look like Rod Stewart. That added burden was something I wouldn’t wish on any female.

The after effects of Cara’s birth created a couple of issues that I don’t believe any of us had considered. The first came from Tate. Since Scott and Franchesca’s marriage and departure for Italy, Johnny was a bit like a man out on an island. His purpose and position within the organization no longer had nearly the impact or meaning that it had once held. Certainly Tate was still a cherished member of the family, and I knew I could count on him in even the direst of circumstances, but I think he had begun to feel out of place in the grand scheme of things. There was also his relationship, for lack of a more meaningful term, with Stephanie to factor into the equation.

Although I can’t say with any certainty, I believe that Tate and Steph were meant for each other. And I think that on some level they love each other as well. A pair of users who know each other so well after all these years that they allow themselves to be used by the other, maybe just so they know how it feels. I will say this, Johnny doted over Stephanie during her pregnancy, and he loves that little girl as if she was his own. I often wish she really were.

The second came at me completely out of the blue, and from a source that I never would have expected (here I go playing stupid guy again) – my wife Leah.

Although she was involved in these discussions from the very beginning, and not only signed off of this arrangement but indeed had advocated for it, I don’t think Leah ever considered how she would feel once the baby was born. First, she talked about money. I knew that wasn’t the issue, but I didn’t attempt to redirect her – I was smart enough to know when my wife needed to vent. She wanted it in writing that Cara was not an heir to my estate and would not share any inheritance with our three children. I could have the attorneys draft that, and felt confident that Stephanie would sign it. I thought, but did not mention, that there would have to be a fixed dollar amount in the agreement designated to Cara as a way to protect our children against any civil litigation down the line.

Then Leah hit the crux of the issue – my allegiance. Right now, Heather, Billy and Jessica would just see Cara as another baby in the house and with no understanding of the dynamics be willing to accept her as their “cousin.” But down the road, the truth was bound to come out and they would possibly feel betrayed and hurt by our cover-up. For this I really had no answer. They were all much too young to explain this to, and even if Heather could comprehend what we were saying it might be a detriment to the progress she was making with Dr. Small. I suggested that we continue to ponder this dilemma, and consult with Millie the next time Heather went to see her. We couldn’t unring the bell at this late date. Some day we might have to just ride out the storm with our kids and be honest with them. But today was certainly not that day.

Compounding Leah’s issues with Cara was a major problem with her mother Janet. When we called from Tokyo last fall and requested Leah’s mom to drop everything and come to Japan to assist with Heather’s care, Janet Butler had tenured her retirement papers with the Lufkin Independent School District. Upon our return to the States Janet decided to stay in Topanga Canyon – a move that was both encouraged and appreciated by all parties involved. Jimmy Butler, however, remained in Texas as he had been recently promoted to Fire Chief and felt inclined to fulfill the obligations of a position that was well earned and richly deserved.

During a trip to the beauty parlor in Santa Monica, Janet Butler was introduced to, and became smitten with, an NBC television executive who was nine years her junior. After a month long torrid and secretive affair, Janet decided that she wanted a divorce so that she could have a more open relationship with the forty five year old executive, a recent divorcee himself. Janet flew back to Texas to inform her husband of thirty five years that their marriage was over. She dropped this bombshell on her daughter on the way to Los Angeles International Airport, just four days before Cara’s birth. Leah was left with the unenviable chore of informing her sister Marla, and to deal with the fallout after Janet arrived in Lufkin, made her announcement to Jimmy, and quickly departed back to California.

Leah and I then faced a difficult decision as well. My wife vehemently wanted her mother to move out of our home. I understood, and agreed. However, we had to factor into this decision the impact it would have on our children, especially Heather. She was certainly not going to understand if her grandmother - the person she trusted most in this world – was suddenly absent from her life. I made a phone call, and scheduled an appointment for Leah and I to consult with Dr. Small. We described the situation to her, and although non-committal as to an opinion regarding our predicament, Millie did recognize that Janet had been a positive influence in Heather’s recovery.

In the end we decided to do nothing. My wife only made one demand to her mother upon her return to Topanga Canyon: that she not invite her new beau to our home or any other family function. He was simply not welcome. Leah also made it clear to Janet that she would use whatever of our considerable resources necessary to keep this man away from our children. I supported my wife's decision, and added one additional request of my own, that Janet's presence in our home was contingent on her ability to be accommodating to Jimmy Butler's schedule for visiting his grandchildren any time he wanted and the expectation that she would be civil in his presence. I don't think Janet appreciated being told how to conduct her life by her daughter and son-in-law, but it was our house, and she was only there because of the kids. She probably doesn't even realize how close she was to being thrown out on the street.

After that day Leah only talked to her mom when it pertained to the children. Marla Butler requested that we assist her in finding an apartment, as she no longer wanted to live under the same roof as her mother. Leah and I were saddened by this decision, but understood and assisted in procuring her an apartment near the Pepperdine University campus. Marla refused to talk with her mother, and would not return her phone calls. Jimmy Butler talked to both Leah and I many times on the phone over the course of the next month or so, and was moving on with his life, although obviously shaken by this sequence of events. Leah's brother Justin had just graduated from Texas A&M, was working for a wildlife advocacy group in Austin, and basically cut all ties with his mother.

Dr. Small also made a referral for Leah to see a colleague of hers who was an adult psychiatrist. He prescribed an anti-depressant and told my wife that she should stop smoking weed while she was on the drug, as it would counteract the effects of the medication. I was thankful I wasn't going on meds; the hash pipe was seeing me through a lot of shit these days.

With everything that was swirling around us, I needed some space. Leah and I rented a Jeep Cherokee, threw some things in the back, and disappeared (with Pee-Tee's knowledge and Mike's permission, of course). As we reached the foothills of the Sierra Nevada's it began to rain. I turned on the windshield wipers, and my mind went reeling back to the video shoot several years previous for our song "Pennsylvania Turnpike" off the "Unending Continuum" project.

I'm setting in the driver's seat of what looks like an old Chevy coupe. Probably late 60's. The camera is peeking in from the rear window, and I have my arm on the seat back and am turned to face the camera. I have on sunglasses, and my hair has a bit of grease in it. I'm wearing a black leather jacket, and doin' my "best James Dean."⁷⁷ The windshield wipers are keeping time.

The Pennsylvania Turnpike

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“Well I’m cruisin’ down the Pennsylvania Turnpike,
Goin’ crazy in the rain.
Well I’m cruisin’ down the Pennsylvania Turnpike,
Goin’ crazy in the rain.
Drivin’ mile after mile in the darkness,
Tryn’ to run from all this pain.
Well I’m cruisin’ down the Pennsylvania Turnpike,
Goin’ crazy in the rain.
Goin’ crazy in the rain.”

I get out of the vehicle and the camera location had changed to in front of the car. It is parked on the shoulder of the highway near a concrete underpass. As I move in front of the car and the camera angle pans out, you first see R.L., perched upon the roof of the vehicle, with a “modified” drum kit. His foot pedal for the kick drum is controlling the windshield wipers. Scotty is sitting on a little concrete abutment next to the car. Eric is set up inside the underpass, and is near a grate that has water flowing into it. Greg is beside the passenger side front door. As I sing, I am walking straight toward the camera.

“Lots of tunnels on the turnpike baby,
Lots of room for you to hide.
Lots of tunnels on the turnpike baby,
Lots of room for you to hide.
Lay your troubles all down by the roadside,
You can catch a free ride.
Lots of tunnels on the turnpike baby,
Lots of room for you to hide.
Lots of room for you to hide.”

By the time we get to the harmonica solo, I’ve moved a ways away from the band. I’m standing in the middle of the road (on the painted stripe between the lanes, to be exact), and there is quite a bit of traffic whizzing by me on both sides. As the solo is about to end, an eighteen wheeler approaches and a collision seems eminent.

We cut back to the car, and the guys are packing up their gear. I’m running toward them as I sing. A passenger in a passing car rolls down his window, and yells some inaudible syllables my direction.

“Take your chance out on the Pennsylvania Turnpike,
Read the writing on the wall.
Take your chance out on the Pennsylvania Turnpike,
Read the writing on the wall.
No need to be a fussin’ and a fightin’
No need for that at all.
Take your chance out on the Pennsylvania Turnpike,

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Read the writing on the wall.
Read the writing on the wall.
Read the writing on the wall.”

As I finish the verse, everyone is back in the car. I assume my spot at the wheel with R.L. riding shotgun. He is keeping time with his sticks on the dashboard. The other three are in the back. I turn back to face the camera again and as I sing the final refrain, Scotty, Eric and Greg do all sorts of things in the back seat – fight, stick their heads out the window, change places, play with an Etch-a-Sketch, and holler out States from the license plates of passing cars and trucks.

“(Roll on) Pennsylvania Turnpike (Roll on) Take me away.
(Roll on) Pennsylvania Turnpike (Roll on) Roll away.
(Roll on) Pennsylvania Turnpike (Roll on) Take me back home.
(Roll on) Pennsylvania Turnpike (Roll on) Roll on.
(Roll on) Pennsylvania Turnpike (Roll on) Roll on Roll on.
(Roll on) Pennsylvania Turnpike (Roll on) Roll on.”⁷⁸

I turn to face forward in the vehicle and we begin to pull away from the camera, which follows until we are nearly out of sight. The car goes over a hill and disappears. The video ends.

On the night in Fukuoka, the footage on the abandoned camera details Mike’s movements. Prior to the show, he was behind the on-stage monitor mixer, pointing out a minor glitch in the snare sound. Then he was backstage, chatting up an English journalist and an advertising executive. Nearer to show time there were wardrobe issues with R.L. and some heated discussions about the quality of the catering (sushi or no sushi had been a point of contention for years).

Once the show started Mike’s focus seemed to gravitate between the staging around Eric’s keyboards and a sweet young Asian thing in the front row. Once the pushing and shoving started he sat the camera down on one of the speaker columns – still running – and you can hear him tell someone to get us the hell out of there. We were all the way back to the hotel before he realized it had been left behind. Mike made a phone call, broke out his “spare” camera, and proceeded on with his adventures. Someone on the crew discovered the camera during tear down while clearing the gear and instruments from the stage (we literally left everything), and placed it in the case with Scotty’s rack effects. It was found there and returned to its owner some three weeks later as we prepared for the next stadium show, which none of us wanted to do under the circumstances, and which spurred a heated discussion with the promoter two hours prior to the show.

It was another week and a half before Mike even bothered to move the contents of the camera onto one of the external hard drives which were the archive of the tour. He never even noticed the events that precipitated either the stampede or the act now at the precept of all issues as they pertained to Connie Leggio.

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Of course, it had been many years since Mike actually reviewed his own videos. Unless there was a specific event (like one of his “absent but still present” recordings), a memorable female he cared to review, or the far less occasional than use to be indiscretion that needed to be removed (after a personal copy was always made) before the contents were copied to the archive drive and turned over to the video technicians for review and cataloging, along with the contents of the other five cameras that recorded every show.

And there was also the copy that was placed on a DAT tape drive and turned over to the FBI.

It had been a little over a year and a half since one of the corporate attorneys (it still seemed strange after all these years that what started out as five guys in an old bread delivery truck was now a multinational corporation with LLP at the end of the band’s name and lawyers involved in nearly every decision) was approached by an FBI field agent in Tulsa, Oklahoma while the attorney was visiting his sick mother in a nursing home near his home town. The Feds were absolutely convinced that we were up to something. Not that the trucking operation was anything new to the authorities. Organized crime’s involvement in the entertainment business went back several decades, with connections to Sinatra, DiMaggio, Atlantic City, and all things Vegas. Hell, even the current arrangement that included stage rigging and transportation had been in place long before the boys in New Jersey had the idea to move weed from one coast to the other in Springsteen’s stage transportation vehicles. The grand scale of the Pop-Op traveling circus just meant it could all be done at a higher level.

Not that the Feds were all that interested in a little smuggling and graft. But there were signs that pointed to a much bigger conspiracy that was being perpetrated and the FBI was most interested in several of the long time “technical” staff, and their comings and goings during the tours. They asked for copies of all of the video. We didn’t see any reason for them not to see most of it. So Mike began the weekly “dump and drop” process, which kept the folks in Washington both happy and quite busy.

And though the Feds were quite familiar with Mike’s personal video collection, there had been nothing of substance (aside from the occasional full breasted coed who did her best “Girls Gone Wild” enactment for Mike’s amusement and pleasure) gleaned from his videos. There wasn’t even a good method in place to inventory the footage to determine what might be missing from any individual event. This is why it was more than three months before the contents of the “lost” camera made it into the hands of a technical review analyst in the Los Angeles Regional Office. And it wasn’t until after the Securities and Exchange Commission started nosing around that the FBI became focused on the footage from the concert in Fukuoka.

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The first twenty reviews of the ill-fated concert footage yielded no information regarding the origin or precipitating events that led to the human stampede. From the vantage point on the corner of the stage, the camera captured (during the twelve minutes that were recorded before the camera was turned off or the battery died) a number of head shots of those near the stage, obstructing all other views of the overall scene. It was also positioned in such a manner that one of the speaker columns limited any sightlines to the left end on the stage. One corner of the floor and the very end of the VIP stands were all you really could see. Had it not been for the fatal events that occurred that evening, no one would have ever bothered that many viewings.

The substance in the contents on Mike's video camera boiled down to thirteen frames. Thirteen frames taken from a vantage point some twenty-five feet away, with a large number of obstacles floating across in front of the lens making it nearly impossible to assess any continuity in the footage. Five of these frames were separated from the other eight by about three seconds that are obscured by someone's shoulder and forearm.

The first five are of the woman's face. The Project looked to her right, directly into the camera lens, and was beginning to move her head to the left. She had a gloved hand raised just below her face. In the last two of these frames she has a look in her eyes that I will never forget. It was a look of purpose. A look of mission. Then the unknown shoulder slides in from the right side of the frame. As it fades slightly back to the left The Project's face is no longer in view as she has moved a bit to her left, but her right hand still is.

The last eight frames show Connie Leggio's gloved hand as it extends toward the young broker's shoulder. In the last two of the frames there appears to be a glint in the middle of the frame. Missed by all who had reviewed and analyzed the footage to this point, it wasn't a light reflection or blemish on the image as some had previously suggested. It was the glint of steel – extending from the end of the woman's index finger.

The incision The Project had made into the young broker was intended to pierce the upper left ventricle of his heart. It veered upward slightly due to the deflection off of some rib muscles and nicked the aorta instead, although not enough to make it leak. That didn't occur until after the size 13 ½ shoe came crashing down on his shoulder. The stress of the impact of the shoe created enough additional pressure on the heart to force the aorta to expand slightly and cause the nick inflicted by the woman to tear a bit more. Blood began to trickle into Kenechi Takahashi's chest.

The medical staff at the stadium was both undermanned and frantic. They'd already found two dead, treated more people that night than many of them had in their entire career at the facility, and were ready for this nightmare to be two or three drinks behind them. They were just about to close down the operation and

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turn it all over to the municipal EMT's when they heard over the radio from one of the ushers that someone had collapsed on the south concourse. By the time the staff got to Kenechi, there was a city ambulance gurney on the way as well. When he complained to them about pain on the right side of his chest, it was dismissed as blunt trauma from Mr. Size 13 ½, and a couple of busted ribs. Get him to the emergency room and take some x-rays. About that time the young broker lost consciousness, never to regain it.

What the stadium medical staff didn't know, and the EMT's wouldn't realize until it was far too late, was that Kenechi Takahashi had a rare but not totally uncommon condition called dextrocardia. In layman's terms, his heart, along with all of the other organs in his chest cavity, were reversed. His heart was on the right side of his thoracic cavity not the left. Kenechi had known of his congenital defect from quite a young age.

The full name of his condition was dextrocardia situs inversus totalis. The contents of his chest cavity were inverted. From a medical standpoint, this condition was not life threatening, and about one out of twelve thousand persons are born with some degree of dextrocardia. Only about one of every one hundred and fifty thousand of these people had full inversion, as Kenechi Takahashi did. Few knew about this, including his parents, doctor, a few close friends – he didn't even think to mention it to the medical staff as the pain of the broken ribs far exceeded any other symptoms. And, of course, Connie Leggio knew.

Scott, Francesca and Anderson McNaughton were sitting in the VIP lounge at Kennedy Airport in New York. For some reason, their connecting flight to Los Angeles had been delayed. The western leg of ZigZag's "One Brick at a Time" tour started the next day in San Diego, and Scotty was anxious to get his family back to L.A. and settled into their beach house before heading south with the band the following morning.

It was their decision while in California for the recording sessions for "Anderson's Lament" to extend the lease on the beach house for a full two years. That way they could leave some of their possessions behind and not have to drag them back and forth across the Atlantic. The nursery had been set up by Joy Bennett and was ready for their now ten month old son to inhabit.

During the first half dozen concerts on this leg of the tour – all on the west coast, Scotty planned to fly back and forth to L.A. every night and Mike Bennett had procured a private jet through Premier Cart and Cartage for this purpose. We would then be spending two weeks doing Pop-Op shows at the Greek Theater before moving to the Midwest.

The Handler had the situation at JFK airport well under control. Through an acquaintance in the Genovese Family in New York, a diesel fuel spill was arranged that would keep the flight carrying the McNaughton family back to

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California delayed for three or four hours. This was confirmed by a contact at the airport's ground control service. He placed a "green light" call to The Project. This was followed with a "standby" call to General Cho, who was currently awaiting his go ahead at a hotel located in Reseda. Once The Project had the video tapes in her possession he would meet with her and carry out his part of the plan.

Connie Leggio had flown to San Diego, checked into her hotel room, confirmed that all of the transport vehicles for the ZigZag show had arrived safely, rented a car, and driven back to Los Angeles. When she received the call from The Handler, Connie proceeded to the McNaughton's beach house in Malibu, entered the premises, changed into one of Franchesca McNaughton's trademark pant suits, located the keys to the yellow Mercedes coupe the McNaughton's had rented, pulled out of the garage, and headed for Topanga Canyon.

FBI field agent Derrick Sims was in charge of surveillance activities on the ocean side end of Topanga Canyon Boulevard from the back of a service van with a "Valley Plumbing" sign on the side. As the yellow Mercedes approached the drive leading back to The Stitchery, he confirmed that the car matched an entry on the "Expected Vehicle" list provided to the Feds, quickly scanned the camera monitors, and finding no unexpected activity went back to devouring the foot long Subway sandwich that sat in front of him.

The Project parked at the rear of the studio and exited the Mercedes. Knowing that her little disguise was meant only to mislead anyone who might be monitoring the entrance to the compound, and would not fool anyone within the band or its security personnel, she moved purposefully up the walkway and into the studio.

Mike Bennett, Pee-Tee Brown and I were sitting in the studio control room, trying to sort out the details that we had been provided earlier in the day. Mike was sitting on the sofa, a case full of digital recordings from the Fukuoka concert on the table in front of him. I'd never seen Mike this distressed, not even when confronting his ex-wife. Pee-Tee was leaning against the glass wall across from the hallway that that led to the rear exit of The Stitch. He was in his shirt sleeves and his holstered nine millimeter Beretta was displayed prominently on his left breast. I think we were all wondering what was going to happen next. None of us had to wait very long to find out.

I had just swiveled the captain's chair I was sitting in that was in front of the mixing console toward Mike when the chime on the rear door rang in the control room. Pee-Tee looked at the security monitors and announced that Scotty had arrived, seeing the yellow Mercedes in the driveway. I took a deep breath. It was my last for what seemed like an eternity.

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The security monitor switched views, and we could all see a woman entering the studio. For a brief moment I believed that it was Franchesca McNaughton, but then quickly realized that it was not Franchesca, but instead a very determined looking Connie Leggio wearing one of Franchesca's pant suits and marching deliberately up the hallway. I looked toward my compatriots and realized instantly that they had recognized her as well.

As Connie Leggio neared the control room door, I looked to Pee-Tee Brown, and with clarity and urgency, I told him to shoot her. Shoot her as soon as she walked through the door. Shoot her before anything else could happen. Connie pushed open the control room door, scowling at Pee-Tee as she entered.

I think before any of us knew what had happened, Connie walked into the room, past all three of us, and stopped in front of an overstuffed chair at the end of the table which ran parallel to the couch that Mike was nervously sitting on. She turned and set her purse down. As she pulled her left hand away from her purse and straightened her body, in the same motion she reached behind her head with her right hand, pulled an automatic weapon from beneath the collar of her jacket and fired one time.

The thirty-two caliber hollow point slug entered Pee-Tee's forehead about an inch above his right eyebrow. It came out the back of his skull almost instantly upon entering. The exit wound was about the size of a baseball. Blood and brain matter spread across the glass wall behind him. Pee-Tee dropped to his knees and then to the floor. I was certain that he was dead. He hadn't even reached for his gun.

Calmly, The Project replaced her weapon, turned back toward Mike on the couch, and proceeded to sit down next to him. I moved to a chair that was at a right angle to the couch. As I began to sit, Connie motioned toward the video collection on the table. Mike leaned forward, as if in a desperate attempt to safeguard his coveted prize.

Connie wanted answers. She wanted the tapes, but she also wanted to know how many sets there were and who knew about them. The Handler, through his informant in the FBI, had already educated The Project to the fact that the Feds had a set, and were pretty sure what they had found was evidence of murder.

That's when I saw it. THAT look in her eyes. The same look that was captured to video over two full frames. The look she had just before she inserted a thin wire into the back of Kenechi Takahashi and nicked his aorta. Just as it had been chronicled in our briefing with Special Agent Welch that very morning. Observers in Corleone had described the same look in the eyes of a young Luciano Leggio. There was no doubt in my mind, in that split second, that she was about to kill my partner. In retrospect, she was probably going to kill me as well, but in the moment that thought didn't pass through my mind. In what I can

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only describe as an “out of body” experience, I was about to interject my will into the situation.

And then it happened...

At the most opportune time of my entire life, which would have undoubtedly ended that day, had it not happened. Time Warp – or whatever you want to call it. Everything seemed to slow nearly to a stop. Every second was now dissected into a thousand distinct moments. And I felt like I had control over each and every one of them.

It had only happened this way one time before. I was making love to Leah. It was both frightening and exhilarating at the same time. Being able to relish those most precious of moments in their absolute fullness was incredible. But I think it's a good thing it only lasted a few seconds. The disconnectedness of one partner in real time and the other in super slo-mo was a bit scary. Had this “spell” lasted much longer, I'm afraid I might have seriously hurt my wife. I wasn't out of control. I was in Uber-control.

From that moment in the studio, I remember seeing things in a “frame-by-frame” mode.

- Connie's right hand moved ever so slightly. To this day I'm not sure if she was about to gesture or was preparing to reach for her gun again. I didn't wait to see.
- Mike, thinking the same thing as I, recoiled a bit on the couch and reached for the tapes on the table.
- I sensed the weight of my entire body becoming centered over the ball of my right foot. I slid forward a bit in my chair.
- Connie's eyes widened and there was a horrible scowl on her face.
- Almost all of my weight was now being supported by my right leg and my right hand was taking a firm grip on the arm of the chair. I looked over and saw Pee-Tee's blood on the wall.
- The woman's arm was definitely coming up now, and she was beginning to lean forward as well.
- Mike tried to push farther away from her and yelled “Don't”. To me it sounded more like “Daaooooooooonnt”.
- Connie looked toward Mike briefly as her hand was moving from in front of her body to beside her head.

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- Mike's head and upper torso began to roll toward the floor.
- In a movement I can only describe as the thrust of a fully coiled cobra, I pushed myself toward the woman and my left leg began to extend.

Then the last frame before everything went back to "real time" – a piece of personal history frozen forever in my mind:

- The heel of my left foot was headed straight toward The Project's right jaw. Over the top of my foot I see her eyes. THOSE eyes. The whole thing came down to the only part of this entire little disaster that had any consistency. Those eyes. And what I saw in them in that last fleeting moment was more despair than humanly imaginable.

It was the wide eyed stare of utter disbelief.

My shoe connected with Connie's jaw right below her ear. The length of my foot proceeded down her jawline and across the end of her chin. The force of the blow pushed her head back and into the wall behind the couch. Her skull penetrated through the sheet rock and came to rest against one of the two by four studs in the wall. I fractured her jaw and broke her neck.

She died instantly.

It was only three minutes after the Mercedes pulled into the driveway that Agent Sims was informed on his two way radio that reports in New York had confirmed that the McNaughton's were still on the ground at Kennedy and therefore couldn't possibly have just driven onto the ZigZag compound. Another two minutes and there were three unmarked black sedans accompanying the Plumbing van and pulling into the drive behind the Mercedes. They were about five minutes too late.

I looked at Pee-Tee's lifeless body and felt like my right arm had been ripped from my own. Leah came into the room about fifteen minutes later and immediately crumbled in a heap beside Pee-Tee's corpse. She was hysterical and inconsolable. We had to get a doctor to sedate her before she finally settled down. When Gladys Brown returned from the grocery there was a Los Angeles County Sheriff's car in her driveway. Upon receiving the news of her husband's demise she fainted right there on the front steps and cracked her head open on the cement. She was treated and released from the UCLA Medical Center with three stitches and a minor concussion.

Mike and I were escorted to a nondescript building just off the Ventura Freeway and questioned individually for the better part of two hours. Apparently they believed our stories, and we were released to return to the madness at The Stitch. A dozen sets of inquisitive eyes greeted us at the door. We were both too spent to

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talk. We went down to the game room at The Inn and I extracted a bottle of bourbon from beneath the bar. My friend Mike Bennett joined me. It was his first drink in nearly sixteen years.

General Cho waited several hours at a pay phone near Topanga Beach for a call that never came. He returned to his hotel room in Reseda and booked the next flight back to Saigon.

We said goodbye to our friend and guardian Edward "Pee-Tee" Brown in a small cemetery just outside of Norcross, Georgia. His father was interred just across from his freshly dug grave. Leah was still in a great deal of shock and I more or less dragged her through the entire proceeding.

One of the most difficult tasks in all of life is to bury a friend. It's a little different than family. When a family member dies, you usually feel as if you've lost part of your past. When a friend dies, you lose part of the present.

The first time I had to attend the funeral of a friend I was seventeen years old. The friend's name was Doug Elsworth. I had known Doug since we were kids, and we were really close until my family moved during the summer between my seventh and eighth grade years. We played army together and listened to records on his older sister's stereo. Doug was into what I would call novelty songs. The two I remember distinctly were "The Ballad of Bonnie and Clyde" and "The Ballad of the Green Berets". Maybe he just liked songs with ballad in the title. I do recall that he would spin the same half dozen 45's all day long. Doug was two years older than I and an outstanding track and cross country runner. His dad was a local police officer and a little league umpire. His mom worked for the phone company.

I was a sophomore in high school when my mom informed me one day after school that she had talked to one of our former neighbors at the grocery store and was told that Doug had testicular cancer. I had no idea what that meant. Doug went through rounds of chemo-therapy and his hair fell out. He had to stop running and was in and out of the hospital. I would see him every once in a while at school, driving the '69 Corvette that his dad had bought for him.

After Doug graduated from high school he was in remission and attended classes briefly at the local junior college. Then the cancer returned and had spread to his liver and lungs. Between treatments and hospital stays Doug would work in a little woodshop his parents had built beside their house, and he opened a storefront down on the town square called "The Splendid Splinter." I saw him there a couple of times and one afternoon was invited over to an apartment he was sharing with his live-in girlfriend/caretaker Lindsey. They had just returned from a trip to Colorado, and Doug had a case of Coors beer. Lindsey made some soup, but Doug didn't eat. He tried to enjoy a beer with me but only managed a few sips while I had two or three bottles. We smoked part of a joint, which Doug said

helped with the nausea from the medication he was currently taking. I left feeling terrible that I hadn't spent more time with Doug the last few years.

Doug Elsworth died just a few days later. He was nineteen years old. I was asked to be a pall bearer at his funeral, and remember my mother made me get a haircut. Probably the last one I got for two or three years. I saw several old friends at the service, many of whom had moved away or gone off to college. I'll never forget the look in Doug's mother's eyes that day. The devastation at her loss. I remembered thinking at the time that I never wanted to know the feeling of outliving one of my kids. Children were supposed to bury their parents, not the other way around.

Pee-Tee's mother was prepared to be angry with me. All that behavior, all of those potentially dangerous situations, this was bound to happen. But his wife Gladys knew better. Pee-Tee never said much to her about the goings on within the band, but she knew from what the police were telling her, and the first hand knowledge from traveling with the band all of these years that this was outside of anyone's control within the ZigZag family. These facts didn't make the reality of Pee Tee's death any easier to deal with, or remove any of the guilt that I had piled upon my own head. If his mother wanted to yell at me, I felt like she had that right. I'd been yelled at by people I cared far less about.

I spoke briefly at Pee-Tee's service, and quoted William Shakespeare, from the second act of "Julius Caesar":

"Cowards die many times before their deaths;
The valiant never taste of death but once."

We had a ZigZag Family Tribunal that night, and I did the best I could under the circumstances to honor the memory of a dear brother. We told stories, and we laughed, and we cried, and we held on to each other at the end of the night like we were the last survivors on earth. I told Tiny that night to make sure that Gladys got Pee-Tee's full pay for as long as we still had money in the bank. Mike and Joy helped me get Leah into our hotel room, and she finally (with the assistance of a sedative) fell asleep. Then I got very, very drunk. I even had a couple of shots of tequila. My journey with Pee-Tee Brown had gone full circle.

After Connie Leggio's body was removed from The Stitch, I didn't know what happened to her, and I didn't care. Mike Bennett probably knows but he wouldn't tell me even if I ask. I loathed that woman. In fact I can't come up with a verb strong enough to describe the depths of my hatred for her. She tried to compromise everything that we had worked nearly twenty years to achieve. She KILLED my closest confidant. She was going to kill my business partner and best of friends. Hell, she would have eventually gotten around to killing me.

Long Live Rock And Roll

I didn't need to know where Connie Leggio was buried. If I knew, I'd want to go there and spit on the bitch's grave. Or worse.

I could hear a young Eric Clapton haunting my brain.

“Strange brew,
Girl what's inside of you.”⁷⁹