

# Walking To Gibraltar, Chapter 6: In Which Moral Boundaries Are Set

*by Frank Indiana*

The first time they were separated, he rediscovered music and writing.

As a kid, he'd lived for music. But Max changed everything. (Baby Max had loved Springsteen and Big Country. He cried whenever Frank put Talking Heads on the turntable.) He still listened. He just didn't explore.

That changed again one morning when he woke up in his smelly furnished room with the TV blaring. Some shill enthusing about a revolutionary way to grow "your own real hair" on your bald head. Frank had plenty of hair. Also, he had seen this particular infomercial. Twice.

He drove to Best Buy and bought a boom box. And a handful of CDs. Elvis Costello. The Smiths. XTC. Los Lobos.

He bought more. He discovered new things. Blur. Sugar. Meat Puppets. The brothers-of-the-road harmonies of the Jayhawks. Red House Painters and American Music Club and the whole San Francisco sadcore scene. Nirvana. Soundgarden. Grunge. There was so much he'd missed. He was drunk with it.

He wrote while he listened. In his journal, he wrote angry letters to Astrid. He defended himself and pled ignorance. He didn't know why she despised him. He tried hard to convince himself it was all his fault. He was the common denominator in every problem he had.

It was good practice for when he returned home. Training yourself to like the taste of shit makes it easier to swallow.

One afternoon, they were driving to Target. Frank was listening to *The Royal Scam*.

"Will you please turn that down?" Astrid asked.

He did.

"Frank. Turn it down."

"You mean so low that I can't hear it?"

"I don't want to listen to your music. I hate Steely Dan."

"You *hate* Steely Dan? You used to love them."

"I just said that because you liked them," she said.

Frank popped the CD out of the player. He replaced it with *Rubber Soul*.

"Frank, I don't want to listen to the Beatles."

"Don't tell me you hate the Beatles."

"As a matter of fact, I do."

"Astrid...okay, I'll turn it off. But I don't know anyone who hates the Beatles."

"Huh," she sniffed. "Now you do."

Was she just fucking with him? Was she serious? Either way, he felt like shit. Not to mention: who hated the Beatles? He turned off the stereo and played *Rubber Soul* in his head.

It got worse.

He was getting dressed one morning when Astrid burst into the bedroom, dangling his copy of *Siamese Dream* from the tips of her fingers as if it were a shitty diaper. "Frank," she said in her something-is-amiss-here voice, "is this *yours*?"

"Yes."

"Do you know it has a song called 'Silverfuck?'"

"Umm...well, I probably never thought about it."

"And you let Max listen to this?"

"Well...it's Smashing Pumpkins. They're popular."

"And so you think that's okay?"

"It's just a made-up word, Astrid. What does it even mean?"

"Hmm. And what's this a picture of?"

The cover shot. The little girls in white dresses, cheek by cheek. "I think they're conjoined twins."

Astrid was dubious. "I want this gone," she said.

"Astrid...I'm not throwing it away," said Frank. "I'm a grown man, and this is my house, too. It's music, for god's sake."

"I want it away from Max. Anything you have like this—I want it away from him."

"He's fourteen, Astrid. He's heard the word before."

"You can take care of it, or I will."

Jesus. At this point, he had a thousand CDs. He started through them with the intention of hiding the sexual, the sacrilegious, the profane. It dawned on him almost immediately that Astrid could find some objection to virtually everything he owned.

In the end, he stacked them all in his closet.

He took it as a lesson. A warning. He would have to be very careful about his writing.

