

ADVANCE PRAISE FOR BALLAST POINT BREAKDOWN

Nobody lives forever. Or do they? Hop on board. *Ballast Point Breakdown* opens with the wind tearing at your face as you bounce across San Diego Bay in the moonlight, hurtling toward a fiery collision of the past and the present. Guitar playing Private Eye Rolly Waters finds that the truth has a way of floating to the surface and that other things are perhaps best forgotten.

G.M. Ford, Author of the Leo Waterman series

This is Fayman firing on all cylinders.

Bill Fitzhugh, Author of HUMAN RESOURCES and PEST CONTROL

As a San Diego author and some-time musician, *Ballast Point Breakdown* spoke to me on so many levels — the unique San Diego settings, the dolphins (!!) and of course, the musician jokes (How many guitarists DOES it take to screw in a lightbulb, anyway?). But you don't have to be a San Diego musician to enjoy this twisty mystery.

Lisa Brackmann, Author of ROCK PAPER TIGER and BLACK SWAN RISING

Musician turned private eye Rolly Waters isn't your average gumshoe. In Fayman's skilled hands Waters is clever, funny and intrepid. But he's much more, a scarred hero who carries the guilt from a decades old tragedy that makes him a real, fleshed-out character who you root and fear for as he follows clues no matter how dark an alley they lead him down." Bravo, Mr. Fayman!"

Matt Coyle, Author of the award-winning Rick Cahill crime series

Private Eye Roland Waters investigates with the cool, laconic style of the blues guitarist he is.

Matt Goldman, NYT Bestselling Author and Shamus Award Nominee

Praise for the Rolly Waters Mysteries *Border Field Blues* and *Desert City Diva*:

A powerful new voice on the crime-fiction scene, Corey Lynn Fayman delivers a potent dose of sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll.

ForeWord Reviews

A rollicking and fast-paced crime novel.

San Francisco Book Reviews

Readers will enjoy the broadly drawn characters and the rough and tumble borderland setting.

Publishers Weekly

Sparse dialogue and riveting scenes make this mystery impossible to put down.

ForeWord Reviews

Fans of wisecracking California crime solvers will enjoy this working-class PI with a poet's soul.

Booklist

A weird, but welcome, addition to the pantheon of literary PIs. A delightfully strange spin on the noir genre.

Foreword Reviews

Offbeat characters and popular musical lore distinguish this decidedly unusual tale.

Publishers Weekly

The dialogue is the real attraction. It is sparse but ricochets with witty abandon. This bare-bones style evokes the natural desolateness of the desert backdrop beautifully, allowing the story to thunder on to a shocking conclusion.

Foreword Review

BALLAST POINT BREAKDOWN

BALLAST POINT BREAKDOWN

COREY LYNN FAYMAN

This book is a work of fiction. Unless otherwise stated all names, characters, events, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or events is entirely coincidental.

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*To all of Rolly Waters' fans and friends.
Though they be but little, they are fierce.*

In Memoriam Hunza Kotas

THE FIRE

J.V. Sideman had just finished playing the saxophone break for the band's rendition of "This Magic Moment" when a twenty-one-foot Bayliner speedboat skidded across the beach outside the Admiral's Club ballroom and crashed through a large picture window. Partygoers screamed as glass shards exploded into the room and the boat landed with a deep and frightening thump on the carpeted floor. They scattered into the back corners of the room before turning to stare in disbelief. The band stopped mid-song, as if the power had gone out.

The crash of the boat had already dampened the crowd's exuberance, but when a woman with a bright red gash on her forehead crawled out of the boat's cabin, a nervous silence fell over the room. The woman walked to the edge of the boat and addressed them.

"Save the dolphins!" she said. "Save—"

Someone interrupted from the back of the room, a woman's voice, maternal and demanding.

"Young lady!" she said. "Come down from there immediately."

"No, Mother," said the woman on the boat.

"I demand that you come down from there *now*."

The crowd gasped as the woman on the boat began to pour the

contents of a red gasoline can onto the deck. A bald man in a dark suit took charge of the scene.

"Everyone out," he ordered. "Everyone out now. The party's over."

As the guests rushed to the exits, the woman's mother moved toward the boat. The man who'd sounded the alarm followed two steps behind her.

"Now, dear," said the man, taking a more conciliatory tone. "Is this really necessary?"

"Lies," the woman on the boat said in response. "Lies, lies, lies!" She lifted the gasoline can above her head and poured the last of its acrid contents over her curly blond hair until it lay flat and soggy against her skin. She tossed the can aside, reached into the folds of her sweatshirt and pulled out a fat, stubby pistol.

"That's a flare gun," said Conway, the band's drummer, rising from his throne. "We gotta get out of here."

"What about the equipment?" said Sideman.

"Fuck the equipment," said Conway. "If she shoots that thing off, this whole place is going up. I used to work here. The kitchen's on the other side of that wall. It's all gas lines and grease."

"I'm not leaving without my axes," said Sideman, but Conway had already abandoned the stage, hell-bent for the patio exit, along with the rest of the band. Sideman started after them, then stopped. He couldn't leave without his saxophones. He had another gig tomorrow and three more next week, some good-paying gigs. He retrieved his cases from under the stage, then glanced back at the room, keeping a nervous eye on the family drama that was unfolding.

"Why are you doing this, honey?" said the bald man, sounding like a college professor quizzing a mediocre student.

"It was a lie, Father," said the woman on the boat. "You both know it."

"What was a lie, honey?"

"My life. It was all a lie."

"Now, dear," said her mother. "We've talked about this before. You're suffering from delusions. You agreed to take your medications."

"I've seen him."

"Who, darling?" said the man.

The woman waved the flare gun toward the water outside the shattered window.

"Arion," she said.

"That's ridiculous," said her mother. "Arion doesn't exist. He's a figment of your imagination. You know that. You've told me you know that. Let's put an end to this infantile behavior right now."

Sideman locked his two saxophones inside their cases, picked them up and headed toward the patio. The woman's mother continued to try and talk her down from the boat, but her daughter would have none of it.

"Lies," she repeated. "It's all lies."

"That's enough, young lady," said her mother. "I'm ordering you to come down from there. Your father and I are very disappointed in you."

The woman on board faltered for a moment, then pressed the flare gun against the side of her head. Sideman stopped in his tracks.

"Don't—" he said.

"Save the dolphins!" the woman shouted and pulled the trigger. The flare cartridge ricocheted against her skull and shot up toward the ceiling, its concussive energy knocking her head sideways like a bobble-head doll. She toppled onto the deck in a limp heap. The flare hit the ceiling in a sparkling rush, then dropped back onto the boat, igniting the gasoline. A curtain of flame rose from the deck.

Sideman leapt back from the heat, upsetting the buffet table behind him, where a carved ice sculpture of a scuba diver and two dolphins loomed over platters of crab claws and jumbo shrimp. The sculpture wobbled, tumbled and fell to the floor, breaking into chunks of jagged ice. Sideman picked himself up, grabbed his saxophone cases and ran for the patio door. The door opened and caught him full in the face. Sideman tumbled backwards onto the floor as a long-haired, bearded man wielding a fire extinguisher rushed into the room.

Sideman stared at the ceiling a moment, then rolled to his knees and reached for his saxophone cases. The bearded man broke the seal on the extinguisher and sprayed foam onto the boat, but it had little effect on the flames that now licked at the ceiling. The extinguisher ran out of foam. The man tossed it away. He stepped back, put his hands

on his hips and stared up at the flames. The woman's parents had abandoned the room.

A long, terrifying howl filled the air. Sideman's guts twisted into a knot as he saw the woman rise from the deck of the boat. She was on fire, burning in front of him, engulfed in the flames. The bearded man raised his right hand and waved it across his chest, like a priest giving last rites. The woman raised her arms, reaching, reaching. She toppled back onto the deck.

The sprinklers in the ceiling popped on, dousing the room in rusty water like some kind of sick joke. Sideman stood up, collected his saxophones and ran toward the patio. He'd seen a lot in his musical career, thirty years of performing in clubs and hotels and theaters. He'd seen fistfights and stabbings and blood on the bar stools. But he'd never seen someone burn. He was wet now, sopping wet from the sprinklers. He opened the exit door. It was dusk, almost dark out, but the air was dry and warm, like so many autumn nights in San Diego. He could see cars crossing over the water on the Harbor Drive bridge. Christmas lights hung from the bridge, long strings of red and green.

"Hold the door, horn man," said a voice from behind him. Sideman tossed his saxophone cases onto the patio and looked back into the room.

The bearded man stood at the seafood buffet, stuffing his overcoat pockets with shrimp. The boat was still burning. The water had done little to tamp down the fire. Sideman recognized the man with the beard.

"Harmonica Dan?" he said.

"How you been, J.V.?" said the man.

"What the hell are you doing?"

"I thought I'd stock up, since I was here," the man said, grabbing handfuls of shrimp and stuffing them into his pocket. "My dolphins love these things."

A ball of blue flame lit up the room as the Bayliner's fuel tanks exploded. Sideman shut his eyes, felt the heat. When he opened them again, he was outside on the patio. He lay on his back, staring at stars in a dark purple sky.

THE FAN

It was Monday night. Tuesday morning, really, because Monday night was the blues jam at Winstons Beach Club in Ocean Beach and now the jam was over. It was twenty minutes past one on Tuesday morning. Rolly Waters sat at the bar, nursing a club soda with lime while he waited for Moogus to pack up his drum kit. A young woman in a tie-dyed halter top walked up to the bar and sat down next to him.

"I'm looking for someone," she said.

"Aren't we all?" said Rolly, as the scent of patchouli oil rolled over him. Not much had changed since he and his band had lived in a house four blocks away from Winstons, in the neighborhood the locals referred to as the War Zone. Fifteen years later, Ocean Beach girls still smelled the same. Patchouli. Or was it sandalwood?

"I'm serious," said the woman.

"So am I," said Rolly. The woman had long blond hair and a lithe, tanned body, but she looked sandy at the edges. The sand was relentless in OB. It found its way into your house, abrading the finish on your guitars. It got into your lungs and corroded your heart. It scraped your soul to a coarse nub.

The woman leaned her elbow on the bar. She rested her head on her hand and narrowed her eyes.

"Someone told me you were a detective," she said.

"Who told you that?"

"Is it true?"

"I do some work as a private investigator," said Rolly. "When I'm not strangling cats."

"What?" said the woman, squinching her nose as if Rolly smelled funny.

"Playing guitar," said Rolly. "It's a musician joke."

"I don't get it."

Rolly turned his head toward the stage, looking for an escape, but Moogus hadn't finished packing his drums yet. The woman continued to stare at him. He turned back to face her. Twenty years ago, he might have been flattered by her intensity. Now it just made him nervous.

"So who are you looking for?" he asked.

"A man."

Rolly resisted the impulse to make another smart remark. He restrained himself these days, more than he used to. The woman wouldn't get his jokes anyway. She didn't seem all that bright.

"Is this man someone you know?" he said.

The woman grabbed the chain necklace that hung from her neck and lifted two shiny rectangles from under her shirt. They were aluminum dog tags, like the ones Rolly's father had worn in the Navy.

"I want to find him," she said, displaying the tags for Rolly's perusal. He leaned in toward her and squinted at the letters embossed on the tags. The dim light in the bar didn't help his aging eyes any.

"Butch Fleetwood," said the woman, sensing his difficulty. "That's his name."

"Yes," said Rolly, pretending his eyes weren't as old as they seemed. "Butch Fleetwood. Was he a friend of yours?"

"My patron gave these dog tags to me."

"I see. Who's your patron?"

"Janis Withers."

"That name sounds familiar," said Rolly, searching his brain for a connection. He found it. "There was a Janis Withers who ran our fan club. The Creatures. My old band. That was a long time ago."

The woman nodded.

"Janis gave me the dog tags. She asked me to find you if something happened to her. She asked me to give them to you."

"What happened to Janis?"

"She died."

"I'm sorry to hear that."

"The police say it was suicide."

"When did this happen?"

"Three days ago. Friday."

"How did . . . excuse me, what's your name?"

"Melody Flowers."

"Hello, Melody. I'm Rolly."

"I don't believe them, you see."

"Who?"

"The police. Janis didn't kill herself," said Melody, her eyes getting brighter. "I have a strong intuition about these things. I can read auras."

Rolly stared at the bubbles in his glass. If the police said Janis Withers had killed herself, she probably had. The cops were usually right about that kind of thing. It wouldn't do him any good to challenge Melody on her instincts, thought. That only made people mad. Her intuition might be as strong as the rip currents off the Ocean Beach Pier. It might be as dangerous, too. He paddled off to the side.

"What's your interest in Butch Fleetwood?" he said. "What will you do if I find him?"

Melody twisted one end of her hair and stared at it.

"I want to save the Lemurian Temple," she said.

"Oh," said Rolly, picturing an animal in his head, some kind of monkey that looked like a raccoon. He remembered a travel show he'd watched on TV where lemurs had taken over a temple in Thailand, someplace like that. He doubted it was the same kind of temple. The zoning laws wouldn't allow for live monkeys, even in Ocean Beach.

"Janis and I founded the temple," Melody continued. "I'm the priestess. My Lemurian name is Merdonis. I live in the back."

Rolly sipped his club soda, wondering how the weirdos always managed to find him. Six months ago it had been a bunch of UFO

freaks. He wasn't sure he wanted to deal with more weirdos, no matter how attractive and sandy they might be.

"Lemurians worship dolphins as spirit beings," said Melody. "Dolphins act as our guides to higher consciousness."

"I see," said Rolly. It wasn't monkeys, at least.

"When I met Janis," said Melody, "I could see right away how spiritually in tune she was. I talked to her about swimming with the dolphins in Hawaii one time, you know, with a friend of mine. I told her how it put me on another spiritual plane. She asked me if I knew about Lemuria and the dolphins. She said he was Arion, the dolphin king."

"Who was?"

"Butch Fleetwood. The guy on the dog tags. Arion. That's what she called him sometimes. I think it was him anyway. It was kind of confusing, the way she talked about people."

"Fleetwood was a Lemurian?"

"He was in the Navy, I think. A long time ago. He did something with dolphins. Janis promised she would leave the temple to me."

"Did she put it in writing? Did she leave a will?"

"I don't know. Her mother came to the temple the day after Janis died. She told me I'd have to leave, that they'd be selling the house. The temple, I mean. I thought maybe this Butch guy could help me."

"What about other family?" said Rolly. "Maybe they'd know something about a will."

"Janis never said much about her family. I think she was in love with him. Butch."

"She told you that?"

"I could just tell," said Melody. "The way her aura lit up when she talked about him. They took a lot of her stuff."

"Who did?"

"The guys who came to the temple."

"What guys?"

"The police, and some people in suits. A man and a woman. They took stuff out of the closets."

"What kind of stuff?"

"Papers and photographs. Janis kept some old boxes in there."

"Hmm," Rolly said. It was unusual procedure for a suicide case. He might be able to get some information from his friend Bonnie Hammond at SDPD, if she was feeling generous. He looked at the dog tags again. Below the name was a number, with the letters *USN* at the end. You couldn't go into a bar in San Diego without running into someone who'd worn Navy dog tags. There were women and men all over this city who'd hooked up with a sailor on shore leave. His mother had married one of those sailors. And divorced him when Rolly was twelve.

"My father's an old Navy man," Rolly said, indicating the dog tags. "He might be able to tell me something about these. Did you show the police the dog tags?"

"Janis said I could only show them to you."

"When did she give them to you?"

"The day before she died."

"And when did the police come?"

"The day after. They were rude to me. Those people in the suits were even ruder. Her mother was the worst of them all."

"Did any of them mention Butch Fleetwood?"

"No."

Rolly nodded. He looked back at the stage. Moogus had almost finished packing his drums. Melody lifted the dog tags over her head and placed them on the bar.

"I need you to find him," she said, putting her hand on top of Rolly's. "I think he can help me. Her mother says I have to move out of the temple next week."

Melody looked into Rolly's eyes, the way women did when they wanted something, when they thought you were easy. Her hand on his wasn't sandy, but soft.

"I charge fifty dollars an hour for this kind of thing," said Rolly. It was the best way he knew to get rid of potential clients. "And I'd need an advance."

"I don't have any money," she said. "Janis said you were chivalrous."

"Chivalry doesn't pay like it used to."

"She showed me a photograph. She's in the photo with you and your singer friend. She told me about your friend, how he died."

"That was a long time ago."

"You all look so happy. In the photo."

"We were probably drunk," Rolly said. He and Matt were almost always under the influence of alcohol or some other controlled substance in their Creatures days. Janis might've been too. She put up with their substance abuse, anyway. She had to.

"Did you pay Janis to run your fan club?" said Melody.

"No. She did it for free. She liked helping out."

"Don't you think you owe her something?"

"Okay, okay," said Rolly. He picked up the dog tags. "I'll see what I can find out. That's all I can promise. I can't spend a lot of time on this. I have paying jobs."

"Hey Rolly," shouted Moogus from the stage. "Is the chick coming home with you or not? I want to get out of here."

Rolly pretended to scratch the back of his head while extending his middle finger at Moogus. Melody put her hand on his knee. She was full of sand. She knew he was sandy, too.

"I knew you'd help Janis," she said. "I knew you'd help me."

"How do I get in touch with you?" Rolly said.

"When I'm not at the temple, I waitress at the café on the pier," said Melody. "Late breakfast and lunch. You can call my cell, too, if you want."

They exchanged phone numbers. Rolly slid off the bar stool and put the dog tags in his pocket. Melody grabbed his arm as he started to leave, pulling him back like a rip current.

"There's something I forgot to tell you," she said. "Something Janis told me. Maybe it's why the police came to the temple and took all that stuff from the closet."

"What's that?" Rolly said.

"Butch Fleetwood. Arion. Janis said he was a spy."

THE TAQUERIA

Rolly and Moogus sat on the patio outside Miguel's taco shop, sharing a plate of carne asada nachos, indulging in an edible memory from their younger, leaner days. Miguel's was two blocks from the beach, four blocks from Winstons. It had been a regular late-night stop for the band when they lived in OB.

"So who was that chick harassing you at the bar?" said Moogus, wiping a gob of guacamole from his chin.

"Her name's Melody," said Rolly. "She wasn't harassing me."

"You didn't look like you were buying what she was selling."

"She's looking for someone."

"Mr. Right? Mr. Wonderful?"

"Mr. Fleetwood."

"Who?"

Rolly ate a tortilla chip loaded with grilled meat and onions. He took a swig of horchata to wash it down.

"Do you remember Janis Withers?" he said. "The girl who used to run our fan club?"

"She was the one with those scars on her face, right? Like she got burned or something?"

"I'd forgotten about that."

“She wasn’t bad looking, even with the scars. Kind of quiet and shy. Carried that funny little backpack around with her all the time. She was one of those little rich girls from over the hill, the kind that liked to take us home so they could frighten their parents.”

“Did Janis ever take you home to her parents?” said Rolly.

“Hell, no. She was afraid of me.”

“Smart girl.”

Moogus laughed.

“Yeah, well, you had your own little rich girl back in those days. If you’d married Leslie, you could be catching rays in Cabo now instead of sitting at Winstons getting your ears abused by the local skank. What’d this Melody woman want with an old fart like you, anyway?”

“She was friends with Janis. Janis died a couple of days ago. She killed herself.”

“That’s fucked up,” said Moogus.

“Yeah.”

They sat for a moment, munching their nachos in silence. Rolly thought about the late-night phone calls he used to get from Janis, after Matty died and the band fell apart. She’d just ring him up and start talking. He’d listen, not saying much in response, letting her ramble. It was a weird kind of therapy for both of them. She’d never mentioned Butch Fleetwood, though, as far as he could remember.

“You still think about Matt?” said Moogus.

“Every day.”

“It could have been any of us, buddy.”

“But it wasn’t.”

“I don’t blame you, Rol. Never have and never will. Shit happens.”

“I know,” said Rolly. “But it happens to some people more than others.”

Moogus and Rolly stared at each other a moment. Moogus raised his Styrofoam cup.

“Here’s to Matty,” he said. “Every band needs its asshole.”

“I thought *you* were our asshole.”

“Nah. I was the muscle. Matt was the asshole.”

“What was I?”

“You were the brains. You’re always the brains.”

"What about Derek? What was he?"

"He was the bass player. He wasn't anything."

"Yeah, I guess so," said Rolly. "Here's to Matty, our asshole."

He tapped Moogus's cup with his own, drank another slug of horchata. In the old days, he would have spiked it with shots of bourbon from the bottle he kept in his gig bag. He didn't enjoy sobriety all that much, but the alternative was worse.

"Enough of this serious stuff," said Moogus. "I got some news for you. Apparently, hell has frozen over. Or if not, it's pretty chilly down there."

"What happened?"

"I'm performing at an engagement with Mr. J.V. Sideman."

Rolly looked at Moogus a moment. The feud between Moogus and Sideman was legendary among local musicians. They hated each other. No one knew why. The origin of their quarrel had been lost in the mists of time, drifting out to sea like a late-morning fog bank.

"How did this miracle come about?" said Rolly.

"We're both adults now," said Moogus.

"That's debatable," said Rolly. "In your case, anyway."

"It's time to bury the hatchet."

"If you say so," said Rolly. The only place Sideman and Moogus would bury a hatchet was in each other's skull. "I'm guessing there's money involved."

Moogus smiled.

"You got that right," he said. "Double-scale and paid rehearsal."

"What's the gig?"

"It's that new water park they're opening. Ocean Universe."

"Never heard of it."

"You know that painter guy, Wendell?" said Moogus.

"Never heard of him," said Rolly.

"He paints whales and dolphins, murals, that kind of shit. Guy's worth millions. They're opening this new water park on the bay, over by the airport. This guy Wendell's got something to do with it."

"When's the gig?"

"Saturday. Wendell's singing with us."

"Is he any good?"

"Who cares? He's paying double-scale."

Rolly had seen it before, rich people paying a lot of money for their vanity music projects. A good band was a kind of insurance against embarrassment. Moogus and Sideman were two of the best players in town. And the most mercenary. Paying them well ensured their devotion and professionalism.

"You got a guitar player yet?" said Rolly.

"Sorry, buddy. They got some guy from LA."

"Well then, how do mere mortals like me go about witnessing this miracle?"

"It's a benefit concert. Tickets are five hundred dollars."

"Guess I'll have to miss it."

"Sideman said there might be a guest list. I'll get you in if I can. Unless it's only one ticket."

"I'm not your first choice?"

"I got a hard-on for this cute barista at the Better Buzz. There's got to be a blow job in there for me if I get her into a show that costs five hundred dollars."

"Didn't you say you were an adult now?"

"Hey, I'm just speculating. I didn't say I was gonna bargain for one specifically. That's more adult, right?"

Rolly shook his head in dismay.

"Well, don't expect one from me if I get a ticket," he said.

"Nah," said Moogus. "Besides, I hear you give terrible blow jobs."

"Yeah? Who told you that?"

"Your girlfriend."

"I don't have a girlfriend."

"Now you know why."

"That doesn't even make sense."

"Yeah, well . . ." Moogus said. His eyes moved from Rolly to something beyond Rolly's left shoulder. Rolly turned. A police car had double-parked on the street. He turned back to Moogus.

"Something wrong?" he said.

"I forgot to contact my PO last week," said Moogus.

"You're still on parole?"

"Yeah. Shit. It's only two more months. But I'm supposed to check in once a week."

"You want to leave?"

"Nah. I'm just being paranoid. It's being in the old neighborhood, I guess. The cops were always getting on our ass."

"One of the many things I don't miss about living here."

"C'mon, your pitiful little life has never been as awesome as it was when we inhabited the Creature Cave."

"If you say so."

"I'm not saying I want to go back there," said Moogus. "Holy cow, the smell of that place alone would probably make me pass out—Eau de Skank. We were living large, though. And then we weren't. How did that happen?"

"You know how it happened. One of us crashed into a tree and killed the lead singer."

"Yeah. Shit. Sorry. I didn't mean nothing." Moogus pointed at the depleted nachos platter. "Are you done?"

Rolly nodded. Moogus got up from the table, cleared the plates and dumped them in the trash can, then started toward the alley. Rolly hesitated.

"You okay with taking a shortcut?" said Moogus, sensing Rolly's reticence.

"Yeah, I guess," said Rolly. They set off down the alley. It wasn't the darkness of the alley that worried him. It was the house that stood at the end of it, the shadows and memories and unsettled feelings the late hours brought with them. Moogus had convinced him it would be fun to go back and host the blues jam at Winstons again. The show had gone fine, but something had changed when Melody told him about Janis. Nostalgia got sucked out of the room, replaced by timeworn regrets, dark thoughts that popped in his head like noxious balloons. Matt's ghost haunted these streets, more present than it had felt for Rolly in a long time.

"There it is," said Moogus, when they reached the end of the alley. "The Creature Cave."

They stood in the shadows and stared across the street at their old

house. The current occupants had strung Christmas lights around the windows. A balloon Santa, his sleigh and four reindeer sat on the lawn.

"What a crappy little place," said Rolly.

"Yeah," said Moogus. "A crappy little place with a legendary history of rock-and-roll debauchery. This brings back a lot of memories."

"Too many, maybe," said Rolly. He glanced over at Moogus, alone in his reveries. Adulthood had a sentimental effect on everyone, even mad crazy drummers.

"Moog?" said Rolly.

"Yeah?"

"Do you remember a guy named Butch Fleetwood ever hanging with Janis?"

"Nah, I don't think so. That's the guy you're supposed to be looking for?"

"Yeah. Janis wanted me to find him if something happened to her."

"Whoa. That sounds kinda ominous. You think you can find him?"

"I told Melody I'd give it a try." Rolly shrugged.

Moogus shifted his feet and scanned the street. He seemed nervous.

"What is it?" said Rolly. "You still worried about the cops?"

"There's something I never told you, about Janis. And Matty. They had a thing going on, near the end. I guess it was kinda serious. This was after you moved out, when you got engaged and moved in with Leslie. Like a month or two later."

"I never knew about that," said Rolly. "Why didn't you tell me before?"

"I only found out after the accident," said Moogus. "Janis came by the house. I had to tell her what happened. You were in the hospital. Matt was dead. She got really upset, started crying, said they were supposed to get married. I couldn't handle it. I had my own problems to deal with, scaring up gigs just so I could eat. When you and I started talking again, it didn't seem all that important. You had plenty to handle just getting back on your feet."

"Yeah, I guess so," said Rolly. There were still ghosts in this neighborhood, more than he'd realized. Had Janis blamed him for Matty's death? She'd never talked about it in her phone calls.

"Let's get out of here," he said.

"Yeah," Moogus said.

As they turned to leave, a police car pulled up in front of them and flashed its lights. Rolly shaded his eyes and watched as an officer stepped out of the car and walked toward them. He couldn't see the officer's face, but he recognized her purposeful gait. She stopped and put her hands on her hips.

"Well, if isn't my two favorite miscreants," said Bonnie Hammond. "Lurking in a dark alley at two in the morning."