

Bang

The Incarnations of the Americas

Volume VI

Bang

The Incarnations of the Americas
Volume VI

William Hrdina

This novel is dedicated to my wife Vikei and to my cats Jubal and Ouisa. That's right, my cats.

This novel was written while listening exclusively to:

The Beatles

Abbey Road, Revolver, the White Album, Sgt. Peppers, Magical Mystery Tour, and 1

Bob Dylan

John Wesley Harding, Live 75 the Rolling Thunder Revue, Modern Times, and the Blues Collection

Sound Tribe Sector 9.

Live at Bonnaroo 2007 and the STS9 Podcasts: Essentials, Georgia Bound, The Dawn Chorus, Best of the Left, Glimpses of Boulder, Sound Tribe of Summer, and the Unquestionable Supremacy of Nature

PART I
OMF

CHAPTER 1- Julia Introduction

Julia Lennon checked her watch. 11:59:35 exactly- it was time to go. She took a deep breath, got up off of the bus stop bench where she'd been sitting for the previous five minutes, and headed for the front door of a small art gallery that specialized in "Civil War" art.

It might've been a coincidence every painting in the gallery featured a Confederate flag, but it probably wasn't. It might've been a coincidence many of the scenes depicted featured slaves in exaggerated, infuriating subservience. But it probably wasn't. Indeed, although you could hardly tell from the expensive brass sign in front, the gallery was, for all intents and purposes, a small museum to southern institutional racism. So no, it wasn't a coincidence Julia chose this particular venue for her group's first foray into illegal protest.

Steeling herself for what came next; Julia grabbed the door handle and went into the gallery. As expected, it was packed. People were shoulder to shoulder, jostling-everyone talking at once. Prior to Julia's arrival, the patrons of the store were being polite in their collective insistence of attention from the one dealer who was working the gallery, but once Julia walked in, the mob immediately started to get ugly. As if on cue...

The look of bewilderment on the art dealer's face began to degrade into fear as polite questions suddenly erupted into cruel taunts and even cruder invitations. A woman near the front of the mob reached out and poked the man in the chest, causing him to jerk back like she'd shocked him with a taser. In the meantime, Julia was allowed to push her way forward in the crowd. As she walked, she reached into her pocket and slipped on her disguise- a pair of fluffy bunny ears and a plastic bunny nose complete with whiskers and large buck teeth that hung down covering most of her face. When she reached the front of the crowd the people immediately fell silent.

"Excuse me," Julia said to the dealer, "Do you have a painting of Elvis. Not just any painting either- I need his visage lovingly painted onto velvet?"

Perhaps understandably under the circumstances, the man didn't respond- he just looked at Julia with variety of confused frustration.

Julia glanced over at Bingo Devonshire, her friend and co-organizer. Bingo smiled, and gave Julia the pre-assigned hand signal- the middle finger. It meant the job they'd come to do was done- it was time to go.

Once again the mood in the place turned on a dime when Julia hitched back her shoulders, stared the clerk hard in the face, and yelled, "Look if some motherfucker doesn't show me a Velvet motherfucking painting of motherfucking Elvis, I'm leaving." Spittle flew everywhere- just as she intended- her rabbit ears swayed violently on her head.

"Yeah!" Replied everyone else in the store in unison. And after a brief pause, "Motherfucker!"

Then, in one coordinated movement everyone spun on their heels and filed cleanly out the door. It only took 15 seconds to clear the entire place out. As they left, each person headed in a different direction, a starburst of human movement.

The man working in the gallery didn't notice what happened to the art until everyone was gone. Each painting in the public section of the gallery now bore a small caption written with permanent marker, "I'm proud to be a racist."

A review of the security camera tapes showed that the first two people to enter the shop that morning had taken up convenient placement so they were effectively blocking the camera's view over the exactly five and a half minutes between the arrival of the first protester and their departure behind the bunny nosed woman. Of the woman the clerk claimed was wearing the bunny nose and ears- there was no sign on the tape at all.

Chapter 2- RON INTRO

Ron Lowell was haunted- a child of tainted privilege. Even with both of his legs bound in plaster and thick bandages holding three broken ribs, he exuded a quiet arrogance. The number of scars crisscrossing his entire body belied the turmoil behind his cool eyes. Ron might not have ever worked a real job, but this didn't mean he'd been easy on himself.

His manner was pleasant, at least on the surface. Women found him attractive, but neither sex nor companionship had ever been enough to bend him from his obsession. His arrogance reared its fangs in his tone of voice when a nurse didn't bring him a glass of water quickly enough; or if there wasn't enough ice.

For the past two and a half months, Ron was obsessed with skydiving. In the 73 days since he first jumped out of an airplane, Ron Lowell had managed to get in 490 jumps, averaging just under 7 jumps a day. The day before, he attempted his first base jump from the New River Gorge Bridge outside Fayetteville, West Virginia.

He'd grown bored, and pushed the limits too far, too fast. He wanted to hold the chute for a full second longer than his instructor advised- he'd jumped out of a plane nearly 500 times already- he could handle jumping off of a measly bridge. Well, now he knew where the line was, and once again was grateful he'd come from the lesson with some new scars, but his life still intact. He still had many limits to test. He had yet to explore deep sea diving without scuba equipment, something he'd seen on a snippet of on a documentary playing on the TV while the guy he'd hired to pack his chute for him worked to earn the extra \$50 promised if he could repack the chute in less than 5 minutes.

With a grunt of effort, Ron sat himself up in bed. His broken ribs screamed in protest, but he did his best to ignore the pain. He tried to raise his shoulders, but he could not. Overwhelmed, Ron flopped back onto the bed with another shock of pain. He heard stories of men who practiced ancient and very well guarded forms of martial arts. It was said these men could take the mental activity that was pain and remove it entirely from their consciousness, allowing them to chop down trees with their battered shins.

Ron closed his eyes and concentrated on the points of stabbing pain in his chest. He pictured grabbing the pain with his mind and pulling it outside of his body.

If anything, his focused concentration was causing his ribs to hurt worse. Glancing around, Ron was disappointed to find a lack of paper or pencil. He wanted to

make himself a note to do some more research on the martial arts guys who could make pain disappear.

Foiled in his attempt at stenography, Ron reached over and flicked the remote control for the television. He flipped listlessly through the channels, barely registering what was on the screen before he flipped to the next one. After cycling through the channels three times, he clicked the TV off again.

Most people in Ron's situation would be waiting for a visitor or family member to show up and console him on his injuries. No one was coming to see Ron, and he knew it. His parents were dead, killed in a car accident when he was only 17 years old. The loss devastated and shook the boy to his core. Five years later, he still often found himself waking up drenched in sweat, the memory of the recurring nightmare of their death still ringing slightly in his mind.

A nurse came walking into the room. Ron looked over at her and smiled. She was in her late 40's and had hair that appeared to float around her head like a cloud. She was the type of nurse who exuded maternity. It floated around her like an aroma.

"You're awake. How're you feeling?" She asked.

"I'm okay I guess. Do you know how long I'm going to be stuck in here?"

"Well I suppose that's up to you. But I wouldn't worry too much. I'm sure you'll get out of here soon enough. I haven't introduced myself yet, my name is Carol, I'll be your nurse for the next twelve hours. Now, is there anything I can get you?"

"Some paper and a pen. I like to make notes to myself. Oh, and when I crashed I had an iPod and a backpack with me- do you know what happened to it?"

Carol looked around the immediate vicinity of the bed and didn't see anything. The next obvious place was the small bureau standing to the left of the bed. Carol bent down and pulled open the drawer where she discovered a backpack. Visible through the webbed netting of the outer pocket was the distinctive white casing of an iPod.

"Got it." She yanked the bag from the drawer and handed it to Ron.

"Thanks." Ron said, smiling.

"Alright, if you're all square I've got about 5 more patients to see and then I'll swing by with your paper. That kosher with you?"

"That'll be fine. Thank you Carol."

"No sweat. If anything... emergent goes down, you just hit the button okay sweetheart." She told him and exited the room with a flourish.

Since his parent's death, Ron worked quite hard to make sure he didn't get close to anyone. On the several occasions he found himself making a friend, he went out of his way to say something horrific to send the person away. He wasn't going to be mean like that to Carol though. Carol had willingly, unknowingly, handed Ron his escape ticket.

Confusion was the only thing Ron had to hold onto. The fact nothing in his life made sense to him was the one thing he counted on- it was the small bit of soil left in the field of his heart. Confusion was how he could request paper to make notes about the future at the exact same time he was thinking about the 9mm pistol in his bag, and what the barrel tasted like.

CHAPTER- Julia after art gallery- the cell

Julia Lennon sat in her apartment looking nervously at her front door, waiting for the insistent banging of the police coming to drag her away to jail. For two solid days she took no phone calls and never stepped foot outside. She diligently checked the paper from front to back, but there was no report of what happened. Gradually, Julia relaxed. She might be an idealist, but Julia wasn't naïve enough to believe a loosely knit group of activists like hers hadn't been infiltrated by some government agency. Now that they'd finally accomplished their first "official" act of protest- a move that marked her group's decision to cross over the line into blatant illegality for the first time, it also meant those initial few days were the most likely time any interested government organization would step in and make arrests.

But none came. Still, Julia decided she wasn't going to take any chances in the future. This was her one and only group action with a big mass of people. Instead, she would hand pick a small contingent of people she knew she could trust and create a thick barrier between her legal and illegal protest actions. It was one thing to allow yourself to be arrested as part of a sit-in or for "illegally gathering," the kind of thing she was thinking about was something else entirely.

There were simply too many risks to mass action of the sort they'd pulled off in the art gallery. She knew the police wouldn't care too much about a bunch of racist art from 150 years earlier- it was part of what made the place such a juicy target. It also didn't hurt to know she would be robbing some racists of several thousand dollars in merchandise and profit.

After her hundredth aimless wander through her department, Julia finally settled down and thought about her reactions to their protest. She was surprised to find she didn't have any of the bravura emotions she expected to feel. When she left the gallery, the adrenaline still stinging in her ears, she felt like she'd stricken a blow for justice and goodness. But the emotion faded quickly, replaced instead with a kind of stubborn determination. Sure, she'd crossed a fairly bright line for the first time- but in the grand scheme of things, the art gallery protest was minor league at best.

This was a problem for Julia because it was her desire to get out of the minor leagues that motivated her to start breaking the law in the first place. She was 22, and her parents were right when they told her on her weekly phone calls home that it was time she made up her mind about what she was going to do with the rest of her life. She knew her parents meant she should get serious about her studies when they said this, but Julia thought about their advice differently. She figured she had ridden the fence long enough. Either she was a professional agitator/revolutionary, or she was just some kid screwing around until she met the right guy, got married, had children, and started worrying about how much money she had squirreled away in the 401-K plan.

The Racist Art Gallery Job was the declaration of her decision to go pro. In Julia's mind, amateurs were people who organized and marched and did the public face of protest. They were the masses, necessary, but ultimately cannon fodder. Now, The Weather Underground, *they* were pros. The Black Panthers, they were pros, too. At least in the sense they did actions they knew would get them jailed, but they did them anyway because they saw the symbolic good done by their actions as outweighing the risk. This was the type of professional Julia wanted to be.

Her journey to becoming a pro started when Julia was fifteen. If wasn't a war or a friend who opened her eyes to the world of protest- it was a trip to the dentist's office.

Julia could still remember the poster on the wall- it was a widely grinning tooth holding a toothbrush in one hand and an oversized piece of floss in the other. For some unknown reason, the dentist's office didn't have any magazines for teenage girls. She flipped through dog-eared issues of Sports Illustrated, Highlights, and the Interior Design Monthly before she came across a magazine she'd never seen before.

Her eye was immediately drawn by the ad on the back cover. It featured a number of plain red chairs from above. The chairs were in the shape of a bottle and the caption read, "Absolut AA." Julia recognized the general tone of the ad- Absolut vodka had a decade-long campaign of showing its bottle in different contexts, but she couldn't believe they would parody alcoholism. That would be like McDonald's doing a magazine ad with an enormously obese person with a visible pacemaker scar talking about the glories of fast food.

In spite of the toothache which brought her to the dentist in the first place, Julia smiled and laughed at the ad. She turned the magazine over and read the cover. It was called AdBusters- she never heard of it before. Julia turned to the table of contents. It was full of articles with titles like, "A Blueprint for Changing the World- Toward a Sane Corporation Free America" and "Growth of Capitalist Identity and the Death of Freedom." When they called her name to go back to see the doctor she quietly dropped the magazine into her backpack. Her Mom didn't notice.

That night, she read every word of the magazine. The next day, she checked online and read everything on the magazine's website. There were no links, but she ran Adbusters through Wikipedia and in the article found hundreds. Two years later, when she was 17, Julia met her best friend and partner in crime, Bingo Devonshire. Nothing was ever the same again. The road forward seemed to scroll out from those two moments, a road leading almost directly to becoming the mastermind of the destruction of several thousand dollar's worth of racist art.

The phone rang, drawing Julia back from her memory. She glanced over at the small table sitting in front of her second-hand couch on her way to the phone. Two things were on the table- a glass of water, and the copy of Adbusters from the Dentist's office, lovingly couched in a mylar bag-and-board of the type one normally associates with comic book collectors.

Reaching the receiver, Julia picked it up and said, "Hello."

"It's Bingo."

"Everything okay?" Julia asked, afraid of Bingo's response.

"So far the coast's all clear. I'd say we're good."

"You still coming by? I'm going insane sitting here by myself. I'm too good at talking to myself to be allowed this much isolation."

"Why can't you just get a boyfriend like regular people?" Bingo laughed.

"I could, but then you wouldn't have any friends."

"In response to your initial question, yes, I'll be there in ten minutes, I just wanted to know if you wanted anything- a coffee or cappuccino or anything? I could stop by the Fair Trade."

The Fair Trade was the name of the coffee shop/community activist center where Julia worked- although now that she was going pro- Julia hoped she could quit her day job. Being financed by some shadowy somebody or other was definitely part of how Julia thought about her newly acquired revolutionary status.

"No, I'm okay. Just hurry up okay?"

"I'm coming." Bingo assured her and hung up.

Julia put down the phone and walked to her kitchen table. On it was a notebook and a pen. She sat down and looked at the notes she'd written about their next action. She was excited, it was going to be fun- and unlike their first action, this one would surely get them on the news.

CHAPTER- Ron on the Mend

Ron couldn't take his eyes off his backpack. He would try to focus on something else, but it was futile. He forced himself to wait a full five minutes before he unzipped the main pocket and glanced inside. It was another two before he actually probed the contents with fingers that felt disconnected from his hand. He reached through the detritus of the bag and felt the hard, unyielding metal of the pistol. It was wrapped in a t-shirt emblazoned with the pithy phrase, "Guns don't kill people, people with mustaches kill people."

Initially, Ron purchased the gun as protection. He spent a great deal of time on the road and sometimes carried absurd sums of cash because he didn't like to pay for things electronically. He regularly marveled at the sociological change that occurred during his lifetime in this regard. When he was a kid, everyone paid for everything with cash, using a credit card was seen as uppity and ridiculous. Now, he regularly saw people paying for items totaling \$1.50 with a credit or debit card. While Ron was a long way from living "off the grid" he didn't see the point in providing any interested party with a ready made map of his activities and movements.

Afraid someone would see the gun in his bag and take it away or find it a threat, Ron left it in his bag, wrapped in the shirt. But he couldn't help pushing his finger into the fabric and feeling the trigger. The simple mechanical device was his ticket away from the troubles of his mind- away from the torment of his existence.

Like a villain in a superhero comic, Ron Lowell was essentially a man divided. He was lost, confused. Nothing about life made sense to him.

His relationship with his parents- good, honest people- had always been strained. Ron didn't make it easy for them. They tried to be lenient and accommodating to Ron's ever-present need to push the boundaries in practically every aspect of his life- but now matter how generous they were with him, he always bristled. His Dad was fond of saying Ron always found the thorn on the rose.

Then, when he was 17, they died.

Their death was pointless. It wasn't a maniacal evil or faceless menace that took them from him, it wasn't even a terrible disease. It was an accident. They were driving, a tire blew, they clipped a tree, spun around twice and then were finally hit dead-on by a semi. Both of them were dead before the car came to a stop. The coroner assured him there would've been no suffering. This information was meant to comfort him, but to him, it just meant they hadn't even had a moment to remember their son before they went on to whatever happens in the clearing at the end of the path.

In his mind, Ron relived the day of his parent's death on a nearly continuous loop. He remembered how cold it was the day they died. He remembered the air had the smell

of snow, a scent he once associated with good things. He remembered the acrid smell of chemicals in the morgue when the doctor led him in to identify his parent's remains. He remembered he'd been wearing a hat and it made his head feel sweaty and clammy. But most of all he remembered seeing his parents, lying on the cart, their faces horribly bruised and cut, but still easily recognizable- by Ron at least. He remembered the way the edge of his vision got swimmy as he walked away from them for the last time at their funeral.

He remembered meeting with the lawyer. Seeing how much money was suddenly his- it was far more than he would've imagined, almost 8 million. Then, hearing there was an equal amount locked away, unavailable until his 21st birthday. It was a relief to see he had the funds to follow the ill-defined future he sketched out for himself, but beyond this, the money brought Ron no real satisfaction. He'd been bought up like a normal middle-class kid. He lived in a reasonably sized house, got his first part time job at a neighborhood pizza place when he was 15, and had always paid for his own car insurance and gas.

As time went on, Ron found the random meaninglessness of his parent's death was the most difficult part to get over. There was no one to blame. No score to settle or vendetta to enact. His parents died, it was tragic, and there was no more to it. Somehow this nihilism of blame made it worse. Ron wanted to point his finger at someone- to strike back against those who wronged him- to have a cause.

The worst part was, he was very conscious of his desperate need to find someone or something to blame. He knew he kept pushing himself to the limits of his physical abilities because he was fighting against the only enemy he could point his finger at- nature itself. There was never any expectation of success- but he had to push himself to the very edge- to taunt death- to dare it to take him the way it took his parents. He found when he was on edge, every bit of his attention focused on nothing other than living from one second to the next, his pain would recede entirely and he existed completely in the present. It never lasted long, but it was enough that Ron spent a majority of his time and energy on achieving this timeless state- by any means necessary.

Ron looked down at his right hand, still inside the bag- he saw the scars running across the back of it from when he nearly crushed it whitewater kayaking. The scars were only a single example of the simple lesson nature taught him over and over again without fail.

"Try as hard as you like to deny it, but you'll never beat me."

Leaning back, his hand still on the gun, Ron finally accepted the lesson at last. His attempts to beat nature at its own game were a waste of time- a folly. All he could really do was eventually lose- and die. If this were true, he might as well just take the gun out of the bag, put the muzzle in the little soft spot under his chin, and pull the trigger immediately. Stop screwing around. After all, notions of security aside, hadn't he really bought the gun for just that purpose? Wasn't he just skydiving out of planes and jumping out of helicopters onto the sides of mountains with skis because he was too cowardly to just stop fucking around and eat a bullet?

He knew the answer to both of his questions were 'Yes.' His ribs gave an irritated complaint and Ron winced. He rubbed them absently with his free hand and waited while his mind whirled at full speed. To kill himself or not... he could think of

arguments for both sides. Despair spun through his soul and the thought of death seemed like a relief. He couldn't win, not against nature.

"But was nature the only enemy?" A voice in Ron's head asked. It was the one he would normally call his conscience, but he couldn't help the feeling the voice wasn't really coming from his own mind.

No. Nature wasn't the only enemy. There were two kinds of space, outer and inner. Thus far all of his attention and focus was on the world outside. In the process he'd utterly ignored the inner world. The place that was, he suddenly realized, the wellspring from which his despair flowed. If he could turn his considerable attention onto his own psyche- he thought he just might be able to cut off his despair at the source.

At that moment, Ron Lowell made a decision. Absently, he ran his finger over the bumpy grip of the gun, slippery through the fabric of the t-shirt. He was going to leave the gun in the bag. He zipped the bag up again and set it off to the side. He would ask Carol to put the bag back into his night stand. Hopefully, no one would see a need to go through his stuff. If they asked, he would say he'd forgotten it was in there.

For the first time in as long as he could remember, Ron had a plan with what he was going to do. His five year journey along the razor's edge of physical endurance was coming to an end. It was time to turn his attention to a new set of challenges.

He would stop pushing his body to the limit and begin to work on his spirit. Ron knew he'd reached the end of what physical stress could teach him. He would later characterize his years doing extreme sports in much the same way Herman Hesse talks about Siddhartha's time as an ascetic. Concentration on suffering in such a manner made one selfish and self-centered, and ultimately, did nothing to bring one toward enlightenment.

Ron decided he needed to find God.

He had no way of knowing he was actually going to find him.

CHAPTER- Julia Creates a Splinter Group

Bingo showed up five minutes after she hung up with Julia. She came into the room the way she always did, like a hurricane. Within seconds of her arrival she'd taken off her coat, throwing it nonchalantly onto the floor, grabbed a glass out of the cabinet and began to fill it with water while simultaneously rearranging the refrigerator magnets. Bingo's hair was pulled up into a ponytail on the top of her head, the color had changed so many times Julia was no longer sure what the original color was. Her current choice was orange and a bright green, probably in rebellion against the plain brown she'd been forced to adopt so as not to give the guy working at the art gallery anything specific to remember about her.

"So sweetheart, tell me how you're holding up. Are you dealing well with being the modern day Che Guevera?" Bingo was obviously joking, but Julia responded to her seriously.

"I don't think what we did counts as a revolutionary action. We certainly did a benign bit of defacement of property, but I'm not under any delusions about changing the world with such shenanigans."

Bingo looked at her with a disappointed look. "My darling Julia, I love you, but you're so dour. Where's your sense of fun? Of adventure? Everything you do doesn't

have to change the world you know. Every once and a while you can do things for shits and giggles. Besides, the point wasn't to change the world- the point was to piss off the fuckwads who run the gallery. I can absolutely guarantee you we accomplished our mission in spades. If anything, I would say that last action took itself too seriously. Although, I have to admit, I nearly pissed myself laughing when you screamed at that guy about the velvet Elvis. That poor bastard didn't even know what hit him. But still, I think if we're going to break the law, we should at least do it in new and interesting ways. The day this whole thing loses its sense of humor is the same day that I pack up my bags and get a day job."

"I'm glad to hear you say that because I have an idea for what we should do next. It definitely leans in the direction of frivolity."

"As well as it should. What do you got?"

Julia outlined her idea to Bingo. When she was finished, Bingo leaned back in her chair and grinned. "I've know you what? Five years now?"

"Something like that, yeah, Junior year in high school."

"Well, in those five years you've never had an idea this ridiculous."

"Really?" Julia asked.

"Oh, without a doubt."

Julia jumped out of her chair and gave Bingo a hug. There was nothing she could've said to make her any happier. The belief you could change more minds with laughter and a strong sense of humor ran deep in Julia, largely inspired by the mock vodka ad she'd seen on the exact magazine sitting five feet away on the table.

"There's one thing though, on the serious side of things." Julia said.

Bingo rolled her eyes. Even though she would never say it to her best friend out of respect for her feelings, there was *always* a serious side of things for Julia.

"I think we should take our extracurricular actions separate from the rest of the group from now on. Maybe pick four or five others and form a splinter group of sorts. If we use the rank and file at all, it'll probably be as a distraction. They can be doing something legal as a cover to whatever bit of madness we have cooked up." Julia paused, thinking. Then she added, "No. I take it back. I don't think we should use the rank and file at all."

An inherently democratic person, Bingo wasn't comfortable with cutting out the group without their input. But at the same time, she could see Julia's point. She knew her friend and the stuff they were doing was going to escalate over time. She knew how much Julia liked the escapades she saw in *Fight Club*- not so much the punching- but the pranks. There was more than one time Julia had lost a guy's attention at a party while she argued blowing up all the credit card company headquarters at the end of the movie wasn't even an immoral act because the film took pains to point out all the people who worked in the buildings at night belonged to Project Mayhem and had been cleared out.

"Who should we bring along with us into this little cabal?" Bingo asked.

"Scruffy for sure."

"Obviously."

Scruffy was the completion of their trio- he was good with logistics. It was Scruffy who thought of sending people into the art gallery to get the layout of the surveillance- a detail which allowed them to quickly neutralize it as a factor in their little escapade.

"And I'm thinking Ollie and Tippy would come over."

"For sure. I talked to Tippy earlier and she said she and Ollie had an epic shagfest after the shit yesterday- they'll be up for it."

"Maybe one more?" Julia shrugged.

"Trixie?"

"That's who I was thinking too."

"Anyone else."

"That's all the people I'm completely sure about."

"Same with me. Well, that was the easy part. The hard question is- what are we going to call ourselves?"

"We'll know." Julia said.

And so it was decided.

When they were in college, Bingo and Julia used to go out "major hunting." This was a favorite past time of the two girls. Major hunting consisted of wandering around until they found a party. One of the rules was they never major hunted at the house's of friends. Strangers only.

They went to these parties, usually on LSD, with the express intention of finding guys who were business majors. They would start chatting them up, acting flirtatious and hyper interested as the business majors talked, and then, once their rap began to lose its humor value, the girls would just unload on them about how they were wasting their lives and selling out their dreams at so young an age they didn't even know what they were turning their backs on yet. They used a wide range of arguments, but they favored one. They decided their best argument was to point out the fact hot chicks like them would never, ever, fuck a business major. The number of times they saw the light go on at this line really went a long way toward the imperious way they interacted with men who hadn't earned their respect. There were certainly lots of exceptions, but for the most part, men actually thought with their dicks- and the dick is not a particularly sophisticated organ.

Almost every weekend, on either Friday or Saturday, they went out major hunting. In two years, only one guy turned the tables on them when they were 19. His name was Scruffy Bittersweet.

They met Scruffy at a fraternity party. He was wearing the uniform of the most nauseatingly stereotypical "brother." Tan chinos, boat shoes, a button up blue Oxford shirt and a cornflower blue tie. His finger length hair was swept over in the preppy look of a J Crew Ad. They picked him out and decided to go after him together.

"Hey Sweetheart." Bingo said, touching Scruffy on the shoulder. Julia walked up behind Bingo, sliding her arm around her waist and grinning at Scruffy.

He looked at them with a kind of bemused disinterest.

"Can I help you ladies?"

"Sure Sweetie. My friend and I have a little bet going that you can settle for us." Bingo replied, her inflection dripping with sexual suggestiveness. "What are you majoring in here?"

"Banging repressed frat guys." Scruffy replied with a completely straight face.

Julia knew in that moment they'd found a partner in crime. It turned out his response was largely true. He said, "I'm 22 years old, I'm just having a good time and these fraternity parties are full of more gay guys than any of the bars in town. Plus, in

many ways, I feel like I'm doing community service by helping people find the door to the closet."

From then on, Julia and Bingo's twosome, was a threesome. Bingo met Ollie and Tippy Oakwood in a psychological experimentation design class. They were high school sweethearts, already married when they came to college. In most ways everyone thought of Ollie and Tippy as one person with two heads- one person with very different points of view on a wide variety of subjects, but connected in a way that was almost tangible.

Trixie was actually fairly new to their circle, but she fit in almost immediately and within a week seemed like a face that'd always been there. Trixie was 2 years younger than Julia, the next youngest- which actually makes a big difference when you're in your early 20's. Everyone thought of her as the younger sister.

The membership of their group now tentatively established, it was time to call them up and see if they actually wanted to join.