

Bringing the house down

Star Turn

By Joy Aimee

Star lived to perform. His first taste of stardom came at age five when, dressed in frilly dress and wig of golden ringlets lovingly sewn in the dead of night by his mother Velda's fair hands, he brought down the house at the Albury-Wodonga RSL Under 16's Talent Show with a heartfelt rendition of Shirley Temple's, "She's Only A Bird in a Gilded Cage."

Of course he was known as little Stan back then and his father, Big Dave, proprietor of McIntosh and Son, Suppliers of Heavy Equipment and ever hopeful his son would follow in his heavy machinery footsteps, was decidedly unamused!

"No son of mine's going to bloody well prance around on stage like a big poofter in an even bigger girl's blouse."

So little Stan, aided and abetted by Velda, went underground with his starry ambitions, singing and tap-dancing his way through all the classics until he knew all the secrets of Judy, Marilyn and Barbara.

The only sour note came every footy season when Dave, a fanatical Saints supporter, would coerce Stan to try-out for the local team.

A visit to a sympathetic doctor fixed that. "Heart murmur," the doctor pronounced. "The symptoms are blowing, whooshing or rasping sounds produced by turbulent blood flow through the heart valves often resulting in chronic constipation." Dave's dream of football stardom for his son was shattered.

On the day of Stan's eighteenth birthday, while his schoolmates were busily popping babies and Prozac in their brick veneer McMansions and his father was at a footy match, Stanley, feeling as free as a bird, kissed Velda goodbye and hopped the next bus to Sydney.

By the time he reached Darlinghurst, Stan's blue jeans and Nikes were gone and in their place were a red Lycra mini skirt and "fuck me - or - fuck you" high-heeled boots. Stan was dead and Star was born!

Star's big break came when he was pulled from the chorus line to play the lead role in a new show. Gold-embossed invitations to A-list parties, a moving feast of beautiful people - Star had arrived!

It was at one of these celebrity events that Star was introduced to Manly Ian - an ex-footballer turned actor.

Now in case you're wondering, let me set the record straight, so to speak. Although Star, as we've established, was definitely in touch with his Inner Goddess, not to mention his Brazen Slut, he still had all his manly parts, if you know what I mean.

But as Star told his new lover frequently in the following frenzied weeks of passion in the egg crate apartment in Darlinghurst that was their love nest, when it came to manly parts, it had to be said that Manly Ian defined the genre.

To say that Star was in love is gross understatement. Time with Manly Ian was his only reality, everything else was just filler until he was back in his lover's arms.

That being the case, imagine the depth of Star's shock the afternoon he walked in – rehearsal had finished early – and heard muffled sounds coming from the bedroom.

It was a sliding doors moment. He could tiptoe out and forget it had ever happened. But we all know he didn't do that. Would you?

What he did, of course, was open the door. And there was Manly Ian in bed with another man.

But not just any man. The man lying in Manly Ian's arms was none other than Big Dave, Supplier of Farm Machinery and Big Bits, and Star's father.

Noise. That's all that Star could recall of what happened next. Screaming, pleading, imploring, defending, accusing but really it was just noise. It reminded him of deafening, unrelenting clamour of the dogs in the pound next door to where they'd

lived in Albury-Wodonga who used to keep him awake all night with their howling.

Star fled. Caught the next bus. Went to the only place he knew where unconditional love was dispensed as freely as conditioner. Salon 266.

With Madonna wailing in the background about getting your education from your lovers, and Morpheas the Shiatsu Maltese sniffing his crotch, Star poured out the whole sordid tale. Jacqui's, "No, you're kidding! Oh you poor love," and steady stream of pink Kleenex helped somewhat but only temporarily. Chantelle, who had popped in to get her roots retouched before her stint volunteering at the Wayside Chapel, chipped in with, "Darlink, two highly strung men like you, no good, no good. Drama, drama, drama! Take my advice darlink, find a nice stockbroker and settle down." At this Star's tears became a torrent that not even one of Marcel's famous scalp massages could ease.

"Rivkah ... I must ... see Riv... kah. She'll tell me wha ...what to do..." Star hiccuped between tears. Minutes later it was organised and soon Star was ensconced in a cosy booth downstairs in the Gertrude and Alice bookshop and Rivkah, renowned psychic and tarot reader, was applying her particular brand of mothering and fortune-telling.

"Star, my dear, I see another performance looming. Just make sure it's worthy of an Oscar."

It was at his neighbourhood laundrette that evening, as his g-strings and y-fronts swished around – those womblike sounds were very soothing – that Star had his brilliant idea. First he rang his mother. Velda, who had been led to believe that Big Dave was attending a conference in Tasmania, couldn't believe her ears. Her first instinct was to pull out her sewing box and finish the frilly blue blouse she'd been working on for Star but he needed her now and she had to be strong.

Her husband's gmail account revealed the horrible truth. Big Dave, it transpired, had become obsessed with Manly Ian and been corresponding with him for some time.

Velda took control. "I'm ringing your father right now and telling him to get to your show tonight and nothing you can say or do will stop me."

While his smalls were drying, Star made a call to Manly Ian who had been leaving messages and texting him all day.

"Star, ohmigod where have you been? I've been frantic ... I'm so sorry ... "

"Come ... tonight ... the show ... we'll talk ... after ... wards," Star wheezed.

"Are you okay Star? What's wrong?"

"Nothing ... a ... bit ... short of ... breath ... heart murmur ... " And Star hung up.

That night as his father watched from the dress circle and his lover watched from the front row, Star shone.

As 'My Way' was nearing its end, Star's voice faltered.

It took a moment for the audience to react. Was this some new musical interpretation or was it real?

In the hush that followed, Star spoke.

"Tonight is a very special for me. Forgive me if I'm a little tearful ... everyone, I want you to meet my lover and my dad. Dad, Ian, please stand up.

"There are some fathers who wouldn't accept a son like me and who could blame them.

"But today dad, I want to thank you, not only for leaving your Big Machine Parts R Us Conference in Tasmania early to be here but also, and – excuse my tears – it's just so special – today my father set aside all his fears.

"Yes ladies and gentlemen, my wildest dream has been realised.

"Today, my father embraced my lover!"