

Chapter 5: Well, here's another clue for you all

Towards the end of May, it was time to get into the studio to get the newly written material out to the world. John had recently spent time recording avant-garde music with Yoko in his home studio. This would later get released as *Two Virgins*. The record cover showed John and Yoko posing completely naked, and the new dynamic was getting very clear. Yoko was John's new creative companion, and they were going to cross all the boundaries of the time. William didn't think much of this provocative project, but he was asked to leave a quote for the cover, and agreed to do so. He scribbled down some cryptic words, stating:

"When two Saints meet, it is a humbling experience. The long battles to prove he was a Saint."

George had also recently finished his work with his first solo effort; a soundtrack record called *Wonderwall Music*. Now William, John and George had all gone solo in one way or another. Ringo has stated that *The White Album* was The Beatles becoming more of a band again. Let me say that I strongly disagree. By this time, The Beatles was less of a band than ever before. Barely a band at all. I do understand what Ringo was referring to. They headed away from the grandiose experimentation and returned to the basic rock sessions. However, it had nothing to do with how the boys would play with Paul in Hamburg or at The Cavern. It was a time of great misery. The band was only living artificially. They were fed up and thought of themselves as individuals as opposed to a collective.

In June, when the sessions were still new, William was told by the management that he was obliged to be best man on Paul's brother Mike's weddings. They had arranged it that way to make it seem like the McCartney family was still going strong. When William eventually would get married himself, a year later, Mike was in return forced to be best man. It was such a cold and insensitive situation, especially for Mike, having to share a big moment of his life with someone he didn't really want much to do with at all. Still, William did show up with Jane, someone he wasn't friendly with at all either, after constantly looking for other affairs. A public breakup was hanging in the air.

The wedding and its following reception all turned out rather surprisingly jolly, in spite of the strained relations between William and the McCartney family, including Jane. Everybody tried to bury the battle-axes and have fun together. The strengthening of the relation between William and Mike would come to be of great relevance later, which I will return to, so please bear it in mind. On the other side, William had now completely lost interest in keeping up the charade with Jane. He was publicly dating the American photographer, Linda Eastman, and the two of them would go on an infamous "dirty weekend" in late June. Linda wasn't the only woman he was cheating with at the time. He had also been getting things going with scriptwriter Francie Schwartz, or as he called her; Franny. He knew he was on thin ice, but he chose to live his relatively new life as a world star to the fullest. He couldn't stand not using his freshly gained popularity.

Now, the recording sessions were to be continued. William fancied doing another album full of visual clues, but John wasn't keen on that idea at all. He firmly stated that he wanted to focus on audio clues instead. The idea of an all white album originally came from John, being

a big admirer of the colour as an Eastern representation of the funeral and the mourning. The white aesthetics therefore was a clue in itself, but it contains no details since John simply didn't feel like focusing on visuals at the time. He did let William plant some visual clues though, enter the infamous collage. A lot of clues can be found in the collage. The most famous one is a picture of William, right before he was to take on Paul's identity. It is taken from a series of test pictures, taken by the management in October 1966 to see what disguise worked best. In another picture, you can see William in his tub, with his eyes closed. Only the top of his head is visible, and the water surrounding it is supposed to appear as floating blood, to symbolize the way blood was floating from Paul's cracked head. Yet another picture of William with his eyes closed was added, as well as a white car and two pictures where ghosts were reaching out for him. The visuals were awfully strong but they could never compete with the audio clues that John had in mind.

The previous year, the boys had released "I Am The Walrus" as a single from the *Magical Mystery Tour* soundtrack. The music video recorded for the movie was awfully revealing. Several doctors and policemen running around. In fact, the entire beat of the song is built around the sound of a siren. In the video, you can also see the boys sitting upon a wall, or a tombstone lying down if you will. That was a reference to Humpty Dumpty, the eggman in the song, who fell down from a wall and split his head, just like Paul had fallen with the same result. It was a surreal representation of the event. The lyrics may seem pointless, but they aren't. John told me that they're built around Lewis Carroll's poem "The Walrus and the Carpenter". The walrus in the poem is a bit of a crook, fooling oysters for his own gain. John connected that strongly to William, specifically the way he thought he was fooling the fans to gain money and power. So, if William was supposed to be the walrus, why did John sing that *he* was the walrus? Why did he dress up as the walrus himself? Well, I can't answer for that, but I know that he quickly regretted it. Therefore, he put the words "*no, you're not*" below the title on the album sleeve. Now it was time to go even further, with his new song "Glass Onion":

"Well, here's another clue for you all; the walrus was Paul"

It's an infamous line in the Beatle community. It was simply a way of straightly pronouncing "Paul" as the actual con artist, and simultaneously admitting that they were dropping out clues. And it was far from the only audio clue that would be present on the album. Remember that John was influenced by Aleister Crowley and his reversed speech. He had been strongly inspired, ever since he first read about it in 1966. Paul also loved it and in fact, during the summer of 1966, he dubbed himself "Ian Iachimoe", which is what "Paul McCartney" sounds like in reverse. John also used reverse speech in "Rain" during the same time, and now it was time for him to use it yet again in order to put some very clear messages out there. Reporting on the state they were in.

"Paul is a dead man. Miss him, miss him, miss him."

"Turn me on, dead man."

These are also infamous clues that were found early on by fans playing the record backwards. This was the best way to present clues, according to John. Through forward lyrics, you

couldn't be way too frank. However, through backwards lyrics, you could tell the direct truth. Small messages that would pass by the big masses, but possibly reach out to a small group of fans. Well, it turned out to become a much bigger deal than John originally had planned.

William had come to one of these sessions with a new song called "Let It Be". The song sounded very different than the classic song we all know of today. It sounded a bit like a rock song parodying gospel. The early lyrics didn't say a word about mother Mary, they actually went:

"When I find myself in times of trouble, Brother Malcolm comes to me"

While one might think that he intended it as a tribute to Malcolm X, he was actually celebrating Malcolm Frederick Evans, his personal guide through the troubled situation he was in. The advice to change it to "mother Mary" actually came from Ringo, unexpectedly enough. It was a clever double entendre. Since it was an attempt at gospel, referring to the mother of Christ only seemed like a very relevant thing to do. This could be done while also turning it into a tribute to Paul's deceased mother, Mary McCartney, whom they imagined he'd met up with in heaven. It was brilliant. John would later add a similar double entendre in his song "I Found Out":

"I've seen religion, from Jesus to Paul".

In spite of creativity blooming, the problems in the group were getting increasingly evident around this time. There were strong arguments going on and it started to get on the nerves of everyone involved. Famous engineer Geoff Emerick chose to walk out on the group, mid-June, not to return for the rest of the album project. It was one of many examples on how the ship was sinking. Some of the sessions were just unbearable. William managed to bore the rest of the band out of their minds when putting focus on recording the whimsical "Ob-La-Di Ob-La-Da". They never got the tempo quite right, until John showed up stoned in the studio and banged out the opening chords that can be heard on the final version.

John was not always too happy about finding himself in session and his seriousness would sometimes be lacking. As a result of this, William often took his business elsewhere to get work done. He would record songs by himself in the other studio. John later confessed that it had hurt him badly to see what was happening to the project he was the founder of. It was getting clear that the band was falling apart. I remember visiting John at 34 Montagu Square, Marylebone, an estate leased by Ringo but rented by John and Yoko at the time. John was under the influence, telling me about his feelings. He asked me if I had read Richmal Crompton's book series *Just William* as a child. Me, remembering my own childhood, answered that I had. I remember him saying something similar to:

"I used to love those books. William the rebel, William the Outlaw and all that shit. I had no idea that he would actually show up in my life."

This says a lot about John's feelings at the time. William was making him feel miserable. They weren't against each other as people, it's just that everything was getting way too painful and the presence of a Paul McCartney double only made it worse. In late August, Ringo famously shocked everybody by temporarily quitting The Beatles. He was fed up with the

whole situation and the way William would boss around with the others, indirectly claiming to be better than the other members at everything. William ironically responded to this by taking over the role as a drummer for "Back In The U.S.S.R." and "Dear Prudence". He actually did a pretty good job, the ending of "Dear Prudence" features some splendid drumming, but the tensions in the group were slowly getting out of control.

Ringo took his two sons with him to go see the Mediterranean. On board Peter Seller's yacht, they were able to have a nice and peaceful family time together. Ringo could finally feel relaxed, but his mind wasn't at ease. He was grieving Paul very actively during his trip, something that the toddlers of course knew nothing about. It was because of this grief that his mind began wandering once he was told about how octopuses build caves on the seabed. He imagined himself in a sweet and safe place together with Paul, John and George. Just like how things used to be before they all got famous. This resulted in "Octopus's Garden", the second and last song he would write for the group. It may appear as a fun song, but it's really a commentary on living under threat and a wholehearted desire to get out of it. This makes the song rather eerie, in my opinion:

"We would sing and dance around, because we know we can't be found"

In spite of the adventures with the octopuses, the band could never go on without Ringo. He soon would get a telegram from the boys, saying: *"You're the best rock'n'roll drummer in the world. Come on home, we love you."* This really encouraged him, since it was not only a loving message but also a nice way for William to admit that he simply could never match his drumming. This put an end to the holiday. It was time for more work.

Soon after this, the group came together at David Frost's show to record promo videos for their new single, "Hey Jude/Revolution". Michael Lindsay-Hogg was the director, and it wasn't the first or last time the band worked with him. The Musician's Union had put a ban on miming, which meant that the band had to perform live, much to their delight. They had a good time, especially when shooting the "Hey Jude" promo, singing along with a big crowd of people that Michael had picked out. Some of them were groupies that used to hang outside of the studio on Abbey Road. William specifically remembers the curious old man that touched his hair during the performance. His name was Bill, and he was a homeless alcoholic who used to stay outside the place where the *Magical Mystery Tour* film was being edited; Old Compton Street in Soho. William would invite him in and talk to him, which is why he later chose to also invite him to the big sing-along. In spite of the band having a good time, they never failed to get on each other's nerves between the takes.

Things weren't really easy in the studio either. George had a very hard time catching the attention of John and William. They were busy with their own songwriting capabilities, causing them to completely ignore George when he brought the masterpiece "While My Guitar Gently Weeps". He actually had to bring Eric Clapton into the studio in order to catch their attention, and they finally agreed to record it. The song is largely based around his sorrow for Paul, which can be heard from how he moans out Paul's name in the ending of the song. The recording of this song came to become a new start in the studio, since it was the first song with Ringo on drums to be recorded after the split.

I visited the studio for one of the sessions. It was on William's 31st birthday, September 18. The band would be improvising a rock'n'roll number that would later be called "Birthday", where William would admit to the world: "*it's my birthday too, yeah!*". The band and their friends would later take a break to go to William's house to watch the airing of "The Girl Can't Help It", a 50's movie they all had fond memories of. Me and a few other people were sitting around in the studio, waiting for the band to come back and finish the song.

Suddenly, we were all surprised to see a stranger woman walking through the door together with a one year old girl. She introduced herself as Sally and I immediately identified her as Sally Clive, William's former girlfriend. She asked for William and I told her he wasn't there at the moment. She told me that she hadn't been able to reach him but that she would love me to send birthday regards from her and their daughter. She left and we were all quite shocked. She must've been in an early pregnancy when he left her behind to become a Beatle. When they all returned, we told him about what had happened. He was not at ease since he apparently didn't know about it either. The mood was extremely tense and the subject was never touched upon again. I hope that the two of them did sort it out and that the little girl got to know her father somehow.

William had other women than Sally on his mind. His "split" from Jane now made him free to embrace his interest for Linda, the American photographer. The two of them were openly dating during a lot of the *White Album* sessions. Linda was allowed into the studio to take pictures of the band, but that was more or less the only occasions she would be sitting around in there. Generally, Beatle girlfriends were not allowed in the studio. Around this time, John was beginning to violate this policy quite heavily. As I've mentioned, John and Cynthia had been facing problems for quite some time. They both knew the divorce was near. Therefore, John was free to spend an increasing amount of time with Yoko Ono, whom he'd met already in 1966. Yoko would even be allowed as a singer on more than one song. This was something that caused the other members great disturbance. William couldn't stand Yoko and felt that she was stealing creative space.

John was also deeply into heroin at this point. He and Yoko would often be using it. This was a result of a severe depression caused by the entire situation. His addictions became strongly problematic. At times, he would show up completely stoned to the sessions and other times he wouldn't show up at all. This was obviously his own kind of escapism. He needed to flee from his sorrow. However, it didn't sit well with William, the perfectionist.

Chapter 6: "P" is for "goodbye"

Now came the release of the "Yellow Submarine" movie, earlier mentioned. It was a cartoon featuring The Beatles fighting the so called Blue Meanies in Pepperland. It was dubbed by imitators, meaning that the band only put the minimal effort required into the production. However, it features several clues. For example, in one scene, five Beatles are on display. One John, one George, one Ringo and two Paul's, one of which only is displayed at a screen, symbolizing that he's not real. In another scene, the submarine goes past a tombstone that says: "No. 49 here lie buried". "Paul" has four letters and "McCartney" has nine, making the

code say: "Paul McCartney here lie buried". The tombstone also spells out the name William.

John was very much into numbers and codes at this point. To the cover of the movie and its following soundtrack, he added the number 23. If I remember it correctly, it was a mathematical clue. $2 - 3$ makes -1 , meaning that The Beatles lost one member. $2 + 3$ makes 5, meaning that they are now five members. That was something that fascinated John, how four people lost one and became five. It was an impossible equation that was also somehow very real. On the cover, you can also see John holding his hand above Paul's head, a common theme of a clue. His hand is flashing the Devil's horns, which I believe is a comment on how evil industry people had Paul under their control. He would also frequently dream about Paul during this period of time. He recalled one specific dream where Paul had showed up by his bed, being really hurt about getting no credit for the *Yellow Submarine* project. It was his song and he wanted to be remembered for it.

John was really determined to please Paul, even if it was only a dream version. He suddenly got flashbacks from his youth, how he used to be madly in love with him, jumping around and shouting "chalk and cheese" after his aunt Mimi had labelled them as such to describe their individual differences. In order to give Paul the credit, he decided to put the letter P on the physical submarine replica that was used for promotion. As can be heard stated by John's character in the movie; "P is for goodbye".

The movie became a success and received critical acclaim, much to the management's relief after the commercial disaster named *Magical Mystery Tour*. However, at this time, John and George were growing more and more tired of the whole thing. George was finding himself preferring the company of people other than The Beatles. John stuck to Yoko, doing a lot of heroin. They were getting bored with supporting William in his act. They felt like sidemen and would prefer to break the band up, something that wasn't possible since the contract they had signed after Paul's death had a five year obligation. William was now the creative leader of the group, and surely, he had new ideas cooking. He started organising a new Beatles performance that would stun the world. He imagined some kind of TV special featuring The Beatles playing oldies but goldies, maybe even for charity or anti-war. He contacted Michael Lindsay-Hogg, whom had worked on the band's promos before. He told him about his idea, to shoot a documentary of The Beatles preparing the big show. This was arranged within a few months.

In January of 1969, the band first set their foot in Twickenham Studios, where the studio was arranged for shooting the progress. Coloured lights were shining and the musical equipment was all set up. John was fast to doubt the whole project. In a later interview, he would complain about not being able to create music early in the morning, in a room full of cameras and funny lighting. He claimed that he couldn't care less about where the band was eventually going to play, and that he'd rather not play at all. According to himself, he was stoned more or less all the time and never gave a damn. George said similar things about the project. I completely understand their disdain, since everyone but William was set up for a project they didn't necessarily wish to be in.

The band began rehearsing a lot of old songs. They played covers and previous songs of their own, dating back as far as to before "Love Me Do". William knew all the old Beatle tracks by

heart, but John would have to teach him songs like "One After 909", one of the first songs that John wrote together. It was a nostalgic blast to play those old songs, but Paul's absence was a very heavy shadow over the whole thing. The mood was incredibly tense. The cameras captured several miserable moments, including the infamous scene where George scolds William for being overbearing. On January 10, the seventh day of the project, he chose to leave the group with the words: "*See you 'round the clubs*".

As this was happening, a legend was forming. A big seed to the entire "Paul is dead" mystery was planted. The seed was named Terry Knight. Terry was an American who had travelled to London already in 1968 to see if he could become a recording artist for Apple. The band was looking for new talents to sign up at their label or give away their excessive songs to. He was lucky enough to get to spend some time with the band in the studio and was reportedly very surprised at seeing how the band was arguing. The mood within the band wasn't really out in the open at this time. William welcomed him with open arms, and they began a new friendship. Terry still didn't know that William wasn't Paul. He would refer to him by Paul's name, until John took him aside to explain about the secret that everyone within the rooms of EMI Recording Studios was fully aware of. Terry's first reaction was to laugh, believing that it was another of John's mad jokes. John gave him a serious look, and Terry looked towards William, who confirmed it all by nodding silently. Terry found himself betrayed and the friendship was over as soon as it had began. He eventually would leave without any Apple contract, since no deal would please him. However, around this time in early 1969, he would release a song about finding out the truth about Paul. Enter "Saint Paul".

In spite of the ambiguous title, the song was clearly directed at Paul McCartney. This was made clear by adding samples of Beatles songs into the composition, specifically "Hello, Goodbye", "Hey Jude", "A Day In The Life" and "Strawberry Fields Forever". This led to some legal trouble that would soon be ended since William and John loved the lyrics and therefore chose to work out a deal that would let the song be the only non-Beatles song released on their own label; MacLen music. "Saint Paul" was extremely outspoken about Paul's death, something they didn't really dare being themselves. The way they saw it, Terry was sacrificing himself, putting his own life at risk. He made it out alive, in spite of lines like: "*Did I hear you call or was I dreaming then, Saint Paul?*", "*You knew it all along; something had gone wrong. They couldn't hear your song of sadness in the air.*", or: "*You didn't listen, Saint Paul!*". In his older days, Terry would be asked about the significance of the song in the context of the "Paul is dead" phenomenon, and he would refuse to talk about it.

George agreed to join the band again, on the condition that they'd move from Twickenham to their new studios. This was accepted, but the camera crew would still follow the band's progress. The band were now jamming on a new song called "Get Back", that started as a parody on British politician Enoch Powell's racist speeches. The band enjoyed playing the song, and the whole project was soon named "the Get Back project". It was also a suitable name since they were now trying to get back to their roots. Billy Preston was now employed as a keyboardist and the band felt that they had their groove back.

While John was excited about "Get Back", he was less excited about William's more mellow songs that, according to John himself, "had nothing to do with The Beatles". A good example is "The Long and Winding Road", which was written about the band and its situation. The whole genre bored John, but he admitted to me later that he cried his eyes out after hearing

William sing the lines:

*"The wild and windy night that the rain washed away
Has left a pool of tears crying for the day"*

It was obviously written about Paul's death and John couldn't handle it. In fact, it wasn't at all uncommon to see John cry or scream during these sessions. He was stoned, miserable and paranoid. There is a lot of filmed footage of this that will never be released, but if you look at the back cover of the final product of the sessions, you will find a picture of John crying out in pain.

George had brought a waltz number called "I Me Mine", a more or less subtle dig at William and the narcissism he experienced was shaping him. He and John had this theory that William had instructed the cameramen to focus mostly on him. My personal opinion is that they were being a bit hard on William. As John and George lost all motivation, William was the only one who truly kept things together. I have full understanding that John and George were only around because they had to be, but William was the one keeping the band out of a really hard legal situation. He kept the boat floating and made sure the band kept on delivering their beautiful music to the world.

All the talk of a new concert was becoming really exhausting. It was out of pure laziness that the band decided to perform on the rooftop of the Apple Corps headquarters on 3 Savile Row, January 30. The boys and Billy Preston played for 42 minutes, repeating a few songs in front of the cameras and happy pedestrians who just happened to be around to witness what would come to be the last Beatles performance ever. Due to complaints from a local bank, the police showed up. They made their way up on the roof and tried to stop the performance. They tried to unplug George's amp and he plugged it back in. They all felt like rebels. Ringo remembers thinking that he wished for the police to try to drag him off the drums. It would make an amazing end of the documentary. It didn't happen, and after receiving applause for the final number, "Get Back", John ironically and infamously told the crowd:

"I'd like to say thank you on the behalf of the group and our sales, and I hope we passed the audition"

The audio of those live takes were also professionally recorded and now enough material was recorded to create a documentary and an album. Hundreds of hours of film and tape was now recorded, and the group simply didn't feel like looking through at all. The film material, featuring some of the misery the public would be curious to see, was now being handled by the filmmakers. The Beatles, however, were focusing on a new project. Only three weeks later, a new album would be in the making.