

DIAMOND
STAR
HALO

TIFFANY MURRAY

Portobello
BOOKS

To my dad, Fritz Fryer

Published by Portobello Books Ltd 2010

Portobello Books Ltd
Twelve Addison Avenue
London
W11 4QR

Copyright © Tiffany Murray 2010

The right of Tiffany Murray to be identified as the author of this work and has been asserted by her in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988

This is a work of fiction. The characters, incidents, and dialogues are products of the author's imagination and not to be construed as real. The author's use of names of actual persons, living or dead, and actual places is incidental to the purposes of the plot and is not intended to change the entirely fictional character of the work.

A CIP catalogue record is available from the British Library

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

ISBN 978 1 84627 207 3

Printed in the UK by CPI William Clowes Beccles NR34 7TL

TEQUILA, 'STALLION BOYS'
RECORDED ROCKFARM AUGUST 1977

TRACK LISTING

DUST ROAD BLUES - 5.26 A. Connor / J. Connor

STALLION BOYS - 4.54 J. Connor

SILVER STUDDED NIGHT 5.42 A. Connor / J. Connor / H. Connor /
C. Connor / J. Connor / D. Connor / K. Connor / T. Connor / J. Connor

PRAIRIE GAL - 4.59 A. Connor

KENTUCKY KARTWHEEL - 3.05 A. Connor / J. Connor / H. Connor /
C. Connor / J. Connor / D. Connor / K. Connor / T. Connor / J. Connor

ON MY FAITHFUL KNEES - 4.53 A. Connor / J. Connor / H. Connor /
C. Connor / J. Connor / D. Connor / K. Connor / T. Connor / J. Connor

LITTLE GIRL - 3.32 A. Connor

SILVER BUS BLUES - 4.33 A. Connor / J. Connor

THE BOY'S SONG - 3.29 J. Connor

GOODBYE JENNY - 2.27 A. Connor

PART ONE:

1977

1.

The one thing my family can agree on – and what I can *swear* is true – is that Fred Connor came to us, we, the Llewelyns of Rockfarm, in the parched summer of 1977.

It was a big year for us. It was the beginning of it all.

First the bin men didn't come, and then it was the Queen's Jubilee (though we were Welsh, so that didn't mean much). When my big brother Vincent stole Mum's safety pins to sing along to a different *God Save the Queen*, our Nana Lew said times were shifting. When Elvis Presley, the King of Rock 'n' Roll, died, Nana told us *everything* had shifted.

After Elvis died, Nana said the Evil Eye was out, so she taught me how to give dead legs and snakebites, and how to pray backwards to her Saints in her *capel* made of bones, nestled like a shoulder blade into her hill. After Elvis, my mother stopped worrying about stones falling on her children; my baby sister Molly learned to growl, and Vincent wore Mum's cheese-cloth dress.

After Elvis, we found Fred Connor.

It was a day when the beech leaves were just thinking of colour and change; a day when the warm rain that pounded Rockfarm bubbled and spat. It was a day like any other day when we found Fred Connor wrapped up in a red cloak on one of our guest beds.

This baby was almost breathless; and he was the smallest I'd

ever seen. Mum had us kids huddle round that piss-yellow candlewick cover to really take him in, and when she touched Fred's forehead with her cold wedding band, he opened his black eyes. I didn't understand what she meant when she squealed, 'Kids, come look! He's part seal-pup, part bloody Heathcliff.'

I do now.

Of course we all knew where Fred had come from, and it wasn't from the birds and the bees and the shaky knees of our parents: our dad hadn't picked him up, an urchin, one dark and stormy night, and Fred didn't fly half-cocked from Never Never Land, either. No, Fred Connor arrived at our farm weeks before with an American band called Tequila. Though Fred didn't arrive on his own two feet: Fred Connor kind of *float*ed.

This is where I'll start then, though the truth is I don't know where to begin because I came out backwards.

'Arse-wise,' Nana Lew calls it; so maybe the story begins with Rockfarm: this home I was born to, this recording studio built by my freckle-handed father on his own Welsh mud.

Rockfarm: a place where rock stars in sunglasses roam, a place where farm cats have toes that run up their legs like pegs on a line.

My Rockfarm.