

THE ROAD GONE MAD

by

Debra Norma Mitchell

Debra Norma Mitchell, *The Road Gone Mad*
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Boekencoopertie Nederland U.A. (for this edition)
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Cover design: Debra Norma Mitchell
Cover photo & photo author: Minnie Middelberg
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NUR 301
ISBN 978.94.92079.73.2

Disclaimer: All characters in this publication are fictitious, and any
resemblance to real persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

THANKS!

Thank you so much to all those who helped me along this journey of publishing a novel!

Hans Plomp, Luc Sala, Rachel Rackitt, Sandra Bishop,
Gerald Hansen, Kim Clarke Champniss, Barbara Ruijgrok,
Rinus Kroon, Dave Doroghy, Sherree Mitchell, Dawn Loverock,
Lizz Daniels, Celeste Perez-Vivas, Tony Sapiano,
Audrey Clarke, Natalia Dima, David Testas, Yantra Jolanda,
Laimite Bez-komentariem, Cor DeCarr, Steve Thomas,
Colin Steven, Anthony Donner, Minnie Middelberg,
Aja Waalwijk, & Ewout Storm van Leeuwen

Special Thanks to:

Maz Weston for making so much possible,
Paul Jay for friendship in a crazy world,
& Ken Kesey for constant inspiration!

Most of all, BIG THANKS to
Amsterdam Party People for
so many wonderful memories!

WHAT THE READERS SAY

An easy enticing read.
(artist)

Caught my attention.
(organizer)

This story needs to be told.
(dj)

I learned a lot.
(party-person)

Some serious writing talent.
(dj/producer/organizer)

Love the imagery.
(writer)

Like going on a road trip without a map.
(singer/songwriter)

Good ending.
(writer)

Love it.
(writer)

Could only have been written by someone who lived it.
(dj/producer)

The kind of info people pretend to not want to know
but really they do.
(party person)

DEDICATED TO
MY SISTERS AND BROTHERS EVERYWHERE

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Chapter 1 → GO

“My name is Madelyn, but everyone calls me Mad!”

Flashing what she calls her big Hollywood smile, Madelyn Easterley throws back her head to laugh. Her eye catches a glimpse of her former partner, lover, and sometime mentor Dick Bird. Music producer and DJ, Dick is now one of the guys behind her big rival; party organization High Kaliber.

‘So-called big rival, I’m not the one who looks at this as a rivalry!’

This is the world of parties; otherwise known as nightclub events. A world of art and mostly, entertainment. A mad scene. A place of non-stop parties, and never-ending party politics. A world in which everybody wants to be noticed, known, in the know, and to know everyone.

The party circuit is well-travelled, and the customs fairly well known. There aren’t rules; however, there are guidelines. Certain rituals are performed. Arriving at an event, people in-the-know go straight to the DJ booth to say hi and shake the DJ’s hand. To pay respect. And to make the proverbial party statement.

“I’m here! I’ve arrived! Look at me!”

These aren’t people with five year plans. Nine to five means nine in the evening to five in the morning. No one knows much about each other except what kind of music they like. Also which DJs and organizations they follow, and which venues they like best. No one knows, or cares, where---or if---fellow party people work.

Unless, of course, it’s related to party business. Then they want to know for sure. Upon meeting, everyone automatically gives each other the three kisses whether they know each other or not. Years can pass before they think to ask the person’s name.

‘We’re not on name basis but we are on kissing basis!’

Sometimes people don’t greet each other at all; they just nod. This isn’t always due to snobbery; it’s to do with seeing each other so much at so many different events, it’s as though they never parted.

Madelyn is the person behind The Road party organization. She takes it as a big compliment an organization as big as HK should look upon her as competition. It’s true The Road’s well known on the local scene. HK however, has international fame.

Dick and Maddy met while teens. At a party. Dick was the DJ. Maddy busied herself with improvising decoration and rearranging furniture to better benefit the party. And it wasn’t even her party. Soon Dick and Mad were organizing parties called Child.

“Bring out the child within you!”

They’re credited with being the ones who really got the party scene going in this town. This puts them high up in the hierarchy; way up the in-crowd ladder. Gives them great status. With his impeccable good taste, Dick introduced underground imports into what had been, until they came along, a fairly commercial scene.

The pair blazed their way onwards and upwards. Madelyn organized, promoted, and made decoration. Dick played the music. Large crowds of party people gasped with ecstasy at this new sound.

The people “ooh”-ed and “aah”-ed with wonder at Maddy’s imaginative ideas. Her amazing décor was out of this world. Together Dick and Mad were king and queen of the party scene. Everything they did was gold.

Of course the inevitable messy break up eventually occurred. Everyone took sides, chose their branch, and fell into one family or the other. Break ups are difficult for everyone around.

Madelyn felt Dick had come to think of her as just his flyer girl and nothing more.

‘And there’s no way I was gonna let that happen!’

She knows she was an important part of the package.

‘It wouldn’t have been the same without me!’

The way she saw it, there are many DJs in the sea.

‘Or in the scene!’

Club owners, programmers, and promoters---recognizing Madelyn’s talent---approached her. They appreciated her magical ways with a party. Before you could put a needle on a record, Maddy was organizing nights in most of the top clubs. Including her favourite.

‘Fantasia!’

Fantasia is an old church situated in the centre of town. Freddy Fantasia was a follower of Child, and is a fan of Maddy. To make matters even better, Maddy’s best friend from the early days is Marianna North. Yes, she of Tip Top Club fame. And Marianna North has become Fantasia’s main programmer.

Madelyn Easterley has organized more nights at Fantasia than any other organizer. Other than Marianna herself, of course. The friendship of the two however, doesn’t automatically mean Madelyn gets a free ride.

‘Nope! Seems to me I have to work twice as hard!’

Knowing someone can get you a foot in the door. However, it doesn’t mean you stay there. Mad had a great idea and cool concept.

‘In the end it’s all about the numbers, how many feet are on the dancefloor!’

The two girls often giggle together about their wild child adventures. In those days---or nights rather---they were always together. So much so, people thought they were related. Sisters or at least cousins. They were always out; seen everywhere.

‘We’d be on up to five different guestlists per night!’

Sometimes they weren’t on the list. In these instances, they’d still turn up and be let in.

‘For free of course.’

They were the type of girls organizers want at their events. Upon arrival, doormen and women alike hugged them. Never asked for their tickets. They were never asked to pay for checking their coats. Seldom paid for drinks. Between them they knew almost everyone, and almost everyone knew them.

Madelyn can remember the names of hundreds of people. Hers is the kind of brain which easily remembers things such as names. This is useful in her line of work. She can also remember where she met each and every person she knows.

‘Also when and what we were doing at the time!’

At a party, Mad and Marianna were mostly to be found in the hub of the action. This means the middle of a dancefloor, in the middle of the crowd.

‘The centre!’

The centre of attention is exactly what they wanted. Those who didn’t know Madelyn and Marianna certainly noticed them. And wanted to know them. During those nights, everything seemed possible.

They loved to play games on the dancefloor. They had a favourite when there came a too-long break in the music. They’d look around, hands on hips, toes tapping impatiently. They’d look at their wrists. Then they’d shout.

“Are we there yet?!”

“Let’s get this party on the road!”

When Madelyn started organizing without Dick, The Road was the obvious choice for a name. Maddy’s eyes glaze over. She’s back in time. She’s with Marianna and several others, having fun.

They’re in the back of a small bus. Travelling from one party

location to another. Madelyn and Marianna have no idea where they're going. No clue who they're with. They don't care. All they know is they're laughing. A lot.

'Sometimes it's the journey which counts!'

Most memorable on that trip was the dreamy-eyed guy whose name Mad never caught. Otherwise she'd remember it for sure. His arm was wrapped around a beautiful girl. Every few minutes he'd joyously shout out the same line.

"I love this girl!"

To Maddy, this ride in this bus signifies the true meaning of the party scene. It's all about love, dreams, and starry eyes. Forever after, the girls call him the I-love-this-girl guy. Madelyn sees him at many parties and never once asks him his name.

Maybe Marianna knows, but Maddy keeps forgetting to ask. Doesn't matter. Isn't necessary. People like having a pet name. Madelyn makes up names for almost everyone she knows.

Madelyn and Marianna make a striking twosome. One's tall, dark, and somewhat imposing. The other's petite, fair, and considerably more approachable. Together their enthusiasm is contagious, and their antics amusing; the ability to dance night after night until dawn impressive. Wide-open to fun, they retain an air of mystery.

Sometimes people mix them up. One guy swore Maddy was Marianna, and Marianna Mad. To the point of argument. People make up what they want. It's a clever person who started calling them M Plus M. It's wise not to put one before the other.

Dick Bird's path led him to what's referred to as the party mafia. I'm not sure, but it might have been Madelyn who first coined the phrase. Could have been. Probably was. Sounds like her.

'Of course it could've been someone else.'

Giovanni Gialoppi runs the High Kaliber parties, along with

his sidekick/brother Guido. They also run Galaxy, the venue High Kaliber's housed in. Giovanni runs the show and always comes before Guido, even when entering a room.

Mirroring each other's movements, clothing styles, thoughts, and ideas, they look and behave like a couple of gangsters. But gangsters in a comedy who don't know they're funny. There's something comical about them. At least that's how Madelyn sees it.

'Maybe it's the way Guido laughs at all Giovanni's jokes no matter how bad they are, it's like Giovanni has his own private laugh track!'

Many stories about HK circulate. It's said they nicked their name from another organizer. It's said they snuck locations out from under the noses of other organizations. Madelyn's heard HK either fines or puts DJs on probation when irritated. To show their power.

'That's not so funny.'

More stories make their rounds. About them eating in front of hungry crew members, and refusing to share. Refusing to pay what's owed. Or to front a bit of cash to the poor hungry sods. Apparently, Giovanni's voice thunders throughout the building, bouncing off walls.

"Pay day's tomorrow!"

Even though it's reputed he always carries a large bundle of cash.

'At any rate, according to the story, he's eating expensive take-a-way, right?'

Refusing to share food with poor hungry crew members while living the high life.

'I mean, that's just mean!'

The long list of lamentable laments goes on. And on.

'True or not, sure makes for good listening!'

In spite of this, or maybe because of it, Giovanni and Guido

are looked up to.

‘Figuratively and literally!’

They, and their party organization, tower above the heads of most. Sometimes Madelyn feels like a dwarf in their midst. Literally and figuratively. This however, isn’t something she’ll ever admit.

Galaxy’s location is an old school building directly across the street from Fantasia. Dick’s one of HK’s residents DJs. His main job there though, is to book all the right DJs for HK. He uses the contacts he built up with Maddy over the years. Reportedly, Giovanni knows nothing about DJs.

‘Or music.’

Madelyn of course, also uses those very same contacts.

‘They’re mine too!’

She’s careful not to use any DJs Dick’s already persuaded to play HK. She has the right to use them, but doesn’t want conflicts.

‘Unless I feel like using them, then I do.’

But now her mind’s wandering from the task at hand. She snaps back to attention.

‘What’s Dick doing here?!’

At this moment she’s being interviewed by her friend Babs. Babs’ live Babalicious radio program on Prompt Radio is listened to by many. Babs is considered to be in the know. Usually Babs hosts her show here at Area One only on Friday evenings. But this is a special Friday. Thus, it was decided to broadcast during the afternoon too.

Yes, this is a special Friday. Tonight Fantasia’s new weekly club night will be launched. Tonight, On The Road at Fantasia will kick off. And, as everyone knows---this being the first Friday of the month---there’s also something else going on.

‘It’s also the night of the monthly High Kaliber event.’

The well established, highly successful, monthly jam-packed

High Kaliber party.

“Big night ahead!”

Babs is shouting above the music. Mad shouts back.

“Yes I’m super excited!”

“But what about the risk? High Kaliber is also happening tonight, you must know they’re always sold out!”

“Doesn’t that say…”

Maddy asks a question in place of an answer.

“...doesn’t that say there’s room for another party? We have DJs who deserve to be heard, artists who must be seen! Fantasia’s not going to stay closed tonight just because somebody else is doing a party! They approached me. I accepted the challenge.”

She continues.

“Road parties sell out too. People come for our special brand of brilliant music, beautiful people, and magical atmosphere! Plenty of fun! It’s always a wild time on The Road! Always an adventure! True, some of our fans are HK fans too. But I think tonight they’ll choose us! Everyone likes to check out something new!”

Madelyn’s smiling, and pretty sure she sounds convincing. Deep down inside though, she nervously sweats.

“We’re doing better than normal in pre-sale.”

Her voice sounds hollow in her own ears. Truth be told, they aren’t doing as well in pre-sale as hoped. Nevertheless, Maddy’s job is to spread good cheer and positive vibes. Thus, spread good cheer and positive vibes she will. MC Bull’s Eye; HK’s mc, host, and main promoter, put it best.

“We’re selling fun.”

The small café is getting crowded. Many of Maddy’s inner circle are here. Dick Bird’s standing closer now. Pretending, as he so often does, to not see her. Surrounded, as always, by his wife Anastasia and her gaggle of gorgeous girlfriends.

Madelyn half smiles in their direction, even though they of

course come under the umbrella of the HK family. They look like they're having fun. They dance and laugh, and those are the two main objectives. Babs, in radio mode, raises her voice even more.

"Look! Here's Dick Bird, High Kaliber resident DJ! This is a happy coincidence!"

Madelyn isn't sure how happy a coincidence this is. It doesn't make her feel very happy. She isn't sure it's a coincidence at all. She realizes though, a radio show is about ratings. From Babs' point of view, this could make for interesting radio.

"Dick Bird! Please have a word with our live audience!"

This is an offer he can't refuse.

'Knowing him the way I do, I'm quite sure he won't refuse.'

Undoubtedly, he'd very much love to move in on her interview.

'It's probably why he's here.'

She's noticed him inching towards where they're sitting.

"Yeah sure Love."

"Tonight your former partner Madelyn Easterley is starting up her new weekly night at Fantasia! Right across the street from your night at Galaxy!"

"Oh is she? How sweet."

'Dick. He knows damn well. He makes a point of knowing everything going on.'

Yes he knew. Must've known. Had to have known. High Kaliber, or High School as Maddy calls them, had been trying to get her number one DJ, Randy Rave, to play exclusively for them. Even though they, and everyone else, knows it's she who first brought Randy to these shores.

'I'm the one who took a chance on him!'

She's even been responsible for getting Randy gigs at HK! As well as their festival High Peaks! Without her, they probably wouldn't even know who he is. And Dick's pretending he doesn't know about her party?

‘Yup, they want my DJ for their very own.’

Randy Rave is tonight’s headliner for On The Road. He played on one of the first Road parties. He’s already played for her at Fantasia more than once. Randy and Mad even once organized a club tour together. He’s an extremely talented DJ. He’s also the producer of many big club hits. It seems everyone likes him and his music.

“Well?”

Babs is talking.

“How do you feel about it Dick?”

“Maddy’s little crowd will I’m sure go to support her and her fun little party.”

Here he makes a ridiculous sort of seemingly sarcastic little leap in the air. His arms and hands, feet and legs, go all a-flutter. His pointy nose pokes at the air.

‘Wow he really does look like a bird, pity it’s radio and not tv!’

Madelyn laughs to herself as Dick drones on.

“But the serious people, those in the know, the thinkers, the intelligentsia as it were, they’ll come to High Kaliber. With us it’s all about the music, the music, the music is most important. The music is and always will be.”

The words drone around Madelyn’s ears like vibrating mosquitoes.

“We have high calibre DJs playing high calibre music. It’s all on a high calibre. To be short, it’s high calibre high calibre.”

He pauses while he collects his thoughts.

“High calibre sound, high calibre music. Music.”

He straightens himself up.

“Most important. The music, the music, the music.”

No way would, could, or should Madelyn ever argue that music isn’t important. Of course it is.

‘People come to a party to dance!’

However, having known Dick for a number of years, she's heard this spiel before. This had been an ongoing discussion between Madelyn and Dick for some time. Madelyn gives her usual retort.

"I love music, who doesn't?! Music's very important to The Road. We're known for being the first to get many big international DJs. Where would we be without music?"

Madelyn knows her own spiel so well she could recite it in her sleep. She probably has on occasion. She goes on.

"But if I had to choose between music and people I'd choose people every time. You can have a party without music but you can't have a party without people! Tonight we're having a party with fantastic people---and fantastic music! After all, we've got Randy Rave!"

Babs cuts in.

"Well, I'm sure you both have lots to do for tonight!"

She's ending the interview. Glancing at a clock, Mad sees Dick's taken up most of her air time. At least Babs gave her the last word.

"Success to both of you tonight and good luck!"

Babs; ever the professional.

"Now let's give it up for Road resident Charlie Acid! Respect for the DJ!"

Charlie Acid has been playing throughout the interview. He now turns up the sound. Maddy and a few others clap, some shout his name; someone whistles. Area One's busier than usual at this time of day.

She's glad some of her friends and Road crew---whom she calls The Roadies---are here. Minerva's been taking photos of the interview. Flexible, the Road flyer designer, stands by her talking non-stop. Now Minerva busies herself taking photos of various people. Madelyn grabs Flexible's hand.

“Hey everybody! This is the guy who made the beautiful flyer!”
Everyone cheers. Flexible blushes.

“I just did what you told me to!”

Maddy’s flyer girls Lala, Tatum, and Ginny whoop and pull Flexible to the dancefloor. Having depleted their flyer allotments, they’re out to just have fun. As always. The girls harmlessly flirt, they shout, they wave their hands in the air. Madelyn met the girls a while back on a dancefloor at a party.

They’d hit it off immediately. Became inseparable at that party. The three girls work for The Road ever since. Sometimes they flyer; other times they sell tickets and t-shirts at the door. They’re girls who can be trusted. Plus they’re fun. Beautiful in an unconventional way.

‘Girls you want at your party.’

Grace, Area One’s owner, pushes her glasses up her nose. She looks happy as she watches the crowd. Area One is the fave pre-and-post party hangout of Maddy and her crowd. It’s small and cosy. HK has their favoured hangout across town. Madelyn has never been there, and it isn’t usual for any of them to be here.

‘What’s Dick up to...can’t be good.’

Maddy smiles at Charlie, and gives him a quick, but meaningful, kiss. Not only is he her resident DJ, he’s also her guy, her man, her main-squeeze. Right now though, there isn’t time for romance. Not with a big night looming on the horizon.

‘Babs is right, I do have lots to do.’

The main task at hand is getting the last of the flyers out. She needs to do the rounds. Luckily it’s a sunny day; makes it a lot easier. People are more apt to go out in good weather.

‘But if it’s too warm we lose them to the beach!’

Doing the flyer round is often an adventure. Mad loves an adventure.

‘Especially a mad adventure!’