

A String Around the Finger

By Dennis Payton Knight

The tuxedoed emcee introduced the barbershop quartet, extolling their recent performances. It didn't him long, because they hadn't been much any place lately. As he spoke, Jack glanced nervously at his cuticles and noticed a string tied around his left index finger.

"Now what in the devil is that about" he wondered idly as Hap found the key on his harp.

♪ *Lida Rose, I'm home again, Rose, to get the sun back in the sky...*

He could sense the four were in fine form, but worries of the stringed finger and whatever it might be prompting would not leave him alone. Good thing he could put this song on automatic.

♪ *Lida Rose, I'm home again, Rose, about a thousand kisses shy...*

How long had it been on there, that blasted string? And *how* did it get there? He is as ambidextrous as anyone, but tying a knot with one hand while the other is tied up as the object of becoming tied up seemed to him dexterity beyond dexterity.

♪ Ding dong ding, I can hear the chapel bell chime, ding dong ding...

The last ding cued the tenor Pete to step forward with his sweet voice. Doffing and twirling his straw boater hat, he crooned,

♪ At the least suggestion, I'll pop the question...

Maybe he is supposed to bring home a loaf of bread? No, dear sweet Adeline gave that up weeks ago. Bacon? Maybe.

♪ *Lida Rose, I'm home again, Rose, without a sweetheart to my name...*

A string around the finger is an interesting mnemonic device, digital computing at its basic. Maybe Jack could tie strings around all his fingers and really supercharge his memory. You know, humans are metrically perfect, with ten digits and all. And why not get the toes involved?

♪ *Lida Rose, now everyone knows that I am hoping you're the same...*

Luckily, Jack only carries the bass in this outfit. An oompah here, an oompah there. This is the last time he would ever use a string to remind him of anything. Irv's spot came, and, with straw hat over his heart, he kneeled and warbled,

♪ So here is my love song, not fancy or fine, Lida Rose, oh won't you be mine...

The classic melody had hit the money line. As they were about to wrap it up, the memory of why that string was on his finger finally came to Jack. Gadzooks! "Now get back to the song, Jackson" he ordered himself, "You can take care of it when we finish."

♪ *Lida Rose, oh Lida Rose, oh Lida Rose.*

Jack's compadres hit their prettiest notes and he laid down his low bass on the final Lida Rose.

He knew what the string was for, and as the other fellows bowed, he turned aside, reached down, and zipped his fly. He turned back to the audience, took his own bow, and got an extra round of applause.