

## Four Friends and a T-Bird

by Marilyn Reeves

Jack lifted his glass in salute to his old friend and said, “You’ve slimmed down quite a bit there, Tom.”

“Yeah, check out the biceps! You can blame it on my wife. She keeps me on the diet-of-the-month club and makes me go work out at the gym. So, yes. I’ve managed to drop a few pounds.”

“Well, you’re looking good, my man,” Jack said.

“Not looking too shabby yourself, my friend – still skinny after all these years. And still sporting that rusty red crew cut, I see. And freckles.”

“You can blame that on my parents,” said Jack. “And then there’s Mr. Suave, here ... or, excuse me, make that “DOCTOR Suave.”

“Quite the lady killer, that’s me,” Ted responded.

“You always were the egghead in the group. No wonder you grew up to become a dentist.”

“Well, dealing with bloody gums and saliva isn’t all that it’s cracked up to be, Jack.”

“At least the pay’s good, right?” Tom said.

“You should talk. How many hardware stores in your chain now, Tom?”

“Only three at the moment, but thinking of expanding.”

“And then there’s Jack here – retired Colonel, raking in the dough.”

“Yeah, I was one of the lucky ones. Larry wasn’t so lucky.”

“Damn, I sure do miss ol’ Larry,” Tom said. “He was always the life of the party. Remember the night of the T-Bird?”

“How could I forget?” said Ted. “Larry swiped his dad’s keys to the dealership and then hot-wired that baby so we could go cruisin’.”

“Man, what a car! Beautiful paint job. Mint condition.”

“Yeah, Tom. And then Gordon Townsend pulled up beside us in his souped-up Chevy – *vroom!* *vroom!* – and challenged us to a duel out at the old fairgrounds.”

“I think Larry had that Bird cranked up to like 90 or so before we heard that loud bang,” Jack said. “Probably just a rock, but it didn’t do the rear axle any good. Larry brought that car to a screeching halt, and ol’ Gordy was laughin’ his head off, screaming out the window, ‘I won, you suckers! I won!’”

Tom said, “Yeah, and then when we headed back through town to sneak the car back into the lot, Larry spotted Gloria Ginsburg and Mary Ellen Hightower walking down the street in their short shorts and halter tops with those sassy ponytails swinging back and forth, and ol’ Larry ran right into that fire hydrant.”

The three men laughed out loud.

“Well, it didn’t turn out to be all the funny,” said Ted. “Poor Larry had to give up college to pay all those fines, not to mention paying his dad back for replacing that rear axle. And then he joined the service and was shipped off to Vietnam. And the rest, as we know, is history ...”

“At least he got to drive that Thunderbird around for a couple of hours,” Jack said.

“Talk about your joy ride! I’ll never forget that night.”

“Me neither,” Tom said. “Or Larry. Good old Larry. I sure do miss him, don’t you?”