

Steve goes to Carnival

By Joshua Button and Robyn Wells

Notes by Robyn Wells, March 2018

7. JAZZ CHARACTERS

Manila folder containing 7 pieces of original artwork

The characters at the Blue Jaguar Jazz Club were well-formed from the first drafts of the story.

Elegant hostess: The hostess is an older woman who runs the jazz club. Her part in the original draft was to be slightly suspicious of Steve when he enters the club, and to be upset when he is revealed as a gorilla before finally accepting him. She is the character that expresses her shock, exclaiming “Opa!” when Steve’s true identity is revealed. The artwork for the hostess was inspired by Robyn’s neighbour Sudha Coutinho, who is renowned for entertaining on her deck in Broome! We took photos of Sudha in various poses to get the body language for the Elegant Hostess.

In the final scenes of the book, we placed the hostess and the kind doorman dancing alongside Steve and the beautiful dancer, hinting at a possible romance between these two long-time jazz club characters! Their dance was inspired by a Marc Chagall painting of a dancer literally being swept off her feet... (see *Notebook 2*). In this version, the doorman is swept off his feet by the elegant hostess!

Kind Doorman: a gracious character who politely welcomes Steve into the club and later dances with the elegant hostess in the exuberance of the final dance scene.

Waiter: The illustration of the waiter is a self portrait by Joshua— Josh preferred that his cameo appearance in the book was to be a quiet, observant waiter rather than a dancer on the dance floor!

Piano player: I was the model for the final artwork of the piano player. Josh took photos of me wearing my polka-dotted frock and playing my Grandmother’s old Beale piano. A lot of time was spent researching the structure of a grand piano. We cut out stencils to get the shapes that were needed.

Jazz singer and cello player: The singer was inspired by African ‘barefoot diva’, Cesaria Evora, a jazz singer from Cape Verde, which like Brazil, was a Portuguese colony. We had considered putting the lyrics of Evora’s lyrics wafting over the scene: “my love walks by me, barefoot...” as Steve walks barefoot across the jazzclub, but we ran out of time!