

goes on and on.

"Would you like me to autograph something for her?" he asks quickly.

"Sure, sure," the man answers. His broad face suddenly lights up. "Hey, I've got a great idea! We haven't gotten our dinner yet, and you've got plenty of room in this booth! How about if we join you!"

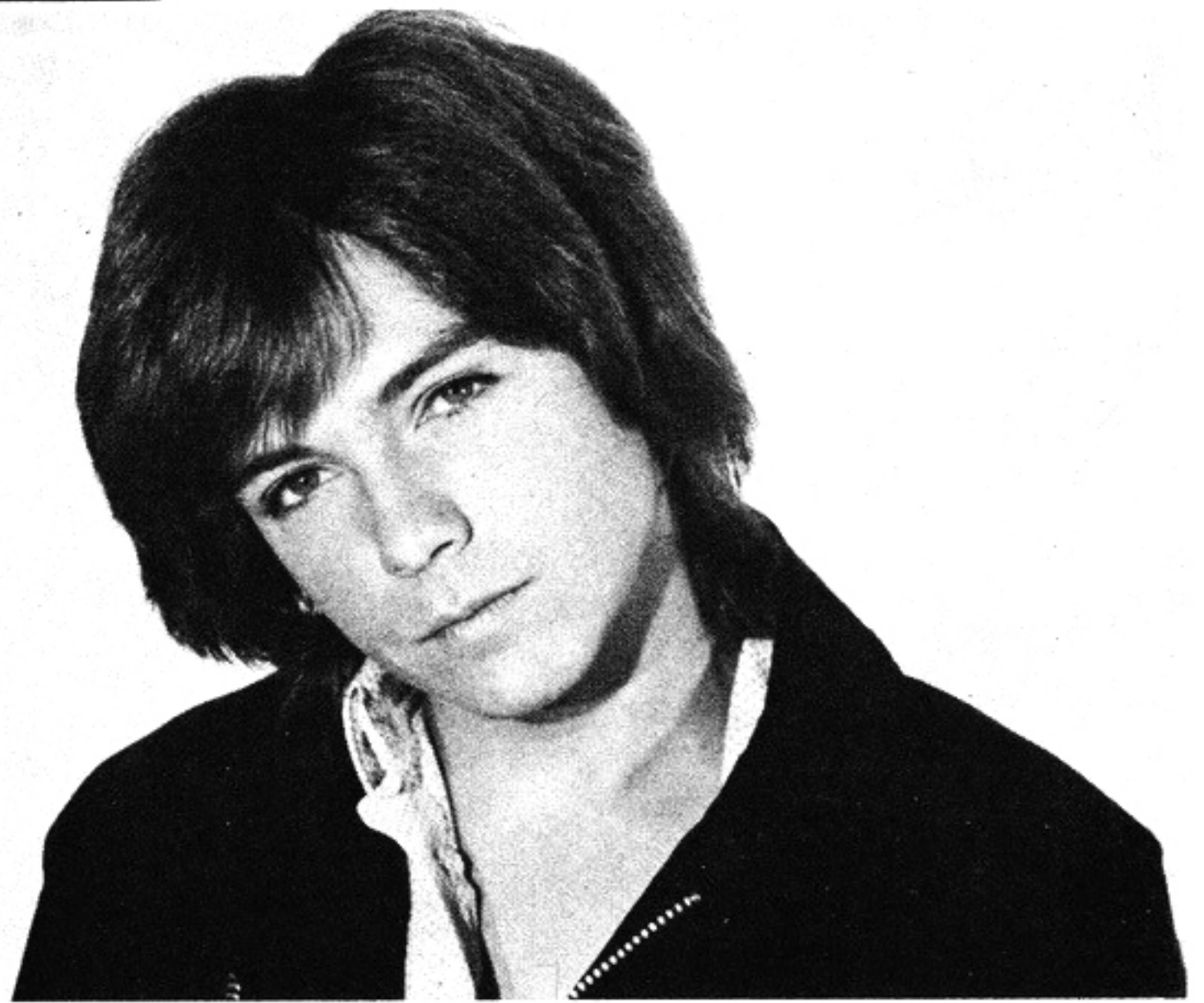
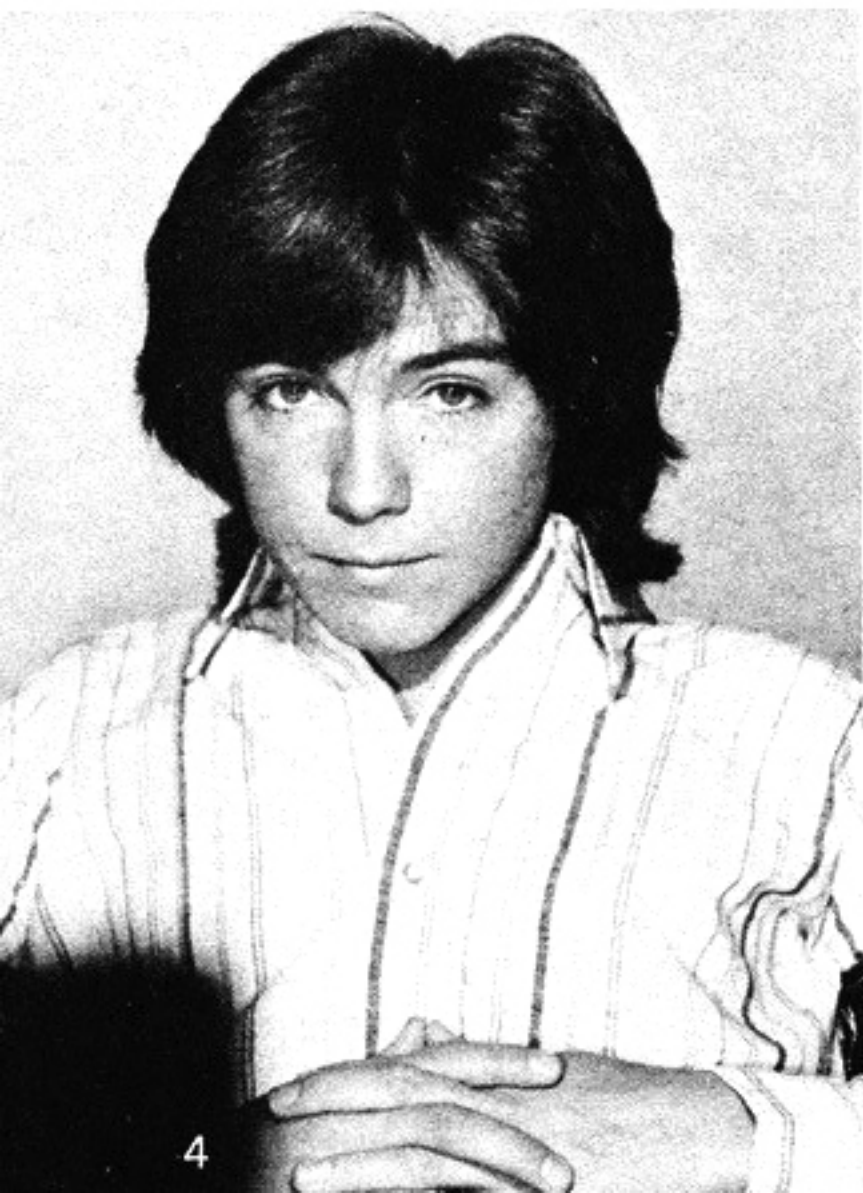
"Oh I'm sorry, but that's impossible," he says, wishing he were three thousand miles away. Now other diners are watching the scene with amusement, and his date looks like she wants to hide somewhere. "We're just having a quiet dinner..."

"Well if you feel that way about it!" The man's voice shows that he has been offended. "The least you can do is sign something anyway!" He shoves a piece of paper at the star, and once it has been signed the couple walks away without any thanks.

The food has gotten cold, and anyway, after what has happened, the star doesn't have much appetite anymore. "Could we go?" asks his date. He nods agreement and they leave the restaurant.

He's at a small, local market picking up some food for a diving trip he and his roommate are going on the next day. It's the first full day off he's had in weeks, and he's really looking forward to it.

As he pushes his basket around



the aisles, he hums softly to himself without realizing it. Suddenly he notices that two teenage boys, their thumbs hitched through the belts of their levis are staring openly at him.

"That's him, ain't it?" says the first, a thin blond.

"Yeah," replies the other, looking at the star from head to toe. They discuss him as if he isn't even there. "He sure isn't a big guy!"

"Nope," grins the blond. "But he sure sings pretty, doesn't he?"

"Maybe he'd do a little song for us right now!" smirks his friend. "Think if we ask him real nice he'd do it?"

The star stands there, unmoving, but his muscles are tensed up and he wants, more than anything in the world, to strike out at them. Instead, he keeps his voice even and says, "You'd better cut it, right now."

Something in his tone gets through to them, and they look embarrassed. But they are still wisecracking loudly as they leave the store.

He's biting his lip and thoughts are churning around in his head as he packs the groceries into his battered blue Mustang and drives up the hill toward home. Why? The question keeps hitting at him over and over again. Why is it, when every-

thing was going so well for him professionally, that the rest of his life seemed to be falling apart? Why wouldn't people just leave him alone, and let him be himself? Was this his reward for the many hours he worked each day, trying to give his best?

As he nears his house, still deep in thought, he barely notices a slim young girl walking slowly down the side of the road. But somehow, her bright blue eyes catch his—and the way the breeze is tangling her long dark hair makes him catch his breath a little.

She's very lovely, and her small face becomes radiant with a smile as she notices him. In spite of himself, he smiles back at her, and the heavy load on his heart lifts just the tiniest bit. She waves the flower she is carrying in her hand and continues on her way.

The star turns into the driveway—home at last. The first thing he notices is a bouquet of marigolds on the doorstep! The same as the flower the girl was carrying. He bends down and picks them up, very gently. There is a small, scrawled note attached to them. The simple message reads: "To David Cassidy—because you make me happy."

And he smiles again because he knows that being a star is worth something after all.

