

## MAY YOU LIVE IN INTERESTING TIMES

Secluding myself like an animal licking its wounds, I considered that a singular malignancy had grown within my soul over years of conflict reared in rage. My mechanic brought food and saw to the farm's operations. One night, I did a giant hit of some DMT from Ralph...and never really came down. The house filled with green and red question marks so thick I couldn't find the toilet. It didn't matter much...

I should've been grateful to survive that overdose, but only fear kept me from trying it again. I locked myself in my little house knowing I was there but not sure where. I simply didn't come off it this time, and like the song about the junkies, "my lights were on, but nobody was home." From then on, no matter what drug or drink I used to sedate myself, I awoke in awesome states at exactly 4:12 in the morning to the phantasmagoria of my mind blown across the cosmos.

Not long afterwards, I stumbled upon Ecclesiastes as I grovelled in the closet for hidden drugs. The author of this section of the Bible made me feel I wasn't alone in this "why me and what for" business. I couldn't believe my luck! I was on my knees, searching in shoe after shoe, when Tessa's Bible plopped out open to a page where this guy was complaining about the weariness and emptiness of all endeavor. I could relate! From what I could gather, this King of the Jews had done the same things I had, and come to a similar conclusion that it was all just chasing the wind!

I sat in the closet for an hour following his lament, thinking how perfect each response was in relation to my own. He'd created orchards and fields, housing for his workmen, and even a pool to irrigate trees like I had. He questioned the merit of it all, indicating no real profit under the sun would come to a man whether he worked his ass off or sat on it drunk. In fact, as I went on, he seemed to propose we follow the latter course.

So I embraced my radical mentor from the middle of the Bible. He was the first to actually challenge the order of the universe and point out great follies in creation! He'd undertaken massive works for the betterment of his fellow man, even being a link in the food chain. Perhaps he'd bought the same mumbo jumbo I had from the ancestors to perpetuate the game plan, but he'd stopped short to do the unthinkable and question it! I couldn't believe the rest of the committee had allowed his sacrilege to be printed in the Bible, but there it was, just when I needed it.

I felt better as I followed his reasoning. Perhaps he'd lost his girls or stumbled on hard times, but whatever

prompted him to question "all and everything," he never did say. He simply realized the sorry state of affairs this imperfect existence toiled in. He grasped his fate was the same as a fool and drunkard, and wondered at his many labors...and the emptiness of it all. The more a man seemed to know, the more he had to suffer. The King claimed the day of a wise man's death was far better than his birth. Wondering why we die at all, he exclaimed, "If it turned out good why break it, and if the form came out bad, whose fault was it?" I loved this guy...he was my only friend.

Some of his best stuff is in a little poem called "For Everything Its Season." I thought Peter, Paul, and Mary wrote this with Bob Dylan, but it was actually our hung-up King. He has a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to weep and a time to laugh...all worked out just like in the songs, very well aimed at his argument to keep life simple and live in the now.

Neither truth nor certainty are granted, he says...life gives but a moment, so go for the gusto! It sounded like a beer ad. After our serving a lifetime of apprenticeship and bondage to this dusty show-booth on earth, and having unfettered all the puzzles of the universe, only death remains before us...the enigma and affliction of the discerning mind. He's not buying any IOU's from Heaven, and extolls us to the good life now with advice to grin and bear the consequences.

A month went by like this, and I began to take refuge in drugs of pleasure I'd once berated my friends for using. With pain passing in delusion, my worldview began to distort, and I drove off the gentle folk who'd lived on the farm to replace them with the retards, miscreants, and untermunchen who'd do the bidding of a madman. In the late seventies, my once-idyllic farm hovered somewhere between Jonestown and Manson's Spahn Ranch, as violence claimed the day and the killer on the river stalked the night.

Hell's Angels came and went as the sounds of guerrilla warfare, dune buggies, and Harley Davidsons shattered the delicate limbo once known there. A consummate distortion of love and any sensible order followed. Enter the needle of death at the end, and we have the coup de grace for my affair with chemical Godhead. It had simply come full circle. We've traveled a long way together. Trust me now, and enter my world when I crossed over the line...

I am all that's ever been or shall be, and the powers of good and evil flow through me in equal proportion and propensity. As much your true son, I am also the anti-Christ, and have been since time began. I am all men from all times and am capable of all things...and so are you.

She had brilliant red hair and flashing green eyes, and tiny, orange freckles which faded to pink near her nipples. She must have loved me then, for she didn't leave after she

knew my secret. The vortex yawned. Swallowed by the starswarm I was moaning again at the bottom of the ocean with the eels and vacant souls of my dead friends when Iris woke me.

"Kerry, come back," she was urging, but I was immersed in oozing slime unable to reach her. Cold currents held me, and moans of those trapped there kept me from answering.

"I'm here, Kerry, I'm here...come and hold me. I'm scared. Where are you?"

I was looking directly into a green eye and could feel breath on my face when I recognized her. We were sobbing, and held each other in consoling urgency until it passed. We made love, sharing an awareness of the enigma still hovering around us. The green letters on the timer told the story...4:12 had swept by again.

"What in the world was that?" she asked as our breathing settled and we curled together under the covers.

"Bad dream, doll, leftovers from 'Nam I guess. It comes and goes," I shrugged wishing it was so.

She drew back, and her distant gaze made me feel like a pariah...so I slid out, poured some Scotch, lit a Camel, and holed-up in my recliner to see what she could tell me about a condition I knew little about myself. After a long silence she said, "I've never heard anyone moan like that before, that's all. But I've heard the sound before somewhere. That's what scared me most, and your eyes were wide open but you couldn't see me. It get's a little weird around here, doesn't it, big boy?"

I liked Iris, she was a tomboy and quite unafraid. She slithered onto a velvet pillow near my feet, where the whiteness of her fanny shone in the moonlight like ivory and the scarlet gash of her still-wet pussy pulsed like some radiant, tropical flower. I couldn't believe some of the erotic positions this creature could get in to capture my attention, for she would often spread her legs when others couldn't see to show herself to me, smiling coyly for my reaction.

I sprinkled some cocaine on her clitoris and slid my finger into that mysterious slice while we talked about the bottom of the ocean and creation of the universe. I ran my tongue along the slippery lips of her cunt, and sucked the pulsing tip of the tiny muscle that would've become a penis, had genes not settled her gender at birth. She held out a few months, which speaks well for her compassion, as my growing madness drove off even the most dedicated.

I gathered a collection of the bizarre to replace them...women passing through my life like water around a stone. Untouched and resolute, I waited, besieged now by the very force I'd been seeking. Drugs are a continuum, like a dog chasing its tail, and my altering consciousness brought the characters who peopled this drama at the end, as night after night it grew in intensity, taking me along,

cooperating or not.

One by one, deranged and unsavory players in the last act poked their heads out of the mud of time, most of them Vietnam vets, and climbed aboard to engage the rest of the world in an undeclared war, fed by a rage at our failing in the greater scheme of things. The women we attracted were perfect too...craving abuse, pushing lust past its limits, and aching for the destruction we could provide so well. I'm sure I couldn't put a team like this together if I advertised in Soldier of Fortune, but then they found me, to compliment a scenario unwritten, undirected, and unobserved except by our victims.

The guy definitely stood out. In the heat waves reflecting off an igneous landscape, his solitary presence warped the desert's mirage as if his very being emitted an energy equal to the heat around him. I pointed him out to Iris as we shimmied and swayed across the lava flow in my derelict truck, instructing her to get him a beer. We were laughing so hard when he saw her leaning naked out the window, she almost fell, and I floored the old beater as the guy jumped back to keep from being run over.

The truck swayed across the center line, overloaded as usual with red cinder on the return trip from our produce delivery, while Iris wriggled her fanny back through the window and I tried to see in the rear view mirror how the poor bastard was handling an apparition such as had just passed. Shit, he was hanging from the side of the truck with one hand, beer in the other, and grinning at me like a monkey. Another one, I thought. Where do they come from?

There he was calmly sipping his beer while his knees whizzed just above the asphalt. Iris got in my way, and when I looked again he was gone. I got the truck swaying to see if he'd landed on the highway, but an insane cackling from the roof announced he'd joined us.

Join he did, for J. D. Hooper, point man and assassin who'd re-upped for two more in the killing fields above Quang Tri, was a perfect candidate for my campaign. He was an Okie by accent, madman by appearance, and my first close look at him was upside down as he grinned at Iris, "How de doo, ma'am." It was the eyes. The last time I'd seen them was the night Hatcher headed north...and short of that picture of Charlie Manson, they're rare.

"Top a the day to ya," he grinned at me with his long ponytail flouncing in the breeze. "I'm looking to grow some dope on this fair rock, build me a nasty scooter, and settle in fer a while. Whadyasay?"

"Let's continue this interview on the level," I nodded and told Iris to pass him up another beer, while I got the truck back into our lane and settled its swaying load. He was very blunt, a country boy taken to "My pappy used to say" on a regular basis, but the line that got me would've been a threat had it not been so simply put. With a grin that swept

from evil to benign he said, "I make a better friend than an enemy." So I let him in my world without another word.

Our camaraderie was born in those fractionalized moments, but before it was over, we would share women, motorcycles, and needles...fighting cops, ghosts, and finally each other in a duel complete with automatic weapons, grenades, and tracers through the night. We were both catalyst and cathartic to each other's madness, brought together to fulfill some vague prophecy of frustration and futility only the generation reared on acid and war can know. So be it that we were waiting for each other to rise out of our jungled memory bank.

We drank for three straight days to cement our relationship, running through an ounce of coke, reliving shared but murky visions from 'Nam while we plotted his dope patch, two choppers, and the women we'd capture with them. Iris served us quietly, in cahoots with our enthusiasm as only a tomboy could be. She was happy, for in my newfound interest, 4:12 came and went unnoticed. My mind reeled in an unsolicited new space, seemingly forgetting its regular orbit.

J. D. went to work on the machines and pot plants with such fervor that none of the other workers dared cross his path or question his authority. He commandeered trucks, chain saws, pipe lines, dirt-bikes, fertilizer, and even labor crews, working a fourteen-hour day in the field and drinking and tinkering on the scooters far into the night.

When Herod Blue arrived from San Jose with the two footlockers of stolen engines and trannies I'd ordered, announcing he wanted to live on the farm, I hesitated for a moment. Considering the rest of the Angels he lived with might follow, I tried not to listen while he talked of the new start he needed. "They're harassin' us bad. Sonny's down again, and everyone's layin' so low its like trench warfare back there. I brought a bucket of bathtub crystal to get on my feet. You know I'm OK, so what the fuck, over?"

That's how the team formed up and motorcycles got built...on speed, beer, and some psychotic dare that needed to be met. When the trunks were opened, J. D. fairly drooled over the chromed pieces, and with a great "Haw, haw, haw" they slapped each other on the back and went to work.

Herod and I went back to Ginzburg and Kesey's introductory days with the Angels and acid. Our mutual respect rose out of his realization that I could supply ganja, and his protection from the horde he ran with kept me in business with a group I wouldn't have trusted without him. We'd done our work in a dangerous setting that, at times, had put me in some very tight spots when it came to large financial transactions and their insistence I take meth in trade.

Like Tiny and his breakfast cereal, they couldn't grasp my karmic reasoning for staying clear of those drugs...and

unlike Kesey, I heard no inner call to convert or interpret their way of life. It was simple business and had to stay that way. Short of the fact I'd stood my ground and gained his respect, I sensed these characters operated on such a different set of ethics that dealing with them was for me something like eating rat meat was for Gordon Liddy.

It was this cosmic game of "chicken" I'd played with power that got me here anyway, so I can't blame him for the inevitable. He didn't hold me down and put that needle in my arm. It was a natural courtship with the shadow of death, as much as running with Hatcher and Meers had been, and the night we drank together at my house I don't recall words of coaxing, caution, or invitation...just a warm rush at the top of my head as he pushed the plunger slowly in, and the wonder when he drew it back and a little swirl of my blood coiled into the liquid like a tiny, smiling snake. Then he booted the load home and I felt power pour through me, a crackling, synapsal infusion more essential than being born.

That's all. One time's enough to set its cycle in motion. The first taste of it, the sheer beyond fear, the passing of right and wrong, a braving of that cosmic dare...and you're no longer a virgin, novitiate, or good boy playing by God's rules anymore. I crossed over by my own admission. Christ! I was thirty-eight years old and been up and down on every drug in the pharmacopeia, when a shot of crystal meth from an Angel of the apocalypse altered my rules forever. I'd never let Ralph or Jimi hit me up, so why this leap beyond all boundaries...as if I didn't know it would come with Herod and the gathering army of my rebuttal to hope, good, and life's promise?

I needed to forget my loss, that real happiness had passed me by, and I concentrated from then on with power from the sensual side of the drug scale. The combined loss of my women and struggle with the farm, the recurring 4:12 mind blower and headaches, and an upwelling of faded nightmares from Vietnam balanced my rationale. I just needed relief. I got on the bus then and there...not the one Kesey had preached about at all. Instead of looking for God, I joined the rest hiding from Him.

The power around me grew blatant. Other motorcycle gangs dropped by our clubhouse, and I embraced drugs and alcohol with fervent abandon...a coating of protective armor to keep out the sensitive side that held me captive for so long waiting for life's payoff. Now it was delivered! Girls put on strip shows for the Honaunau Head Hunters while the needle went 'round, and a pile of drugs lay on top of a stained copy of the Bhagavad Gita.

In my carpeted bunker, past shelves of books covering the world's religions, festooned leather knights were getting blowjobs. They jeered the girls to screw each other with a rubber dildo...as my mind returned to the line on the beach with Haggmo and the gang-bang train I ran from. Fuck it, I

thought, I'm sick and tired of that scared little boy. It felt good to put a needle in a vein while a girl sucked your cock and another licked her pussy. The more demented the better, once the line was crossed. Sensation ruled at last.

In fact it grew. The blossoming of this dark flower attracted unto itself, and soon Herod and J. D. were introducing new cronies from the debauched and depraved ranks of fugitives, malefactors, and delinquents they'd accumulated in their group memory bank. They slithered from dark shadows and myriad cracks in the foundations of reality, seeking shelter and a good time like so many cockroaches.

It was proffered to them as each produced a measure of progress with their time, if it was only sanding cycle parts or guarding against intrusion by outsiders, whomever they might be. I caught a few drifts in the currents of an air of onrushing doom, which fanned an accelerating chaos and fed the glowing spark of mayhem, but purposely drove on to see what would unfold. Behind me in the wreckage of my past lay the 4:12 reality and ahead the unknown. There seemed nothing to lose...

Thus was born the '86 Club, a conscious entity of its own, harboring those rejected souls who'd been "eighty-sixed" from life, and it seemed a profound product of our times. Fugitives from justice hovered in its depths beyond the pool table and iron horses, watching TV while they trimmed buds for different growers, feeling a part of something at last. "Stinky" had killed a narcotics informer, and the group conscience deemed that worthy, so he had his own chair in the assorted car-seat bleachers, while the old man known only as "Pops" seemed to have as his sole function in life the task of rolling perfect joints and winking as he passed them out.

J. D. kept the lesser refugees working on the far reaches of the farm, and let them in the clubhouse only on special occasions. The tattooed man, Reese, had killed elephants as a sniper along the Ho Chi Minh trail and had heard of Hatcher's campaign, so we drank for a week to our good old days "in country." When Jimmy Carter came on the tube during the Iranian hostage scenario, J. D. became enraged and threw a beer bottle at him, nearly hitting the screen. It was the first political statement of our organization, and there was talk of "nuking the ragheads" and turning the sands to glass...stuff we could relate to.

At times it ran amok, but on the whole, some semblance of order prevailed as we concentrated on outside evils and kept our own in line. Some lunatic was lighting vehicles on fire throughout Kona, and by the time he'd lit number thirteen we had a perimeter of vets fully armed and hoping he would appear. During this charade, we dug up the M-3 and the AK-47 and began inane preparations for war. We put a platform for a treehouse high in the old mango outside the clubhouse, held briefings every evening, and sent out hunter-killer teams into the surrounding countryside.

The clubhouse briskly evolved into an armed fortress, as some illogical response to outside encroachment began to fester, and it ran fully rampant, making it dangerous to approach the farm from almost any angle without proper clearance. All this, and the Iranian hysteria, raged on in heated debate as we took to wearing "Fuck Iran" buttons, promoting guerilla warfare, and polishing our weapons.

At this pregnant moment, Herod got hold of six-hundred pounds of dynamite, four cases of det cord, five-hundred fuses, and some delayed timers stolen from the Honokohau Harbor job. The bulk of this was secured in customized refrigerators, and put into the cave of the apocalypse in preparation for its coming. With a great sense of satisfaction and power, we settled back to await the enemy's next move. As inevitable boredom set in at the front lines, I put everybody to work blowing cesspools from solid rock before they started going after each other.

By this stage in our evolution, I was armed at all times and taken to wearing leathers and two weapons plus my knife. The ever-present little Colt was in my back pocket, and a snub .38 with no serial numbers was in my jacket. It felt as normal as the days of my coming of age in Asia. Just like there, the enemy never fully materialized. Maybe we were him, and in our conjugate discord, we warred with the grave demons of our schizoid group mentality.

The power of an outlaw authority emerged, and the farm became a safe zone among warring dope growers. Many a strange deal was consummated within the perimeter formed by my ragtag warriors. Syndicate cretins rose from the swamp of my past, and armed convoys of "Kona gold" marijuana slipped past sentry points above to meet in my luxurious bunker. Bars on the windows and trap doors secured these arrangements, but the integrity of my history and our warrior team, with its considerable firepower, carried the day.

From the hallucinatory fabric of my past, the captain emerged to rule over this tableaux of mayhem. The farm became my tugboat, the river the stream of life, and one-by-one the disparate entities of my motley crew crawled aboard to press our fearsome image upon the face of contemporary reality. As if in sublime orchestration of destiny's artistry, the colors melded into shapes, its picture sharpened into focus. From that eye in the storm, we sallied forth on abysmal sojourns into the darkness around us to entreat disaster at inner stations of our own making, as real as any that Splendid Little War in Asia had produced.