

THE POPE OF DOPE

Like an immigrant pilgrim fleeing the old world, I watched the Statue of Liberty below. Back on American soil, I was cautiously reunited with Kela to resume my role as her husband...the one she couldn't recognize in a silk suit and black, slicked hair. The fantasy world of time-warped England swirled in my head as I attempted to decompress into the denser reality where she waited. It was hopeless from the outset...

I couldn't bear the awkwardness of staying with her conservative relatives, and fled immediately into Greenwich Village in search of something by which to measure our times. Like the directions we had, "Go East on Sixth 'til the grid breaks down," here bloomed a side show of flower power one would expect.

We found my old friend Bugbee with his wife, Buffy St. Marie at the Dakota, and passing with them through that fateful arch where John Lennon would meet his fate later, I shuddered for no reason. Bugs was a lot like me, and could relate to my recent experience. A Kailua boy who'd met and married a music star, he too was over-sensitive and a little confused by life like me. Buffy was like Kela, sure of her role, and dominant in her ways, akin to an alpha male in a wolfpack.

So it worked out great. The girls window-shopped while Bugs and I traded stories about the Stones and hunted alligators deep in the manholes of New York. He heard they got up to twenty-feet, and harpoons and ropes in hand, we pursued them with gusto through the subterranean grottos of that uncaring city.

I couldn't bear being around Buffy, with her telling Bugs what to do all the time, and began to notice its cumulative effects on Kela. So I loaded our VW station wagon, wished him good luck, and fled the Big Apple, alligators and all. Driving north towards my date with Dr. Leary at his commune in Millbrook, I imagined Bugs and me marrying about five different women before we found peace. It was actually gonna be worse than that.

Leary's place was just like the lumberjack, Steve, had portrayed it way back in the Himalayas. A painted bus was on blocks in the grass outside the kitchen, and the teepees still buzzed at night with young coeds spreading their legs for the excitement of being fucked by one of his mystic disciples. I was amazed at the audacity of these girls. They climbed the walls, knowing just what they wanted, and unflinching got it.

It seemed to pay off having hair down to your ass and lots of beatitude dripping off your body. I felt like a kook

with my short hair. Everyone looked like Merlin, the magician, again, and I kicked myself for working too hard on my disguise. A simple but profound revelation was dawning on me. I didn't fit in anywhere anymore. The last place I'd felt comfortable was up the Mekong, surrounded in mist and giant trees.

The "Third World" camera crews, whoever they were, had set up camp in the main living room, huge power cables splayed across the rugs, and a singular "on camera" professionalism reeked through the entire scene. I tried to catch Leary's attention, but he was too wiggled-out as prima donna in the movie to be bothered. Kela wouldn't let me drop acid there, fearing a scene, so we tripped around the grounds meeting everyone and absorbing the group consciousness at arm's length.

The nicest girls worked in the kitchen, and I spent some time there finding out how the place functioned and learning of their plans for farming and self-sufficiency. Although Timothy had his own private kitchen upstairs with Rosemary, most of the cute girls, I gathered, were his lovers. I got a taste of pantry romance in the storage room with Alicia under her paisley bedspread. I was just beginning to appreciate our guru's set up when I got kicked out.

It was really no big deal. In fact, it had already happened ages ago in Laos in a dream. I just went up to his private aerie and told him he should be more clear in what he was creating out there, pointing to all the spaced-out kids I'd seen following the white light ego-lessly across Asia. It musta touched a sensitive nerve. Like he knew I was coming or something, the pope of dope and I scratched at each other, punching and clawing down the stairs, with Rosemary breaking it up just like I'd envisioned. It was disgraceful, but I've never been good at avoiding the inevitable. At the same time I hardly believed it was happening almost word for word in *deja vu*.

I retreated to the bus, quarantined like a pariah...the *persona non grata* and *non compos mentis* of the tribe. I licked my wounds, reviewing my personal mandate to deliver such a message, and tried to accept the simple truth no leader would come forth to be responsible for the awesome swerve in world consciousness we'd taken. Tim sure wasn't gonna take the jerk. Searching the graffiti painted across every square inch of the bus for some hidden formula, I found it different from New York's subway, but just as bewildering. So I retired in meditation on the slim prospect our disparate generation might make some sense of this on its own.

While Kela tittered about, making apologies for her fractured hubby's manners, I slipped into Alicia's womb-like tent. I tried to take the situation seriously, but grew weary in my exile. I think it was right then that I shook the old ego problem that continued to haunt me and kept me from functioning with self-assurance. I was as capable of

acting on this stage as any of the long-haired freaks auming around their phony saint within his hallowed halls. I said "Fuck it!" and left...heading across the country for the bay of my youth with my young bride in tow.

It was the same car scene we'd barely survived in Europe, and I can recall nothing of our crossing the continent but reaching the Pacific Ocean. I don't think we spoke at all.

Wandering the streets of Haight-Ashbury with all the houses painted in a crazed colorama, it took me about twelve minutes to reach a conclusion that it was all over but for some deranged curtain calls and a little applause.

I could see nothing but the blatant dementia loosed on humanity I'd predicted. Christ, it was worse than India...drugs had taken us all in, the young and innocent wandering now in a world of make-believe where nothing mattered, free love reigned, and work and order were out of date. The deeper into the acid ghetto I gazed, the more frightful became my vision of a lurid human zoo complete with mind vamps, predators, and street scavengers.

Kela thought it was all just hunky-dory...fatherless children hung on tattered skirts of welfare mamas, while the "Grateful Dead" muttered inane truths in endless songs, and everyone smiled with hollow eyes and aumed along in the musky smell of some unfamiliar deodorant. The new world was upon us...and I was nearly ill with a panicky feeling we'd all gone mad!

I guess I lost it at the "Smoke In," where the tribes had gathered to puff marijuana and taunt the authorities to a breaking point with painted faces, raging music, and public pissing. I made it about half-way through the standard ration of horseshit, but then some Berkeley peace types got up and started chanting "Ho, ho, ho...Ho Chi Minh. Ho, ho, ho...he's gonna win!" They acted out young GI's bayoneting children as ripples of an unbearable rage began deep in my being.

Who were these fucking faggots to portray a scene they'd never known in their bravest hallucinations? Hackles rose, my eyes bulged, and my heart pounded. I wanted to cry out some grave warning, but could only shake in silence while the smell from that hippie world of love and peace curdled the very air I breathed. A compulsive urge to zap 'em all left me scurrying like a rat in a maze to escape the madness unfolding before me.

The "Mamas and the Papas" were singing our praises at Monterey--"a whole generation with a brand new explanation"--but John Phillips was about to lose his mind, Cass her life, and Michelle her warmth. The real story read like a Wall Street graph in 1929, and I heard the news everywhere as clear as I'd sensed "incoming" before it was upon me. The redneck cab driver was singing about a black crow flying backwards to keep the shit out of his eyes as we left the

smell of Patchouli oil, incense, and pot on our way to the airport, and hopefully, the reefs of my youth.

In the terminal, I heard a lilting ballad calling from my past as George's voice said it all, "There's a fog upon a lake and my friends have lost their way, they'll be over soon they said, but they've lost themselves instead..." The most real thing said yet, I screamed out loud, and half the airport turned my way, security guards reaching for their weapons, and fearful types crouching. Was I the only one? Couldn't anyone else see what was going on?