

REALMATTER

A photograph of a tree on a roof with a blue tint and a white paper airplane. The image is a low-angle shot of a tree growing from a tiled roof. The entire scene is tinted with a vibrant blue color. A white paper airplane is visible in the sky to the left of the tree. The background shows a clear blue sky with some light clouds. The overall composition is simple and artistic.

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#13

**Life's
adventures**



REAL**MATTER**

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1. The Last Trip

Reading Time 28'

Outside the cabin the summer stars were crisp and bright like I could touch them with my hand, growing larger and glowing they calmed me. I'd been lying there in the field watching the sky slide through the changes from blue to black and I could hear people occasionally walking up the trail and entering the cabin. Emily, Kathy, Cush, Johnny Mac, and of course The Hedgehog, my old running mate. Hedgie the woodhook hippy, two eyes peering out from a ball of long snarly hair, beard, 'stash all grown together and set on top of a flannel shirt and dirty jeans; kind of like Yosemite Sam. It was Hedgie who got this whole trip rolling. I let the natural weight of my head tip it over to my right and watched the bugs marching up and down the stalks of timothy grass. "Ladybug, Ladybug fly away home your house is on fire..." All right, things were getting a little heavy and my body was growing chill as the dew started settling, time to pick it up and move it inside. Getting up was more than I'd planned for as the stars started spinning and the bugs were looking at me with impassive curiosity as I made it to all fours and rested my head on the ground in preparation for the final push. One quick rush from the acceleration as my head went from ground level to six feet two inches in a matter of seconds and I was standing in front of the cabin. As I opened the door they came rushing out—American flags. Thousands of them all shaped like couch pillows blowing by my face like a

blizzard, a blizzard of fat puffy American flags, they blew me back away from the door. I fought my way into the cabin knowing that once I was in and the door shut they would stop. I had two thoughts.

“Now I know why Emily went wandering through the commune last week muttering ‘American flags, fucking American flags,’” and

“Shit, I really did overdose.”

Nixon had shut down the Mexican border creating the worst weed drought I could remember, but American free market principles and a hip Adam Smith produced a supply of Lebanese hash that summer that almost met demand. The demand for smoke of any sort was so high in those days that the entire production of India, Mexico and the Middle East could not have satisfied it. Everyone wanted to score, although the quality of the Lebanese Blond in most households was pretty good. But we were red blooded Americans, man, not artsy-fartsy Europeans. We couldn't live on hash, we needed weed. Pot. Smoke. Mary Jane. Boo. Ganga. So when I scored some very tasty homegrown from Jim, on a trip back home to Maine it was a welcome addition to the stash. I had a good sized grocery bag full and the quality varied depending on which bit you happened to pick out of the bag. But when it was good it was very good, especially when tooling back to New Hampshire with the top down in my orange Triumph TR-4A with the roll bar and the full race

cam and the twin duel exhausts growlin' up at 3-4 thousand RPMs. I was a twenty year old college drop-out with a low-end manual labor job, great friends, lots of women, lots of dope and it was New England summer. Life gets no better.

A few days after returning I was sitting in my trailer trash living room smoking a number and thinking I should go up to see Hedge. He lived in a cabin on the way to Rt. 12 and Claremont, up an old logging road off a dirt road off the Spring Brook Rd. Not an easy place to get to but that was the point. The TR had a two-inch ground clearance and the road had bedrock sticking out about six inches which meant that I parked at the foot of the logging road and walked up the hill. Nice walk on a summer's afternoon through thick growth and open pastures and finally opening to a view of the upper Connecticut River valley. Pretty country. The kind of place a low-rent twenty year old could imagine just squatting down until the well ran dry. As I got to the head of the trail Hedge's place showed in a clearing to my right so I cut through the grove and up to the front door.

"Hey, man. Que pasa? Hedge, you there?"

"Hey, amigo. Come on in"

I sat down, took the Ballentine's ale, affectionately

known as skunk piss, lit up a cigarette and we started to gas about nothing. Who's doing who, who's doing what and what the fuck. That kind of thing. Hedgeie and I not only ran together we worked together humping antiques for cousin Doc, or Bill Smith, or both of them depending up the work available at any given time. It was seasonal and sporadic with intense periods of picking, packing, loading, driving, selling and all the little fiddly jobs in between. But we had enough time to sit around and spend the money we made. The lifestyle made for a real solid bond because the work was hard and there's a lot to be said about sweat bonding between young males. Sounds kinky but you know what I mean. This was one of our down times and it was the perfect afternoon to just kick back and get a buzz on.

"Look what I brought from Maine, man."

"Shit"

"Yeah, and a lot of it."

"Where'd you get it?"

"Remember Jim, my best bud back home? He and a friend have a little new growth forest coming up behind the house and this is some of the first cuttings. A pretty mixed bag, no pun intended, but some good stuff in there. Rummage around and fix a few rollies for us."

I handed him the bag and he pawed around for the clumps that indicated a higher level of resin, broke them down on newspaper and then sifted out the rocks and trees—seeds and twigs. Hedge was an old hand and a salt of the earth kinda guy which meant he used straight white Zig-Zags, the best smoking paper but the hardest to roll. No E-Z Widens, wheat straws, one-and-a-halves, or joining two papers together. A couple of minutes later we were doing numero uno, the first of the day. Always a pleasure to get the first few hits and feel the mellow begin. And as we sat there gazing out across the tops of the trees to the valley in the distance and felt the view get softer and smoother, it occurred to me that he had hit upon a pretty good batch of the old home grown.

“You know, Bruce, with the lack of weed about this summer, this is about the bestest stuff I come across in a while.”

“Yeah, here’s to Jim.”

“I’ll pop another skunk piss on that one.”

“You got it.”

“How about selling some of that shit?”

Selling? I hadn't really thought about selling it. I wasn't into dealing, wasn't my thing. Looking back on that time it appears as if there was one big dope craze, but actually there were all kinds of dope cultures around. Up in the back woods there were a few dealers who circulated but mostly it was friend to friend. Somebody'd score and cut in a few other people, or, like Jim, just grow it themselves. But it was obvious that Hedge wanted part of my stash, and while I didn't want to part with too much of it, as I didn't know how long the drought would last, I was thinking over what to do. While I was thinking he broke in,

"I got some great acid."

"Really?"

"Yeah, super shit in a brown powder. Don't know what you call it but I gave some to Emily and the crew last week and it blew their brains out."

"Let me see."

He went over to the kitchen cupboard, rummaged around for a while and then came back with a little twist of tinfoil. Opening it up carefully, there appeared a small pile of brown dust wrapped inside the foil looking a lot like curry powder.

"No much of it."

"Man, that's enough to get you off for a while."

“All right, I haven’t had any acid for some time. I’ll tell you what, I’ll trade you a lid of what’s in the bag, you pick, for this.”

“Sounds good, let me get my scales and a baggie.”

I’d done enough acid to know that the type of experience and the quality of the trip had a lot to do with the attitude you had coming into it. If you were down it would be all headless beasts and bad vibes. If you were up it would be sunrises over Beacon Hill at two o’clock in the morning with a girl friend that looked like an R. Crumb cartoon. And this was the most up of up days. Out in the woods, great weather, money in my pocket, close friend at hand, no work in sight—what could be better? So, as Hedge gathered the necessary to cut himself a lid, I opened the tinfoil, looked at the powder, wet the very tip of my little finger, dabbed it lightly into the powder and wiped it onto my tongue.

“Wait!”

“What’s the matter?”

“Holy shit, did you just stick your finger in there?”

“Yeah, just wanted an easy ride so I only put a little on my little finger.”

“Christ you just took enough for an army, man. You’re supposed to just put the head of a pin in it. That shit’s potent.”

Ah. Shit. OK. Not to worry. Shit. The big thing about tripping is the mood. Got to get the mood right and put this trip on the right road. There I was ready for a quiet afternoon cruise in the woods when all of a sudden it was turning into a bummer. The second rule of tripping is to know that it is a trip and not reality. As long as you can keep this little place in the back of your mind that continues to tell you that the walls really aren’t moving, that your friend has not just actually melted into a puddle of ooze in the middle of the floor, that the people walking by you on the sidewalk don’t really have animal heads, you’ll be all right. You need to keep this little tentative grip on reality in order to come back from the trip and not keep spinning down the road until you have to be fed from no-spill cups and write with crayons. Every one knows someone who didn’t come back. That’s the last thing you want to think about going into a trip—will I come back? And so as Hedgie bagged and rolled his weed I wandered out into the field behind the cabin, lay down in the timothy grass, and let the sun and birdsong and wind-in-the-trees get my head right before the show started.

I had been doing fine lying there with the sun going

down and the bugs playing, but when those flags came screaming at me out of the cabin door I knew things were going weird. I was vaguely aware of everyone who had come over while I was outside, but the fact I didn't even notice most were dipping into my homegrown showed how far I was gone. Suddenly it was time to start the process of calling upon reality like a prayer in the wilderness to a god that you knew existed but weren't really sure was going to show up to save your ass at that particular point in time. I now realized that Emily had taken some of this shit when she went wandering through the commune the week before. She looked like a zombie in the "Night of the Living Dead" and was muttering "American flags, fucking American flags" under her breath. No one paid any attention. Well, everyone pretended to pay no attention to her, just letting her go her own way, no one wanting to interfere and send her someplace worse. That was why no one was there when she wandered out of the house and down the road and fell down on to the rocks by the side of the stream over which a bridge existed before it got washed out. I think Emily must have hallucinated the bridge back into existence. Anyway, the for-real screams brought us out of the house and luckily she was cut up a little but no major damage was done.

I mention all this because I realized that everyone was looking at me the exact same way they looked at Emily that night in the house. I had the zombie eyes and people were trying not to notice. They were

getting out of the way of my vibes in the same way you'd get out of the way of a homicidal maniac with a chainsaw and a highly communicable disease. Meanwhile, there was a whole movie playing itself out in my brain and it didn't look like a Disney flick. Then something started happening that had never happened before and really spiked the anxiety. My essential bodily functions started to get into the act. I could feel myself breathe and then someone flipped the breathing switch from "automatic" to "manual control". I stood there concentrating on my breathing realizing that I had to consciously breathe in and out and if I didn't voluntarily do it, I would stop breathing. Great. I now have to perform a manual function necessary to life while my brain was spinning off to god knows where. OK. I can do this. (Reality, where are you? Oh pleeeeeeease, I'll never take drugs again, honest, no kidding, just bring a little reality back, pleeeeeeease.) So, I'm freaking and trying to breathe and the volume on my heart starts going up, lub-DUB, lub-DUB, and then the movie in my head starts flickering, the film comes off the spool and I hit the floor. Fade to black.

There I am on the ceiling. Or actually, there I am on the floor. My mind is on the ceiling looking down from the cabin rafters on to the body curled up in the fetal position on the floor. It's my body, I can see that, and it doesn't appear to be moving. Neither do the people standing over it with nervous little gestures like they all have to go pee. My mind is completely clear, all the anxiety and paranoia has

left and I'm looking at the scene with a great deal of clarity and calmness. They are all speaking in low voices as if they might wake me up and the main topics of conversation are whether I am dead and whether they should do anything about it in either case. Hedgie has the presence of mind to check for a pulse, finds one, and then everybody walks off in their own direction. I did feel some sympathy for them. Here they are, assuming that they're going to spend a nice evening getting stoned up at Hedgie's and then Bruce has to go die on them. Bummer. Puts a down on the whole thing, you know? I float there for a little while surveying the situation and then suddenly I open my eyes and I am on the floor.

I was weak, still tripping, dizzy and a little sick, but back in my body and all the parts seemed to be functioning on automatic again. As I stirred and tried to get on my feet everyone came over to give me a hand or just stand and stare like I was Christ arisen.

Hedgie said, "Man I thought you might be gone, you sure were out for a long time. We didn't know whether to call an ambulance or what."

"I'm still not sure myself, I'll let you know as soon as I find out."

"Some heavy trip, huh? You sure took a shitload of that stuff. What'd you see while you were gone? Anything good?"

“All I saw was a bunch of stoned out hippies looking at my cold, dead body and wondering how they were going to get out of this one.”

“Hey, man, don’t blame us, you’re the one who OD’ed. What do you expect us to do, call the cops?”

“I know, I know, I’m just pulling your chain, Hedge. If it were me I’d probably be back in Maine by now hiding under the bed. Wow, I’m still trippin’ heavy. Got some Ballentine’s and a little smoke to add some ballast?”

I sat down and after a few tokes and a few pulls on the Ballentine’s I was restored enough to take stock of the situation. I was weak and tired but that old chemical buzz, like a giant electric generator, was humming away right there at the back of my head where it always was when I tripped. That told me that I was still tripping but I was back into some kind of trip I’d be able to deal with. I had never gone that far over the edge before but wasn’t going to think about it right then. I did realize that I had almost spun far enough out of orbit to never come back.

After I’d sat there for a while, gotten myself back into focus, and convinced everyone I wasn’t going to croak immediately, I thought about leaving. I was still edgy enough to want to be somewhere else, and

preferably by myself.

“You sure you OK, man? You can bunk here for the night if you want. Just take it easy and kick back. We got no work tomorrow and you got no place to go, so just toke up and let it happen right here.”

“Thanks, Hedge, but I’m really buzzing and I got to get out and get away, you know? Nothing personal.”

“No problem, man. You just went through some heavy shit. You going home?”

“Yeah.”

“Want a ride?”

“No, I drove the TR over and I’ll take that back.”

“You can’t drive.”

“You shitting me? If I can light a hash pipe in the TR with the top down doing 70 miles an hour on I-95—and you know I can—I can drive it the three miles back to my place.”

“All right if you want to, but be cool. Friends don’t let friends drive drunk, but nobody said anything about stoned outta their fuckin’ brains. That’s all right.”

“Listen, I’m going to leave my stash here just in case something happens on the way back, right? You keep it for me and keep their mitts out of it until I come back and get it?”

“I gotcha, buddy, 10-4. It’s as safe as soap in a French whorehouse.”

The air outside was cooler and cleared my head of the fog inside the cabin but the dynamo hum in the back of my head just got sharper as the air got clearer. I stood there for a moment looking at the electric stars and feeling the buzz, getting a little edgy again, the acid kicking back in after all the confusion, Ballentine’s and dope. The broad maple leaves that hung down almost at face level were glowing in the night and I started to suck in that forest feeling. I had spent a lot of time in the woods since I was a kid and felt very comfortable there. I understood why Indians would just walk out into the woods to die, surrounded by the earth and its gods. I felt the same way, it was a fine night and the moon and stars lit up the old logging road showing me the way back to the car. I walked looking up at the stars for the view and down at the road to watch my footing. The hardwoods, maples, oak, elm, poplars, created dark walls that emphasized the light above and as I walked neck craned, head up to see the night sky I hardly noticed I’d come to the pasture. On the right was a large pasture and as I approached it I could feel a slight tremor of the earth and then a sound. The sound of hundreds of hooves pounding the earth just to my right, drumming with an insane noise. When I turned my head to look I saw a stampede of wild horses just yards away. Hundreds of them with nostrils flaring

and saliva whipping from their mouths, hooves raised high and tearing the ground, sweat glistening on their flanks and all headed right for me. With a scream, I threw myself on the ground just as they approached and rolled with my hands over my head waiting for that first vicious kick in the head by the lead horse. The herd rolled over me like thunder and wind and then were gone. I picked myself up off the road and was just about to brush the dirt off myself when the quick snort of a horse sent me flying back to the ground. Nothing. OK. I stood again and there was one lone mare in the field looking at me with somewhat questioning eyes. I immediately understood the hallucination. This one, slightly sway-backed, mare probably cantered up as I passed the pasture hoping for a midnight snack and my buzz-center translated that into the snarling, earth tearing, massive horde that had sent me to my knees whimpering. Forget the stars I just wanted to get to the car.

I had reached the down side of the parabola and the edgy state had started to kick in with fewer outrageous hallucinations but really electric nerves. Walking down the end of the road to find the TR sitting there in the moonlight, I thought, "just three miles home." Home was the place where you could be by yourself for the hours at the end of the trip. Coming down from an acid trip was always the worst part because your body would be so tired and your mind and nerves so alert.

Slipping into the cockpit and firing up the engine always gave me a minor rush and a feeling of comfort. In the car was almost as good as home. I let out the clutch and started rolling down the Spring Brook Road at the speed limit, tense with the acid at the wheel, waiting for the unexpected to happen. When it happened the trick was to just deal with it. I remember I was riding with Al, my BU roommate, down the New Jersey Turnpike one clear, sunny day while he was driving and tripping when suddenly he flinched and turned on the windshield wipers. Not a cloud in sight but I didn't say anything. After he turned them off again I asked, "What was that for?"

"Didn't you see it?"

"See what?"

"The blob."

"What blob?"

"The big blue blob that splashed all over the windshield. I couldn't see so I turned on the windshield wipers and it went away."

"Right, good thinking."

The cool thing about it, he was never fazed. Like big blue blobs came hurtling out of the sky to splash on his windshield and blind him every day. Must happen all the time in New Jersey. "Well, Bob, the weather

will be mostly cloudy today with intermittent big blue blobs descending in the vicinities of Patterson, Camden and Cherry Hill.”

So I was ready for my version of the big blue blob whether or not it actually happened. That was the thing about acid, you never knew and so you had to be ready for anything. Although I was being perhaps a little too conscientious in following the 45 mile an hour speed limit, the Spring Brook Road was great for racing. The road followed the Spring Brook, twisting and turning through some great S-curves and reverse curves and banked curves with the odd straightaway for some ten miles or so. Many a night I had taken out everything from the TR to the old Volvo station wagon we used at work on that road, just for the fun of it or for a real race. Johnny Mac bought a new Spitfire and I thought it was a piece of trash, the beginning of the end for Triumph after producing the magnificent TR-2, TR-3, and TR-4 line. Mine was years older than his but I challenged him to a midnight race. The piece-of-shit Spitfire was never in it. But on this night I was just lazily following the curves, floating along with the top down and finally getting into a rhythm. I was nervous as hell when I'd started, not knowing what would happen, not knowing when I'd have another major hallucination or maybe even another anxiety breakdown. But now the top was down and I was just cruising, stars streaking overhead, moon smiling. In the words of Chuck Berry, I was gone like a cool breeze. Then the road started to do funny

things. Up ahead the road took on the appearance of a giant roll of toilet paper winding itself out ahead of me up and down, left and right, curved and flat. The cool was gone and I freaked for an instant but then remembered to just go with the flow like AI had done. So I followed the road, wherever it rolled out in front of me I simply stayed on the right hand side of it and just as suddenly as it started I found myself in the driveway next to the house. Just like that. The toilet paper was gone, the lights were out in my cousin's 18th century colonial across the street and all was quiet.

I turned the engine off and sat there, head resting on the back of the seat, looking up at the stars chasing themselves in swirls across the sky calming my nerves and prying my fingers off the steering wheel, while the buzz continued to hum through my brain and body. I had made it home. All was OK and the worst over. Nothing could happen now. I was still buzzing but the acid was rapidly wearing off. I quietly got out of the car and walked across the porch and into the house. I didn't even bother to turn on the lights but walked up the stairs and directly into my bedroom, took my clothes off and flopped on to the bed. The buzz wouldn't stop and I knew I couldn't sleep so I let the images of the evening float through my brain and I started to really think about it for the first time. It was then I realized I had almost killed myself. I have never been a believer in supernatural phenomena, parapsychology and all that but it certainly seemed

as if I had an out-of-body experience. It was classic, the calm drifting above while watching my inert body below. What else could it have been? Was it a hallucination or was it real? The more I thought about it the more I thought that it was real, and the more I convinced myself that it was real, that I had almost bit the big one, the more amazed I became. I wasn't freaked or paranoid or anxious, just the opposite, I thought..."Wow, that's strange." So strange I had to write Marie. So I got up, went downstairs and wrote a long letter to Marie describing the almost fatal effects of the evening. I told her that this was it, my last trip. It was a great run and I had a great time but no more hallucinogens. It was time to get out of the business while I still had a functioning brain. Finally, written out, I went back up and fell asleep.

Marie. Of course I had to share this with Marie. She and I had been twisting in and out of each other's lives since our first semester at BU in 1968. She was from the City, the big city, The Big Apple, New York, and was coooool, I mean really cool. I was from Shitsville, Maine and distinctly not cool but wanted to be. She was beads and denim elephant ear bellbottoms and patchouli and an Irish 'fro, naturally curly red hair about a foot long. I was helmet hair blonde who thought that a button-down white shirt open at the collar, pegleg blue jeans rolled up to the ankles, white socks and black shoes was the epitome of cool. I loved cruisin' in my '61 Ford Galaxy or roller skating at the rink on Sunset Beach, Luckies

rolled up in the left sleeve of my T-shirt, my linebacker, farm boy body giving the girls a thrill. But I wanted out. I wanted to join the ranks of the newly hip. I wanted life in the city, beatniks and bongos and cool and jazz and French films and coffee shops with berets. So when I first met this certified product of the Village with the cool eyes and the quick wit and the laid back soul, I knew this was it. What'd she see in me? Still haven't figured that out. Maybe she needed a fixer-upper. She took me under her wing and did a make over. My one saving grace was even though I grew up in Shitsville, I knew the outside world through reading and the movies and I was dying to get out there and do it all. I knew what was happening but I hadn't experienced any happening thing. So she and I started happening. Whether it was Boston or New York, we'd just go somewhere and hang. Smoked dope with the Byrds at the Boston Tea Party; sat on the sidewalk all night in Times Square watching the bums and the players doing their things; dropped Mescaline and went to see "2001: A Space Odyssey" and then walked over to the Charles River where the river and sky grasped hands in front of us. After I dropped out of BU we lived together for a while on Green St. in Cambridge where we become touchstones for each other's lives. Me, the wandering spirit working here and there in Maine and New Hampshire, needing the woods but also missing the city cool. She, needing something but not finding it for a long while later. So after becoming an undefined but cosmic influence in each other's lives. This was just the thing I had to share with Marie.

The next morning I finally came downstairs to have some coffee and put the pieces back together again and there was my letter to Marie on the kitchen table. There were about six sheets of lined paper and they were all covered with big scrawling marks as if (as I am sure that I had) simply taken the pencil in my fist and swirled it around. I thought I had been writing. Well, I couldn't rewrite it but I could tell her about it in the Green St. kitchen. I called her, she said 'come on down', and I loaded up the TR for a road trip to Cambridge. I made it that night and the next morning we sat around the kitchen table talking about the momentous trip.

"You still got some with you?"

"Yeah, I brought it down, but I don't want any more. That was my last trip."

"You sure?"

"Yeah. Why? You want to do some?"

"Not without you. Listen, it's a great day, now that you know how much is enough, let's take just a little, teeny tiny itsy bitsy bit of it and drive down to Woods Hole and take the ferry over to the Vineyard. Come on, it'll be great."

"Jesus, I don't know. It is a great day for it. All right, but this is it, love, this is my last trip. Honest."

“OK, what could be better than doing your last trip together?”

So we got out the stuff, opened the tinfoil and stared at the little brown dust for a while. I took Hedgie’s advice and wet the tip of a pin with my tongue and lightly dabbed it in and wiped it on my tongue. Marie did the same. I was just about to freak out thinking that I had pushed my luck too far, I knew I shouldn’t have dropped again. If I had just barely escaped with my life and/or sanity intact last time why the fuck was I doing it again. That was supposed to be my last trip. Not this. Then I looked over at her, my hip-mate, smiling away and looking laid back and cool and I knew it was all right. It was always all right with Marie.

We went out and put the top down and started rolling down Mass. Ave to the MIT Bridge and over to the Southeast Expressway. It would be a while before the acid kicked in. Somewhere on Rt. 3 I started to feel the buzz and knew it was going to be good. Jan hadn’t said much for a while but cruising at 70 with the top down and the exhaust purring wasn’t conducive to conversation anyway. Suddenly she turned away from the scenery and shouted frantically at me,

“ARE YOU DRIVING? ARE YOU DRIVING?”

“What the hell, of course I’m driving.”

A sigh of relief, “Oh, that’s good. (pause) How the hell can you drive on this shit?”

I could tell she’d gotten off and I was getting off myself. I had judged the dose just right and was cruising under control. She tensed up for a while as the power hit her and then wound down, head back, eyes closed, lips smiling, hair blowing in the wind, just keeping that position until we dropped down into Woods Hole and tried to find a place in the parking lot. It was so full we had to drive all the way into the back lot and wait for the VW van that picked up passengers and took them to the boat to Martha’s Vineyard. The calm began to dissipate as the van pulled up and we realized we’d have to squeeze in the back with a lot of other people. We sat in the very back and nothing happened. Nothing at all. The van didn’t move. Then we realized that everyone was looking at us. No problem. Everyone staring at you is one of the most common of the acid paranoid hallucinations. We both knew the thing to do was just sit there and mind our own business and ignore the hallucination to avoid acting weird. So we both sat there and waited it out. Hum-te-tum. Waiting until it goes away. But it didn’t go away. They kept staring at us and the van remained stationary. Then it dawned upon us that the driver was shouting something.

”DID YOU LEAVE YOUR KEYS IN THE CAR?!?!”

Shit, it wasn’t a hallucination. The driver had wanted to make sure we didn’t leave the keys in the car but we hadn’t heard him ask. I wonder how many times

he had shouted at us. No wonder everyone was staring. So much for being unobtrusive. The whole scene put us back on edge and we hunkered down for the short drive over to the boat. But once there it picked up again. We clambered up on the top deck and plopped down on a couple of deck chairs. We were finally here. We took the water out of the backpack, put our feet up on the rail, lit a couple of cigarettes and started to soak in the sun. Marie had been close to the edge a couple of times but now the sun, the boat, and the view over the harbor mellowed us both out. We felt the ship vibrate and slip away into the harbor, off on our trip to... WHOOOOOP WHOOOOOP WHOOOOOP!

She leapt toward the railing, I grabbed her shirttail to keep her from going over the side and we both collapsed back on the deck. We'd been sitting right under the boat's whistle and the sudden sound shot her out of her deck chair as if she'd been shot out of a cannon. We looked at each other and hugged, crying with laughter. The rest of the day and the trip was what we had planned it to be from the beginning, to the extent that anyone can plan this kind of a trip. We walked through the town and up into the hills and as we sat there in a wooded grove overlooking a small, winding road we heard the whining sound of a F-1 racing car grinding the gears down into a tight turn, and there in front of both of us Graham Hill's British Racing Green Lotus #4 went flashing by, tightly followed by a red Ferrari. That was the thing about Marie and I, we had mutual

hallucinations. We saw the same things when together, never had to explain them and never wondered why we had joint hallucinations. Just seemed natural to us.

That was the last one, though. The last hallucination we shared, the end of the last trip. We eventually got back to the parking lot and headed back to Cambridge as the sun started to set. The one final major act of the day was a perfect symbol of the time and not a hallucination. As we entered the rotary coming off the Cape we cut off an older middle-aged couple in a big-assed Cadillac. He was in a suit with a cigar and his wife was dolled up in a mink coat with a big bouffant hair-do. As if in slow motion, as we passed we turned to look at them, they at us, and we all gave each other the finger. They continued around the rotary and we branched off onto Rt. 3. So long, suckers.

That night we lay in bed together both feeling the buzz, tired in each other's arms and unable to sleep until the electricity wore off. That was it, then. The last trip. I thought about it laying there, about the weirdness of it all and where life would be going from there. I had made it out of Shitsville. I had seen the French movies and smoked dope in jazz cafes and slept on the street in Times Square and was here in the underground cool of backstreet Cambridge in bed in the arms of the woman I loved.

But I couldn't stay here forever. Taking the last trip meant moving on. Taking the last trip meant getting on with life. Starting to get serious about what to do about me and who I was going to become and what I was going to do with life. I had always known, ever since I dropped out of B U and started the years of no-responsibility kicking around from job to job, that I had a life in front of me somewhere. I knew I would go back to school and get responsible and do something with my life. Taking the last trip was one step in that direction. But where? Which direction? I had no idea, I just knew that it would happen. So I rolled over and put my arm around Marie, cuddled closer with my face against her hair, and fell asleep listening to the electric buzz fade away. Tomorrow would come when it came.

2. Marie's Discovery

Reading Time 9'

Babs and I were sound asleep in the apartment when about two o'clock someone knocked. We'd gotten fairly stoned that night so it took a while for it to register, but I rolled out thinking "What the hell?" as Babs kind of rustled in the sheets. "Who IS it?"

I opened the door and there was Marie looking strained, almost frantic.

"You have to come with me."

"Marie, what? It's two o'clock."

"Please, Bruce, you have to come with me."

I could see that she wasn't stoned, she wasn't tripping, she was serious, and something was seriously wrong. Marie always put me in mind of Janis Joplin; looked like her, was strong like her, but also could be a bit unstable.

By this time Babs had awoken but wasn't yet fully conscious. She and I had been married for about two years and had it together enough for me to go over to the bed, hug the warmth and the hair and say, "Listen, I got to go. It's Marie and something's

wrong, I really think I need to help her. I'll be back, love, just go back to sleep."

"OK, I hope it's OK. Mmm OK" She was asleep again before we were out the door.

The apartment was on Commonwealth Ave about three blocks down from the Public Garden but at two in the morning, Marie's TR-4 was parked right outside. She didn't say anything we just got in and she started driving. As soon as she took the Mass. Ave bridge I knew we were headed to her apartment on Green St.

In order to get up on the bridge you have to pass Charlesgate. When we were freshmen at BU she was in Charlesgate and I was in Miles Standish, just a few minutes away in Kenmore Sq. We were both in the School of Public Communications, but how we ever hooked up I'll never know. She was the truly cool NYC woman and I was the truly uncool woodhook from rural Maine. It should never have happened but it did and I couldn't believe my luck.

When I was in high school, cool meant white shirt, blue jean cuffs rolled above the ankles, white socks, black loafers, black belt and a shit-eating grin. That, and being captain of the football team, was about all

it took to get the goods. That wasn't going to cut it with Marie. When we started dating, I tried to impress her so I went out and bought a pair of elephant ear bell-bottomed jeans. I proudly went over to show her and when she looked down and saw that they ended at my ankles, she just looked at me and said, "Nice. Trainers, huh?"

I hadn't seen her since I got married. We'd drifted apart a few years before that and all I'd heard from her was a letter that basically said, "You married a girl from Long Island?" But we had been so tight, and she had meant so much to me as a guide to my life-to-be, that when she showed up unannounced at two in the morning and I found myself riding in her car toward the apartment we'd once shared, it just felt strangely normal. The way true friends long separated get their groove back as soon as they are together again.

In her car, in the TR4. I shouldn't be surprised that she still had it, but I had that cool first. The summer between our freshman and sophomore years I made good bread working for Mayflower Moving Vans and within a month of starting the job bought a used TR3. White with red upholstery and tonneau cover. When we got back to BU that fall, we'd cruise Storrow drive, stoned, Stebro exhaust purring. It had wire wheels and one cool night I had on a scarf that my grandmother had knitted for me, it must

have been ten feet long and it was streaming behind me as we drove. She turned and looked at me and just said, "Isadora Duncan." She was wicked funny. The TRs became a kind of thing.

Later, after I dropped out, I bought a burnt orange TR4-A that was truly bitchin'; full roll bar, independent rear suspension, $\frac{3}{4}$ racing cam, dual Stebros, and it was tight. We used to work on it in the driveway on Green Street. She was better at working on it than I was. Not long after she bought a TR4 of her own and we'd shop for tolls and parts and work on them together.

I looked out and there we were, the green house on Green Street. Jesus. Suddenly I thought, "She still lives here?" It seemed a little odd that she hadn't moved in all these years. She took the downstairs apartment sometime after I had dropped out and took off to work in a woolen mill in Maine in the winter, Mayflower in the summer, and some antiquing with my cousin. Green St. was my haven, our haven. Sometimes I'd stay for months, sometimes just for the weekend. I kind of wondered who else stayed there with her. I never really saw other guy evidence around, but I was smart enough to know that was her business, not mine. I knew that she knew wherever I was, I wasn't going to be too lonely too long. It didn't matter that much because our relationship had always been more heart and

soul than loins and lust.

Green Street was that period of adult-becoming. We could indulge our hearts in whatever we did. Snuggling on the couch listening to Ian and Sylvia, walking up to the Plow and Stars to spend the night having Guinness with the crowd, smoking dope in the Cambridge Cinema watching the Marx Brothers or a French art film, all of it was done with that “this will never happen again” intensity. And after a while it didn’t happen again. The Green Street visits got fewer and farther between, she was getting involved in community activism and reading Saul Alinsky, and I started getting deeper into my “fuck this intellectual shit I’m a working man” head.

The last contact I had with her before I got married was when I was living out in the woods in New Hampshire. I’d pared life down to a cabin with a wood stove, a dog, and working the woods when I came back to the cabin one day to find a drawing she had left on my table. She could do the Peter Max thing really well. The drawing was of her truckin’ past the cabin and headed toward a rainbow and the caption said something about how she waited but had to truck on and she’d see me again. That was it. Babs and I got married a few months later.

All of this and more came flashing back as we walked through the front door. She took off her coat, dropped her keys, took my hand and still without saying anything, led me into the bedroom. As soon as we were there she flipped out. She started taking off her clothes saying, "Come on, you want to fuck me right? I want to fuck you. Come on, please I need to find out. I need this please, fuck me, let me know. I have to know. Am I a lesbian? Am I? Am I a lesbian. Jesus, Jesus, Jesus."

As she was saying it she got on the bed and started crying. I couldn't move, it was so crazy. Then it wasn't and I walked over and took her in my arms.

"Marie, come here. What is this? What's wrong? Shhhh. Stop. Just, OK, shit, just get it out, that's right, let it all out."

She couldn't answer, she sobbed so hard she started going in to convulsions. I rolled onto the bed with her, me full clothed, her naked, holding each other and both of us feeling that melding that we had not felt in years, the melding of the heart, the melding of the soul. We lie there for a long time, just holding on to that feeling as long as she needed it. Maybe me, too. As it began to dissipate and her breathing slowed, I soften my embrace and looked at her to

ask, "OK, Marie, what is it? And put on your clothes, for Christ's sake, I'm a married man."

"Yeah, like that would stop a tomcat like you". Said with a smile and I relaxed. And then came the torrent.

"I'm so sorry, I just well, I don't know. All my life there's been this thing and I've put it aside, and it has just been getting stronger and I know what it is, I always have, but I didn't want it but now I can't help it, it's just there, and I didn't know what to do but I had to find out and you are the only person I could turn to and I just had to know. Oh, damn it, you didn't want to fuck me did you? Because I'm a lesbian. And you know at I didn't really want to fuck you either, I just wanted to show myself I could. Didn't our sex ever seem strange to you? Didn't you ever think that I sucked at making love?"

She was bawling and talking, I could barely make out what she was saying. Finally, I looked over at her and said, "Listen, I didn't fuck you tonight because I am married to Babs. You are as close to my heart as ever, and as beautiful as ever, and I would've done you in a minute, but on the other hand I'm not sure if it is legal to fuck someone who is obviously fucking insane. There must be some kind of law against

taking advantage of the crazy.”

She looked at me with a flash of the old wry smile, wiping the tears with the sheet.

“I really am sorry. I guess I’ve been fighting myself so much lately, knowing I am a lesbian but not wanting to be, kidding aside, it has driven me crazy, I’ve been seeing a shrink and he’s got me on meds.”

“Holy Christ on a crutch, after all the drugs you’ve done in your life? My only question is, are they good, and do you have any to spare.”

“No, seriously, Bruce. I just don’t know if I can deal with it.”

OK, and seriously, Marie, you know you can. Yes, I always thought our sex was a little weird, but I loved you...no, not love so much as you were my soulmate. You meant so much to me because of who you were, and that doesn’t change no matter you are gay, straight, or a eunuch. Can women be eunuchs? Christ, hold me, hold me tight. I care so much about you, I just want you to be Marie. Everyone does. You’re a lesbian? Good, be a lesbian. I know your folks, they will come around. I don’t know who your friends are these days, but if they are friends, they will want you to be happy and free. Just promise me you won’t get a “Born to Lose” tattoo and a Harley...

and that you'll work on my car when I need it. Actually, this is great because when Babs wakes up and realizes that I took off with you at two o'clock and I come home smelling like you, I can say, 'Oh, don't worry, she's a lesbian, she just wanted to play with my wrench.'"

We lie there a little longer, had a cigarette, and talked about old times. Finally, we looked at each other, kissed, and she rolled out and put her clothes on. She drove me home and dropped me off with a final kiss.

I can't remember what time it was but the sun was just coming up and I simply walked into the bedroom, took off my clothes and snuggled up against Babs. After all the excitement and emotion of the night I got instantly hard.

"Hey, you're home. What was it? How is she? What did she want? With what I feel in my back, I guess she didn't want that."

"Let's go back to sleep, I'll tell you in the morning. She only wanted to play with my wrench. On second

thought, before we go to sleep maybe you'd like to play with it, too."

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