

EXODUS

That brief conversation led to the blazing fire-fight I'd anticipated...sending me underground and out of Honolulu's mainstream forever, but not before I'd totally altered the slender worldview of the retirees around us. We fixed up the old boat shed, making it into an artists' retreat where all manner of fantasy bloomed. Psychedelic paintings covered it's walls, and we even did our little Victorian house inside and out with the better flavors of the Haight. It became Oahu's philosophical mecca, with our original crowd tripping there on weekends. Several months of really high times went by, and a bunch of money went into good causes, when suddenly it all came to a screeching halt.

Ralph was unable to keep my identity from his syndicate cretins and the pressure was on for their cut, a large slice of my personal efforts. I should have known...these people are the same in all places and times. I told him he could take care of them after I left, and that he should come out the next afternoon to split up our treasure. I had it buried in the sand of the pine forest not far down the beach, and crept there in the moonlight to get enough to hopefully take them off my trail and pay him off, as well. I'd decided to move to a far and private place where I could live in peace.

Ralph arrived early, insisting I give them their bonus and play ball for the long-term deal they offered. Would you believe it came complete with protection from them? I flat-out refused, and gave him more than his share to stall them, but he was sure they'd be out that night if he didn't give them a satisfactory answer. What a total screw this was! I was really bent outta shape, and got out the AK-47 and my other weapons in a rage, while he went into town to buy some time.

I sent Kela away, and paced the sandy road, measuring the distance to my house, and setting up a fire-zone and some booby traps. I pounded pegs in the sand, taped simulation grenades to them, and walked wires tied to their pins along the pine trees, across the sand dune, and into Sakamoto's watermelon patch. I climbed into the rickety watchtower he used to keep hippies out of his fields, and cut a short burst on each weapon. Then I reloaded sets of banana clips, put on my black camo colors, and crept into the darkness. It felt very comfortable.

Sure enough, about midnight a sleazy Chevy and a van pulled up to the house. The Chevy was in front of the garden, empty by the time I reached the trees, and five dorks were by the van at the beach entrance to the shower, peering into the bathroom where light and music filtered out. What a group! They reminded me of Hatcher's turkey shoot at the

waterfall with Mona, whose scalp still hung on my wall. I pulled the wire on the first grenade, and cut a short burst on the AK into the blast near them. Then I strafed the bejeezus out of the Chevy, while the panicked bozos bumped into each other in a frenzy to get into the van. Sparks and ricochets streamed through the night, and the wonderful smell of gunsmoke and rush of adrenalin coursed through me. I strafed under my house, cutting most of the garden down in the process, loving every second of it.

The other trip wire wound through the pines a hundred yards, where the swerving van careened now toward freedom and the open road, but not 'til I was finished with them! I guessed the speed of their movement, pulled the second wire, and stepped from the shadows to get a better view. Right on the money! The blast almost rolled the van over. I laid the AK on the pine needles, and laughing 'til tears came to my eyes, ran across the watermelon patch with my M-3, the old forty-five which had seen me through so much already.

As they swerved out of the bay, I threw three simulators onto the highway. Crouching in the dunes, I emptied a foot-long clip in farewell tribute to "the gang that couldn't drive straight." Those poor bastards must've thought a whole squad had laid wait for them. Then I walked out to the point house, got Kela and the artists, packed all night, and vanished by morning.

Malignant powers may have rubbed off on me in those impressionable years in Vietnam, but like so many young Americans who'd grown up there, I held values far from the norm now sacrosanct. You didn't pull a weapon unless you meant to use it, and I'm certain I would've killed them all if they'd fired one round at me in return.

As things worked out, I made a final statement and retired from their world. I never really considered that island my home again, and moved further away each year, never going back...and in some simple dignity they let me go. As an Asian expert in drug matters, I remain the "goose that laid the golden egg," and even these stupid fucks could figure one should not kill a good thing. Through my Hawaiian bodyguard, who'd been with me since little kid times, I let them know they'd get their share on a regular basis. He also hinted that I would hunt them one by one if they didn't agree with our new and fair relationship.

Our first stop was Hana, Maui...and for far away in Hawaii it is. In its pristine beauty, I created a tiny fire base, crazy as it seems in such a natural paradise, but like I said, wherever you go there you are. Hana is as far as one can get from the mainstream of island life. The tiny village of about four-hundred Hawaiians sleeps at the end of a two-hour drive around ninety-nine turns cut into cliffs, rising high above windswept waves on the rainy side of that island. One store and one plane a week serviced the place then, and I chose it for its remoteness and untouched beauty.

We found a perfect spot, an old cowboy shack with a little barn and adjacent bungalow. It was propped on a sloping hill near a waterfall, with good views of the one-lane road in both directions, almost out to Seven Sacred Pools. While Kela twittered about, reveling in our long-awaited, rusticate version of country life, I laid out my defense perimeter, with a rock-lined bunker across the road above the falls and an escape tunnel out the back of the house under the fence that protected the laundry area from the sea breeze. The weapons were greased, loaded, and the real grenades hidden from our first moments in paradise. Rightfully so by my standards.

A month went by setting up a new life there. Artists and musicians came and went. Carpenters redid the barn and bungalow, and many of our tribe began flying in for visits, business, and pleasure. The barn held five dirt bikes, a dune buggy, and camping gear for eight. We had toys for every season, the greatest and latest in music, and whatever we lacked was on order.

It became like Keith Richard's estate, Redlands, outside London, the place to be if you were in the swim. I fashioned it after the "live while you can" attitude of those better days with the Stones, and spent thousands flying groups in on chartered flights to the tiny landing strip, and taking the same little planes out on business and to every rock concert or gathering of the times.

The dark forest surrounding Wild Beach on Oahu still held the source of our wealth. Not far from our Kawela Bay house the boxes lay, buried in the sand, golden bombs waiting in shallow graves for me to visit in camo paint, bristling with weapons. I savored these macho rituals, making shadowy drops with my string of dealers so bizarre some of them began to wonder about me. From cautious deliveries with the Hell's Angels, to bulk purchases by Crane for the Laguna Brotherhood, I covered my tracks and ass for good reason. It didn't matter what hoops I jumped through, the connoisseurs of our times cried from afar for the Golden Voice and I delivered.

The other half of my split personality, seeking respect and order, found a job appropriate for entry into the new social order we'd settled in. I hired on as Hana Ranch's cowboy carpenter and began building artificial insemination pens in the mountain pastures. I rode a horse at work, got on great with the locals, who were untainted as yet by contact with the outside world, and began to actually enjoy life for the first time. No one noticed the Colt under my left arm.

The cowboys loved my stories, and were all abuzz with the happenings at my Koali homestead. I had some of them out for beer and "puupuus" after work, and they were awestruck with the Husqvarna motorcycles, art work, and the sound system. The ranch boss took a liking to my creative work,

and soon I was building a haywagon with a folding stairwell, a dance floor for the hotel, and my favorite mark on their little world, a raft for the Community Association. He let me do whatever I wanted on a project and trusted my judgment. I really liked that. But if he'd had to pay for the huge painting of Ra, the sun god, fiberglassed on the raft's deck he would've freaked out. My artists worked for ganja...not money.