

## DAZE OF '49

While we were shrieking and freaking on my fair hillside, the fickle fingers of fanciful fate were erasing all traces of power I held. I flew to Oahu and drove out to dig up another box, while Tab and a few supporters packed for our coming departure. The radio in the rental car was playing, "Ride, Captain, ride upon your mystery ship" when I confronted a destiny of horror, colored in a fuchsia sunset. A gaping and terrifying scar across the land imprinted abject terror on my mind.

The pine trees were replaced with a barren and lifeless three-hundred-acre sandlot! Dragon-like earthmovers crouched in menacing groups near two-story piles of broken trees and debris, in some utterly fantastic derangement, where once a fragile forest held the enigma of my dual life. It was gone! My secret spot and buried treasure...a million dollars just vanished in an infinite stretch of unyielding sand and shredded biomass!

I leapt from the car into the flume's cold swirls and waded frantically through broken sugar cane toward that devastated landscape. I screamed somehow it not be real, and tears gushed from my eyes, praying and swearing revenge in the same breath upon a god who could turn upon me so.

I emerged, cut and bleeding, from the cane's clutches to find it real. Like a man dying in a desert, I crawled across the sand, pounding my fists and beseeching a nameless witness for mercy, finally rolling on my back in the private agony of being beaten by some final and exacting odds...a one-in-a-million longshot that a hotel should fall from the sky on my tiny corner of the world!

I stumbled in confusion like a drunk, following stray hopes of finding a clue or getting my bearings, but it was like being thrown into an uncaring ocean. There was nowhere to gain a foothold, or even begin! Night fell to find me crying near those man-made monsters I swore to destroy. No, no, no...that was a sickness--revenge! Something had to be done to undo this fatal flaw in the script. It couldn't end like this, not after the challenges I'd overcome!

I ran, tripping on gnarled roots, into the slushing flume. Wet, bleeding, and dangerously insane, I raced to Kammie's Market and called my brother and Daniel, begging them to bring flashlights and thin spears out to help me. We would walk the sand all night, poking and probing, turning this around! I called Ralph on Maui, and headed back to the carnage, when Bob Dylan came on the radio with "Days of old, those were days of gold, those were days of '49." More than that, it became a daze I barely survived, without relief or end, lost in helplessness and despair...four days I grew old

and crazier in. Dell Webb had come to Hawaii to build his Kuilima Resort and cut a huge turd right on top of my head.

I ran myself to the brink of collapse. Stabbing my spear in endless circles, refusing food, delirious in my loss. I survived on cocaine, Kit Kat bars, and Dr. Pepper. The second night, we stole the giant Caterpillar 988 loader from the sugar mill and drove it five miles down the main highway to gravel 'til dawn in gaping, pool-sized graves, to no avail.

The third day, the sun rose on my determined band and their wild-eyed leader accompanied by four "blalabs." I'd called in the syndicate, led by my bodyguard, Moe. We approached two operators as they serviced their beasts. Moe went into his macho ritual, while I peeled off hundred-dollar bills. Much to their Japanese foreman's dismay, they moved the piles around and spent the day sorting through the debris, while my "supervisors" rode with them. The frustrated foreman finally came out in his truck, but after a terse warning from Moe, was escorted off his jobsite to go fishing with his wife or something. These guys did know how to shove their weight around, I'll admit.

It was almost sunset. I was a total wreck, sitting on some rubble surveying the unyielding wasteland before me. My brother was near the beach, high in a tree, keeping a lookout. Up on the ridge above the fanning sugar fields, Dickie stood near his military Jeep, peering through field glasses at our feeble gropings. The giant D-9 roared along, scraping two-feet of sand off with each pass, while the other creature, called a "sheepsfoot," clawed the biggest pile of grubblings like some monstrous praying mantis. I thought I saw a familiar piece of rusty car door roll out. It's those fractional milleseconds in the subconscious that kill you.

Gouged from their graves like mummified corpses, the boxes erupted from beneath the huge pile of debris, ripped and shredded, spilling their golden blood upon the sand! I ran in front of the rolling pile sheared by the blade, yelling at the operator who was intently babbling at Moe while churning along full-throttle. The wind caught the treasure and our footprints turned to gold. An incipient panic set in, some horrible greed and paranoia, rocking us almost into inaction. A few of our helpers actually did flee at the fearsome reality come to the surface...but I was too busy to be bothered with their reactions.

Moe was holding a gun, money was given to the operators as they ran for their cars, and the area was declared secure...whatever that meant. I was frantic, lest the wind pick up, and dumped all the beer from the coolers, scooping pounds of precious powder with a bucket and exhorting the rest to do likewise. We filled the Jeep 'till the clutch wouldn't go down, and ground it into gear, lurching about, unable to stop. The Volkswagen bus was so loaded down with treasure it got stuck in the sand, and we had to push it with

a bulldozer.

We clawed at golden footprints, worth thousands apiece, until a peculiar madness overwhelmed us all, and in fearful retreat from some deranged, macabre presense, we fled the area in disarray...leaving a fortune flickering on the sands of time.

I was physically ill, my insides tortured, and my mind wracked by forces excoriating me for error on one hand, and goading me to alter its outcome on the other. After the intricate details I'd managed accomplishing this feat, having it destroyed while clear signs of danger dangled right in front of me was a slap in the face I could barely handle.

Paying everyone in sandy pounds, and moving the bulk to a safe house, I finally slept, a beaten boy curled near a ten-foot mountain of glittering gold. My brother fed me over the next few days, as he and Daniel developed methods to sift the impurities out, and I began to recover from the ordeal compounded by the previous week of partying.

We tried everything, from fans and chutes to sifters and hair dryers. Nothing removed the finest particles of coral dust, which weighed the same as the golden pollen, the end result, years of girls getting their tits burned from red-hot embers dropping from lit joints. From that time on I habitually blew first on the end of anything passed to me.

A combination of intense paranoia and depression befouled our efforts like a thick raincloud. Day by day, we argued and fought over the littlest things, as the pile hardly changed size at all. The wretched bungalow became a tortured prison encrusted in gold. Even the furniture was coated, and we discovered a powdery hash could be had just by scraping the walls.

Infrequently, one of us would wash off the dust and smell, and go surreptitiously to get food and supplies, taking detours and cutbacks to avoid being followed. We worried more about my fair-weather friends in the syndicate than the police, but it didn't matter who the boogeyman was...he was becoming more real by the minute. The pressure became simply too much, and sensing we couldn't go on much longer, we succumbed to a quick solution by dumping the lot into a water-filled bath tub. The majority of the sand sank, and we laid the goey broth scraped from the surface onto screens and corrugated iron all over the house to dry.

Of course, the plumbing backed up, and we had to rent a roto rooter, but the worst of it was the product didn't please me. It lost some of its color and definitely wasn't as stony without the pollen. I was sick but had few options by this time. I bought five-hundred-dollars worth of heat lamps and hair dryers, and we sweated it out in that wretched hell-hole like powdered gnomes in a mine shaft 'til the fuses on the old house started to go.

The process came to an abrupt end. In a mad flurry we mutually lost our minds, abandoned ship as one, and fled

from each other like pariahs. Numbed into fatalism, I distributed the remains amongst my band of dealers, watching them like sharks in a feeding frenzy. I told them they'd never see me in this role again, and didn't even price the crap. I just walked out of their lives as if I could become a memory by simply saying so. The only one convinced was me.