

THE FLIP OF A COIN

The farm was like a place visited by death...I couldn't stay long. Persons unnamed, in cahoots with Alu, were taking it over anyway. I gathered my money, sold whatever I could, and left Hawaii as quickly as possible, before my hatred tore loose. Caring little whether I lived or died, the killer almost had his way...

Anonymous on the mainland with about a hundred-fifty grand, it seemed possible to get a new start...but anger raged in me unabated. Catching the freak show on Sunday afternoon at Venice Beach, I listened to bongos and watched the crowd gathered on a little mound of grass near the ocean. A dark beauty danced before me, and somehow I got up the courage to approach her. It was my birthday and I was so alone...she seemed to sense my ship was sinking, and walked with me to the water's edge as if I'd cried out for help.

I've made a conscious decision here to just tell what Teresa and I lived through, rather than carry on parts we played in conversation...it would take forever to detail the dialogue between us. Just know she arrived like the last angel at exactly the right moment, with precisely the proper ingredients. I smoked some crack with her because it was my birthday, and I simply didn't give a shit any more.

That first hit gripped me inexorably, and took us on a journey more than miles can measure. Crack is simply the most addictive stuff on earth, and has potential to be the most beautiful. Anyway I was created by drugs, so they were meant to take me away...

I learned to worship a woman, especially her vagina, as the receptive flower in the universe. Never giving before, now I found an altar to kiss for hours, and finally hung satin ribbons to hold her legs apart as she smoked, having as many as seven orgasms in a row.

The night sky had revealed the female organ with its lips unfolding like layered petals of a giant rose...and a chorus of sound, higher in pitch than any aum, filled my mind. It was like the whine of a generator that runs the cosmos, and with each hit became clearer and more exotic.

I was addicted from my first hit, and spent ten grand in a few months, before realizing the demon held me firmly in its clutch. I couldn't stop...for it filled all the holes in my pain-struck mind. Like Jim Morrison, I consciously decided to ride the snake at whatever cost.

Of course, there was a nasty side, the crack world is full of crooks. It doesn't matter...beauty lay just ahead. That concept of a lifetime stash formed up again and I decided to take the chance. Why not? In my state of mind, I had nothing to lose...

Teresa could speak Spanish, and after these months living together, wasting so much money on junk, I talked her into going on a journey to Colombia to get the real stuff we needed. She had an extremely sexy way about her, and as with Karen, I molded a meticulous plan around distraction.

I bought a used Chevy, and practiced removing the tires from the rims, wrapping clear one-inch plastic tubing in them, and measuring how much weight we could carry. She agreed to all the logistical stuff, but insisted on flying back unless I'd give her half to cross the border. Shit, that was the part I really needed from her more than just linguistics...and we argued across seven countries about a percentage for her act.

We got nowhere...she was too terrified of losing her freedom. For me, there seemed no choice. I had to have the stuff then to go on living. Sometimes I felt she might do it, but we could never get past a fifty-fifty split, and it was my fortune on the line.

Late in winter we started out, with my promises and even a prepaid ticket for her from Mexico City to Los Angeles. I needed her to translate, as we planned to get between the cartel and a lab to buy it wholesale. I figured I could talk her into crossing back with me on the long drive. We got good product to smoke as soon as we were out of America, and she warmed and cooled to the concept as we went up and down on the drug.

After forever in Mexico, we crossed all those poverty-stricken little countries like Guatemala, San Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and finally Panama. Then, aiming at the middle ground between the Medellin and Cali Cartels, we wandered around in the high Cordilleras seeking a lab or distribution point that would sell directly to us rather than the syndicates who ran the whole country.

On the coffee and coca producing slopes near Belalcazar we struck paydirt. My sexy girl performing majestically, we got away with the unthinkable...buying fifty pounds of pure cocaine for ninety-thousand in cash. It was easy to turn into crack. We could have been killed in a heartbeat, but there was something about her that coerced even the gangsters into wishing us well.

After five-hundred miles, we located a discreet auto shop, pushed the payload into the tubing, and stuck it with aluminum plumber's tape deep into each rim. The well-paid old man helped put the tires back together in his darkened paint booth. So far it was going better than I'd dreamed.

The battle in the car raged on through six countries. At times I thought she'd ride it down with me for around twenty-five percent, but then a great fear would darken her mood, and she'd clutch her plane ticket, staring straight ahead without a word. I prayed she'd help me in the dangerous crossing for a share in the considerable fortune, which now went round-and-round in the tires. I'd never

needed anyone so much in my life.

I couldn't convince her even for fifty-percent, and there were real tears as we neared Mexico City and the airport that would springboard her to freedom. Our agreement if she flew the coop had boiled down to ounces on my arrival in Venice Beach, and more money than I'd originally promised in payment for her part as translator.

We stopped at a gas station in Cuernavaca and I went to take a leak. When I came out, the car was gone. As if struck by lightning I suddenly recognized the lie we'd lived, and accepted my part without question. There wasn't amazement or even anger. It seemed I'd sensed this coming all my life...

My karma had finally caught up with me. I thought of all the women I'd used, and the justice in it. I couldn't believe the calm that settled over me where once rage would have carried me away. What could I do...call the police? Shit, she had fifteen crossings in four states to choose from, and would probably trade the car and switch the wheels before I could even put a plan together.

"Don't get high on your supply" would've been appropriate, but I'd been smoking the whole way...not thinking to take the keys to the toilet with me that time. There was about ten grand in the money belt with my passport. A pipe was in my pocket along with about an ounce. The choices were simple enough...clean up my act and return to write this, or hole up in the Andes and smoke myself to death, expecting enlightenment before the end.

I wandered into some trees and sat on a rock. I'd been here before...always wondering what I'd be when I grew up. Just what could I have become in thirty-six years on the path to euphoria? Probably just who I am, a fifty-seven-year-old addict still waiting for some miracle born in the sixties, buying lies built into drugs as I go. A vision flickered momentarily...maybe the road to Ataraxia was still open back somewhere. I took a huge hit off the pipe and tossed a coin in the air.

Now you know how it came down...