

"HE BLEW HIS MIND OUT IN A CAR"

It worked so well, my status as non person, that I decided being slightly retarded was a role considerably easier than being on stage. It saved us for a while, and allowed a European tour free from further conflict over Kela's version of magic and my excessive research into the source of all things.

Did this mean I should stop gobbling LSD like candy? I chided myself to keep the mad scientist at bay and the fisherboy in the closet, not to mention the killer on the river. The formula worked for a beautiful, yet brief, period. Then, like two vapid strangers in a mental clash of titans, we warred over which way to go at a traffic light...and she left.

I prefer the wondrous memories of that bittersweet time when things just happened and I didn't try to figure them all out...when "I" was on vacation: autobahns and fairytale villages, picnics with bottles of Bordeaux and Liebfraumilch set by a stream, a sprig of edelweiss, storybook Bavarian castles reflected in clear lakes, making love in the grass, and waking to pristine forests, lakes, and beaches.

There was a cable car in the Swiss Alps, a road that wound through the countryside of Saint Francis of Assisi down to the Italian Riviera, and a drunken night we couldn't find the car after too many liters of wine in the Snagelhaus or "snail house." I recall the singing and dancing in olive orchards of the Greek Isles, toasting with Ouzo to ancient gods, and a monastery carved into cliffs shimmering in reflections. Those special things happened then...when I didn't stop to figure them out.

I treasure our encounter with Christopher Plummer, the movie star, on his glistening yacht at the island of Corfu. We were lying on warm rocks near our camp in early evening about an hour into an LSD trip when a wondrous apparition dropped sail and anchored in the patterns before us. Rowing in to stretch his legs, Plummer became our friend at first sight and we walked up the moonlit path to the cloistered sanctuary above us, Kela and Christopher chattering non-stop.

I'm pretty sure he was on acid, too, or else he's just a very high guy. He was such a vital human being and deeply interested in our lives and travels. Invited aboard later, I'll never forget his portrayal of Adolf Hitler in the lamp-lit elegance of the main salon. He'd studied "der fuehrer" intensely for a movie, and it wasn't the LSD or my imagination. He "became" Hitler, acting from the oversoul, catching every nuance of this crazed being, from his heinous eyes to the droop of his forelock. I absorbed as much maturity and method as I could from Christopher during our

days together. He was the first mentor I respected for his genius and gentleness instead of power and control. Life seemed hopeful around him.

It was sweet and good for a while, and we inhaled it as if tomorrow would never come. From the docks of Marseilles to the bullfights of Pamplona, the showering fountains of Tivoli, and "son et lumiere" at Biarritz with its coral and sandstone flashing like carved figurines...we viewed it all with our magic pill.

For me, it was a vision only, a dream to observe, and when the Creoles danced like Zorba in their olive orchards around great vats of shrimp, I watched like a sailor too long at sea, peering down on ships below, but I did not dance.

I hold the memory of Kela's face at a harbor table, sipping Galliano in reflections of Monaco's glazed casinos...a solitary moment in time. I still hear the sound of paddles swishing and the gondola rocking in Naples, smell the urine and musk of the Coliseum, see endless corridors of the Louvre, and the look on the gendarme's face discovering us curled naked in our sleeping bag under the Eiffel Tower at midnight. Most of all I remember waiting for it to end.

Those months remain a pleasant memory, hundreds of unconnected pieces in sequence, floating in a curious calm before an expected storm. It was a conscious stay of sorts from the nemesis of my inscrutable destiny. Was it Vietnam, an inborn apprehension, the drugs, or just the burden of my generation? I couldn't get it into focus at all...only wait. The sights we were privy to, magnified by LSD, overrode my spiritual dilemma, and for the time allotted, those apocalyptic horsemen of my nightmare slept.

There was an acid trip near the end when she claimed I was "out of it" because I couldn't communicate in thoughts or hear the Beatles playing in "our" head. I think I told her she was too naive to know the depth of life, in all its morose moods, which mutant powers had tutored me in...that magic would never encompass reality and she was crazy, not me! While she prattled along about "thinking was the best way to travel," I brooded in some clandestine fear of losing my only contact, more than loss of her love. In fact I hated her then.

It was godawful! I couldn't just go with the flow, as she and the goddam hippies did. Like a captain, I tried to steer our course while she waited and watched for her philosopher-leader's every hesitation and error. Remember the Beatles' lyrics, "he blew his mind out in a car. He hadn't noticed that the lights had changed." Well, I got in major approach-avoidance conflicts that verged on catatonic insanity over such miniscule decisions as whether to go left or right. Every little thing became a crisis of monstrous proportions. I couldn't even speak for fear of using my ego! There she was, humming her little ditties, watching me crack up with that "see I told you so" smirk on her face.

The situation in the car became terminal. I couldn't even think without her hearing my every thought! Maybe we overdosed on each other, for chrissake, I don't know! One day at an intersection, my culminate inquisition boiled down to left or right...and it was over. We shipped the car, and she got on a plane to wait at her sister's in New York for me to get it together.

I remember her saucer-like eyes flooded with tears at the end. Then she was gone, and I sat on the shores of time in the drool of a moiling sky as an impregnable loneliness settled upon me like a suffocating fog.