

Shootout at the Homeless Camp

Headline in the Nanaimo News

Man shot trying to get back his shit at the homeless camp-- the newspaper article implied. He's still alive, but he's got some insane pain. The cops had warned him if he kept going back harassing those people he was gonna get shot. But our-- bull headed—friend evidently didn't heed their advice. He went back anyways & sure enough our friend got himself shot.

Not that the homeless had been sitting around waiting in ambush. Peeking through the flaps in their tents watching. That was absurd. The homeless had their own life to be angry at. Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Our friend a diversion, one of the many lined up, take a number.

Our friend was just himself—alone-- against a wretched world which was driving him mad.

Our friend had a garage just down the road from the homeless camp. He was not too smart but smart enough not to live in a tent. His garage was on the edge of a small—canadian-- coastal town, known for its tasty sweet pastry treat-- nanaimo bars. Our friend lived in two small rooms in the back of his shop.

He was BC born & bred. His mother was dead. He fixed cars & bought & sold some for extra cash. Had a pump out front for diesel. He'd been here for awhile, over twenty years. Then the homeless built tent city-- about six months ago-- within his sphere. Just outside the town line. Within sight of his shop.

This made him mad. He had no patience for, 'them that don't work & take no pride in their lives,' our friend was heard to say to anyone who'd listen.

He made his way up to the camp—after it'd been there a couple of months-- just to check it out. This made him madder. People living like animals, obviously gone feral. The stench of garbage fumes, feces & camp fires smothering his breath.

Now our friend was a man who liked his booze. Though he had but a few friends, when they got together in the back of his shop they weren't immune to hoisting a few. The frustration with what was going on in this world spilled out like the fireballs they were drinking. Nothing was good enough, nothing worthwhile. An aged bunch of big talking losers scared of their own shadow. Oozing with blame of others, riddled with shame of their own. Needing someone to lash out at—other than themselves—the homeless way of life was right in their site. Needing something to scoff at when drunk, the homeless camp was easy prey. Heaping scorn & plans of annihilation, 'Fuckin hippies, fuckin bums,' heard as a chorus to their drunken rap of rage.

When his friends weren't around our friend drank by himself. Furious—alone-- frustrated about those damn homeless people poisoning his head. His fury obsessive about those dregs of death living in tents just down the road. He started standing out front at his pump & shaking his fist, flinging insults & crazy into the air.

What are they a bunch of fucking hippies he'd chuckle to himself back inside, sitting stewing at his table, alone drinking whiskey. Well how's that working out for em he'd laugh like a gurgle.

The cops didn't seem to care. They cruised by, but usually turned around at the Townline.

Well, if the cops weren't going to do something about it our friend eventually decided he would.

So he started going up regular & harassing the homeless camp—drunk, by himself-- late at night. Finally, one night setting fire to some of their tents. Yelling—absurd insults. The homeless-- scampering like zombies in a colony-- screaming in terror. Popping out of the flaps of their tent like bursting pimples. Our friend booming, 'you fucking low life's, burn, burn, burn.'

Then, our friend-- punching a few haggard homeless on his way out of the camp-- headed back down the road to his whiskey, eager to appease that taste of desperation making him dry.

The cops showed up at his shop later that night. Our friend said yea I did it so what. That's when the cop with a fat face told our friend he better stop harassing those people or he's gonna get shot.

End of Part One

Two nights later, early evening;

Davie was trying to show off his gun. He was waving it in front of his cronies, Jayman & Zach, while they were all smoking crack in the tent. The sweet-sour smell of crack filling the tent like a tear gas bomb.

No one really took notice of the gun, so Davie put it aside, back in his pack. They had been high on meth for days, the crack was an unexpected recent score-- bonus; party!!

They spent their entire days looking for & scoring drugs. Always high, always looking. They were scroungers. Everyone talking they had a job but no one working. It's all a myth. A game that

they play to retain a tentative touch with sanity. All balanced on the ledge of lunacy, feeling it slipping slowly away.

They were all wacked sitting around in their tent this evening reeking of revenge. They were always seeking some way to stick it to someone. Now they sat around stoned wallowing in their success. There seemed to be a new target everyday to perk their interest. Everyone an enemy everyone out to fuck em. Their life was cheap, they knew it, their existence fried in a deep dark chasm sizzling in ripe despair. A life only worth living from pipe to pipe.

The hate that breeds in the oppressed becomes primeval. It breeds like a beast. The revenge it wreaks is potentially fatal to all.

The plan had been to steal the bastard's tools who had set fire to some of their tents. Fuck him up good. The plan backfired, it only worked to pour gasoline on our friends already crackled fire. It upped the ante dramatically. Infuriating our friend to no end. When our friend started noticing his tools gone missing & then the compressor-- he knew who took it-- it just made him madder. If that were possible in a human being.

Fuck him Davie was mumbling to himself, the night before, as he ran off clutching the silent heavy compressor. Zach & Jayman following close behind, backpacks swollen with spoils. Fair retribution for setting our tents on fire all agreed.

Now these three reprobates were reviewing their recent acquisitions. Power drills, hammers, screwdrivers & wrenches piled about a resting compressor, in the middle of the tent. They were talking about all the things they could do now they had tools & a compressor. Worse comes to worse they can always sell em.

Davie reached back in his pack & pulled out his gun, this time to add it to the treasures. Davie actually had thought to keep it to himself, after their previous display of disinterest, but what the hell. Guns were taboo. Guns drew heat. Knives were usually the weapons of aggression or used in defense. So the presence of the gun-- within their circle-- for those cool enough to care, was met with little interest mixed, with disdain. The tone of the conversation was stoned & boring.

'Don't know if that's cool,' Jayman whispered into his beard just loud enough for Davie to hear. Jayman, sitting bare foot, cross legged on the dirty tent floor. Slowly lifting his head from the perpetual druggy droop. Jayman's long blonde matted hair hanging down loose, hiding a sparsely bearded pointy face. Gritty with the ravages of meth.

'Count me out,' said Zach, 'draws heat.'

Zach was standing skinny, head bent slightly so it won't touch the top of the tent. One foot in front of the other as if he was balancing on a beam. Hair cut military style. Eyes dark dark black, you had trouble seeing them. A complexion reflecting the surface of the moon, splotches of scabs like craters. If his nose wasn't so long & narrow, you would never know it was there.

'No it's cool,' Davie said trying to talk himself into it. Davie lied to himself again. He was always lying to himself about something. The big score, riches at the end of the rainbow stuff, now he was lying about his comfort with the gun. It scared him a little. He'd seen close up the damage that can be done with a gun. Truth be told Davie didn't just lie to himself he lied to everyone about everything. You could never believe a single word that came out of Davie's mouth, because if you did, your world became his & that's a pretty scary place.

Davie's about forty-five, he's been hitting it hard for many years. Davie has dropped dead & been brought back to life so many times Hell is his second home. He looked like death warmed over. He'd droop then drop when he was having fun. His face looked like a cartoon character, nothing real. His hair balding but don't tell him that. Davie was in constant pain, his body was falling apart inside out.

Always bringing random stuff back to the tent. No one ever asked where he got it. Davie'd never give them a chance, bragging about it the minute he got past the flap. Showing off his booty as if he'd just won a bear at the fair. Tools, cameras, shoes, shirts, sweaters, coffee sweetener, eggs, crowbars & chains, would somehow emerge & be gone the next day. Davie'd sell or trade whatever he got for whatever he needed.

It's no wonder a gun passed his path. Davie would rob a grave if he thought something was in it for him. When he opened up that dresser drawer in the empty house he was plundering last week & saw the gun sitting there he had no moral qualms at scooping it up. Even though he had no idea how to use it. Worse comes to worst he could sell it.

Davie didn't fear the heat it could bring. He'd spent so much time in jail over the last few years it was more like a Caribbean vacation then incarceration.

It was Davie's idea to steal our friends' tools. Davie had no problem compromising the camp's safety. Davie was always only out for himself. He laid the gun back down carelessly on top of his pack.

End of Part Two

Later that same evening;

Our friend was fuming alone-- about his stolen tools—sitting at his slippery stained table in his shop. He knew the cops had told him not to go back since he set the fires. But fuck them. Our friend was well into the whiskey, while Davie & the gang were speeding along like life will never end.

Our friend decided he was gonna go get his tools & compressor back come hell or high water. He knew where they were. He was drunk he was mad. He hated those people he hated his life.

The drunker he got the more he wanted to retrieve what was rightly his. Those bastards he fumed, those no good lazy fucks. How dare they share the air I breath. He laughed to himself-- at his clever phrase-- as he downed a shot & chased it with a beer.

His mind was winding itself up like a rubber band being twisted so tight, that it was stretching his eyes back into his head.

The room where he sat started to spin. The little window over the sink seemed to be moving. The door to the shop swinging on unknown hinges. Flapping like an empty menace. The slimy table-- where his elbows lay-- erupting into a devilish dance as if proposing romance.

His mind was coming unglued & he knew it. There was only one cure. He must go into action to avoid his mind going completely unscrewed.

Onwards & upwards he decided.

He pushed himself up off the table trying to stand. The floor started swaying as if he was standing on a small boat in rough water. Goddamn bums he talked to the air as he stumbled backwards overturning the innocent chair. The chair felt totally annoyed & kicked up its legs making sure it entangled our drunken friend. Causing our friend to fall—flailing-- flat forward on his face without grace. Kissing the cheap linoleum floor covered with a life time of grit & gore.

He reached out in a hallelujah as he was going down, finger tips straining reaching searching, for a mindless god to come down & kill em all. He lay furious trying to get up, first on his knees, jeans slick on the floor, pissed himself a little, he drew up the strength to rise straight. A burning fire in his eyes.

He just got madder at his own disgrace of a life. He was passionate at pursuing someone to blame.

Resting himself on the kitchen sink-- stacked with stained dishes-- he looked around for his bat. There it was in the other room-- resting in waiting-- by the corner of his unmade bed. He pushed himself off the counter & wobbled like a whacko. Heading resolutely across the floor to get his weapon.

No more of these drunken hijinks. He must prepare for war bellowed like a command in his head.

Our friend on a march hits the road. It was a rusty dusk just before dark. A disinterested sun reluctantly retreating in the west. Using his bat for balance our friend is marshalling in a wobbling stride down the deserted hwy. Like a colonel Blimp in the Boer war, on his way to rid the world of these degenerates, even up the score. Rocky Mountains in the distance dripping tears of glacial spring snow. Silhouetted like giant overseers— casting shadows over rolling rocky hills. Forests of cedar painted in splotches, dotting the distant darkening horizon. Tree tips swaying trying to get a better view of events to come. Our friend—oblivious-- totally entranced by his mission. Never would he have believed in any part of his whiskey addled brain that he was taking a baseball bat to a gunfight.

End of Part Three

Meanwhile;

Back at the homeless camp there was complete chaos in the tent. Zach had dropped his crack on the dirt floor. Or so he thought. So the search was on. There is no concentration more intense, no human being absolutely totally focused then a junkie tweaking, looking for crack around his feet. It took all the time & attention of the three amigos to check with the eyes of an eagle, every speck of grit, be it under the sleeping bags or under the fingernails. Or squashed between shrunken toes stinking of filth. Jayman taking the opportunity to check out his feet as they were engaging in this noble quest.

They had all but forgotten the gun. Lying recklessly on Davies pack. Priorities rang true like a clear piece of crystal. The crack must be found, to hell with anything else. All the wise men since the beginning of time, with all their intensity on questions-- with no answers-- did not possess the power of concentration, currently at play with our boys. All the glory of God's creation focused on where's that little nugget of nirvana.

After a search which lasted for hours (but really only took ten minutes) -- increasing the anxiety levels of all three to a fevered pitch—the focus of their efforts was found. Hiding in Zacks front

pants pocket. No gold miner ever leapt louder in glee, then when Zach realized, the object of their obsession, was sticking to the seam in his jeans.

Amidst their jubilation a commotion was in motion outside in the camp. A faint scream was heard as a bird to our band of malcontents.

Davie picked up on it, like a wolf in the woods. Instinct blade sharp. A beast always alert, ears twitching in the air. Always walking the edge of illusion.

Zach stopped standing in mid air. Frozen in time like a mime.

Jayman no more aware than a hibernating bear. Head on a droop.

Within this instant, Melissa exploded through the tent flap in an absolute funk. Screaming so loud it woke up the lord our god, disturbing His slumber,

‘It’s that guy!!!!!!!!!!!!!!’.

Melissa had a devilish glow. She had been talking to god quite often over the last little while. She just couldn’t believe how her life had come to this. Living in dread, dodging the devil as he diddles your soul.

She was gone as soon as she came. The canary in the mine heralding impending doom.

The boys responded as fireman to the pole. Zack first through the flap, Davie close behind. But wait! Davie hesitates. Halfway through the flap Davie stops in mid stride. Motioning to Jayman to go ahead. Jayman in this instant of consciousness has had that last whack of crack explode through his head like fireworks on the fourth of July. He all of a sudden has the strength of seven. He was up & gone—toes squishing dirt-- passing Davie on his way out. Davie meanwhile wheeled back & got the gun-- sitting silent, anxiously aware-- waiting for action.

Our friend has exploded on the homeless camp like a tornado. Swinging the bat like a Mickey Mantle hitting homeruns. Scaring the shit out of the homeless. Scattering them like roaches scurrying from a light.

‘Come on you lazy fucks,’ our friend bellowed, ‘Where’s my stuff,’ he roared like thunder. Justifying in his hate filled mind this act of vengeance.

Our friends anger increasing with frustration. All he’d done was stir up some garbage & destroy some tents. His intent was to bust em up, crack some heads, kick some homeless ass. Our friend was out for bloody restitution.

Stopping to catch his breath, standing in the middle of the camp on a pitcher's peak of ashes & debris, our friend spied Zach & Jayman emerge, appearing through the trees. The both of them pulling up, stopping & standing back taking it all in. Frightened as shy kittens confronting its maker.

Our friend stood now at the central bonfire site for the communal gatherings of the culture. Powerful, our friend felt all powerful. Like a conquering Khan atop a mound surrounded by flesh & bone. Now our friend was never a tall man-- actually he was kind of small-- some said that's what made him so mad. His five-foot two frame—raised in rage-- took on a monstrous hue as the shadows of the night crept up behind his exaggerated presence. Throwing an endless black sight across the plight of the homeless.

His fierce eyes finally focused on the foe. Standing stunned, Jayman & Zach frozen like deer in headlights on the edge of his vision. No better two of the enemy could he have hoped to find. Our friend slowly started his insidious intent.

Zach & Jayman were of course stoned like in a movie. So it was taking some time for them to believe what they are seeing is real. This situation was truly-- in the lingo of the ancient sixties-- blowing their mutual minds, like a kamikaze pilot exploding hitting its mark.

Zach was first to react. He trusted his vision, that this apparition which had entered his sway of consciousness was a force to be reckoned with. He was quick to switch into superhero mode. Going into a ridiculous crouch like a crane, teetering on one leg, as if balanced precariously on a bobbing log.

Jayman freaked in fear. His new found powers punctured like a pricked balloon. He wanted nothing to do with anything. He just wanted to run & hide. This was just too fucking weird. The dirt between his toes was starting to tickle.

Just as Jayman was starting his retreat from this fuckin weirdo's view, Davie finally arrived. Dragging his gun like a drunken Chicago mobster. Clutching it with frozen fingers.

Jayman paid Davie no heed. Jayman was concerned with just one thing; Jayman. He ducked in behind Zach, who was now cackling like a goose & moving his limbs all about like he was trying to fly.

As Jayman retreated Davie filled his space coming under the distracted gaze of our friend. Zach's hijinks had stopped our friends advance, as if he was looking at a ghost. Our friend stood flat footed in his tracks. The whole scenario took on a surreal feel for our friend. Like what was happening was happening somewhere else. Perhaps on another planet.

Zach crowing, the whole tent city in chaos. Cries & crying filling the dense darkening air. The whole night just getting blacker. Our friend experiencing a primeval surge took on a serene demeanor. The manor of a man who's made a decision. He became his own man of destiny. The lord of the land, the noble Khan ready for bloody battle. He took stock of these thieving

peasants, his intent on thinning out the herd—he prepared to proceed immediately with this one in front of him, dancing absurd like a ninny.

He approached Zach as an enemy, bat held ready to cleave off this deadbeats' head. Off with the head, his mind screamed in a tormented destructive deluded disposition. Our friend moving methodically like a mongolian warrior on a mission of mayhem.

Zach-- responding to this changing apocalyptic apparition-- let out a girly shriek & fell to his knees, as if to others what would appear in prayer. For Zach it was a last gasping attempt to appease this devil incarnate invading his consciousness.

All this time-- & it happened in seconds—Davie had been in shock. His first impulse was to flee. Forgetting he had a gun in his hand. His first impulse was to run like a dog. As Davie twisted away from the terror-- like a Fagen preparing flight-- our friend was pointing his bat at Zach. Who was still down on his knees pleading like a saint for his soul. Our friend about to anoint this freak by destroying his face.

Davie like a clown went all wobbly weak at the knees at the sight of the impending atrocity. In Davie's delusional state his hand with the gun started to irritate, it became a distraction, like a bug, which Davie wanted no part of.

Davie reacted in an exaggerated twirl. In his efforts to toss the gun & run—Davie shot our friend --as if in fun-- in the stomach; bam!!!—just as the bat was in motion to destroy Zach's mortal coil. Our friend's guts exploded like a tomato. Our friend dropping like a deflated sack of flour. His eyes met the eyes of Davie on his way down-- both of them caught-- expressing disbelief & absolute surprise. Their actions on display as in a circus & they're both a couple of clowns.

Our friend crumpled down to the ground where he lay on display. A bloody mess on a sea of ash & trash. Davie took off stumbling tripping over his feet.

Zach—still prone in prayer-- spliced his fingers covering his face & peaked out with one eye then another. Almost falling over in relief. He jumped up immediately like a child on a spring on a trampoline. Screaming;

'Take that you piece of shit.'

Davie now running in every direction like a girl, finally let loose his grip on the still smoking gun. Tossing it like a hand grenade ready to explode.

Jayman close on Davie's heels. Bare feet splattering mud through his toes. He'd been crouched behind Zach & wasn't sticking around.

Our friend meanwhile realized he wasn't dead-- then the whiskey started to sooth & he gradually started to pass out. One hand clutching the fallen bat. The other covering the wound. Oh noble lord how does all your cowboy bullshit feel now. Softly losing a limp grip on his weapon, his mind going slowly completely numb, consciousness starts to fade.

Zach during these final moments came down from his elation & started jiving in a circle about our fallen friend. Like a rock n roll African tribal ritual.

Our friend laying flat, just in that last instant before he passed out-- using the only body part that worked-- followed Zach's hijinks with his eyeballs ever so slowly until all went black. Our friends final thought feeling like the main course at a cannibal's convention.

'Zach,' yelled Jayman looking back over his shoulder, 'come on,' Jayman exclaimed fiercely.

Jayman then in his first heroic effort of the night pulled up & went back & got Zach. Rounding him up corralling him like a hyena directing him to get the fuck away. Jayman's bare feet gone strangely nimble.

The boys all three made it back to the tent, somehow all arriving at once. They all silently gasping for air. As one they reached for the pipe. After that the only word that was whispered round the circle was, 'fucked up,' Mumbled as a Tibetan chant-- without the beauty.

The police had now arrived at the camp to take charge of the situation. Our friend in & out of consciousness. The paramedics patched him up & put him on the gurney. As they rolled our friend into the ambulance, our friend was aware of a big fat presence thrust in his face. It was the cop from the other night. Who never gets a chance to say he was right to his overweight wife in any argument they might have. So he was anxious to actually take advantage of pointing out something he predicted actually occurring.

'I told you not to go back,' our fat cop gloated, like the cat that swallowed the canary.

The End