



Frontiersman

Facing the truth, however great the cost.

June 2014

The Pursuit of Happiness

Sticky, of San Diego, California

Incarceration has its ups and downs, but this last week things have been just peachy for me. I have been in a Vocational Construction Management class these last few months and only recently my cabinet making skills have been recognized, so much that I have been “granted” shop space and allowed to order/use needed power tools. Up until last week I’ve been given little busy-work, bullshit projects. I don’t mind because my time flies by in my little prison cabinet shop paradise.

The program at this particular prison yard sucks balls and the only thing consistent about it is the inconsistency. The trade off and reason for my tolerance, not requesting a transfer, is that my class/job is five hours of daily bliss. Oh, and there is the fact that I can still call a cell my home as opposed to living in a dorm with 199 obnoxious idiots. Here I have the run of a wood shop and things are improving daily.

Last month the class gutted an old greenhouse and pulled out all the rough cut redwood shelves. It was supposed to be cut up and trashed, that is, before I stepped in and pleaded with my boss to save it. The wood was weathered, ugly, and full of nails, but I saw the potential, knowing there was beauty underneath. Boy, it feels good to be right.

Last week, one of our down-to-earth yard cops wanted a small cabinet/locker to house his personal AM/FM radio, lunch box, and coffee mug. I heard him discussing it with other cops and jumped into their conversation, volunteering my services, informing him of my new cache of redwood, perfect for reclaiming. What the hell, he’s always been straight up with me. He agreed and I started the design process the next day. After the milling and assembly was complete I finished it with Polyurethane. My reclaimed, old growth, 40 year old redwood masterpiece is ready to be installed and it is fucking beautiful, if I do say so myself. All his cop buddies remind me of Pavlov’s dog salivat-

ing over the anticipation of vittles, many wanting me to build something for them. I will, for 2/3 of them.

I have had small run-ins with many of those cops. They want respect and expect inmates to bow down simply because they hide behind a shiny badge. Some I have had words with and others I avoid after seeing how they interact with my peers. We are all inmates, so we “must” be up to no good. Although, now I feel all warm and fuzzy inside, because all of a sudden I have a skill they want. The tables have turned. I think to myself as I look at about 1 in 3 of them, “I bet you wish you were not such a dickhead or bitch to me way back then, when you thought I was a piece of shit, huh?” All those cops will be (and will remain) at the back of my work-order clipboard until they figure out all I ever wanted was a little recognition. But, I’ll let them figure it out on their own. Life’s a bitch and then you can either be nice to the cabinetmaker or keep lookin’ at your shitty office cabinets. The beauty of it is, to me, I don’t have to build anyone shit! I do it because I enjoy it and nothing more. I don’t even get paid to do what I do. I’m a volunteer.

Things are turning around and my skills are being requested. It feels good. No, it feels awesome! Give me a table saw, nail gun, cordless drill, treat me with respect and you will benefit. Otherwise ... keep lookin’ at your unpainted plywood ugliness behind your desk. ∞

Letters to the Editor

I’ll print the letters to the editor next month.

—editor

Stray Thoughts

Sam Aurelius Milam III

- The perception that most Christians seem to have of “Heaven” doesn’t appear to me to be very much different from some kind of a permanent, drug-induced euphoria.
- Do you suppose that those three large stones at Baalbeck might be hollow, with the open sides facing down?
- The only thing that’s worse than government or religion is government and religion.
- Most things make noise.

Bygones

Fiction by Sam Aurelius Milam III

1. genesis

What is past I know, but what is for to come I know not. —*The Apocrypha, 2 Esdras, IV, 46*

The world was young, but the sun was dying. It pulsed wildly, threatening annihilation. On the world were birds with plumage of brilliant blue, eyes that were round and black, and golden beaks. There were grazing animals of purest white, and emerald forests filled with orchids and deep shadows. The oceans were filled with fish, and red coral. The world was young. It could have been at peace, for there weren't any men. But there was the sun.

A silver thing appeared. It hung in mid air for a moment only, and there came from it a clap of thunder such as only the gods, or man, can make. Below the silver thing, trees were stripped of branches. Beside those, others were knocked to the ground. Life was swept from a portion of the forest.

The thing fell to the ground and bounced to rest with a crunch. It was a perfect sphere on top of which was a much larger parabolic structure somewhat resembling a flower, and pointing up. Presently, an opening appeared in the sphere. From the opening stepped a man and two women.

"Well, we made it," said one of the women.

"Yes, we made it," said the man.

"We always do," answered the woman. Her name was Juliet.

"You always say that." The man's name was Frank. He was large and muscular. He seemed uninterested in the conversation.

The other woman, whose name was Lynne, began scrambling through the debris of the wrecked forest. She reached the sunward side of the thing, which they called a capsule. With a nervous glance over her shoulder at the erratic sun, she began clearing debris. "Come on!" she called. "We only have two hours 'til it explodes! We have to move the capsule!"

"I wonder that she doesn't break her neck," said Frank.

"She never does," was Juliet's practiced reply.

"You always say that."

They moved more cautiously around the capsule and began helping Lynne to clear debris. At a critical moment, that they all anticipated perfectly, the capsule suddenly rolled toward

them. They stepped back as it moved, unsurprised by the sudden motion, and stood watching as it came to rest exactly where they knew it would.

"Perhaps I should verify its position." Frank was the technician of the group.

"It's always right," said Juliet. "It's never aimed itself wrong yet." She seemed almost to be reciting a script, but without the emotion requisite for a live performance.

"You always say that," said Frank.

Glancing again at the sun, Lynne spoke. "Don't you two ever get tired of this conversation?"

"You couldn't possibly believe," snapped Juliet with sudden feeling, "how tired of it I am!"

"Sorry," whispered Lynne. "I try, but I can't help it. I just can't change anything. God how I try!"

Frank shrugged then climbed back into the capsule. The two women stood together in a kind of resigned anticipation. Later, Frank called, "It's time!"

Without comment, the women climbed into the capsule.

2. exodus

*And on her lover's arm she leant,
And round her waist she felt it fold,
And far across the hills they went
In that new world which is the old.*
—*The Day-Dream. The Departure, Stanza I*
Alfred, Lord Tennyson

In the command chair, Lynne scanned her instruments. "We didn't come any further back this time than we ever did before."

"We never do," commented Frank.

Juliet swore. "If we could just get a couple of extra years maybe we could break out! God Damn it! Will this never end!?"

Lynne touched the keys on her panel and murmured to herself, "They never wear. We must have done this a million times, but they never wear."

"Don't start," begged Juliet. "Please! Not another paradox discussion!"

"There is no paradox," remarked Frank.

"But they never wear," insisted Lynne. "If we have memory, the keys should wear. They're like brand new."

"What's memory?" asked Frank. "We've been here less than two hours. Before that we didn't exist. Neither did they."

"Yes we did!" shouted Juliet. "We're not new! They're not new! They did exist be- →

fore! I can remember!”

“Please, Juliet,” said Frank, “Don’t get excited again. You always do this.”

It was more than Juliet could bear and she sobbed uncontrollably. “You always do this! You always say that! What the hell am I supposed to say?”

“Juliet, you’re getting hysterical again.”

“Of course I’m getting hysterical again! I can’t stand it! This never ends and Lynne just sits there on her goddamned stinkin’ ass and does her goddamned fuckin’ countdown as if we could miss the explosion of a sun and you just sit there calm as shit, you son of a bitch!”

With a touch of regret, Frank replied, “I can’t be a son. I don’t have a mother. None of us has.”

“Two minutes,” said Lynne.

“How do you know we don’t have mothers! What the hell’s a mother!?! I can’t remember that far back! And if we don’t, where in hell did we come from? Answer me that, you piece o’ shit!”

Frank sat unperturbed, watching his instrumentation.

“An’, come right down to it, why can’t we have kids? God knows I’ve offered enough times, but oh no, not here! Not now! Mr. technician Frank’s too good for that! Where would we do it? Jesus! Why not do it on the goddamned floor. Lynne never sees anything but her goddamned stinkin’ clock anyway, so who’s to notice? Aw, come on Frank! If we had a kid, at least it might break the cycle! It’d be a new variable! Something’d have to change somewhere!”

“One minute,” said Lynne.

“Receptor on line,” replied Frank.

“You’re not listening!” shrieked Juliet.

“You know we can’t,” said Frank. “We have to go back or we’ll roast when the sun explodes.”

“It ain’t enough!” sobbed Juliet. “It ain’t enough. Two hours ain’t enough. There’s gotta be more to life than this.”

∞ revelation

1 And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years.... —Revelation 20

The sun exploded. Enormous energy poured into the receptor, which drank it greedily.

Only during such an abundance of energy was it possible to do what was intended. So intense was the fall of energy that it would have melted the capsule, had the receptor not channeled it to a more useful purpose. Beyond a certain limit, it would have melted the capsule anyway. Lynne monitored her instruments, cautious of that limit.

Inside the capsule, Frank operated the enigmatic machinery that channeled the energy, machinery that he didn’t understand, machinery that no one within living memory understood. Lynne waited as long as she dared, watching receptor temperature. At the last critical instant before it began to melt, she initiated the time push and shoved them back into time. Once, Lynne had refused to act, determined to end it all. That time, some unexpected overload device had done it for her. Since then, she had never failed to perform and, as always, she performed with superb skill. She waited for the accumulation of every bit of the energy that could be captured, to traverse every possible instant into the past. The capsule vanished.

As always, Juliet watched with numb horror. She knew that, again, they would move back 2.16 standard hours. They couldn’t go any further because the receptor couldn’t collect any more energy. She knew where they would land. She knew how many times they would bounce. She knew that Frank would leave the capsule first, that she would follow, to be followed in turn by Lynne. She knew that Lynne would, unprompted, begin removing debris from the sunward side of the capsule, and call to them for help. Again, as she had so many times before, Juliet determined to change something. This time, she tried to get to the door before Frank but had difficulty with the buckle on her safety belt. It had worked perfectly before but jammed briefly and would not let her loose. As always, she got to the door before Lynne, but after Frank.

“Well, I did the best I could,” said Lynne. She waited while Juliet followed Frank out the door and then she followed Juliet. “Let’s get busy.”

A sense of resignation overcame Juliet. When she stepped from the capsule she was calm again. “Well,” she said, “we made it.”

“Yes,” said Frank, “we made it.”



Nation in Distress

It is hard to imagine a more stupid or more dangerous way of making decisions than by putting those decisions in the hands of people who pay no price for being wrong.
—Thomas Sowell



Acknowledgments

My thanks to the following: SantaClara Bob; Lady Jan the Voluptuous; my mother; and Dewey and Betty.
—editor

Wanted

Sam Aurelius Milam III

I need to find somebody who can repair VCRs. If you know of such a person, then I'd appreciate it if you'd send some contact information to me. 🐿

Posers

Original Source Unknown. Forwarded by Sir Donald the Elusive.

- Why is *abbreviated* such a long word?
- Why does the sun lighten our hair but darken our skin?
- Why can't a woman put on mascara with her mouth closed?
- Why isn't there mouse-flavored cat food? ∞

Frontiersman

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And Then the Fight Started

Original Source Unknown. Forwarded by Sir Donald the Elusive.

Saturday morning I got up early, quietly dressed, made my lunch, and slipped into the garage. I opened the garage door, intending to hook the boat to the truck, and saw that there was a torrential downpour outside. It seemed like the wind was blowing 50 mph. I ducked back into the garage, turned on the radio, and learned that the weather would be bad all day. So, I went back into the house, undressed, and slipped back into bed. I cuddled up to my wife's back, with a different anticipation, and whispered, "The weather out there is terrible."

My loving wife of 10 years replied, "Yeah, and can you believe that my stupid husband is out fishing in that?" ∞

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—Sam Aurelius Milam III, editor