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## Elvis, the Lizard King, and Me

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# Elvis, The Lizard King, And Me

As the freezing North Dakota wind tore at the cheap aluminum siding outside and the jukebox tiredly played "Candy Colored Clown" by Roy Orbison, I came to believe that the two middle aged men sitting next to me were more than just drunken, unemployed factory workers looking to kill their downs with liquor. The lights were dim, and the drone of conversation mixed with the lilting music drifting out of the juke made it hard to hear what they were saying, but as I lit a cigarette and snuck a look at them, I just knew they were different. Factory workers don't dress in sequined suits or leather pants. Then, as I sat and nursed my beer, I caught enough of their conversation to confirm my suspicions: sitting next to me at the bar, in a cheap dive in the middle of North Dakota, were none other than Jim Morrison and Elvis Presley.

It took me several minutes to work up the courage to enter their conversation. But finally, as both long-lost legends lifted their whiskies to their lips, I leaned over and whispered, "Nice to see you gentlemen are still around."

Elvis, sitting nearest to me, casually set his drink back down and turned to face me. His proud cheekbones were flushed with alcohol, and his thick upper lip rose in the patented Elvis sneer. He whispered back in a slurred Southern drawl.

"Well now, boy, I don't believe we've ever met before . . . why don't you be a smart little boy and turn around and forget . . . forget this, boy."

As The King's speech trailed off, Jim leaned around him and stared into my eyes.

"Yeahhhhhh . . . . . mmmmmm . . . . . alright . . . . . alright . . . . . listen to the King . . . . . royal blood speaks wisdom's words, in this dark exile . . . . . yeah . . . . ."

As Jim turned away and began mumbling to himself, I desperately tried to come up with a way to win these guys over, to let them know I wasn't like all the vipers and leeches who had driven them to self abuse and finally this cruel exile . . . . . I was like them! I, too, had come to this High Plains Wasteland to escape the clutches of the anonymous hords . . . . I, too, had run away from a world that tried to limit me and rape my soul . . . . On a dismal day in January I had finally thrown up my hands and walked away forever from the frenzied demands of my customers, abandoned the McDonalds on West Main of which I was assistant manager, and headed for the open skies of the Great American West. But how could I ever convince these mythic Gods of music that I was with them? How could I convince them to let me hang with them?

"Would you gentlemen like to, uh, get a bottle of tequila and find some women? I know one who lives out on Odessa, she wears her jeans

so tight they look they were just painted right on her, and I tell you, she's got the body for em, too, and I know she'd just love to see you, if you know what I mean . . ."

They exchanged glances and turned back to their drinks.

I scoured my brain, trying desperately to think of something else these living idols would want to do. I began to sweat; to be this close and not get to hang out with them would be too much.... how could I win them over? I decided to change tack.

"How about some peyote? I bought some off this Indian a few weeks back; been saving it for the Super Bowl but hell, it's there to be taken, right? I'd be honored if you gentlemen would eat it with me....We could wander around in the hills and, uh...."

My brain went blank. I remembered reading somewhere that Jim had gone out into the desert once and eaten peyote, but I couldn't remember what the article had said he'd done while he was out there...something about looking for something.....

Then it came to me.

"We could search for visions!"

This time Elvis didn't even look up, and Jim just let out a low sigh and ran a hand through his hair. I was blowing it. As I wracked my brain, trying to think of some way of getting their interest, Elvis raised his hand for the bill. No ! They couldn't just leave ! I'd never be able to live with myself .

As the bartender began adding up the tab, I took my last shot.

"Hey....you guys like to bowl?"

I'd remembered seeing a special story on "A Current Affair" about deceased rock stars' favorite sports, and both Elvis and Jim's had been bowling. As my words settled on their ears, I hoped I was in.

Elvis lurched over and his hot breath steamed up my glasses.

"Did ya'll say . . .somethin' 'bout bowlin', boy?"

"Why, yes, Mr. Presley, yes I did." I replied. "Would you and Mr. Morrison like to go bowling with me at Earl's Bowlerama? The shoes are free if ya drink a six-pack . . . . it's a really, uh, cool place . . . . it's got twenty lanes!"

I crossed my fingers, I prayed to God in heaven . . . . please say yes! Please come bowling with me! I prayed so hard my hands began to shake. The King turned to Jim and relayed my offer. Time stood still.

Finally I heard Jim mumble "Yeahhhhh . . . . pretty good . . . . . pretty neat . . . . . bowling . . . . . alright." Elvis turned back to me and said "Alright, boy, let's us and you do a little bowling."

I could hardly believe it. My heart sang, my kness went liquid; I felt like a school kid after his first kiss. Me ! Going bowling with Elvis and Jim Morrison!

Elvis and Jim stood up. I told them I'd pay their bill and meet them out front, and they staggered off to the men's room. I dropped a twenty on the bar, lit another cigarette, and went out to warm up my Chevette, whistling "L.A. Woman". After about ten minutes I began to worry . . . . did they slip out the back or something? Just then the door to the bar opened and out they staggered. Jim was waving something that looked like a cable guide in the King's face and I heard him say something about driving before Elvis told him to shut up and get in the car. I smiled, still unable to believe what was happening, and as they piled in I silently thanked God for hearing my prayer.

We drove in silence for a minute, the two exiled superstars staring out into the night. As I took a left onto Hyacinth Street, I asked them how long they'd been living in North Dakota.

"I've been here since I left Paris in '71." replied Jim. "All that . . . . acid . . . .all that fast living, man . . . . all those vultures waiting to feed on carrion flesh, man . . . . Man, Rimbaud was right, man. I had to quit the scene and get back down to the world, you dig? . . . like the golden rose comes with golden thorns, man, and yeahhhh . . . . . yeah . . . . . so I took the highway to the end of the night and ended up here, and now I ride the harvest of my dark funeral parade, man".

Elvis reached up from the front seat and hit Jim on the shoulder.

"Fuck you, Morrison, you little pansy. You don't know the first thing about trials and tribulations, you goddamn hippie freak long-haired communist bastard!"

Morrison laughed, reached back and gave the King a playful powerflick to the nose.

"Vengeance is sweet, man...Do not anger the man who rides with snakes....you'll get bitten and swell to twice your size, yeah....yeah"

"I was in the goddamn army, you little pinko!" bellowed the King. "I went and put my life . . . . my life . . . oh god . . ."

Elvis started coughing. "Pull over . . .oh god . . . . I'm gonna be sick . . . ."

I quickly swerved the car to the shoulder, but it was too late. Elvis let fly right in the back seat, his near-holy vomit splattering all over the vinyl seat. But I didn't mind. After all, this was The King!

I got a rag from under the seat, and as Elvis opened the door and fell out, sucking in the cool night air, I smiled. Not many can say they've had the honor of cleaning up Elvis Presley's vomit. As I got down on my knees and wiped up the glorious mess, I made a vow to never wash the towel again.

After Elvis collected himself and I had cleaned up the car, I started her up, pulled off the shoulder, and began to head for the bowlerama again.

"Hey, boy.... to hell with the goddamn bowling. Lets go to our place and watch cable. "whispered the pasty-faced Elvis from the backseat.

"License to Drive comes on at eleven " mumbled Jim. "Yeah...'License to Drive,...yeah.

This was unexpected.

"Are you guys sure you wanna watch cable? I mean, don't you wanna do something crazy, like eat speed and drive fast with the windows down?"

Morrison turned in his seat and looked at Elvis.

"The kid's right...let's be wild, like the old times...let's play Nintendo when we get back....yeah...Nintendo, oh I want to play Nintendo and I want to...now...now? ...NOWWWWaaaaahhhhhoooooOOOWWW!"

Elvis started singing 'Love Me Tender', Jim started screaming obscenities, and I thought for a second that maybe they hadn't changed after all. But then Elvis stopped, turned to me, and spoke in a sober tone.

"Listen, kid. I like cable. I like Nintendo. I just want to be like everybody else....God, I wanna be me!" His voice rose to a shriek. "Why doesn't anyone understand? All I want is to be left alone! All I want is a nice bed and a lawn and a color T.V., boy! All I want to do is watch cable and be left alone! Take me the fuck back home." Elvis broke into tears.

Morrison spoke up. "I think you'd better take us home, man....It's getting late and Elvis needs some rest...yeah...why don't you just take us on home?"

I looked into the rearview mirror, and for the first time I noticed the scars that time had left upon Elvis's face: the bloated cheeks, the flabby neck, his receding greasy gray hair riding the skull in a weary pompadour. I turned back to Morrison, his thinning hair hanging limply around his lined and haggard face. His eyes looked pleadingly into mine.

"Come on, man. It's almost eleven....'License to Drive', man...c'mon....just take us on home and let us live our lives."

So I followed Jim's directions to Lazy-Tyme Trailer Parke, just outside town on 71. As they climbed out and stumbled toward home I called out to them. "You gonna be at Louie's tomorrow? I'll buy the first round! Neither turned around, and Jim just waed me off as he helped Elvis up the steps and inside. I sat in the car in silence for I'm not sure how long, watching as the lights came on, and as their shadows moved around a while and slowly settled down. Finally I could hear the sound of the television as it drifted out to me on the clean, cold wind of the Plains, and I knew it was time to go. As a tear rolled down my cheek, I started up the Chevette and pulled slowly away. Before I edged out onto the highway, I looked both ways to check for traffic, and as I started back toward home I caught one last glimpse of their trailer before it was lost in the inky blackness; one last glimpse before it receded into the night, and was gone.

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