

“THE BIG SHINY PRISON” conceptual cover art.  
“*Ellis Gharib*” manipulation by Klaus Von Valkenburg

***ATTN: To all recipients of the promotional PDF for “The Big Shiny Prison”***

This electronic document is hereby offered to the public domain.  
File sharing is *approved* and *encouraged* by its author, Ryan Bartek.  
Having spent a Herculean effort on this project, his only wish is that it be circulated.

Mr. Bartek himself retains the copyright & trademark to “*The Big Shiny Prison.*”  
He currently seeks a publisher for the physical print run of this manuscript.

Mr. Bartek has one prior book release to his credit (“*The Silent Burning;*” 2005).  
He’s been a freelance contributor to periodicals such as Metal Maniacs, AMP Magazine,  
Hails & Horns, PIT Magazine, Real Detroit Weekly & others.

Currently he tours as an acoustic artist under the alias “Jack Cassady” He is also  
vocalist/guitarist for the grindcore act Sasquatch Agnostic as “Benedict Badoglio.”  
Under his real aegis, Ryan Bartek has accomplished two national spoken word tours &  
performed dozens of gigs. When in the United States, he lives and works in Seattle.

To schedule an interview with Mr. Bartek, or to inquire about the manuscript, please  
contact him directly through [ryanbartek@hotmail.com](mailto:ryanbartek@hotmail.com) or [bigshinyprison@hotmail.com](mailto:bigshinyprison@hotmail.com)

*Thanks in Advance,  
June Mansfield  
Anomie PR*

# THE BIG SHINY PRISON

*(HISTORY OF A YEAR: 12.20.06-10.13.07)*  
*c/o Dr. Ryan Bartek, GhostNomad & Benedict Badoglio*

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*“I had to travel about ten thousand miles before receiving the inspiration to write a single line. Everything worth saying about the American way of life I could put in thirty pages... Nowhere else in the world is the divorce between man and nature so complete. Nowhere have I encountered such a dull, monotonous fabric of life as here in America...*

*We are accustomed to think of ourselves as an emancipated people; we say that we are democratic, liberty-loving, free of prejudice and hatred... Actually we are*

*a vulgar, pushing mob whose passions are easily mobilized by demagogues,  
newspaper men, religious quacks, agitators and such like...*

*The whole white world has at last been turned into an armed camp..."*

*--Henry V. Miller*

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*To Sutter Cane, Keyser Soze,  
And All Who Get The Joke*

*act vi vi vi*

# Introduction: SAWDUST CAESAR (*THE ALUS REPUBLIC*)

by Benedict Badoglio, former ambassador of *The Alus Republic*

**T**his **B**ook, called by its author, “**THE BIG SHINY PRISON**,” is actually a long tract on what happened within the span of three-quarters of a year. During this period, Ryan Bartek sacrificed himself to the most absurd of all addictions. Against all logic, against all laws of self-preservation, against all conventions to which a young man his age normally submits, he willingly & fanatically became a character in his own *living novel* -- the hapless, tragic pawn of an organic manuscript shaped wholly by the winds of fate.

Despite the lunacy of this decision, his aims were clear – he would present to the world a frenetic expose of extreme journalism. He was determined to unveil in a fashion never witnessed before the secretive underworlds of American fringe. He would encompass the beat and the gonzo, lunging headfirst into the deepest of tribal undergrounds in punk rock, extreme metal, industrial, the experimental & avant-garde. He was determined to showcase the true state of American counterculture; to challenge the academia’s status quo of travel literature.

*Thus began the struggle, and so began the endless parade of freaks, mongrels, rock stars, metal gods, punk icons, psychopaths, hobos, street crazies, ex-cons & clowns...*

From December 20<sup>th</sup> 2006 until October 13<sup>th</sup> 2007 – for 297 days – he lived in a stasis between worlds knowing that every action & line of dialogue, each twist & turn of fate would be recorded. Once it began there was no escape, no life but the road. His only compass would be an internal sense of where the manuscript should theoretically lead, and his only coordinates the most engaging and immediate story at hand.

In fact the title of this book itself is a fitting double entendre – not only was Bartek journalistically sculpting his country into a dark caricature of social/political prison, but he was literally trapped within his creation as well – imprisoned by this glowing, shiny promise of adventure and personal rebirth.

Yet for all the turbulence to follow, it is of utmost importance that we begin this tale with the past, for the turgid history of Ryan Bartek is a depraved saga. True, **THE BIG SHINY PRISON** begins its odyssey on December 20<sup>th</sup> 2006 -- but the chain of events which brought that moment still cannot be explained without considerable effort.

The circles go far into the past and into the future – all centered right there, that

frostbitten December eve when the broken man charted a lone Greyhound destined for California, his legacy concluding in utter humiliation and defeat. The man once cursed or acclaimed as one of the most important counterculture journalists in Detroit's history was then a mere bundle of tired flesh, an uncomfortable superfluity -- a grotesque ghost that had once achieved a media prestige none of his tribal background had ever acquired.

For within a single year he'd gone from prominent figure in a multi-million redevelopment deal that would have saved Detroit to none other than haggard trailer trash -- a desperate, powerless Sawdust Caesar handicapped by poverty; drowning in booze, curtailed by sundry highs, grimly watching his life's dream irrefutably crumble into nothingness...

The pre-BIG SHINY PRISON caricature of Bartek, with his shaved and shiny block of a head, his pouting lower lip, pugnaciously out-thrust chin, his bantam-rooster stance, arms akimbo, belly and chest straining against a \$3 pin-stripe suit fit for a Jean Claude Van Damme villain -- these do not seem the features of diabolicism so much as they do that of low comedy.

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We tend to think of him as a kind of eighth-rate pseudo-dictator, a wannabe revolutionary genius, and ultimately, a failed insurrectionary. The fact is that Bartek is both worse than this and far more important precisely because he built the edifice of his particular shuck upon the emptiness of deception, delusion, and fraud. He cannot be rehabilitated.

As distinguished historian T.J.A. Paylor puts it: "*Our principle interest in Bartek derives from his authorship of the so-called 'Pan-Tribal Socialist Manifesto.' Yet this 'Pan-Tribalism' proves to be a highly elusive subject, for in the end, this great antagonist of society had no ideology... He was a mountebank who governed by press statement. His leadership was corrupt, incompetent, empty.*" Empty at its core, an avatar of that very heart of darkness into which Mr. Kurtz gazes in and can repeat but a single phrase: "*the horror, the horror...*"

There is no doubt that Bartek had been more popular in the Detroit underground than any other local journalist since the early 90's. He elicited the favor of a great majority, for he was one of the people. His mad carnival was like a counterculture Vaudeville -- propaganda offensives & street teams, publicity stunts & radio appearances, interpersonal meetings with ambassadors from every subculture splinter in the city. In time he'd networked a beast that grew to phenomenal proportions, gracefully moving through the gamut of underground politics from extreme to extreme.

At his peak he booked shows for dozens of bands, hosted 2-3 concerts a week, engaged in political activism, informed admiring radio DJ's what their playlists should consist of, gave dozens of "homework assignments," physically worked to restore a half dozen venues, disc jockeyed downtown. He performed spoken word gigs, ran international PR campaigns, assisted contacts throughout Europe & South America, crafted 3 popular weekly music/political columns, was a music editor at another well-respected local paper, and vital in the promotion of a numerous Detroit record labels.

As a journalist he'd written quite a few newspaper articles on Detroit unity, but as a politician, he nearly succeeded in rendering his intended transformation. He created, through the power of media, a great drama of fringe history in which 20,000 elite Detroiters were the protagonists, and the outside world the astonished spectators. He always knew how to speak a language the people understood -- he had all sorts of feelers and antennae that made him grasp the trend of popular mood and suggested to him the right attitude, the right slogan to whip popular passion to a frenzy.

There were few major problems of our times to which Bartek did not offer his dazzling answer. His tone always suggested self-assurance, if not megalomania. Dilettante, approximate, and rambling in his views, they were, nevertheless, expressed with magniloquent eloquence. The outside world offered its powerful co-operation by admiring the performance and attributing

wondrous qualities to the chief performer. Who would deny he was a great man, when they themselves cultivated and solidified his myth?

Yet the attribute of greatness that was once so lavishly poured on him is applicable to only one of his characteristics, which was the predominant one of his character. He was the greatest "HAM" that ever existed -- the most intelligent imitation of what, according to him, was propagandic genius. Sometimes he overplayed, sometimes he was astonishingly effective -- but a ham he was all throughout.

The recollections in his autobiographical writings, as well as the declarations by his henchmen and associates, are self-serving or, more to the point, self-mythologizing. One would search in vain for a rational, evolutionary pattern to his development. "*Illusion is the sole reality of life,*" he proclaimed, and Bartek lived his maxim to the fullest.

Facts are hard to come by in the early life of Ryan Bartek. Whatever else he would become, the boy born on April 4<sup>th</sup>, 1981, in the Detroit suburb of Dearborn, would be almost always and above all a huckster. He is eager to paint his adolescence in hues that presaged his

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Lex Luthor-like dimensions of permanent greatness as foreordained and inevitable, but most likely, his development was not unlike any other vicious problem child with a flair for artistic creativity. Certainly he was persecuted as an outsider, but it also seems clear that he equally brought this upon himself and, indeed, even cultivated it.

It is typical of the angry, disturbed loner over time to gain confidence by projecting of himself the ice-cold persona he so wishes to become. It is a natural tendency to overcome despair through re-creation of the self. In 90% of cases, this tendency manifests itself as short-lived rebellion during the teen years, running its futile soft-belly course.

But not for Bartek; from the age of 14 onward he was a die-hard that espoused every fanaticism of his era -- socialism, tribalism, anarchy, occultism, anti-right wing militancy. By the time he'd integrated himself into the burgeoning Detroit underground, he'd already set upon the creation of his rebel empire by combining dozens of youthful factions throughout the Metropolitan area. He had a term for it -- "*The Prozac Nation*" [*which, Mr. Bartek claims, was not in any way inspired by the book of the same title*].

By 16 he'd gone from isolated, suicidal loner to being a figure of some importance. He was respected among his brethren; an outspoken, miniature dictator, commanding his own crew of thugs and vandals. In the language of mainstream America, he was a gang leader -- a sort of "*trench coat mafia*" prototype, as the term developed in the late 1990's. He was a prime example of the pre-Columbine "Dark Age," yet neck-deep in punk ethos...

As 1998 began, "The Prozac Nation" collapsed under the stress of internecine -- fist-fights, drug addictions, theft, suicides, overdoses, prison terms, tethers, ideological zig zags, mental hospital internment. From the ashes a dramatically small circle was left who, within due time, soon ruthlessly devoured each other. It was from this chaos -- the abysmal year of 1999 -- that Bartek spiraled into a drug-laced, suicidal maelstrom lasting 3 long years.

In the end, fleeing to self-appropriated quarantine, he embarked on the creation of his first book *The Silent Burning*. It was equally an attempt at brutal self-therapy as it was hypnosis propaganda meant to radically terraform his generation into sending the gates flooding wide open. It took two years of expanding his influence before he discovered that very outlet as an intern at the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest free weekly in Detroit. With 70,000 copies per week and an estimated readership of 150,000, Bartek thrust everything into his mission.

His first order of business was not learning how to be a professional journalist -- it was to maintain the hostage situation he now held over the media, and milk every last drop in order to leave psychological claw marks upon world history so savage that they would likely take centuries to heal. His untainted freedom of speech was mainly due to the editor's appreciation of his fiery rhetoric, and the editorial department's gross ignorance on the subjects in which he was

writing.

For the first time in history, a major Detroit newspaper was promoting militantly aggressive punk rock, Scandinavian black metal, horribly insulting death metal and grindcore; the most debaucheries industrial, the harshest governmental conspiracies, the most fringe authors and subcultures. The media, unaware of his demented agenda, went along for the ride, spreading his myth and gazing onward with approving smiles.

The intervening years were crucial ones for Bartek, full of drama and, at first, triumph. What began as a far-fetched scheme developed into something far more substantial. Suddenly this nerve-shot, haranguing freak became the “*Voice of Detroit*” in many international eyes. Aided by the amazing network dozens of press agents blindly left in their wake, he assumed more than 3,000 media contacts from across the globe, and formed his own press release company ANOMIE PR.

In true P.T. Barnum fashion, he began promoting himself as if he were John Gotti, and answered all online correspondence as if he were one of two young attractive females working as secretaries for him. The prank was astonishing in its effectiveness. The underground spread its

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legs wide open, the media jumped on the band wagon, and all bands were anxiously waiting to work with the mysterious giant who had single-handedly taken Detroit by storm.

He convinced major radio to start backing underground bands, tailored a solid network of musicians, venues & promoters – widely augmented demographic album purchasing patterns the midwest. He directed tour traffic, convinced larger labels to check out dozens of small bands, pulled every ace out of his sleeve. There seemed to be nothing that could stop his adventures.

The centerpiece of Bartek’s strategy was pompously called “ANOMIE INCORPORATED.” His alternative to disunity in the music scene was one blanket production/promotion company meant to assist in the regulation of activity amongst all who were swindled into it.

ANOMIE INC was a thing to behold, although it was, of course, seething with corruption. Its imposing structure was like that of a building that has no trace of sanitary facilities or of sewage. Still, it was a propaganda machine that found him integrated directly or indirectly with hundreds of live music shows.

Bartek worked hard to counterpoint the image of a steel-hard ideologue with that of a humorous, intellectual, freak mutant. Most were impressed by the charming, smiling, soft-spoken manner he adopted in private -- a welcome contrast to his strident public persona. They always convinced themselves to view him in the best possible light, and they accepted the charming self as real and the swaggering, hellfire self as mere play-acting for public consumption.

The exercise of media preeminence had brought but few changes in his habits or tastes. Recording Industry Illuminati and Press Elite were always ready to go the whole way to please him, although never stopped being on the *qui vive* for they knew he was strange and different -- and certainly not one of them. Nor did he feel at ease with them.

If Bartek had a driving need to amass power, it was not so he could live like a king. For a man of his position his personal life was rock bottom. He worked up to 4 odd jobs at once, barely scraping by, every dime fed into the ANOMIE INC machine. His relationships with women were stormy at best, and generally traumatic. He picked cans, ate out of dumpsters, lived off the Wendy’s \$1 menu. He duct taped his ragged Payless shoes together, shoplifted at every opportunity, sold bags of grass when money was tight. For this all powerful media tyrant was quite shabby, unshaven, and ill-kempt in person. Bartek could have had more, much more.

He worked hard, staying up for days at a time building his designs. Often he was so distant he spoke only to friends & family as if they were crowds at a public gathering. His only official public appearances were scant, and all other times remained a shadowy chameleon,

unable to definitely finger in a crowd. Everyone knew who he was, yet no one knew what he looked like. There were rumors that he had facial reconstructive surgery every 6 months in Cambodia.

Night after night he locked himself into his computer, shutting his door as if he were a man sealing his own tomb. When broken from his trance he could be found silently drinking coffee unnoticed at a donut shop or 24-7 Coney Island. Often in the middle of the night he could be discovered at Onyx's trailer, haranguing street kids and shit-faced madmen at 4am, or fondly battling them in the streets with lead pipes and boa staffs.

Yet he could have at any time partied with The Pistons, Kid Rock, ICP, Ted Nugent, Bob Segar, always refusing any possible invitation into those worlds. Professional models, burlesque dancers, stunning females always eyeballing him in public. Was it agoraphobia or misanthropy that kept him in isolation? It is yet another mystery to which we have no answer.

Not knowing where to stop and not being strong enough to stop, Bartek was going to be ruined no matter if he won or lost the media war. He vaguely comprehended this as he decided the time was ripe for a coup. His moment, he believed, had finally come.

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He then seduced the local publisher Elitist Publications to release *The Silent Burning* amidst considerable apprehension, assumed the editor post at the other local free weekly Jam Rag, began throwing 2-3 shows a week, formed his long-awaited band FILTHPIMP, and simultaneously was handed 3 weekly columns and unlimited free reign at Real Detroit Weekly itself.

He inked the contract, built up his books release amidst sensational hype, and waited as the seconds ticked by for the grand release party on Saturday, January, 8<sup>th</sup> 2005. Cackling as he realized his master plan had finally come to fruition, he muttered, "I'll cook 'em a stew they'll choke on..."

The coup was comical in its failure, acute like the forebodings of immediate ruin. Ironically, *The Silent Burning* created the exact reverse effect of everything he had worked so diligently to achieve. Within the span of 2 months, his book had ushered forth what was perhaps the highest-speed career suicide campaign in the history of the city.

Many times the people had thought that Bartek had gone too far, too controversial, or vastly overextended himself, and every time they saw him coming through as the avenger of mediocrity. *The Silent Burning*, as far as the people were concerned, was his wrong turn. It might have been all right to plunder the character assassinations of local celebrities, give scathing reviews equal to that of a prison reaming, install puppet dictators as the bookies of venues, pimp GG Allin onto 14 year old children, declare black propaganda guerilla war campaigns on major radio, bully bands into mutual proactivity, hustle his henchmen into media internships; to sensationalize, to hype, to blackball, to obsessively prattle on about the coming New World Order and The Illuminati... Demagoguery and the spirit of the carnival could go a long way in making bearable even the most absurd rhetoric -- but *The Silent Burning* was quite a different thing.

For Detroiters who've never known such filth-ridden, insulting, brutal misanthropy, it was a shock of alienation which coursed through all the circles. The inner circle felt it much before the greater whole. Once *The Silent Burning* had entrenched itself into local consciousness, Bartek's stranglehold was doomed.

He became desperately unpopular in Detroit. Bands refused to book with him, venues promptly fired him, radio stations ignored him, Jam Rag dropped him, local papers blackballed him, scenesters decried him, editors heavily censored him, labels shunned him, distributors flatly declined to sell his book.

The wooden, cardboard setting of ANOMIE INC started crumbling to ruin, and he

appeared pitifully helpless. He had no stage and no audience. When that grotesque mask -- with its square jaw and beady red eyes fell almost of its own weight -- it revealed an utterly desolated spirit. The only answer Bartek gave to the maelstrom was to feebly say over and over again, "...it's my ruin, my complete ruin..."

Bartek had created all the conditions which make betrayal inevitable, deluding himself to feel a link in a long, long chain -- a segment of a universal, almost cosmic conspiracy. In the minds of all at Real Detroit Weekly there was but one question differently phrased: *could the media do without him?* Was or wasn't Bartek's dismissal the only guarantee of survival for credibility? Some wanted him re-installed and reinforced. Some wanted to have him cast aside. Some just plainly didn't know what to do with him.

But practically no one was afraid of Bartek, as if his ties with all factions, even that of his most fanatical supporters, had been cut -- and all factions were united in bringing the lurid episode to a close. He was the pawn of the game, not the one who plays it -- and his dismissal & blackball from public view was a solid reality.

For there was no revolt against the newspapermen, not a single crustie decided to go out and burn a stack of magazines for him. Instead the advertisers streamed in, he was replaced by a

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fiery young clone, and the scenesters -- not seeing any press possibilities in Bartek -- felt that nobody was a supporter, that nobody ever had been, and the whole thing had been a long, ghastly nightmare.

He was always a baffling character, but nothing he ever did was as baffling as the way he vanished. His hostage situation over Detroit had, overnight, melted away, and the large majority of scenesters went hoarse shouting "*DEATH TO RYAN BARTEK!!!*" He was still closer to them than any other journalist or promoter, accustomed for years to paying him lip service, but this time as an immediate, tangible object of execration. The most frequently heard comment, aside from "*Watch out or he'll silently burn you,*" was "*Death to the Freewheeling Monkey.*"

In those weeks of popular rejoicing the people acted as if, once Bartek had vanished, his pull amongst the International Heavy Metal Illuminati had disappeared with him. Yet from that night onward, he was replenishing his resources in ever growing strength...

Perhaps, he thought, he could still re-conquer the confidence of the people. He had a key, "*a secret key,*" as he said, that someday he was going to use and things would thoroughly change. In light of June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2006 (6.6.06), we know what his secret weapon was.

He would wave again, as in the days of his youth, The Black Flag of Pan-Tribal Socialism. He would appear once more as "The Revolution" and by going radical, he could outflank his rivals. In this void "THE ALUS REPUBLIC" was born.

THE ALUS REPUBLIC was a direct reference to the Nostradamus prophecies. The "Fourth And Final Beast" was said to be a conglomerate of all the factors embodying the end of times, all backed by what seemed an ideology vastly more disastrous to human kind than Marxism, National Socialism, or NSK.

First, Nostradamus stated, would come "MABUS;" Second "ALUS." Recruiting a lineup of degenerate mercenaries to spread their filth-ridden musical wings, Bartek changed his band name from FILTHPIMP to A.K.A. MABUS, and abruptly declared all that was left of his empire in Detroit as "THE ALUS REPUBLIC."

A.K.A. MABUS' beginnings were messy, and nearly all shows terrified the audience with half gazing hypnotically at the bestial madness on stage, the remainders pressed against the wall, if not walking out the venue in sonic protest. Too punk for the metal crowd, too metal for the punks, too soft for the hardcore, too aggressive for the indie, too zany for the hardboiled, too experimental for the rockers, A.K.A. MABUS was like Frank Zappa with a bullet belt and corpse-paint, the Marx Brothers gone grind with a Discharge flair.

A mountain of televisions onstage emitted hundreds of clips from horror films, pornography, propaganda newsreels. Small Jehovah's witness-styled pamphlets were distributed before their performance declaring the coming of MABUS with the group members themselves as prophets of this coming era. They dressed wildly different on every occasion, playing different characters, lyrics making a complete mockery of rancid music scenes worldwide. It was a last-ditch attempt to deliver one final savage and fatal blow to the Detroit music scene.

Unleashed on 6.6.06, "The Mabusvanian Conspiracy" was both the heralded ideology that Nostradamus forewarned and simultaneously Bartek's attempt to build himself on the international level. It was the sum equation of all he'd ever believed and fought for, this self-styled revolution he dubbed "Pan-Tribal Socialism." Here Bartek presented the world with his dark vision of the future. The career suicide of *The Silent Burning* was then turned into Millennium Falcon warp speed overdrive.

Under the alias of "The Propagandist," Bartek aggressively transmitted this manifesto to all corners of the globe; a transformational propaganda manual of sorts advocating multi-spectrum radicalism. The glue "The Mabusvanian Conspiracy" uses to weld his disparate ideas together runs the gamut from guerilla media infiltration, to mind control, to belligerent empirical designs on international subculture. Its theories are extremist, immoral, absurd, even comical in

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places – *at times an absolute caricature of itself* -- and seem to promise catastrophe if taken seriously.

Despite the attempts of many fringe notables to champion him a gutter philosopher of exceptional caliber, his contribution to the history of ideas can rather be found in his clear and forceful articulation of numerous shtick already in circulation rather than any thoughts of his own. His influences were more than likely the high-brow satire of LAIBACH and the CHURCH OF SUBGENIUS. But somehow The Conspiracy has been embraced by a growing cult fan-base and its lunatic plan has actually been put into effect.

This was the last dream of his downfall. For his position, his role in Detroit history was now the stake of all games. But actually it was late, far too late. He could only watch around him people play games in which he had been the supreme master. Starting from his dismissal at Real Detroit Weekly, these last 393 days gave to the underground a repeat performance in which the played out old mimic offered the public a gruesome, demonic imitation of his former self.

For Bartek at the end of his career rendered the service of presenting all of Detroit with the most sordid, undiluted form of psychological warfare that was such as to ruin the memory of all his past performances even in the most uncritical minds.

The entire underground community resisted. They mocked his Pan-Tribal manifesto, ignored his journalism, refused to attend his shows, deleted him from MySpace, declined to play alongside A.K.A. MABUS. They acted to his face as if he were invisible, and when cornered, abruptly blew him off or looked the other way.

Bartek and his few remaining acolytes were made to feel they had no power, that A.K.A. MABUS was not punk rock, that they were not "true" metal. But the most important thing was to make them realize they were a joke – just a freakish assemblage of doomed men who for some reason were enjoying a too-prolonged stay of execution.

The writing was now blazing on the wall. By September 2006 all rational hope for victory was long extinguished. His last months were blackened by terrible shows, personal apocalypse, substance abuse, financial stress, automobile difficulties, barren weather, and a thousand jaw-dropping betrayals...

A.K.A. MABUS bickering endlessly, his mother battling cancer, his street family 10,000 miles away & all remaining close friends spread across the breadth of America. His ex-wife in prison over one Vicadin, his brother on life-support from dead kidneys, His freshly ex-girlfriend

pregnant by another man & his latest romance sent away on Valentine's because she was going to do 6 months in jail over a single roach...

By early winter he'd suffered attacks described as "*nervous collapse*" and "*an absolute loss of energy and intelligence*." He was perpetually sleeping 12 hours a day or more, staring at the ceiling from his broken mattress, lost in torrents of the slowest, most punishing doom metal in existence.

The more he shut out the world, the more the PR people came at him. At any moment he could have members from Judas Priest, Morbid Angel, Napalm Death, Emperor, MANOWAR call his house. He could travel to New York or Los Angeles for invite-only record release parties. He could tour with the bands he worshipped in his youth writing lengthy stories about his experiences for Metal Maniacs, PIT Magazine, Hails & Horns, AMP, or any of the dozen zines he now wrote for. Yet he simply would not pick up his phone, haunted and jaded by the emptiness of the world that had once ignited his passion.

Bartek, whom many of his inner circle now believed frankly mad, declared he'd wage the Detroit war to its apocalyptic *Gotterdammerung*. While he paced around frothing at the mouth in a tirade of such rhetoric, he inwardly obsessed over escape. Most appealing was the idea of seeking asylum in California. So amidst the completion of their debut record *Lord of The Black Sheep*, the tarnished Golden Boy swallowed his pride, murdered his legacy, and lethargically faced the A.K.A. MABUS firing squad.

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There was no *Clausewitz* in this Propagandist's end -- just the banal last moments that failed tyrants have endured and have deserved to endure down the ages. Bartek had long outlived an aspiration to greatness, and a friable Pan-Tribal Socialism -- exhausted of credible meaning or social purpose -- had long since crumpled into nothingness.

At the end, cornered as he is by history, his view of things is consistent, and in a strange, inverted way, correct -- *invariably, what is right for him is wrong for Detroit*. Ignominiously forced in his professional career to work as a microwave cook for Applebee's, he writes that Detroit's rebirth will come only after total defeat, anticipating a new era well into the future. *The divorce between Bartek and his beloved underground had truly been complete...*

And finally, the sinister adventure ends. One December night, the unassuming crowds on Howard Street could see a lone figure pull himself silently onto a bus, the fire at last gone out of him. For II Propagandist and Pan-Tribalism in Michigan, that day really was the end. The great prank has ended in tragedy and the incredible story is finished. No reincarnations or returns are to be expected. Ruined and sobered, Ryan Bartek is finding himself.

Maybe he felt relieved when he found himself riding on that Greyhound. Maybe he thought he was at long last going to have a rest at The Villa Winona. Yet everything that was Hyde within him refused to compromise. Those deep-seated psychological forces grabbed the forlorn old ham, tossed him back on the road, and went right to creating the nucleus of a freshly constituted "*Pan-Tribal*" web.

Years will pass before self-mythologizing may allow him to attain the power to realize that vision, but it is a lesson that denies the free world the excuse of ignorance. It is a waking call never to close our eyes to the architects surrounding us. Since 911, Homeland Security has been taking promising steps in this regard. It is our responsibility to ensure the continued progress of that civilizing trend. Lately new research has added much to our knowledge about Bartek and his policies, but this book is still essential for any reassessment.

- Benedict Badoglio; *New Years Eve*, 11:59pm, 2007

## PART I: HUMBLE ORIGINS

### (*UNCALM BEFORE THE STORM*)

#### DECEMBER 20<sup>th</sup> 2006-FEBRUARY 6<sup>TH</sup> 2007

##### 60 HOURS AND 24 INCHES (THE GREAT WHITE DESERT)

“Ok man, so we’re headed out to Oklahoma to premier this little independent film we made called *DADBOT*. After 15 hours of straight driving, we’re finally out of steam & gas and we pull into this town called Cuba, Missouri...”

The trucker smiles and nods his head: “*Oh yeah bro, I know exactly what you’re talking about -- I live a hundred miles west of it. It’s the last place on God’s green earth you wanna end up. Ain’t nothin’ goin’ on in that lil’ shithole.*”

“No doubt about that,” I say, ready to spew the strange tale. “So yeah, not only is there a drive-in theatre playing two full servings of *Passion of The Christ* on each screen long past it’s DVD release, but there’s also a Jack In The Box on the corner of the Interstate.”

Still nodding, still smiling, the trucker listens on: “This weird, skinny chick is working the register – spies us, nabs us -- takes her break and swings us outdoors to jabber. She plops on the hood of an Escort and while chain-smoking explains how Cuba is the crystal meth capital of the United States and that we need protection – immediate, hardcore defense.”

“She flicks her butt in a trail of red ember and flashes us some chrome. Grinning, she dumps this killer street-gang blade on us – like this twisted mutation of a Klingon death weapon. She tells us to watch our backs.”

“*That’s quite an introduction.*”

“Well, that’s just Point A... It’s starting to get dark, and we’re gunning for a few beers.

Our quest for the local dive takes us down these menacing, shadowy streets – lurching willow trees like a ghetto in New Orleans. Finally we hit this bowling alley but there were only three people inside and they wouldn’t look at us -- like intentionally avoiding us -- this evil vibe as if they’d just hacked up some drifter for BBQ and hastily mopped the floor. They are ugly fuckers, all of ‘em, faces rotted & sunken purple like Elder God worshipping cult folk from some Lovecraftian nightmare village. ”

The trucker’s eyes light up in a strange, horrified bemusement. “We ditch on the alley & hit Main Street, which only adds to the *Innsmouth* vibe. The drag is a narrow corridor stretching for ten blocks, the walls of every building sloped with painted murals of farmers and cows.

Inside them semi-Amish agriculturists are dressed purely in black, which is creepy to begin with. But the kicker was that everyone & everything inside the murals – the farmers, chickens, cows – all of them have pitch black eyes. Like evil insectoid eyes, huge and bulbous.”

“They are fucking terrifying, totally painted by an armada of sleep-deprived meth freaks. And within the murals the Amish M.I.B.’s aren’t doing anything. They’re all just standing there, watching you, with their plows and rakes limply at their side. Even the cows are staring blankly with these soulless, black eyes, as if the second you turned the corner the painting would magically come back to life. It was children of the fucking corn, man...”

“We shook off the heebie-jeebies and surpassed the murals to find another street...” The trucker’s still with me, waiting for the big punch line, “...with a dozen Texas Chainsaw Massacre looking houses. Giant houses – old, dilapidated, the stench of rotting wood -- all of which had human sized ragdolls on the porch, plopped in rocking chairs. All of these hideous stuffed creatures, gazing at us with murderous black insect eyes. We heard something strange behind us and flipped our heads to catch two of the dolls we passed – again, totally serious – the chairs were rocking. We fucking ran all the way back to the motel.”

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The trucker belly laughs and proceeds to hammer me with sad stories of interstate loads at 19 cents a mile, gas not included. He was stuck, like all these other displaced people, in the middle of St. Louis Greyhound depot, rerouted or otherwise immobile due to the giant 24 inch blizzard that had engulfed the center of America. Our normal route was to be through Denver, but the poor saps in Colorado are now stuck there up to a week. All of Texas engulfed in white, the desert winds searing a negative 20 degree chill -- Old Man Winter’s incongenial bitch-fist. *Elemental bastards, stay out of my damned Valhalla...*

So I commit these thoughts to mental calligraphy, awaiting the opportunity to purge. Barely a day into this thing, and I have yet to recognize the extent of what I’ve done. In a drunken whirlwind, not thinking the subject over too clearly, I declared the creation of a new book via international press release called “THE BIG SHINY PRISON.” In it, I tell the world that I now travel America for a year straight, drifting town to town, interviewing bands and the personalities thereof, penetrating music scenes as I ping-pong across the country totally DIY.

I have no energy, I have no publisher. I have no game plan, I have no structure. All I possess is a backpack, a duffel-bag, and an oldschool cassette recorder. And I have no money except for the \$1200 which is to last me until the end of March.

The money itself does not cover any kind of motel or rent arrangement. It barely covers the fares of Greyhounds to destinations still vaporous and unbooked. I have no real idea where I’m going for certain except a loosely constructed list of bands, pr men, zine proprietors and promoters that have no idea I’m crashing their way. I rely totally on the willingness of those parties I can drag into this thing. None of that really matters though for I have MySpace, the thunder of the gods...

The book I have espoused is not the book which will be printed. I have been bored to the point of hammering nails through my face by the shoddy journalism of heavy metal. The only well-known books available on the subject are ultimately handcrafted from some hack writer making dozens of phone calls and typing his conversations into a paint-by-numbers expose in which we hear all too often the word “brutal” to describe everything.

No, this isn’t my realm. I am not interested in what guitar strings they use. I am not interested in their perceptions of rumbling Drop D noise. I don’t care what patches are sewn onto their sleeveless denim vests. To even call it a book about music is misleading. What I seek is the soul. Character studies, their environments, their dreams, hopes and aspirations -- a total sociological unearthing. The very substance and inertia of their war and poetry. What are they fighting for and against? And most importantly, how alone in my views am I? What is the common thread? Does the magical world I once looked upon in magazines and onstage when I

was 17 even exist? And in the end, what do I hope to find?

So I fall into this cocoon, my physical body screaming in constant pain from a jigsaw skeleton of pinched nerves. No chiropractor, no therapy, no respite. One full year of road with no stopping, my last sacrifice to journalism before I can walk away, form a new band somewhere, discover my queen and live a real life. This book will be just as much about the artists and freaks I encounter as it is the hard reality of trying to write this book. This isn't a Kerouac rip-off. This isn't Hunter S. Thompson. This is akin to Christian Bale wandering the earth in *Batman Begins* for seven years, recreating himself in steel. It is just as much about me as it is all of them, because our struggle is unanimous.

Surely, I will be sued. I will be misconstrued. I will be laughed at by dunderheads who think so small that the intensity and mission of such a project will fly miles above their heads. In this I am undeterred. Some will ignore, some will offer sanctuary. No matter the immediate situation I will play by the rules in which I am confined, weaving through these complex undergrounds by stealth. And if all else fails, keep them amused by whacky anecdotes until I can jump back into the safety of the Greyhound purgatory.

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The plan is to avoid big bands unless they seek me out or are right there waiting to go. It is not my job to promote those already promoted. Instead I seek the unknown, the struggling, the fringe and depraved. I am out to prove the point that no answer is ever *the* answer, and that reality is only in the eye of the beholder.

I will hunt down the most extreme of personalities from the right to the left. I will let the recorder roll in front of views as confrontational as possible. From pagan militants to Christian rockers. From "Goth Idols" to street-dwelling crust punks. From neo-Nazis to flaming homosexuals. Every monster possibility in America, every inch of its seedy underbelly thrust into the spotlight...

3am, sleeping soundly and somewhere in Texas, a foofy-haired woman interrupts my rest: "*What is he doing back there?*" she questions, in a weird state of panic. I pass back out only to have her wake me again with this identical question. To shut her up, I wander to the back of the Greyhound, pretending to use the toilet.

There is a creepy Hispanic man dressed in a blue-workman's outfit, like Michael Myers duds in *Halloween*. He looks like the gruff caricature of a Sergio Leone villain and smells like rancid feces. And, of course, he's rabidly masturbating an iron-hard flagpole.

I sit back down. The foof lady asks again, and I duly confirm. The passengers are now wide awake, unwilling to confront the strange man wildly jacking off behind them. We pull into Amarillo, and the whacker guns it for Miss Pacman.

Little does he know, cackling and babbling to himself, that Greyhound has called the police. When the heavily accented officers confront him, the Mexican becomes enraged. The cops point to the white glob of jizzom on his clothing, and the man protests in broken, hysterical English: "*No iz paint, iz paint!*"

The cop whispers something in Spanish, and he starts laughing and unzipping his coveralls. Out it plops, dangling from his bellybutton as a limp pendulum. Fearful mothers grip their children, the elderly squeam, grown men grow nauseous & bellicose -- *a giant colostomy stuffed with shit dangles to and fro, dripping profusely, and all the Mexican can do is laugh horrendously at the terrified honkies...*

#### THE FRINGE DESIGN: A PRELIMINARY DISSERTATION

To my dearest of Alice clones, from whatever vortex you might exist, from this tragic Cheshire comes the dynamic of the labyrinth. We must put an end, immediately, to these endless preconceptions. We must shoot down all error from the human mechanics which now pervade us...

To the hip, to the knowledgeable, to the fanatic – *none of this will come as a shock*. But to the outside element, the ones accustomed only to the ritual of entertainment – those who look at the weirdo uprising with a dim mystification...

If I am to be your tour guide then I must also be your educator. It is a gutter philosopher you require, not a journalist bound to objectivity. We need to char up that grit, not flubber in the laws of the past. I will be honest to the sharpest apex, but do not chastise or aggrieve, for you now enter a freefall of eternal descent which even Alighieri refused conjecture.

The kaleidoscope basis of this manuscript will always hone in on the subcultures deemed “*punk rock*,” “*extreme metal*,” “*industrial*,” “*rock n’ roll*,” “*experimental*.” Still, this does not prevent me in any way from side-missions outside those particular confines, because in the end *every freak* is somehow connected to the overall grand schematic in my humble opine...

Like Voltron, these sharply defined terrains link to create a monster. It is this composite leviathan which constitutes the “*counterculture*” -- the assemblage of all conceivable fringe as one massive, organic jigsaw. The nuts and bolts come in all forms, and the breadths of philosophies are panoramic & amorphous...

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Within every modern society the fringe lurks substrata. All of us, no matter our vocation, are the by-products of a deeply-ingrained refusal. Every subculture has sprung from the sense that there is something horribly wrong, something deeply unhealthy going on, and that there is definitely a larger system of misery at play. The air of Utopia is poisoned, as it were...

In America there are but two concentrated psychological lines which prevail -- the “*herd mentality*” and the “*wild west*,” so to speak. There is a quick-fix, “*don’t look too deep & silence the questions*” pre-packaged reality in which we are indoctrinated from birth. Then there is the darkness (*or the light, depending on your view*) -- that vast grey area in which the general population only slowly and in marked paces inches forward. The counterculture is the collective body of all who’ve strayed into that realm of infinite perplexity...

The world of The Big Shiny Prison is the reality of America. Here, in the apex of convenience and security, our bellies are full, our hide is soft, our suburbs are tidy and well organized. Our terrain is landscaped, our structures Goliath. Our culture is that of Walmart Tribalism; our social court the shopping mall. The police are your friends, the priest your neurosis killer, the psychiatrist your handy-man. Work is good, god is great, and everything is plum shit happy.

To phrase the language of the gutter oh so eloquently: “*well fuck all that bullshit*.” Yes my Mohawk-laden scat-champs, I tell you as it is as sincerely as one can. There is a word which defines the root propulsion of the first subculture we are to dissect: “Anarchus.” It’s a Latin word meaning “*any time you act without official permission*.” Translated to English, this word reads Anarchy.

Anarchy and Anarchism are not the same thing. Anarchism is the attempt to formulate and apply a definite structure or form, whereas “Anarchy” reflects a mode of thought or perception which the very definition “Anarchus” provides. Again – “*anytime you act without official permission*.”

Anarchy is the *action* itself, and a conceptual *underpinning* which is amorphous in nature. Unlike any other ideology, it simply doesn’t have one. To claim oneself Anarchist is to claim the position of a “*Free Agent*” from any system, to consider nations an illusion & patriotism a farce -- for the anarchist is by design a citizen of the world.

The exact opposite of “Anarchus” derives from another Greek word: “Politik,” or politics. The root refers to “*mans relationship to and life in servitude of the state*.” To be political is to be a sentry of the establishment. To be an Anarchist is to be apolitical, and anarchy itself is like a virus in the larger body -- malleable and formless, within every government, society, class and culture.

Anarchy is the acting through of any activity with the conscience realization that it is not an action intended for the strengthening or assistance of the state. A family picnic by definition is a state of Anarchy, because you are “*off the clock*,” so to speak. The act of shopping, of painting the nails, of leisure is by very definition soft-belly Anarchy...

Therefore, it should be of no dispute that the spirit of punk rock is wholly submerged in Anarchist thought. The entire basis of the underground is summed up by the phrase: “*Do it yourself*.” **DIY** is the mantra of punk rock, which is main-line Anarchy – building your own reality, starting your own band, zine, label, clothing line. Creating underground house venues and refusing to pay taxes -- squatting, hustling, running amuck as gypsy land pyrates. None of this is rooted in a compulsion for violence, but rather as an outcry of individual passion. The “*bleeding heart*,” so to speak...

We now speak of The Punks – *skins, crusts, skaters, surf-punks, greasers, straightedgers, vegans, scumfucks, the deftly unclassifiable*. In this wing of the counterculture you have a huge mass of differing opinions. In this, people are either extremely cool about everything -- *like Rick James cool* -- or they are pretentiously fickle about every minuet detail.

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Here you find the most panoramic view of politics in music. There isn't a punk alive that doesn't claim knowledge about some government conspiracy, nor will you find any true love of authority. It is a fanatic escape attempt from the rule of the machine, forever at odds with a materialistic, clean cut existence.

Nothing is more comedic, more ridiculous and laughable to the punker than the worldview that a man such as Curtis “50 Cent” Jackson embodies. In mainstream view, these scurvy rogues are seen as the epitome of “*music entertainment*” -- big money & hot bitch hustlers, diamond-plated rims & pistols, MTV cameos & *dolla dolla bills y'all*.

Far and wide, from sea to shining sea, that mentality is the laughable dunce crown.

Whereas a high-roller nightclub pimps \$1000 bottles of citron & sheepish patrons exude designer fashions, the seedy punk dive celebrates \$1 pabst drafts, lets you bring your dogs inside, has no dress code, allows you to paint pictures on the tiling & slap bumper stickers everywhere.

I shall put it this plainly: If someone G-Unit were to show up in a limo flashing all the commodities in the world, they'd be laughed out of dodge. Punks admonish their standing as the refuse of the world. This gutter pervades a life best described as rekindling the one long abandoned in childhood – returning to that magic but going deeper in, architecting a new world from it's murky lagoon...

Thus, punk is a seed endlessly germinating, growing profusely amidst a universal sense of boundless adventure. And none perhaps have more a sense of adventure than “The Crustie” -- the dirtiest, dingiest, most fanatic guardians of that resurrected ideal.

“The Crustie” is the closest thing to a land-based neo-pyrate you'll ever find. They are essentially street kids that have discovered freedom in disowning everything; literal hobos all on a wild mission to overthrow culture from their livelihoods. Hitchhikers, train-hoppers, panhandlers, dumpster divers, they often travel in small, tightly-knit groups before they get to the designated cities in which “The Black Flag” has been raised...

They form in packs and hustle the streets, sleeping in parks or cracking the street system until they know how to get free food, shelter, money, medical services, clothing. They are commonly known as “crust punks,” “squatters,” “scumfucks,” “scumbums” or the like.

When the tide suits them they are ultra-communal. Everyone shares what they own -- *especially drugs & booze*. They are united in their perpetual self-destruction, and have an overwhelming hatred of squares and clean-cuts. Some have been on the road for up to ten years, but many are fresh crops who seek themselves for a few years before finding something solid, whether it due to burn-out or physical collapse. They live fast and burn like a tide of seasonal

locusts. Those who die young are eulogized into crust folklore. Legends are spread like fables across the world. In other words, "*His name is Robert Palsin.*"

On the flip side, there is the ultra-karmic strain of crustie, so deeply committed to veganism and social issues that they are the vanguard of positivity. In a sense, these twin strains exist as a sort of ying-yang effect, all of which preside in a virtual land of the lost – the fall through the cracks of society so violently that any reverse becomes impossible...

I will probably find myself traversing with many of these shadowy characters, especially in larger cities where I may have difficulty in finding a place to crash. There is always a squat somewhere, always a way to get some food, and plenty secretive avenues that can be explored so long as you dangle a 40oz in front of someone's face. It is the ultimate bargaining chip because a bottle of Mickey's goes fast among twelve alcoholics so hardcore they're puking blood. The only problem is that you have to keep supplying it, or trick them into thinking your broke. Either way, \$10 bucks in Steel Reserve is far cheaper than sixty bucks for a motel.

Plus it's far more fun. When you hang with crusties, you drink and drink and drink -- *everyone dies together, that's the rule*. You also truly have to earn their respect or stay up until you're the last one to pass out, because if you make the fatal mistake of falling asleep while everyone is at their liver-annihilating prime you run a high risk of "Beer Elf" danger. Expect your

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clothing to be sewn together with dental floss and your face covered with magic marker, *David the Gnome* style...

The Skinhead is the antithesis of the crustie. Skinheads are not Neo-Nazis, as this confusion is simply the outcome of media disinformation. Neo-Nazi's do exist, but they can be found in any subculture regardless, albeit the vast majority condemning this fascism and violently drumming them out. Real skins are for the most part SHARPS, which stands for "Skinheads Against Racial Prejudice."

The skinhead thing was a wholly black movement which originated in Britain.

Jamaican/African immigrants worked mercilessly on dockyards and shaved their heads to avoid lice, in the process gaining a specific look with Lonsdale Boots, suspenders, etc. They were the working class backbone of the UK, and established a unified underground in filthy Taverns on the outskirts of London...

The centerpiece was always Oi dancehall music, a component of Reggae. Oi eventually crossed all racial boundaries, developed into ska, and was imported to the United States and other areas in Europe. In the late 70's it really began to explode alongside punk rock's growing phenomenon.

Skins are for the most part heavily nationalistic, and pride themselves on their blue-collar position. Strongly tied to the bonds of family and friends, they live a disciplined, clean-cut way of life. But they also drink like fish, and have a nasty belligerency in humongous gatherings. On their own they can be quite amusing though...

The destructive crusties pride themselves on their knuckle scar tissue as well, but they mainly just fight each other. The crusts are fanatical about their separation from society, and would rather bleed to death from a stab wound in a gutter than degrade themselves by snitching. Society is not an option, except as sheep to con and tax. The clean cut to a crustie is that of an "infidel" to a Muslim.

Crusties and Skins are highly secretive because they are targets for law enforcement. If you ever get pulled over or spotted meandering with a crust or skin, be prepared to be searched, if not shook up or arrested over a bogus charge. Skins, however, are friendlier to authority personal in general because they stand for the middle-class, structured lifestyle. They can talk most cops out of anything, so long as there's no rum in their belly...

The straight-edger (sXe) is the antithesis of the destructive crustie. They maintain the unity and

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