



NARRAGANSETT PIER
AFTER MIDNIGHT

Edward Drobinski

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Lights Across the Water

Sometime in the near very foreseeable future Wilhelm Whitel and his wife, Lisa Fontaine Whitel will be on their June vacation. This time it will be in Reykjavik, Iceland; they being increasingly interested in getting a glimpse of the last of the good places and days, and adamant that this "democratic" totalitarian darkie phenomenon not be a cause for severe depression upon their return to the invaded United States; where the quality of life had been allowed to decline over the decades to virtual non-existence. Though the filth was getting closer by the day, Narragansett Pier, their home, was one of the few remaining bastions of distinction and safety.

They had waited for the warm weather season, though despite Iceland's "popular" reputation, the weather is very tolerable there. They did this safe approach because they knew that they were living in the age of post-truth, where all information is suspect, and half the web is filled with post from bots programmed to espouse their programmer's perceived cause. Truth be told by an unbiased hominid visitor; if one can endure the winters in the US Pacific Northwest and Atlantic Northeast, they can easily stand Icelandic winters. Smart Danish Icelanders chose the name to keep outsiders away, perhaps encouraging them to go to misnomered Greenland, where the cold is actually biting

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and often deadly. Score one for those prescient, pre-net, as well as post-net Danes who successfully sought to discourage the invasion of a different species. A one year residency requirement for the receipt of welfare benefits did not hurt their cause of freedom.

Their teenage sons, A/K/A the Whitel brothers, Karl and Ernst were in the process of establishing their recently and/or sporadically acquired midnight conversation repertoire. Their large Narragansett Pier house on the water usually afforded the kids their own rooms, but with their parents gone, for "protection," they linked up in the same room, Karl's; Ernst taking the embroidered 1787, camel backed, Chinese Chippendale couch with the chinoiserie legs; the legs called that due to an early American disinterest in the lagging specificities of foreign "cultures," though perhaps indicative of some subliminal acceptance of desert horses. "It's either British based or not worth mentioning, more or less."

"Look, the lights are on again."

"Who cares, Karl. Go to sleep."

"Sleep! How can I sleep? Something's going on over there."

"Wooooooo. Is it the spooks again? Luke the spook himself? Or has Cthulhu come back?"

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Truth be told, neither brother was anywhere near relaxed enough to be anywhere near sleep on the second floor of their mid nineteenth century Tudor revival. Though it was past midnight, the absence of their protective parents fostered a vague, not easily defined dis-ease, a discomfort, a decline in protection level, which was not entirely overcome by the presence of the other, and something neither would admit to even themselves.

Junior Karl responded with sarcasm which matched sophomore Ernst, saying; "The Kraken has been released."

"Isn't that 'have'?"

"Not sure, but anyway I see that you're paying attention."

"As little as possible."

"You know, you try to sound so smart, and it's just to cover for the fact that you haven't got the nerve to go over there."

"Right, and the chains I put on you are preventing you from going."

Ernst pulled his blankets over his head and like a recalcitrant turtle refused to come out.

Undiscouraged Karl kept on. "It could be squatters. No one has been living there since Alistair Fuhray was found dead. You know

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this stupid government in Rhode Island gives squatters 'rights' and they can gain possession and even title to abandoned properties through adverse possession."

That effectively ended the late night conversation, though two sets of eyes remained open and staring through the window at the lights on the adjoining pier; that is until the weights upon their eyelids pulled them closed at the first sign of morning.

The following day they received an e-mail.

To: Karl and Ernst

From: Mom and Dad

Subject: Our Amazing Adventure in Reykjavik!

Dear Karl and Ernst;

We hope this e-mail finds you well and not too buried under homework. Haha. Do the public schools still prescribe homework?

I suppose that now that would be considered some sort of "legally" banned, racially prejudiced assignation since the "disadvantaged" have been disproportionately under exposed to this modern phenomenon.

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At any rate, screw all of that; as we chiefly wanted to share with you the incredible time we're having here in Reykjavik, Iceland's capital!

First, the flight here was smooth, and the views from the plane were breathtaking. As we descended, we saw the rugged coastline and the vast, open landscapes that seemed to stretch on forever. It was like something out of a movie.

Our first day was spent exploring the city. Reykjavik is charming, with colorful houses and a beautiful harbor. It's immaculately clean and the only people you see on the streets are the polite descendants of the Danes. We visited the Hallgrimskirkja church, which is as hard to pronounce as it is impressive to look at. The view from the top is spectacular. We could see the entire city and the ocean beyond.

We also took a dip in the Blue Lagoon. It's as blue as the pictures show, and the warm water was a welcome respite from the lukewarm air. Think Washington. Failing that, think Oregon. We even tried the silica mud masks, and we have to say, our skin has never felt smoother!

One of the highlights so far was our trip to see the Northern Lights. We drove out into the countryside, away from all the city lights, and waited. It wasn't long before the sky started

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dancing with greens and purples. It was a magical experience, and we wished you both could have been there with us.

The food here is something else. We've tried everything from fermented shark, which is an acquired taste, to say the least, to the most delicious lamb stew. We've been sending you guys pictures, so check your phones!

We miss you both terribly, but we're also having the time of our lives. We can't wait to show you all the souvenirs we've picked up for you. Oh, and we've been keeping a list of all the places we think you'd love to visit when you're older, if we all don't move here first.

Take care of each other, and don't give Grandma and Grandpa too hard of a time. We'll be home before you know it, with stories and photos to share.

All our love,

Mom and Dad

P.S. Make sure to feed Mr. Whiskers, and no parties while we're gone! 😊

By that evening Mr. Whiskers was well fed, and Karl's perception of strange events continued.

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Karl said; "Did you hear that noise? Sounded like a ghost."

Ernst, still trying to sound more secure and brave than he was after having moved into Karl's room, replied; "A ghost? Please. It was probably just the wind."

"The wind that whispers 'Boo'? I didn't know we had a haunted breeze."

"Very funny. It was obviously the old pipes. This house is ancient."

"Ancient like a mummy's curse or ancient like your playlist?"

"Hey, classic rock is timeless. And speaking of time, weren't you the one who freaked out over Alice Cooper being on 'Hollywood Squares?' That comedy wasn't exactly a sign of the end of civilization."

"Strategic retreat. I was gathering my strength to fight the phantom."

"Gathering strength or gathering stuffed animals for protection?"

"They're action figures, and they're collectibles. Besides, you were the one chanting spells from that fake wizard book."

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"It's not fake. It's a limited edition. And those were precautionary incantations."

"Precautionary? You mean like the garlic you hung on your door for vampires?"

"Vampires are a legitimate threat. You can never be too careful."

"Right. And I suppose next you'll be wearing a tinfoil hat to ward off aliens?"

"Don't be ridiculous. Aliens don't care about tinfoil. Besides, they're allergic to pop music."

"Allergic to pop music? So, your singing in the shower is actually a defense mechanism?"

"Exactly. My high notes are like an alien repellent."

"Well, keep it up. The world needs your 'talent'. Now, let's go investigate that 'wind'."

"Lead the way, oh fearless ghost hunter."

"The hell with the ghosts. There are those damn lights again."

"They probably have them set up to go on every midnight, to make bums think that someone is living there."

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"No, it's not technologically precise. Sometimes they come on at 12:00. Sometimes they come on at 12:05. And look at the computer; tonight they came on at 12:08."

"That can be programmed."

"But most people are too lazy to go through the trouble of having multiple programs."

"Okay, tell you what. If this happens again tomorrow night, I'll go check it out with you. In the meantime, I'm tired. Goodnight."

Karl wasn't sleepy and searched the computer for information about squatting, and came up with the following.

The Governor of Texas, Greg Abbott, doesn't mess around. This week, Abbott issued a grave warning via social media to any squatters thinking of unlawfully taking up residence in the Lone Star State: you'll be shot.

According to Abbott, anyone occupying a home without the owner's permission is guilty of criminal trespass and criminal mischief under Texas law. Even more ominously, Abbott noted that the Texas Castle Doctrine allows homeowners to use deadly force to defend their property. Bang, bang, bang. Problem over at no taxpayer expense.

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As opposed to the taking of the defecatorial and/or thinking position, the majority of squatting discussed herein is residential in nature. According to a 2003 estimate by the United Nations Human Settlements Program, "UN-Habitat," there were about one billion people in squatter settlements and slums. According to an academic, Kesia Reeve; "squatting is largely absent from policy and academic debate and is rarely conceptualized, as a problem, as a symptom, or as a social or housing movement."

In many of the world's poorer countries, there are extensive slums or shanty towns, typically built on the edges of major cities and consisting almost entirely of self-constructed housing built without the landowner's permission. Such settlements also exist in industrialized countries, such as for example Cañada Real on the outskirts of Madrid.

Squatting can be related to political movements, such as anarchist, autonomist, or socialist. It can be a means to conserve buildings or a protest action. Squats can be used by local communities as free shops, cafés, venues, pirate radio stations or as multi-purpose autonomous social centers. Dutch sociologist Hans Pruijt separates types of squatters into five distinct categories:

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Deprivation based - homeless people squatting for housing need

An alternative housing strategy - people unprepared to wait on municipal lists to be housed take direct action

Entrepreneurial - people breaking into buildings to service the need of a community for cheap bars, clubs etc.

Conservational - preserving monuments because the authorities have let them decay

Political - activists squatting buildings as protests or to make social centers

Adverse possession, sometimes described as squatter's rights, is a method of acquiring title to property through possession for a statutory period under certain conditions. Countries where this principle exists include England and the United States, based on common law.

UK police official Sue Williams, for example, has stated that "Squatting is linked to anti-social behavior and can cause a great deal of nuisance and distress to local residents. In many cases there may also be criminal activities involved." The public attitude toward squatting varies, depending on legal aspects, socioeconomic conditions, and the type of housing occupied by squatters. In particular, while squatting of

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municipal buildings may be treated leniently, squatting of private property can often lead to strongly negative reactions on the part of the general public and the authorities.

If we send every Norwegian to Nigeria and every Nigerian to Norway, in five years Norway will become part of the third world and Nigeria will become a civilized nation.

There is no magic soil. People make countries. Countries are a reflection of those who inhabit them.

The following evening, right at midnight, the lights in the old abandoned Furay residence came on again.

Karl said; "Precise enough for `ya?"

Ernst put up his hands indicating no argument, and said; "Come on. We'll take the boat over. Maybe the spooks won't be able to see or hear us coming."

The Atlantic Ocean shouted ancient secrets and the fog clung to the earth like a shroud. Karl and Ernst Whitesel, despite verbal pyrotechnics, were as close as two souls could be, bound by blood and a shared curiosity for the unknown. They were out rowing in the midnight water with their family classic, ten foot dinghy, on their way to the Furay residence.

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On that crisp summer evening, the brothers had embarked on a journey that would forever alter the tapestry of their lives. They set sail from their home, each fully expecting to find nothing nefarious, in a small wooden boat that had been in their family for generations.

The destination was the Furay residence, as they called it, a grand house perched precariously on a jutting pier overlooking the ocean. It was a place of legend, where seemingly concocted tales of ghostly apparitions and unexplained phenomena drew the brothers like moths to a flame.

As they navigated the ocean waves, the water lapping gently against the hull, Karl and Ernst shared stories they had heard about the manor. Some said it was haunted by the original owner, a reclusive alchemist who vanished under mysterious circumstances. Others whispered of a hidden treasure, guarded by spirits that roamed the halls at night.

The journey was long, as much of it went against the tide, and the night grew darker, the only light provided by the stars and the soft glow of the lantern hanging from the boat's bow. The ocean seemed to carry them through time itself, the modern world fading away until it felt like they were sailing through the pages of history.

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Ernst's mind wandered back to his first remembered adventure, when he and Karl got on the fringes of the lost map of El Dorado. In the small village of Narragansett Pier, which is nestled at the edge of the Enchanted Forest, there lived the two pre-pubescent brothers named Karl and Ernst. They were inseparable, their bond forged by shared dreams of adventure and the thrill of the unknown, encouraged by their father, a seasoned explorer, of abundant tales, one of which concerned searching for the legendary Map of El Dorado, said to lead to a hidden treasure beyond imagination.

One stormy night when pops was ostensibly off somewhere in pursuit of something ma could have well lived without, sufficient lightning danced across the sky to have given life to a slew of Frankenstein's monsters, had they been hooked up to the juice provided. An ancient man even older than their father, who claimed to have been named Gideon stumbled into the Whitel grounds. His clothes were tattered, and his face evinced that baked on accumulation of dirt endemic to those who had been outside too long. But, his eyes still held a lively wild glint. He claimed to have seen the elusive map and knew its location deep within the heart of the Enchanted Forest. The brothers listened with wide eyed wonder, their hearts pounding in anticipation.

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