

C.O.N.
CONDITION OTHER THAN NORMAL
BY **G.B.T.**

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Betty Rose

So many times, when I have been frail and helpless, I would drop to my knees and cry out to God above for mercy. Just cut through the devouring fire on high and talk straight with the man Himself. Amen.

All is well

G.B.T.

C.O.N.

I won't keep you on the hook. It's only proper I explain C.O.N. right off the top. C.O.N. was loose and general jailhouse jargon for 'Condition Other than Normal.' Covers a lot of space doesn't it?

There was C.O.N. in other jails. There was C.O.N. in D.P. The entire D.P. experience was C.O.N. And my whole remarkable life and existence on this marvelous planet has been slapstick C.O.N. comedy.

I will tell you of C.O.N. I will tell you of the end of innocence and of survival. I will tell you of failure and of redemption and *this* is what the book is all about. The *message* is faith and hope.

All is well

G.B.T.

Dark Ride

After a lifetime of craziness, I truly hope I'm humbled enough to tell you folks a story. I certainly feel like damaged goods today, broken everywhere and not much for it.

These days I find, more often than not, an objective and silent response is the best defense I can offer, when dealing with stupid people. And I try real hard not to listen to or talk to stupid people. Which means I'm usually to be found doing my own time.

It seems I've run thru all my options and I no longer have need of charge or praise. Today I feel border line isolated and detached and I don't have many cares.

What I *do* have today is a sometimes-deplorable fear of being and a severe passion for anger and I'm going to try and work these issues out with words. Also, deep inside, I have a loneliness and an emptiness, mixed loose with an ache and a dim hope, to say something and these words might be my last chance on this beautiful planet. To say something...

Words *are* important. Writing *is* sacred. I pondered on these great truths and then decided to crank out some quality thoughts and candor of my own. I really do have something to say folks.

Whatever does become of these exalted words will be not less than a much-needed resurrection of spirit and redemption of purpose. A bold and noble statement indeed.

After the burden of this undertaking, I suppose I'll do an inventory and I'll decide which way to jump. And I plan on being around for a long, long time.

As I say...whatever. The significant point is for me to be able to say I tried. At least I tried.

A solemn ditty before I begin to roll. I cherish the truth. Right here and now, with this pen, on this paper. I will not lie. Should I find myself writing less than the basic truth, well, I will have no choice other than to quit. I'll toss this pen out the window, cover and conceal these words and think for a while. I will not begin, endure or end this narrative with deliberate falsehood. I will not lie.

Understand further, when I finally decided, at long last, to bring out the pen and paper, with regards to this singular deed, it was only after quiet deliberation, after careful soul-searching, even after burning out a pair of poor - boy sneakers, roaming and wandering, up and down

the dreary streets and avenues of this forgotten city, that I knew there was no other way. I knew that if I was to tell this story, I would have to be brutally honest but the truth is vital and precious to me today. To this end I swore an oath to do this very thing. To tell the truth, anything less than the truth would diminish me, something I'm not about to accept, not now, not anymore. And I'm not afraid. I'm ready.

Fair warning! On occasion I may feel it necessary to bend and stretch, to make certain allowances but most anyone who reads these illustrious words will recognize exaggeration and distortion. Hell, I *need* to have fun. But, on my honor, mostly I'll give you the straight goods, the truth. And I reckon I can't go wrong. I'll just step to the right now. I do believe it's about time to stand and deliver.

All is well

G.B.T.

Whitehorse – Briefly

Only I can tell this story. I really don't want to because the damn thing appears suspiciously like work but it must be told and it must be as soon as possible. Otherwise, given my chaotic and turbulent lifestyle, I suspect I could find myself bang – dead or quite insane and unable to defend my wayward existence. See, my being on this street is much like walking a tightrope. I never know for certain, which day, which way, I'm going to fall. Also, this book is a necessity, to prevent and avoid this planet from saying about me, 'He left no footsteps.'

All my life I've been running. From the beginning one might say, Running and hiding, always a careless rush and usually a headlong flight into a greater and deeper danger. I can't look over my shoulder and remember a time when I haven't been ducking and dodging unfathomable powers and forces.

From the coppers mainly, curious characters, who, time and again, took strong and sincere objection to my absolute and unalienable right, to ridicule, to oppose, to thwart and frustrate them and their rules. The courts with their restitution orders, banks and other agencies that wanted their monies back, multitudes and organizations that conceivably may have preferred me dead and buried, rather than suffer my candid laughter. There were people who could have done without me and had dim regards for my cheating ways. Crazy ladies and their outraged and offended husbands, little girls and their distraught boyfriends and the occasional irate mother or father, whom I will be no doubt meeting one fine day.

There are people who would say I have forever been running from myself and they would be correct. I hold I have forever been fleeing every man's demons and I too would be correct.

Certain people would label the following tale as being a doomed and hopeless Odyssey. I would refer to it as being a test and a learning experience. Again both views would be correct.

The nut of the matter is these words constitute a statement, which must be read and enjoyed with a cold and calculating smile.

For various reasons, the long road was regularly a defiant freedom or an essential compulsion, a welcome release or a desperate captivity. I have chased many a futile resurrection, if you take my meaning.

This yarn begins in the summer of '76. An extremely high – powered run thru the North Country was called for and imperative. It was a flight of dismay and consternation. Crazed on booze and dope, racing hard and fast, crying and dying all the while, not knowing and not caring why. I was alone. I was afraid. I was angry. I was a mad dog and should have been gunned down.

The only absolutes I had going for me, were a fierce determination not to be taken alive and a primitive instinct for survival, at anyone's expense. A lot of faces and doubles in my life and yet, so far, I've managed to escape reasonably intact and in one piece. I've always known when to run away. Anyway...

There were times when I've appeared so damned suspicious, I've expressed mild astonishment or light amusement at radar or sonar being unable to track and trace me, considering some of the methods I've used to get away quickly. Times were when I should have done the book and the walk that went with it.

Now, I will concede, I happened to be about half-insane back in 1976, unstable for sure and not thinking clearly but I would have had to have been incredibly normal and prescient, to have seen and understood a blind and final confusion and perhaps a terminal judgment I was rushing madly towards.

The original plan had been W.H. The heat was on. Truthfully, I can't recall what I was moving from that time but it must have been serious enough for me to break for the North Country.

I reasoned the way I did and rightly so because of the few occasions when I had held my ground. On these same foolish occasions, all I had ever known for faith and trust in a contrary judicial system were the insides of filthy jail cells.

Logic was, any damn thing could have happened between the time I lit out and the time the law laid me by the heels and dragged me back to face the amends process, dragged me on back, kicking and snapping, to be denounced, scourged and sentenced and forced to do my time. Not good. No. Better to run away.

Listen up. The courthouse could have been struck by a higher power. The police station could have caught fire and burned to the ground. The witnesses could have vanished without clues. Any of these unlikely possibilities I would have accepted and considered divine intervention or proper retribution. But no, it never happened, it never did and they never went away. Instead, those swinish bastards, every one of them, had their days of judgment with me, sometimes after years of frantic and frenzied running on my part. Best to keep moving.

That was yesterday. I don't run so much today. Today I build my own walls. The difference is, tomorrow I'll know exactly why and when to haul ass and run away. I am an outlaw and always will be.

What I knew, back in '76, in Edmonton, was, all I had been doing was fading and failing and becoming smaller. Likely, it would only have been a matter of short time before someone put me down permanently. I was a bum, a peculiar and unique breed of bum. I had no home, no money, no friends and I never cared who I cheated or lied to. I never *cared*.

It was an alarming state of being and a tangible wall of dark alienation had been closing in on me and I had felt it. The uniforms and the steel had to have been real close behind. Right - Time for me to book it for the high country. Time to do my magic act. So...

One clear morning, without so much as a, by your leave and thank – you very much, I winked out and Edmonton was another blue memory.

Now, I had done this disappearing routine, so often and from so many places, it had become a chronic grind and acceptance. Just do it and be nimble about it. Then again, leaving Edmonton, specifically, had never been a hardship or a sadness for me. Leaving Edmonton had frequently been an exoneration, an amnesty and a freedom.

W.H., for inexplicable reasons, had suggested itself as the right place to run to and to hide from a life of constant sorrow. Perfect in fact. A thousand miles north, a boss job, make all the money, buy an expensive set of wheels and return to Edmonton as a hero. Strut into the Strathcona Hotel, dressed in fine raiment, shout a round for the house, stay personally drunk for a month and then retire into a leisurely rest home, sporting a mild liver disorder and as a gentleman. Pure fantasy. Straight fiction. Today I smile at that howler and I know I was some kind of fool in 1976.

Ailments of every description, no cash, hundreds and hundreds of mystery miles in front of me but I wasn't worried. Hell, way back in '76 I was a small – time thief, never one to take more than I needed and there had to be every manner of foodstuffs and groceries between Ed. and W.H.

In a tight situation, I had always counted on thievery as being a necessary talent to survival and in '76 I was being squeezed and would do what I had to do.

The places I slept you wouldn't read about. In ditches, in razed and abandoned shacks, inside rusty and wrecked cars, in fields, under bushes and trees. And I had no sleeping bag. No. Only a moldy old blanket I had scrounged from a pair of University students, good folks I had last known and stayed with back in Edmonton.

The weather was a loyal friend in '76 and I did the right thing and thanked and praised God for a fine and mighty northern Alberta summer. It was sunshine and blue sky, all the way up and over a blasted and twisted mountain road. 'Could be a whole lot worse,' I thought but quietly realized I'd have to think more on this concept.

The rides weren't important and not worth mentioning so I'll pass on describing them and keep passing on ordinary circumstance. I'm not big on frivolous detail. Use your imagination folks.

I must say, only a real strange person would have even thought of giving me a ride. Any driver could see I was down and dirty and didn't give a damn and I had that deep and dangerous look of a drifter. Positively, I rode with idealists and illusionists, maybe people nuts on bad drugs but certainly no one in a square – john frame of mind. No.

I humped that sad and lonely road for a week and longer and it was a tough passage. You would have missed my smilin' face. Except for a brief stop and reprieve in Grande Prairie, it was a dull and dismal journey.

Jim and Grace had a house and home in G.P. and in the relatively short time I was there, as their guest, I quickly went from, “Welcome,” to, “When ya’ all leavin’?”

I may have felt like a low cur at having gobbled Jim’s food and for having swilled Jim’s liquor and at having further abused his hospitality by doing the same to his friends. At the time and mindful of my place and position, I had felt so damned grateful for Jim’s cordiality and compassion, I had fervently contemplated thanking Grace into the bedroom for a bit of cuddle and snuggle.

But no, not a great idea. Jim was a bug in his own unique way. Jim was a connoisseur of high – velocity weaponry and I was fully aware of Jim’s qualified love for his guns and of the indisputable fact that he would not hesitate and was fully prepared to use them, had anyone given him perfect reason. A shining incident such as me screwing his wife would have been one of them. Jim would never have appreciated an item of this description. No and in a perverse type of way, Jim would have welcomed the moment and been indebted to me. Nothing personal. Jim has ever been awaiting a special point in time. Jim is, latently, the most dangerous man I have ever had the good fortune and pleasure to call friend.

Accordingly, I passed on a forbidden liaison with Grace as being harebrained and impetuous. Astuteness of this persuasion has begat the natural consequence of me having remained sound and whole and only somewhat re–arranged over the many years. Self–preservation has always been at the very top of my list of priorities and values.

Still, it may have been embarrassing and uncomfortable for Jim, to have had to explain to his friends in G.P. and to G.P. as a whole, after I had gone away, just what manner of thug – like characters he had known at one time, back down Edmonton way.

Whitehorse! I had made it without getting caught or killed. A big rig let me go and I immediately gravitated towards a 2 A.M. bar – beat I could not ignore. Now...

Whoever had driven me to the outskirts of G.P. and put me on the road had been pleased to shoot me a double – sawbuck to jingle in my jeans. Hell, he got away cheap. After the fuss and commotion I had raised in G.P., he had every right and reason to expect no less than this good ol’ boy asking for his truck and demanding his watch and wallet.

And so I had a few dollars and was prepared to drop it on any cheap thrill but fate stepped in and I fell across an acquaintance from the southern days. And he was buying.

Much later, thru the blur of a smoky alcoholic cloud, just like in the movie, a brown eyed girl across the room and she owned a green metal – flaked Cadillac. Marga was her name and she was a metropolitan and cosmopolitan class of lady. She knew petticoats and palaces. She took me home. To her apartment. Where I spontaneously regressed into a sprawling and spreading lower life – form, right over and across the lovely lady’s bar. I drank everything. I can recollect her bar as having been a well – stocked and custom affair. Until my

arrival and determination to imbibe. At 4 A.M. the damn thing was history. And then, had I wanted or needed another drink badly enough, well, I just might have stripped the paint clean off the girls' living room walls. I was that way, once upon a time.

Thru the fog and mist, I mind the image of me telling that sultry girl a long and detailed story, a desolate and forsaken narrative. She said I should write a book, as I was a strange and distant character. (Here it is pretty lady, like I said I would.)

I got drunk. I passed out. I remember no more. Then morning came and the girl kicked my wicked ass out and onto the streets of W.H.

When blanks like this happen to me, I feel like a prize fool. It was not the first time for sadness of such description to come my way and positively not the last. No.

After that wonderful salutation from W.H., I scurried on downtown and did just 1 pass thru the Edgewater Hotel before managing to tree a total stranger into buying me beer for the remainder of the day. I have a talent for essentials of this sort.

Well now, I hung my hat at the regional hostel for a night or 2 but soon burnt – out that amenity, that sweetness and light, after the staff became cognizant of my fondness for drink and of my wont for reeling in at odd and unusual hours. I was asked to leave. A door closes. And the damned things keep right on closing.

Read this. W.H. depends or did depend, on the existence and efficiency of 2 mines and they directly or indirectly employed the whole remarkable city of W.H. and without those mining enterprises, W.H. had no credible reason for being on this planet.

What could possibly go wrong? After all, I was in the Yukon, Robert Service country, Jack London land, high adventure and a fortune to be won at the snap of a card. It was not this way in 1976 folks.

Both mines were on strike. W.H. was a bust. W.H. was a town of walking and wandering spooks and specters, every one of them with a cheap beer scam. I was not pleased. I was not impressed. At one time or another, I too, had used all the tricks and crafts, in a lot of far off corners on this planet, to keep from having to give up the ghost.

Dismayed and distressed at having found W.H. to be no more than an inhospitable and precarious danger – zone, I knew something had to be done. Something had to change or I would have gone to jail, for reasons I shouldn't have to explain but I will. Quite simply, I would have had to pillage and plunder and maybe have done something worse and possibly have hurt somebody, to have removed myself from my quandary and predicament of the time. Jail seemed a possibility.

All the tourists and trash like myself, hundreds of us, were drifting from one end of W.H. to the other and back again, moving aimlessly, trying to forget the burden of boredom and hoping for deliverance.

Resources were spread thin, practically non-existent, gutter butts were rare and invariably a satisfying delight when found. It was a slim – pickin's and sparin' situation. I had gone past hunger and was preparing to deal with a prodigious case of starvation. It was a grim setting and I felt like a phantom and I knew I was standing awful close to the dark lady and her kiss of death. It was a hardship but I would manage it. I *had* to manage it.

A bleak and bleary summer's evening and I had occasion and opportunity to do a late night reflection on my life in general and of my condition of the moment in particular.

I was laid out high and horizontal, amongst the weeds and rocks, atop the Yukon River. Above me, towering and soaring overhead, the Northern Lights began to shimmer and dance. Rolling and roiling, howling and hollering, from horizon to horizon, frantic and eerie ripples of gold and silver, green and purple haze, blue – black velvet, shockin' pink and blood – red hues and tones, splashing and splattering over my face and body, laughing and pouring down on me. Brilliant lights and flashing fireballs, from star to star, wild and violent shrieking and smashing and crackling noise, over and aloft and out of the mighty northern Canadian sky.

Alone, private and withdrawn, the moon was a gentle, white – hot disc.

Down below, the Yukon River fought its' way thru the canyon, incredible din and clamor, as the river bucked and swayed and charged, swirling and scraping and grinding past the scabrous and scraggy walls of the gorge and chasm. It was a blustery thunder and racket.

It was nature's hauntingly beautiful symphony, challenging for dominance and supremacy, a terrible and tumultuous beauty of such intensity, of such magnitude, that my breath left me and I was awed and humbled to my knees. Then I heard, over the magnificent storm and turmoil, even louder than the uproar and chaos which surrounded me and engulfed me, great tidings, that, even though there was close trespass and quiet villainy in my life, there were still eternal wonders and miracles I had yet to see and experience. Fine words to hear.

Desperately, I reached for my bottle of Colona Royal Red that I had wisely brought along for earthly comfort and was about to go on the damned thing when up popped a vagabond. The tattered old fool seemed determined to purloin my 'baccy and booze so I thrashed him soundly for his impertinence and sent him on his way. Strange wine indeed. Ho! Ho! 'Twas a fine night for feelin' fine.

The closest I may have come to disappearing in the Yukon Territory, had to have been when I decided to stay 2 nights of my life in a friend's cabin.

It was a rustic setting, trees and rocks, fresh and frosty air, a pastoral backdrop, a scene to be found on any North Country postcard. A scene, one in which I was downright terrified to set foot outside the cabin for fear of the wolves my German friend saw fit to keep as pets. The dumb bastard was a tad paranoid concerning his skeptical Nordic heritage you see and so harbored and nurtured those wolves for the fright and dread they instilled and inspired in any stranger or passerby who happened upon his shack in the bush. Those animals were

an amazing deterrent and not many neighbors came a – callin’ while I was there. For sure, those wolves were masterful and powerful protection.

Even though the filthy brutes were heavily entrenched behind a double, chain link fence, I felt and knew it was not enough of a security factor, not for this lily – livered southern boy. At first sight of those shaggy and mangy mutts, I casually suggested giving them a taste of the salt from the ol’ 12–gauge hanging above the fireplace but my square head friend got right hot and upset over that notion.

Big and mean? Well, yes, they were big and mean. With razor claws, dripping fangs, fiery eyes and they had no fear. They were creatures from hell.

The second and last night and not surprisingly, I had successfully stumbled my way back to the stronghold with a skin full of beer I had promoted and took hold of downtown and those evil and unspeakable hounds came at me. Growling and snarling and smashing and slashing at the fence and it was a fearful instant and that fence seemed mighty poor protection at that moment. My heart stopped. Then I recovered, thought for a second and stepped closer to the cage. I was wearing a ruthless grin. “Here doggies, nice doggies, come and get it” and I unzipped and let go and fly an amazing and astounding stream of hot piss, which soaked and shampooed the bastards down. They went crazy. The stupid fuckers were caterwauling and crying with rage and frustration, banging and slamming against that super steel mesh, cowling and howling, rolling and sloshing in the mud and the blood and the beer. My laughter was hollow. I knew I’d be leaving soon. I knew I had to leave the Yukon or perish. Slowly I shook my head and went inside the cabin.

Sleep was hard to find that night. All during the cold and early morning hours, I thought those hounds from hell just might come crashing thru the walls, coming for me, seeing as how I had riled and ruffled them to an extreme fever and pitch and had kindly given them my scent and they knew exactly where to find me. And they wanted me bad. And they would have rendered me dead. It could have happened. Easily.

The night was lit with the sounds of riot and disorder, fierce shrieking, baying and screaming, wails and yips and yowls. And if this peal and uproar wasn’t enough to keep me pissed off and paying attention, those damned dingoes, after they had done with the weak and the wounded, took to indiscriminant rutting and bugging with each other. The yelps and squeals of ripping and tearing flesh, were ghastly and gruesome sounds to hear, at a drunk and dark 4 A.M. It sounded as though the pack, including kith and kin from every part of the Yukon, were readying and preparing a primitive rite, prior to an organized storming of the bunker.

Should Darwin have come across Canada’s Yukon Territory, he would surely have cut and run but not before shouting, “Survival of the fittest!” A sage of the Yukon would nod shrewdly and say, “Call of the wild. Code of the north.” Me? Hell, I knew it was every man for himself. That was wisdom deep and profound enough for me to understand. I also knew it was best to take it on the lam before the North Country went totally insane on me.

So I shot the moon early the same morning but not before stopping in front of the wolves' cage and pointing and leering and laughing at those freaks from hell. The last I saw of those mongrel beasts, was they were purely and positively berserk, turning and spinning cartwheels and back flips, trying to chew thru the steel fence which contained and confined them, trying to get at me, to release me from my mortal coil.

Leaning up against the brick fronting of the Edgewater Hotel and praying for a miracle. Hoping I wasn't too conspicuous and wondering who across this great country Canada owed me a favor or money. Who, within the vast range of my visionary network would be good or foolish enough to lend me jack – cash. No one. When you are down and out, you have no friends. You are alone. It is an axiom. It is also one of those true – life facts which occasionally bothered me yesterday.

One slight and slender prospect and in a fit of panic and desperation, I placed a collect call to my best friend down south. Zowie! Shazam! A radical but wise speculation! The government of Canada had done the right thing and upped with the money they owed me! Two hundred dollars shot north fast! Mercy!

It took me 2 nights to splash and spill that satisfaction on a bar – room floor and about then the full realization of my dilemma came over me. For sure, it was time to do a fast exit from W.H. and the only way out was back down that damned dirt road, to turn around at G.P., to go north again, to Yellowknife.

This brilliant strategy had been determined during my last alcoholic stupor and slumber in W.H. After all, no doubt I would find a lot of really good friends in Y.K. So long ago, way back and during the summer of 1976, I was convinced God was not a kind fellow.

All is well

G.B.T.

Yellowknife – Basically

My reception in G.P. was cold and the good and gracious citizens of G.P. may have let me have a glass of warm water before putting me on the road again.

The long road is a harsh and uncaring bitch and I've walked that white line many times and always alone. The road will steal your pride and make you humble and you become aware of how small you really are. On the road, there were times when I despaired of seeing civilization ever again. Not that I've ever had great need of organized structure in my life but society's mainstays, books and beer and other excitable things have sometimes been necessary. Hell, at times even people hold me with a peculiar fascination. The long road builds character and strength and courage and allows you to think and imagine your mistakes and alternatives. On that journey, back in '76, I did all kinds of things inside my head, only to find hordes and legions of barren and broken questions, no answers, just bitter need and longing.

There I was in '76, charging angrily down the throat of the N.W.T., wholly unprepared for what lay ahead. Had I recognized a climactic ending to a frenzied lifestyle, perhaps I would have fled screaming and screeching in the other direction. But no, that would have been a cheat and the next 100 days had been written and would have come to pass no matter where I ran to. An equal form of adversity would have chased and followed me and nothing I could have done about it. There was no escape. I don't believe in chance or luck today. There is a reason and a purpose for everything.

A man would have to be seriously disorganized, to want to live anywhere suggestive of the N.W.T. From where I was standing, the N.W.T. was not much more than a flat, scrub – rock wasteland. The N.W.T. is no more than a huge and festering gravel pit. The land was asleep and gloomy, devoid of vitality, not like the jolting and stirring landscapes and scenes I had looked upon, in my own small way, in other lands, in other countries and here in Canada.

There was one redeeming feature regarding the N.W.T. Should a man have *wished* to remain obscure and anonymous, well, the N.W.T. was the place to be and I can understand seclusion and solitude. Hell, I enjoy serenity and I delight in being on my own and free but the N.W.T. was a meaningless quiet, dull and insignificant and of no big importance to me. The N.W.T. and I could never blend and flow together. We could never intermingle, contribute to and help each other. In the N.W.T., I could not feel the heartbeat. Of a certainty, I had crossed deserts that had more character and inspiration. Nothing exciting lives in the N.W.T. I could have been watching and listening from beyond the far reaches of outer – space, for all the virtue and rectitude I found

between G.P. and Y.K. and no matter I may have run afoul of the law there. I guard myself against bias and preconception. I will not lie.

The rides were lengthy. Hell, human habitat was scattered widely and randomly across the orange rock and moss of the N.W.T. and I came to believe the only creatures endemic to that part of Canada, were those huge and horrible blow – flies, black and hideous slips of nature, which kept attacking me and trying to drag me off and into the bush, where they would have had their way with me. Once or twice, I honestly wished for a shotgun to ride herd on the evil bastards.

Standing on a remote and desolate corner, high above Alberta and I was exposed and vulnerable and truly grateful for 1 ride that is worth mentioning. The man was moving and transporting 10 lbs. of quality marijuana and it helped take the pain away. Also, the young man had recognized my fierce need and want for the 5% and he took care of this craving from the depths of a large ice – chest, which happened to be firmly anchored between us in the cab of his truck. The man’s name was Rennie and he was a prisoner of the white line.

Rennie and I trucked and flew that hi – way for 100 miles and more and then he dropped me off with best wishes, a six-pack of beer and an amazing bag of robust and rowdy marijuana. A kindred spirit and a rare person. I called and bawled many blessings and benedictions at the man and his rapidly departing cloud of dust and then sat back on the side of the road and watched the world go spinning past my eyes.

At that twisted moment in time, I naturally felt like a saint, kiss – tilted and stone – rocked on believing and I was positively crazy and abnormal. I even took to ignoring the occasional vehicle that chanced and rattled on by and to those drivers who did bounce past, I was a mystery. I mean ... what was this animal, down in the dirt, drinking beer from an un-sterilized can and laughing at a clear and empty sky? A lost link that had accidentally strayed from out of the bush and encountered a vestige of civilization? A savage? Folks, it was all I could do to find my mouth with a smoking joint or a foaming can of beer.

About the only thing I remember of my last ride north to Y.K., was stepping out of a battered old car and dumping the sand out of my pockets. I had arrived in Y.K. I was dizzy and dazed from the booze and the dope and bent badly from the road. It had been a long haul and drag. Journeys end.

Even though I was garbled and off – centered, I wasn’t overly bothered or concerned, as being nuts in the North Country was a man’s private affair. Not for the first time had I been worn and wasted in a friendless and foreign land. No worries.

No money either and not much for it other than to do my hocus – pocus routine and convince someone innocent of the wisdom of buying me a beer.

This I did, by targeting the Gold Range Hotel, a nom de plume I thought entirely auspicious and there, to my great delight, I came upon an even dozen miners, drinking their wages. I may have been a homespun union

representative on that particular occasion. No matter. In return for my having to listen to their gripes and groans, they were, in their own casual and friendly way, willing to buy me drinks all day long. I do have an affinity for caging a brew.

I needed a place to sleep. It became my lot to hook up with an American, a sportsman, a man who had materialized in the north country behind the wheel of a complete R.V., stove and fridge, shower and sauna, guns and rods and a wallet stuffed plumb – full of 100 dollar bills.

The man was prepared to do battle with any bear or moose or fish or fell beast that could be taken safely and without getting his Yankee ass thrown in jail and deported. To further bolster his image as a rough and rugged hunter and in the ever-likely event he met a girl of the high – country, he had rented a suite of rooms in Y.K.'s best hotel.

Therefore, I thought it only right and proper to jump in and stake my claim before a pretty northern girl picked and pinched him clean. 'A wonderful opportunity,' thought I, 'I *belong* at this man's side.'

It was appropriate I pass myself off as a backwoodsman of the northern lands, a skilled and proficient guide, who reverently guarded and protected and knew of every secret location, where the most dangerous and ferocious and wildest of wildlife could be found waiting for a keen and sharp challenge, one such as my American friend clearly possessed and offered.

Actually, I did look the part, a week's growth of whiskers, a face set deep with inquiring and intelligent eyes, patched and faded shirt and jeans, a standard hermit appearance, a man who had left his shack in the outback, after a hiatus of several years and returned to civilization to write the Great Canadian Novel. Ho! Ho!

It was a good cover and the man bought it hook, line and sinker and together we became a competent and capable team and nothing moving in the bush was safe for the next 2 weeks.

The man was pleased and thought me a wizard and gave me leave to sleep on his hotel carpet. No way he wanted to be rid of my accomplished services, not for a spell.

Captured all the prizes and told all the stories, did all the sights and drank all the beer, the only safe and sanitary beverage fit for human consumption in those healthy northern climes, so I told the man and was constantly insistent and on about. I cost the man a small fortune before I was discretely cut loose. Hello America!

Owing to my American friend's generosity, I led an easy and carefree life of affluence for a week but then had no recourse other than to become a gentleman of the streets of Y.K. and had been reduced to the status of beggar before managing to connect with a band of relaxed and at large inhabitants of Old Town. I had plugged into this group of sundowners with my usual flair and the accommodating nature of the Gold Range Hotel. "Hi there. Buy me a beer and I'll tell you a story. How do you like me so far?" I needed a place to sleep once more.

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