

## Spark #1.18 -The Lamb

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After last week's brain scratcher, I received several interesting emails regarding the idea of hypertypes. I am certain I will revisit that topic in the future. I also received a few emails asking for another trip down memory lane as I hadn't done anything like that since August 2000.

So, to please a few readers, and feed the memoir hopper, I should like to take you on a merry little trip down memory lane. Previously I told you of an ELP concert/disaster. Today I will tell you of another concert disaster.

*Public Service Notice: DO NOT try this at home. This is not recommended behaviour for a standard issue human. Use this more as an example of how NOT to have a good time.*

It was early December, 1975. It was a crisp cold day, and I was, as usual, a completely stoned hippie dork idiot teenager who had the remarkable good fortune of being in possession of tickets for a special concert — Genesis, live, at the Academy of Music for the tour supporting their latest release, *The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway*. My friend, Phil, and I, had saved up to see this show, and we were very excited at the prospect of finally seeing Peter Gabriel's amazing stage antics and the rare privilege of listening to this amazing bunch of musicians.

A few days earlier, another completely stoned hippie dork idiot like me, my friend, Mark, had spent too much cash on 4 tickets, only to find that no one wanted to go with him. Poor Bastard. Mark asked me if I would scalp the tickets for him. I said "Sure!" I had visions of Huge Dollar Amounts dancing in my mind's eye. All Mark wanted was to not lose money on the tickets. Anything I made over that was mine Mine MINE!

It was a chilly Saturday afternoon when I went over to Phil's house to "prepare" for the concert. We "prepared" by smoking ourselves stupid on vast quantities of marijuana preparations in his basement. This was no ordinary basement. Half of the basement was an oily depressing machine shop. The other half was a series of connected flight cages for several hundred Finches and Cockateels. The racket from their incessant chirping and the fecal stench of their guano deposit haunts me to this day. Between the lathes and the twittering and the bong hits and the floor littered with bird crap, it made even the strongest mind and stomach reel.

Once we had completed our "preparations", we went upstairs to hang out with his brother, Roger. His brother had a few problems. At the time, I shared a few of them (a compulsion to smoke enormous quantities of pot, for example) but was happily unencumbered by a few of his other features (like a borderline personality.) Since then, I'm pleased to note, Roger has mellowed out a lot. But back then, he was, shall we say, a Bad Influence. Roger said he'd give us a lift to the train station in his girlfriend's car. The car that didn't work properly because Roger would take some weird mix of sundry

pharmaceuticals and try to "fix it". And, he would, and find a number of "extra" bolts and parts for his collection in the backyard, where he buried his motorcycle. Yes, buried his motorcycle. A Kawasaki KZ900.

To make a long story, uuuuh, less long (he cheerfully offered) what happened was this: Roger had taken A LOT of LSD one night, and completely disassembled his motorcycle. The Next Morning he had no idea how to put it back together. After the motorcycle pieces had mouldered in the side yard for several months, he did the right thing for this fine machine, and buried the rusting carcass with honours next to the shed that was filled with a dozen broken lawn mowers. The broken mowers are another story altogether.

So, we clambered into the rusting brown hulk of his girlfriend's Rambler American, and he drove us to the train station. Along the way he said "Here- have some pills!" We asked him "Gee- what are they?" and he said "Hell - I dunno. Got me really blitzed a few weeks ago, though..." We obediently swallowed them and smoked a joint with him as thanks. He let us off at the Metropark train station. We bought our train tickets and made our way to the frigid platform. There, we met some people who were also going to the Genesis concert. They had also just scored a 1/4 pound of pot, and were merrily puffing away, and offered us some. Then some people in Beige Coats appeared at the ends of the platform, and the people with the pot promptly vanished. We didn't care. We didn't have anything on us except a bunch of tickets to see Genesis.

The train came, and once aboard, whatever Roger had given us quickly took effect.

By the time we arrived at the tunnel that passes under the Hudson River and a large chunk of Manhattan, we were completely obliterated. Zonked, fried, brain spittle on the griddle of pharmaceuticals. The world promptly kicked back into first gear. I felt warm and fuzzy and dull. These were definitely "downs" of some variety. I heard Phil say:

"Iiiiiiiii' mmmm ggggooooiiiiinnnggg ttttooo ssssmmmmmoooookkkee aaaa  
ccccciiigggaarrreettttttteeee...."

As we entered the tunnel, we stood up and glided to the part of the train between cars. I felt like the world was made out of marmalade. Phil opened up the door. Click- he moved. Click. He moved again. While the racket of standing between cars on a train in a tunnel was deafening, it was only a muffled distorted rumble to me, and only added to the moment wearily lit in the train car's sickly flickering fluorescent light, bestowing its uniquely cadaverous pallor and stroboscopic lighting effect. Phil stuck his head out of the open doorway to look ahead. His long dark hair fluttered and twirled behind him, as the tunnel's lights wizzed by his head. He turned around and said:

"WWWwwwwoooooowwww... Cccchhhheeeccckkk iiittt ooouutt..."

I slowly glided to the doorway and gently stuck my fuzzy head out to look ahead-

And-everything-went-past-me-at-one-million-miles-per-hour!

It was insanely dangerous and a total rush- a thrill of sheer stupidity combined with intense drugs. A clattering chattering rocking noise hell, a flash of one's life splintering at the speed of light, all in the smelly confines of a train tunnel.

I turned around and said:

"WWWwwwwoooooowwww...IIInnttteennnssee...mmaaannn"

The train stopped at Penn Station, but it didn't matter- we might as well have taken a Trailways Bus to Mars for all we cared. Our legs were rubbery and we had a distinct case of giggles and trepidation as we navigated the freaks, the weirdos, the commuters, the geeks, and the smelly human refuse, the flotsam and jetsam of New York City's sub-under-class that inhabited Penn Station that evening. We needed to get to 14th and 8th, so we crawled to the A train downtown. Phil decided that my shoulder would make a good punching bag, and began hitting me repeatedly. I explained to him I wasn't a scarecrow and besides, we need some food. We talked to some people on the train- we could tell they were going to the Genesis concert, because one of these freaks had shaved his forelocks off in a triangle to emulate Peter Gabriel's appearance a few years earlier. On his forehead, in the patch where his hair used to be, he had painted some goofy symbol on his head that looked like a crippled rune cribbed from the Hobbit or some other folksy pseudo-psychedelic nonsense that was being passed around those days.

My head was spinning and I felt like I was being flung through an atmosphere of velvet pudding. Phil was no help.

They asked us some questions that I was completely unable to answer except to tell them that we were also going to the concert, and that we had some tickets to sell. At that, the eyes of one of the females in their tribe lit up. She looked up from the orange she was stripping, and instantly her lovely face swirled in my brain, which was swimming in a limpid pond of barbituate goo. She said:

"I need a ticket. How much do you want?"

I responded: "III""mmm hhhuuunnnnggrrryyy --- III""lll tttaaakkkeee aaannn ooorraannnggeee,, ttthhhaannnkkksss..."

She looked at me like I was nuts, shrugged her shoulders, and said, "sure — I suppose — here — have this one!" I thanked her and gave her a ticket to the show. She was very very happy. I was too ripped to ask her for her name, much less her phone number, but it didn't matter — I couldn't have possibly remembered it anyway. Besides the fact that her boyfriend, who was seated next to her, probably would have pounded the snot out of me....

At the 14th street stop we all disembarked and made our way to the frozen street. I was still hungry, and Phil said he wanted some of my orange. We saw lots of people wandering towards the theater and some of them going to a pizza joint nearby. We had no money, but we were hungry and had lots of tickets. So, I sold a ticket for a few dollars that I couldn't count, and bought a few slices of hot pizza.

It burned the roof of my mouth, but I could have buried my head in molten lava and not have noticed it at that point. It was chewy, fatty, and delicious, and I was completely involved in trying to get it into my mouth without losing the gloppy cheese all over the sidewalk. Quickly, the December night came to my aid, and the cheese quickly cooled into something more solid, something that required less coordination - something that could satisfy the chomp-gulp-burp cycle of my teenage gut. After inhaling the pizza, we went down the street to the theater and decided it was time to sell Mark's two remaining tickets.

I just said "Tickets for sale!" and within a few seconds a smelly pukestain of a person comes up to us and spat "Yeah man, I'll Trade ya three hits of awesome blotter for two of your tickets." After visually identifying it as a known variety of blotter acid (Christmas Tree) we traded our tickets and divided the LSD right there and chewed the paper up and swallowed....

We took our seats, and after about 20 minutes, my fingers started tingling. I knew this was going to be a ride...

The concert lasted about 15 minutes. Within that 15 minutes, the planet moved about an hour and a half, while Peter Gabriel, dressed like some street punk, changed into a slime creature and then disappeared. The band played like a finely tuned machine. They didn't even look at each other. It was unnerving. The stage was backed by 3 huge screens where slides and movies were projected. I remember a film about the Carpet Crawlers. Gabriel came back out dressed like a little old man and did the song "Musical Box". The End. A building full of happy alligators clapped its approval for the marching band.

When the concert ended we were tripping our butts off and had absolutely no idea what to do, where to go, or who we were. We wandered back out to the street and eventually sauntered casually down into the stinking bowels of the earth also known as the A train. My feet were slipping and sliding on the stairs. We could hear people arguing. On the platform two kids were fighting with knives, and one kid's mother was screaming some crap about "REMEMBER WHAT HE DID TO YOUR SISTER!!!" and then hollered something in Spanish or Swedish or something equally unintelligible. Phil said something to the effect of "Let's get the hell out of here." It took me a while to understand that he meant that as a recommendation to leave and not an instruction about what we should remove from "here", whatever that was.

He grabbed the epaulet of my coat and dragged me toward the stairs, and we both started a kind of fumbling stumbling dash up the stairs to the exit. As we jumped up the stairs our hearts and feet froze. At the top of the stairs several policemen with billy clubs and guns drawn appeared from around the landing were racing right at us.

Phil and I had a telepathic moment where we both thought:

"Oh. No. We're. Busted...."

Instantly, we were rendered completely incapable of moving or thinking or breathing.

The police ran past us and began cracking the heads of the punks fighting down on the platform. We breathed a sigh of relief

"OH! IS THAT ALL??? Cool. Let's go..."

And we laughed and scampered up the stairs to the streets, still frozen, and darker than ever before.

"Which way should we I don't know go which way are we look its eighth avenue and how do we get there I don't know and fourteenth street OH PRETTY LIGHTS and I wish we had some more pizza and we should start walking and so like which way are we going to the train station and the LIGHTS and the train station's at 33<sup>rd</sup> and we're at 14<sup>th</sup> so we have to start walking...."

We walked from 14<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> to 33<sup>rd</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> — a distance of about 2 miles. Normally a long but not impossible walk, but that night had been imported from some forgotten Eskimo Village, and while we were properly dressed in Military boots, bib jeans, sweaters, and Air Force Winter Coats, they were little match for the cold we faced. Luckily, the world was made of styrofoam, so we didn't really care about the weather having all the qualities one normally associates with Siberian Death Camps or Santa Elves slaving away in their sweat shop toy factories.

What was of concern was the city — it seemed more ominous than ever, especially after our Subway Welcoming Committee. Freaky gargoyles sat in phone booths waiting for the check to come. The street lamps glared and barked obscene orders to the parking meters. METER VIOLATION! It was the middle of the night, past midnight, past hope, past misery and well beyond any inkling or glimmer of reason when we arrived at Penn Station to find it empty save for some snoring drunks, cops eating donuts, and our own shivering psychotic selves.

We had missed the last train by 15 minutes. Phil said: "There's always the bus..."

"Which way should we I don't know go which way are we look its eighth avenue and how do we get there I don't know and 33<sup>rd</sup> street OH PRETTY LIGHTS and I wish we had some more pizza and we should start walking and so like which way are we going to the bus station and the LIGHTS and the port authority's at 42nd and we're at 33rd so we have to start walking...."

We walked from 33<sup>rd</sup> to 42<sup>nd</sup> street, a distance of about a mile. We found out where our bus was to leave from, only to find that it too, had left some time ago.

We were stranded in Babylon.

"Which way should we go? Let's catch the first train out at 5 AM. We have to go back to Penn Station at Madison Square Garden. Back down 8<sup>th</sup> avenue, but look! Pretty lights....Really Pretty Lights...."

Of all the urban hiking trips I could think of, the one I would least recommend to anyone- even the fat bastard who beat me up every day of first grade- even the dull witted self absorbed jerk who thought he was Lou Reed and stole my old girlfriend — even the old girlfriend who was stupid enough to fall for

his lame pseudo-nihilist nonsense — even the creepy crackheads who smacked me with a bat for \$27 and a pack of stale Merits leaving me to bleed all over the sidewalk — even my eighth grade math teacher, Mrs DiFranzo the fat evil bitch who is hopefully rotting in purgatory with her ugly haircut — even the stupid ignorant greaser who decked me on my way to a party in the woods next to school just so he could impress his skanky illiterate girlfriend and his 5 watt henchmen — even Ming the Merciless and his flock of sycophantic flying Monkey flunkies at Two Guys — EVEN TO HIM — I would never recommend a walk down 42nd street at 3 AM on a cold Saturday night in 1975.

Because, we did.

And it was a really bad idea.

"Hey honey- tall fellas like you lookin for some FUN?"

"No and get away from me!"

"HEY- you messin wif my BITCH?"

"No no no- we're just trying to get to the train."

"You just get yo hippie punk ass outa here!"

It was like that — block after block of pretty blinky lights, pushy whores, threatening pimps, speed freaks screaming to their imaginary torturers, gargoyles calling their boss about another job well done, miniature godzillas doing the hokey pokey, unemployed and unemployable demons looking for a free ride back to oblivion, joyless junkies sliding through the winking eye of a phonograph needle, obstinate trash cans demanding payment, wine softened tramps puking their welfare checks into the gutter, disagreeable lamp posts arguing about the rightful posture of meditation, grimy windows filled with artificial bodies and cheap TV sets with their rolling screens all tuned to static stations long gone off the air, and street side psycho cases demanding more from life than they will ever have to give, and yet more blinky lights...more blinky lights...more blinky lights...

When we jaywalked Second Avenue, we could see the United Nations coming into view at the end of the street.

"Gee- that's like, uuuh... the UN, man. Damn, we walked the wrong way. Let's go...back...uuuuuhhh...let's not go back... hmmmmm. Now what... I know - let's go down Second avenue and then hang a right on 33<sup>rd</sup>..."

We arrived at Penn Station frozen to the core. We found some melting flight attendant who sold us coffee. Some time around 5AM, we caught the first train out of New York City, and walked the two and a half miles back home. We stopped half way, to warm up at the Menlo Roach Coach for some burgers and fries. The only people there were the all night truck drivers and religious zealots who get up before dawn to eat a greasy meal before bothering God about the pissy little problems they have with other people who don't share their pissy little problems.

The fries were cold. I felt like my eyeballs were going to fall out of my head.

When I got home, the sun was well up, my parents had just made breakfast, and were surprised to see me rolling in. I explained that the concert had gone on longer than expected, and we had missed the last train back, and had to wait for the first one to leave, and we stayed up all night in Penn Station and that I was really tired (yawn) and was going to go to bed and I will see them later in the afternoon...

They were, uncharacteristically, fairly sympathetic. I went downstairs to my basement hovel and found a gargoyle sitting on the end of my bed, next to my desk, smoking a cigar with the New York Sunday Times in his lap. He said I was made of tough stuff- it was cold last night. He said there were good gargoyles and bad gargoyles. He said he was a good gargoyle. He asked me if I wanted to read the Magazine Section or the Book Reviews. I told him I was tripping and that he was just a product of my twisted psychedelic imagination. He said I was wrong - my twisted psychedelic imagination was the only way we could possibly meet. I told him to buzz off — I was tired and needed rest.

I dreamt about blinky lights. Lots and lots of blinky lights.