

Post Script: Moonrise Kingdom

by Chris Okum

Suzy Bishop and Sam Shakusky ran away from home in 1969 and joined The Rice Family, also known as The Fort Hill Community, centered in a few houses in the Fort Hill section of Roxbury, Massachusetts. Founded by former musician and filmmaker Jack Rice, the Rice Family was considered by those on the outside as a commune at best and a cult at worst. Assuming that they were joining a group centered on counter-cultural ideas and values, Suzy and Sam soon began to feel stifled under Rice's leadership, which proved to be virulently anti-hippie, with female members expected to dress and behave conservatively, while male members were forced to keep their hair relatively short by the standards of the day. According to both Bishop and Shakusky, Rice discouraged couples from spending private time together, and Rice ordered Bishop to get an abortion after finding out that Bishop had become pregnant during an unsanctioned midnight dalliance with Shakusky. Bishop constantly rebelled against the notion that she was to act obedient and serve in domestic capacities only, while Shakusky drew Rice's ire for refusing to dominate and control Bishop. After coming to the realization that the foremost goal of the Rice Family was to provide a financially and emotionally supportive environment for Rice to do his creative work, Bishop and Shakusky fled the community. Broke and living in an abandoned Boston bread factory, Bishop eventually found work as a go-go dancer and part-time actress, while Shakusky fell into drug addiction and petty crime. After being featured in *Get It Together!*, a documentary on the city's burgeoning hippie scene, Bishop was chosen by world-renowned Italian filmmaker Giorgio Vivaldi to star in his first American production, *Death Valley*, a film about two urban guerrillas - a girl and a boy - on the run from the F.B.I who find a sect of like-minded young people living in the

eponymous Southern California desert. Vivaldi decided to cast Shakusky opposite Bishop after witnessing Shakusky violently berate a man Shakusky assumed to be an undercover police officer ("He was the angriest young man I had ever seen," Vivaldi said in an interview around the time of the film's release). While Bishop proved to have a natural camera presence, Shakusky had a hard time finding not only the key to his character, but Vivaldi's politics, often arguing with the Academy Award-winning director about the contents of the script, the film's climactic orgy scene most of all. Once the film was released, Bishop and Shakusky, despite both the film and their performances being savaged by the critics, found themselves in demand for magazine photo shoots and talk shows, with their appearance on *The Dick Cavett Show* now legendary for the belligerence Shakusky showed towards not only Cavett, but his other guests as well, including Dr. Joyce Brothers and Norman Mailer. Soon after their appearance on Cavett's show Bishop and Shakusky separated, with Bishop moving to England and Shakusky staying behind in Los Angeles, appearing in one more film (*Swamp Bait*, starring Anulka Dziubinska, Playboy Magazine's Playmate of the Month for May, 1973) before eventually falling back into drug addiction and a life of crime. On August 29, 1973, Shakusky and two other men attempted to rob a Crocker Bank in Beverly Hills, California. One of the men, Sonny 'Sand' Dunes, was shot and killed by the police. Shakusky was arrested and sentenced to a term of six to fifteen years in San Quentin State Prison. Shakusky died in prison on February 7, 1978, during an apparent weightlifting accident, when a 150-pound barbell fell on his neck and he suffocated. Prison officials did not suspect foul play. He was 26 years old. Bishop's acting career eventually flamed out as well, but not before meeting British Glam Rock superstar Brian Slade on the set of a quasi-fictional documentary about Slade directed by D.A. Pennebaker. Bishop and Slade's marriage, while short-lived (Slade was assassinated on stage during a concert in 1973, although there are still those who believe he faked his own death and disappeared from public only to reappear later in the early 1980s as the arch-

conservative area pop star Tommy Stone), produced one child, Anna Belle. Bishop now lives in Big Sur, California, where she has been working at the Esalen Institute as a Creative Arts Therapist since 1987.

