

Summoned by the Board

by Jeff Goldberg

The Divine Board of Directors had summoned me to a meeting. They wanted to have a word with me related, I assumed, to the less than flattering remarks I'd been making about them.

They were all sitting naked in a sauna and drinking Diet Coke, with droopy ball sacks and sweat rolling over massive man titties and paunches. Yahweh sat on an upper bench, wearing dark goggles to protect his eyes from the brightness of his own still radiant tanning lamps, and reading a smeared, stained copy of yesterday's *Post*. He was attached at the hip by a knotty mound of flesh to his Siamese twin Allah. They cast sideways glances downwards at each other, still secretly comparing the sizes of their withered old cocks. With a mouthful of brown teeth, Muhammad bit into a blood orange laced with hop. Jesus looked at the others with the forlorn dopey smile of a terminal cancer victim.

It seemed to be Yahweh's meeting, and he did the talking. "So, Sterne, you brought us some enlightenupment maybe?" he asked.

"My name's not Sterne any more."

"Oh, maybe you changed it to Smith, or Brown?"

"No."

"So what do I call you? *Schmuck? Schmendric?*"

"Dai Lo."

"Dai what?"

"Dai Lo."

"Dai Lo, Dai Schmo, you really think I give a fuckin shit?" I was silent. The hot air in the sauna seared my throat and lungs.

"Big shot. He's a real big shot, isn't he? Real, real big shot."

I wished if the Old Boy was going to smite me he'd just get it over with. It was hot in there and smelled like piss. Instead He just continued with the sermon. "Who the fuck are you to judge Me? You don't judge. I judge. It's my job, see, judging. I have no choice. I'm Yahweh, creator of all things—ALL. Good, evil, life, death, judgment,

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forgivingness. You want forgivingness, you got to have judgment. You think I like being this way. You think I wouldn't rather be all mellow and la-lala-lala down by the pool drinking margaritas. Ehh? But to do that I'd have to start a hepatitis outbreak from kids shitting in the shallow end. You see how it is, Big Shot? If you want forgivingness talk to my boy Yahoo. He's a soft touch. He'd probably listen to your crap. Eh Yahoo?"

"That's not my name, Dad. I'm Jesus."

"*Vos ret ir epes? Vyzoso! Yahoo,*" he scolded. "I tell you, things were all right in ages past, but today I can't get no respect. No respect. Look at that bastid Allah, stole my act, the bastid—look at him, the bastid." He glared menacingly at the bearded twin gnawing and tugging at their conjoined knot, trying to break away.

A very old white-haired woman in a house-dress and babushka, wearing gray stockings and plain black shoes, knocked on the steamy window.

"You okay in there? Vant some fresh towels? Some *kichel*, some *kuchen*? A glass tea maybe?"

I eyeballed her quizzically.

"Lillith. She's getting old too." He lit a cigar stub and coughed smoke in my direction.

*"The old mystical feminine ain't what she used to be
Ain't what she used to be, ain't what she used to be."*

As he crooned, he seemed to forget I was there; then he suddenly looked up. "Whad're you still doing here? Go! Gedouta my sight," he commanded weakly with the gesture of ultimate disapproval of Jewish fathers through the ages, turning away from me and simultaneously flicking me brusquely away from him with the backs of his fingers, uttering only a grumbled "Feh!" as if I was an insignificant bug.

In one way the Old Fart was right. Who the fuck was I, a middle-aged, bald, overweight man, who as Ikkyu often reminded me, "barery know ass from hore in ground," who was I to think that Jake Sterne had something to offer the world? Well, maybe Jake Sterne didn't, but Dai Lo did. Dai Lo, peaceful samauri, lover of

countless beauties, righter of wrongs, protector of the weak, avenger of delusion, who had tasted heaven and slipped back through the night to the place where real love is, Dai Lo would save them all.

I revved up the Mercedes and started the descent, as the Fat Geisha sang in the distance one last time.

*The years go by without a care
Where groves of lilacs perfume the air
Until the garlands of flowers rare
Worn in her divine silken hair*

*Begin suddenly to fade and then to fall
She starts to sweat, and worst of all
For the first time in eons to blink her eyes
And that's a sure sign she's going to die.
In the blink of an eye
Even gods can die
Impermanence is all
Beware the fall.*

