

September 1969

by Michael K. White

Lake Berryessa, CALIFORNIA

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It was dusk on the 27th of September when the Stocky Man finished his work and trudged casually back across the mainly treeless, flat expanse to his car. He could hear the moans and screams but he was unhurried and unconcerned. The Lake was quiet and now, golden hour, it was quite beautiful. There was a breeze picking up the hint of fall and the last of the summer crickets and cicadas ground their legs in a sound like sleigh bells as the Stocky Man strolled back to where the cars were parked.

The distressed voices had died away in the cool fresh evening but the Stocky Man was sweating beneath his hood and layers of clothes. Taking his time, he removed the hood and threw it in the trunk of his white sedan, which was parked diagonally. Highway Patrol style, behind the cream colored Kharman Ghia.

The Stocky Man listened because he thought he could hear yelling but the breeze kicked up and he heard nothing but the faint, distant *Tatatatatatat* from a woodpecker. He wiped the bloody blade of his bayonet knife on the grass and replaced it in its sheath. He took his pistol and hid it in his trunk. He removed his layers of jackets, used to camouflage his true appearance and pocketed the clip on sunglasses that he had used on the outside of the hood to obscure his eyes. He could see the hood in his open car trunk, like an lifeless doll, it's large square cornered head piece looked like a cloth version of a paper grocery bag with eye holes. The front flap was splayed below the hood and the circle with a cross inside of it

he had expertly attached to its center shimmered in the warm glow of the fading sunset.

Closing the trunk, The Stocky Man decided he had had one more chore to perform. He pulled out a magic marker and squatted down next to the boy's Kharman Ghia car. The boy had tried to talk to him during the Event, but he hadn't really listened to him. He was a college boy and talked like a college boy which the Stocky Man despised. It had been a pleasure to stab him. The girl was different, she had squealed which he loved and her desperate fear and animal eyes had excited him past the point of no return.

It had been a good day.

With the magic marker he began writing on the driver's side door of the Kharman Ghia. First he drew his symbol, the circled cross that looked like a crosshairs in a rifle scope, or a printer's alignment mark or a projectionists leader symbol. Beneath it he wrote; "Vallejo/12-20-68/7-4-69/Sept 27-69-6:30/by knife."

A sound interrupted him and he stood looking toward the lake. He could see a fishing boat going back and forth near the shore and he thought he heard some shouting. Time to go.

After a leisurely drive of about a half hour toward Napa, The Stocky Man pulled up to a pay phone at the Napa Car Wash. He thought about washing his car after his phone call. He reached into the pocket of his pleated trousers and his fingers felt the change he had taken from the boy when he had told the boy and the girl that he was an escaped convict and needed their money and car keys. It was only about seventy cents, a Quarter and some nickels and pennies. The Quarter had some dried blood on it so the Stocky Man licked it until it was clean then he deposited it into the pay phone.

"Napa Police Department, Officer Slaight."

The Stocky Man at first said nothing.

"Hello?" The Officer sounded annoyed.

"I want to report a murder, no, a double murder. They are two miles north of park headquarters. They were in a white Volkswagon Kharman Ghia."

There was a pause while Officer Slight took this in.
"Where are you now?" he asked, his adrenalin rushing.

"I'm the one who did it."

The Stocky Man almost whispered putting down the phone, careful not to hang it up. He would have liked to have gotten his Quarter back, but sometimes you just had to let that sort of thing go.

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