

Full Tilt Boogie

by Rich Haber

You find yourself dancing with demons, on a cold weary dreary after many years of sobriety. “Come in, friends... long time no see!” you say, noticing one that looks like you but with eyes popped out and spittle hanging to its chin.

Pale and unsure, you light a few candles and incense, sending your thoughts into an acid place you remember, outlines glowing with the wet intensity of a throbbing sex organ, choose your gender. The spirits find items you've buried deep in your body and scrape them through your liver, sending small rivers of blood into your stomach.

The room reels suddenly. In your nausea you realize it can't be happening, you aren't dreaming, someone went and changed the fabric of reality when you weren't paying attention to the teacher, water of life, flowing yin and yoni along the endless Moëbius loop of infantile regression and fully realized enlightenment. You're seized by tinnitus but it's not your ears, it's the phone, ringing at 2 AM.

“Hello?” you say, trying to angle the caller ID so you can see the info. “Who is this?” you demand, seeing a blank LED screen.

“It's me, your unconscious. What the fuck are you doing alive? You were scheduled for...” the voice is familiar but certainly not yours. Your dead mother? Cousin Ellen? Aunt Sylvia? You stare at the receiver, not quite hearing the voice but afraid to replace it to your ear.

“It's 2 in the morning. Stop fucking around and tell me who you are,” you say, bravado dripping from the growing bald spot on your head. Your fear is copper flavored, the nausea stepping up to smack one outta the ballpark.

"Die already, will you? Check your blood pressure, it's through the roof. Do it now, I'll wait." Wait, the voice is yours, age 12, not a female's. You pull out the pressure cuff, pump the bubble thing, staring at the gismo that resembles your caller ID. You see the result, eyes bulging. You look in the mirror, see the spittle on your chin, the tiny voice alive again.

You pick up the phone. "If you want to make a call, hang up and dial..." You replace the phone in its cradle, singing rockabye baby. You crawl into bed, pull the plastic bag over your head and drift toward oblivion. In your mind the face of God appears, classical flowing beard, Johannes Brahms playing the Requiem behind it.

"What the fuck are you doing, child? Get that thing off your head. Now. I'll wait," God says. You open your mouth and poke a hole through the plastic, your finger going down your throat. This is more than nausea can handle and you throw up projectilely. The phone rings.

"Hello?" you hear yourself say.

"Man, you sound like death warmed over, buddy. Where you been?" says a familiar voice but you can't place it. "I been calling for 2 hours. Don't you believe in waking up in the morning?"

"Yeah, but not 2 in the morning. Who the hell is this and why are you calling at this ungodly hour?"

"It's ten after 12 noon. You need to lay off that shit my friend," says the voice, laughing. You realize it's your voice, age 22. You hear the beginning of a squeal and feel the tinnitus take hold. It builds in intensity until your head is pulsating with unbearable pain. You wonder how old you are at this moment. The mirror is fogged with mammatus clouds, like an egg carton, bulging erections against cotton briefs. You're standing in your doorstep, screaming into the phone "Leave me the fuck alone! Do you understand?"

Your neighbors open their doors, shocked and embarrassed by your nudity. You follow their gaze and see you're indeed naked. You duck back inside but in slow motion, while someone's hand grabs your phone. You let it go, slam the door and lock it.

You turn the deadbolt as spirits descend from the ceiling around you, their teeth and claws glinting metallic in your face. You can't fight them anymore and slump to the floor in a fetal position. The cold tile sends you shivering toward oblivion again, and again God is talking to you. "Damned shame, such potential, who knew? Well, besides me."

As He says this, Satan appears, classical in red skin, immense priapus, horns, snake tail, black mustache and goatee, Modest Moussorgsky playing Night on Bald Mountain behind him. He stands one hoof on your hip, the other on the side of your head but you feel no weight.

"Wanna make a deal, Jim? How bout it? You got nothin to lose, compadre." You want to answer but something is growing in your mouth. Your tongue is enlarging... no wait, it's growing hair. Wait, it's not hair, it's planarian flatworms, squirming with an earthy taste oozing down your throat. A terrible itching spreads from your solar plexus, under your skin everywhere. You know if you scratch even once, you won't stop til you've scraped off all your skin, head to toe.

"Okay! Okay! I'll take anything for a moment's peace!" you scream.

"Anything?" asks Satan. "Why don't you listen to my deal first, fool? I take you back to your youth, your life at age 12 but take your memory away from age 12 on. In return, you give me..."

"Never mind," you say, rising from the floor, fluids running along the tiles you've been lying on. Blood, urine, sweat and drool, better

clean it up before Zelda arrives... my God! Zelda! What will she think?

Her face appears in the balcony doors without her body. It's your imagination but you're not sure. How many demons are still here you wonder, walking into the bedroom, noticing the candles burning the wooden desk they're on. Things are coming back to normal but you aren't certain reality will make it all the way. Maybe food poisoning. Yeah, the crabs you thought were safe, in Loveland Colorado, 1,500 miles from either ocean.

You go to the full length closet mirrors, wondering what the hell's coating them. You take a dirty sweatshirt from a chair and start wiping. As your reflection comes into view, you break out in sweat as breasts appear in the mirror and no penis. You drop the shirt, look at your hands, slender fingers with remnants of nail polish on long nails. The phone rings.

You ignore it, running toward the balcony doors full tilt boogie, the Valkyries fanning their wings to lift you through the shattering glass, across the edge-railing and out into thin air. As you descend in slow motion again, you remember your name, your history and how the first kiss of death tasted the last time. Your laugh follows you down, follows you down, baby let me follow you down; well I'd do anything in this God Almighty world if you'd only let me follow you down.

