

Man-Bomb (excerpt from a Bromance in progress)

by Shawn Misener

"This is no party!" screamed the man shaped like a cartoon ACME bomb, a Bible in one hand and a revolver in the other, Ronald Reagan's waxy face stretched across his chest, spaghetti sauce and crouton crumbs Pollacked over Our Great President's reassuringly dashing forehead wrinkles.

The crowd- which consisted of exclusively men with beards and djembe drums and women with hairly legs poking out of corduroy patchwork skirts- cowered and crawled in fear around the angry man-bomb, mortally frightened yet encouraged to shimmy because the Grateful Dead were still in the tape deck. More than one of them were in the act of actively contemplating the curious high brought on by mixing the fear of imminent death with Jerry's fluffy "Eyes of the World" solo from Red Rocks in '88. Paisley Allen was shrieking "Shake it Reaper! Shake it! Shake it!" with her face buried in the carpet.

Man-Bomb fired off a shot into Bob Marley's posterized cheek, and then another into the stereo, and began to sing "Ordinary Average Guy" in a crooked alto:

*I go to parties sometimes until four
It's hard to leave when you can't find the door
It's tough to handle this fortune and fame
Everybody's so different I haven't changed*

James snickered and ran his fingers through his tight respectable beard. "This is fucking hilarious."

"Yeah," replied Francis.

They relaxed against the doorframe, a mere dozen feet directly in front of Man-Bomb, philosophically reposed and definitely amused.

"I mean, this is almost too good. You got a smoke for me?"

Francis dug around in his puffy and ill-fitting black winter coat, eventually producing a pack of silvers. Holding them out to James he said, "Do you think he actually gonna do something, you know, *stupid?*"

"Nah, no fucking way."

They watched as Man-Bomb pointed his Bible at the wallowing hippies. "You. *You*. YOU! All of you consumers! Live and learn!" He tossed the Bible into the air and spun the gun on his middle finger, as if flipping off the holy scripture. With incredible grace and mastery he righted the gun and blew three holes clean through the airborne book. The room fell silent in the echo of the blast, the Bible thumping the floor like an afterthought or a fading sentence. . .

. . .And Man-Bomb smiled, a coy grin that belied his bombastic act, tossing the gun toward Francis and James. "Hot" he said, and walked out of the room.

Francis discovered that the revolver was indeed very hot when he absentmindedly went to catch it, and he batted it to the ground after fumbling for a second through a clumsy hot potato dance.

James was in awe. "Fucking brilliant," he gasped.

The mass of slithering hippies seemed to come around, some of them standing and embracing in mystical hugs, men and women crying alike, while others were feeling their faces and wondering when they would wake up. Paisley was poking the swiss cheese Bible, fingering the holes with a confused look on her face.

One of the them, a small dude who greatly resembled a bleating goat, struggled to his feet and landed on the wall next to James. He gestured toward the cigarette and James passed it to him.

"I don't smoke, usually," the goat-man said with a slight Australian accent. "Do you know who that was?"

"No," said Francis, sucking his burnt thumb. James shrugged.

"What in the world was his problem? What was that?"

“I don't know, but I intend to find out,” said James, picking up the gun, stuffing it into his jeans, and heading out after Man-Bomb. Francis looked back at Goat-Man, who was puffing smoke from his nose and coughing. “I'm with him,” he said, pointing to James and shuffling behind.

