

Outfit

by Steven Gowin

Momma called them Vaughens, "a outfit," and said, "they shoulda throwed the book at that Darla Jean."

However, I do not agree. The court ruled justice as far as I can tell; Vaughens might not hurt a fly under a normal circumstance.

Darla Jean attended my class of 1971; go Bulldogs. She wore too many freckles, but none the pretty model kind like them New York fashion plates without make up in *People* magazine at the SuperValu checkout.

Nope, these was the orangey splotchy out of control kind you could see through her thin white hair which was stringy and home cut, and she needed braces over them yellowy choppers too, but never had none, old Bucky Beaver.

Her clothes hung off her boney scare crow frame like they never ever fitted but had a kinda mind their own which was to fall to the earth every minute. No color worked with no other combination; nothing helped nothing.

Blue, blue, blue like the US Air Force would answer, but sadly I could not advise at the time and am ashamed too of how we tormented her for her odd ways because she never smelled bad like Marcia Johnson or nothing. We did not treat her Christian at all, and come out in trial what she thought of us.

Cass Vaughen headed up that clan North of town. Fed a pig, butcher in the fall, couple of cow, two or three ugly children, a spitting llama. He kept junked ruin in the yard: weeded up New Holland bailer, rusty straight eight Buick '52, warped spruce Criss Craft, to name a few. He didn't mind if you busted glass for jollies out there, but most would not be caught dead on the place.

Time to time, Daddy Vaughen frequented Ethel's Tap to watch a ball game. He'd treat you a Grain Belt or a round for the house which practice did not exist amongst the sauerkraut crowd but was appreciated by my old man. Mom said it was just like them wild

North of Towners, Catholics, sure. They took cues from Beelzebub and the Pope in Rome.

Running his mouth off ceaseless served Cass poorly too; said he raised a 300 pound pumpkin, dug a sweet water well alone, outran the Rock Island Rocket at the flats along the river, Park Lane the best car on the road. Nothing any Lutheran cared a whit about except for Cass's bragging which tolerate they could not.

Probably one of them krauts started the rumor of summer dancing and chants and goings on at the Vaughens, big doings and bonfires lasting on into winter time in them overheated, sheet plastic insulated rooms, and that's why they was called "a godless outfit" by the same Lutherans who over influenced my Momma.

See Momma practiced their ilk herself but run off with a Marine at 16 years of age, until he left her high and dry in the lurch, and she come home from Texas tail between her legs crying and trying to patch up her reputation ever since, I guess but does not understand that tight assed does not equal upright.

Anyway, they all said Cass practiced this wiccin craft with nude hags running around naked, buck naked, and prescribing such for the entire family. That is why Darla Jean never did seem to match her clothes, but hells bells, if you didn't wear clothes much, how'd you ever be right in them?

Well now I been to Guam Island the Pacific with our United States Air Force Strategic Air Command, and seen a thing or two. For example, Asiatics who'll eat with a stick but still nourish some fine looking children and women. So I say what if that Cass bunch qualified for naturalists anyway? They never did me or Daddy or even Momma one tiny bit of harm, so why should I care?

I ain't clear on all that happened, but momma said the boy, Stone, Darla Jean's new man, had been runnin' around all over Dallas County and dealing drugs and almost hit that retarded Mayweather kid on his bike when he, Stone, the husband, was drunk, and he was drunk most of the time, and beatin' on Darla Jean too.

One night late, Darla catches him front seat of the Malibu goin' at it with some bleachie headed gal. She marches inside for that loaded

45 cannon, stomps back out, pumps three balls into the paramour, and squeezes the other three through the windshield into Stone's brain. Then she just stands by watchin' him bleed out before callin' the deputies her self.

The girlfriend survived, but in testimony, Darla Jean said she killed Stone alright, meant to by God, and didn't care about it for she hated the town how we dealt her and them Vaughens so much pain for many a year and wouldn't mind did we hang her now and wouldn't we prefer it anyway? She would.

But Darla Jean's lawyer convinced 12 honest men about Napoleonic justice and crimes of passion, and in the end, they called her guilty of assault but acquitted on manslaughter. Judge said three years, but paroled after three months, she come straight home from the Mitchelville Women's.

After that you wouldn't hear more about that bunch from nobody much except my poor momma who wouldn't let go.

She was always goin' on about how happy and so glad she was we "never turned into a outfit. No outfit like them Vaughens."

