

THE NIGHT HAS A THOUSAND HEARTS AND EYES

A SWAMP SCENARIO

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HACIENDA

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*The night has a thousand eyes,
And the day but one;
Yet the light of the bright world dies
With the dying sun.*

FRANCIS WILLIAM BOURDILLON

*Ideally a book would have no order to it,
and the reader would have to discover
his own.*

MARK TWAIN

WAITIN' FOR YOU

It was a very hot night in the Delta. The swamp literally boiling with libido and the many inmates of the earth's atmosphere were either mating or murdering.

Craving community.

If you'd climb the stairs to the top of the church tower you'd see the whole village below like a shattered diamond on a slightly hilly bosom, a seductive and sweaty décolleté of a brown, busty blues singer, swelling above the edge of a dark green dress of fertile forest land containing the secrets and expectations tight communities tend to hide.

This was the place where everybody that once mattered to us grew up and gradually came to hate what they loved.

But no one climbed to the top.

Well, Norma Jean did.

Fourteen years old.

And fell down, over the roof of God's house.

She was pushed, community said.

Yeah, pushed by the community's crazy demands for this poor girl, this angelic apparition... to eventually become this daredevil tom-boy she was.

Or had been.

Crickets crying to the rise of the moon, kids playing in the streets, unable to sleep, some hanging in chairs on the veranda's, everybody outside, too hot to stay in, the couples were lying everywhere in the bushes.

In the illogical street plan of lost youth I was looking for Molly Fleur who I heard would return from New Orleans this weekend. Men and women were hanging out, eating, drinking, laughing,

flirting, not wearing a shirt or just a camisole.

Music in the air. The cadence of the Cajun accordion. As if life were a constant feast and every Tuesday a Mardi Gras.

Soft, warm summer breeze going through the houses opened to the world this night with faltering lights and crackling electricity, flowing through the dusky rooms and over the sleepy veranda's, connecting the many scandalously hidden stories of the broken families of St. Elsewhere, this small village somewhere between Lafayette (the happiest city in Louisiana, the heart of Cajun and Creole Country) and Houma, in Terrebonne Parish. Most of the pioneers who came to Terrebonne migrated from the Mississippi River, down Bayou Lafourche and Bayou Terre-

bonne, 'Good Earth'... abundance of wildlife, seafood and fertile land. They chose this area because of its isolated geographic location and minimal government control. Acadian, Spanish, English and West-Caribbean settlers. Sugarcane and moss-draped wetlands, swamp monsters, voodoo priestesses, Choctaw and Houma tribe and faith healers.

Here, in St. Elsewhere (Saint Ailleurs, Santo Otro Lugar) tiny white and mulatto boys were longing for the motherly bosoms and hips of the black widows cooking patchouli in the street, Jambalaya, crawfish pie, filé gumbo, who in turn were longing for tenderly tight white and mulatto boys spying on them in the sweaty evening...

Life in its essence's beautiful, and it really would be if it weren't for the pois-

onous predators prowling about hungry for the sweet-smelling lives of others...

Tonight my only real goal was seeing *Jolie Fleur*, as the men from the Cajun Cantina used to call Molly, my heart excited, heavy and light. I just had to see her and tell her all I carried inside...

Molly and her family used to live in a white house made of good wood on a colonial estate a little outside the village. On our way to the marshland of Hatefield we went by the estates of the elite. Sometimes we hung around for awhile and played with some of the children living there or we called each other names depending on the weather in this wasteland as unstable as our mestizo moods.

At the end of Peninsula Avenue there was a very big estate with a very large, ostentatious country house with dark

brown stone with golden gutters and lampposts giving this building a very bleak and black look. A very rich family from Scottish and German descent lived there with two sons, the youngest of them now a pompous businessman and politician.

Old mr. Dilly and his wife were long gone and the younger brother now owned both estates, the 'black' and the 'white'. Molly and her parents had moved to a smaller country house closer to the village centre. This happened about ten years ago. Young Dilly had a complete wing added to it, even larger than the actual house. Great taste, so the trees of course had to be cut down.

Everything Dan owned he owed to his father, a ruthless businessman back in the days. And it was the will of old man

Dilly that the difficult Dan inherit the largest part of his real-estate.

Dietrich Dilly had been investigated back then for profiteering from government subsidies. His bully son Dan eventually became the president of his daddy's real-estate business. Two years later, they were sued by the U.S. Justice Department's Civil Rights Division for racial discrimination against black people.

Dan Dilly lived in Molly's former home destroyed by utter tastelessness, a wealthy businessman and governor producing the greatest misery of the greatest number here in the Delta.

As it says in an old Scottish border ballad:

*I've heard my granny crack
O' sixty twa years back*

*When there were sic a stock of
Dandies*

There had been too much Dilly in this wetland for decades and now there was too much Dan Dilly too all over the place. A fact we had long been well-accustomed to.

My thoughts only went out to Molly, ever since our childhood days when we discovered the forest and wetlands.

If only I could win the heart of this fine young lady she had become. A someone made just for me, you know. This evening I was keen on finding out if she still remembered me but at the same time reluctant to really find out.

‘I’m here to see what she has to say,’ I told myself. But though St. Elsewhere wasn’t that big, somehow we always managed to avoid each other, you know,

like at a bad reunion where you meet the types you want to avoid but never the one person you came for.

Me and my friends entered The Juke Joint at Main Street where a fiddler just finished his own freaking frantic *danse macabre* for a cheap whiskey or bourbon.

The fiddler's arm had gone dead and talk was beginning to spread.

'The cat is out of the bag,' we heard John Didless yelling from the other side of the joint, 'they say this Wetstone died in jail, suicide, they say, well, can you believe that?!'

Didless was a successful man in the swamp. He was known for organizing garden parties for the happy horny few and filming them too, tho' not every body knew...

Politics ruin the mood and this was a nasty political stench coming out of jail making you sick. Some suggested Dan Dilly was involved too.

In a swamp there's a lot of talk going on, most of it rumors that lead back to the deepest wells in society's open zoo.

Sometimes you got really angry about it, but most of the time you didn't give a fuck. The rich and famous get away with a lot of shit, that's common, while the rest of us whistle the workman's blues.

The last time I was really angry was a few years ago when we joined a graduating party on the Mark Twain, an old river boat used for dance parties. And did we have a ball! Molly left with a handsome young man that night, an older student she had met during the introduction week of the Loyola University in The Big Easy. A Criminology

and Justice dude, why, what would then
be the fucking link with the Marine
Biology study *she* was going to take?
Studying the underworld beneath the
surface of course, o yeah!

Boy, such anger!

Melancholy.

Sadness.

Out on the street again with the boys.
Evening still young, sleep banished from
the wriggling wetland. *The night has a
thousand hearts and eyes.* And me just
waiting for you.

BISOU DU BONHEUR

Between the woods and wetlands surrounding St. Elsewhere there's a nice grove of small beeches, *une fayette*.

That night, with everybody out in the streets and on the veranda's, outside the cafés and creole kitchens, rumors were spreading that somewhere out there in the old growth forest with shaded, damp understory of broad-leaf trees, shrubs and ferns, near the shore of the bayou, the body of a man was found. Police cars were heading for the area where it had been seen and all of a sudden the whole town was captivated by this silent search.

But then news reached us, disturbing messages from the heart of dark-

ness, the bayou where the roots of trees are hidden under still water and the banks of the river are difficult to define. Strange echoes we heard in this moonlit night, chaotic chorus of the collective subconscious.

Nonetheless, in the streets the winning and dining went on while Milly Mamou, *tit galop traiteur*, tried healing tense loins of worried young men in the back room of Blue Bayou Saloon by both faith and folklore of the laying on of hands.

Jean Lafitte staggered out of the Acadian Anchorage Bistrot with a small bottle of Jim Beam's in his one hand and with the other arm around his darling wife Hanah, daughter and descendant of the Mi'kmaq tribe from

New Foundland. Her family name being Jeddore, I believe one of her foremothers must have been as beautiful as she was now and in her days frequently addressed by the several French settlers with the sweet words '*j'adore ...*' followed by her real name. After a while you start believing you are '*jeddore*' and your family too, so why not keep it that way?!

Hot wind swept through the neighborhood and with it the sounds of strange rumors.

Yes, a dead body was found and some folks now seem to know for sure it is the well-known mister Dilly, real-estate giant and biggest shareholder of the greatest company of exquisite