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UNCONTROLLED EXPERIMENTS IN FREEDOM

BY: BRIAN STEPHEN ELLIS

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Uncontrolled Experiments in Freedom

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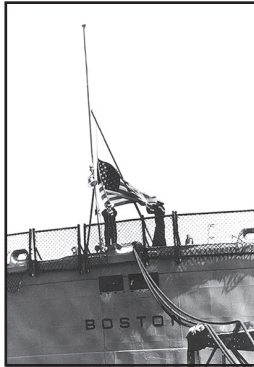
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Uncontrolled Experiments in Freedom

is a book of poetry documenting the manic and shimmering life of Brian Stephen Ellis. His narratives come from the images of a world where many believe no poetry to exist. This is a second-hand microscope examining the fuzzy science of survival.

Enjoy.



THANK YOU

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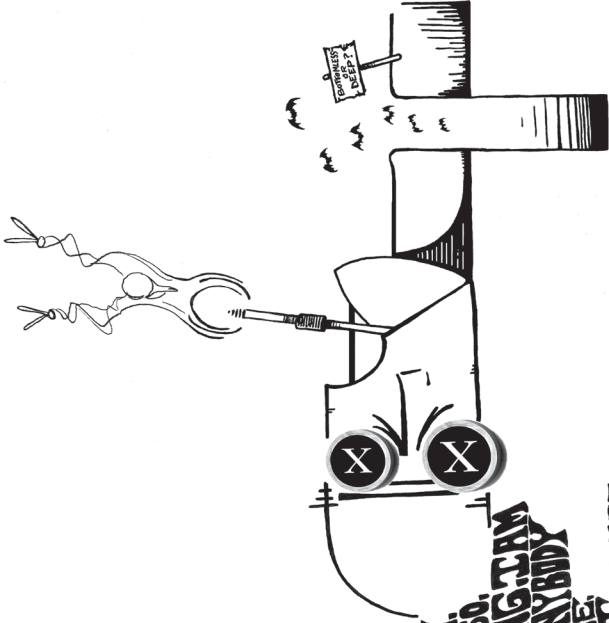
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UNCONTROLLED EXPERIMENTS IN FREEDOM

“RELAX...THIS WON'T HURT”

- Hunter S. Thompson

Hunter S. Thompson exit note illustration
by shea M gauer



SOMEONE'S MORE BEING MORE WALKING MORE FUN.
ANDREW WING 67 THAT IS YEAH PAST 50.
I'M MORE THAT I NEEDED TO WANT TO BRING. TAM
ALWAYS BITCHY AND FUN... FOR ANY BODY
YOU'RE GETTING GREY. ACT YOUR OLD AGE.
THIS WON'T HURT

HST 

SHOPPING CARTS

It started as a game of Communist Soccer
Communist Soccer is when you and your friends
stand around a shopping cart, volleying the ball back and forth
eventually getting it in the basket

In Communist Soccer, when one person gets it in the basket
everyone does

We had the energy, we had the night, we had each other
We had a problem,
we were way too good at this
So we did the most obvious thing: we stacked another
shopping cart on top of the one we already had
But a hot minute later we were popping the ball in
every other slap of the ankle

By the time we lifted that third cart in the air
we knew something unexpected was going on...
maybe even something magical

The Shopping Carts, they were begging for it
Begging for us to pull pyramids out of them
So we answered their prayers
The logistics were immediate
and the mechanics came even quicker

We worked in pairs, gathering the carts, lifting and attaching,
deciding where the sculpture was going to go next
First the center is upright and then
we spread outward,
laying the carts on their sides
The next layer rests with its front wheels
hooked into the basket in the center

You wouldn't suspect how many ways
shopping carts can lock into one another
In the middle of an empty Stop & Shop parking lot on a weeknight
It didn't take long for authority to come after us
And we ran, but not before we we're given a thick:

"Hey! you think this is funny? Who's gonna take this down?"

Some lifetime-dead-end-job schlub just like me
whose morning routine will be abruptly interrupted by something
he/she didn't know existed

Our work was not finished

At Star Market we erected an overflowing swarm
of metal and carriage

By the dumpsters of Family Dollar we recollected the scattered bones
of commercialism into a throne of modern antiquity
We slid them upside-down into the ones right-side up
We forced wheels into handles

In the alley behind Toys 'r' Us we erected a ziggurat
to the possibilities of shopping carts

2

It was what was inside of us
and like everything else
it came from the earth

We chiseled away all that was not shopping cart from the air
and the closer we drew
to the realm of the impossible, the larger it became

We wrote letters, in the language of shopping cart,
and they read:

*Wage Slave,
When you pull this apart tomorrow, please,
do not let any weight gather in your shoulders
We wanted to put a little impossible in your life again
a little unexpected, a little
'I-don't-know-what's-around-the-corner'
and we wanted to remind you of the necessity of magic
So when you pull apart these structures, sculptures, pyramids
remember that a pyramid has five points
One
that aims toward god
and four
that aim for something more important*

ELEVEN TO SEVEN

I arrive at 10:30 and the high-schoolers
arrive fifteen minutes later
on their way home
from the liquor store, getting mixers

At 11 my shift starts and it all
begins a half-an-hour later
When the evening shift nurses get off duty
they buy their low-tar cigarettes and clear out

Next the nightclub crowd washes in
for a pit stop before they hit main street

The single mothers that live in the neighborhood
behind the convenience store file in after that
filing in with those hapless, loveable stoners
who are always looking for that same thing
that they never find

12:30 and the waitresses drag themselves in
They and I share the same meager smile

By one, those nightclubbers have got
their drunk on, and are crashing their way back home,
buying condoms and the pack of cigarettes
they thought that they didn't need

At 1:30 the newspaper delivery drivers purchase
over-the-counter amphetamines
and fill up their station wagons

Two o'clock belongs to the cab drivers
howling and yelping and blowing off steam
from twelve hours of bad tips

At 2:30 I fall asleep

When convenience stores sleep,
they dream that they're hospitals

or, at the very least, the cursed king of sustenance
whose touch turns everything to cancer
From the slave trade coffee
to the world war gasoline, let's face it
everything in here is poison

So when the trailer truck driver shows up at three a.m.
the only thing I have to offer this man is me
He buys a pack of Camel Lights outta politeness
and hangs out by the register, telling me
about a lousy route, on a lousy road
in a lousy land that never gets more forgiving
His eyes are begging me not to become him
His heart is dying not to be my martyr

The other four nights of the week
3 a.m. is all stillness and frailty

But on Friday nights 3 a.m. is a man
whose skin is burnt by the nickelodeon of yellow lines
Whose knees ache from the hum of a gas pedal
Who gets paid just to stay awake
Who gets paid to never stop moving
Someone like me,
whose shoulders burn from constantly shoving
the stupid, stupid night
into morning

Four a.m. brings the airport employees to work

Five a.m. is an assistant manager who doubts my intelligence

By six a.m. I'm dead

And by seven, I'm driving home
My retinas scoured by the details
of all the tiny, unrecorded movements
of humans

FINGERTIP GUNFIRE

Christopher Redgate collects photographs
of people he doesn't know

My mother collects ceramic figurines of owls

I collect dead-end jobs

This is a difficult hobby to maintain
The larger my collection grows
the greater the suspicion of my new employers
I used to construct intricate fables in
the 'previous experience' boxes on my applications
No more
Now, I only write one sentence on my job applications:

Motherfucker, I Speak Register as a Second Language

I don't care how angry your customers are
I don't care how long the line is
I don't care how many items you got
I will cradle your purchases in my hands
like refugees and in their own memories
I will ring the sale with the precision of a sextant

My fingers are changeling, my fingers are liquid
My fingers are a cloud of exploding diamond gas
My fingers are lawn mowers with laser fan blades

The index and middle punch in the dollars
and the ring jams on the decimal
then it's back to the middle to enter the coins, if any
I roll my pinky over the total, and,
PFFHTFP-KRHRSSH...

the fender dinosaur squeal of quarters,
the frantic jazz high hat of dimes,
the hollow baritone of nickels,
the ancient marching band of pennies,

My hands are translators of copper and paper dialects
They know nothing of numbers, and everything of dancing
My hands have seen ten years of clinging to the bottom rung
My hands probably should've learned more in the past decade
than how to smile in the face of lazy american disrespect

Go ahead, check your receipt
I don't make mistakes
I don't want to talk about the price of your lifestyle
If you think something costs too much
Don't Buy It,
you probably don't need it anyway

Here's an idea: put me out of a job
I was looking to expand my collection anyway
Better yet, put the slave that made that item out of a job
I dare you

But don't even consider interrupting how gorgeous
my movements are
This is the only foreign language I know
This is the only musical instrument I can play

You may have all the time in the world
but I'm doubling in age every day
and I don't have enough time left in my life
to be as beautiful as I want to be

So I want you to know:
I can't let you get in the way
of my music

MEXICAN TRANQUILIZER LOVESONG

You are nineteen, young, and innocent enough
You can't yet grow hair on your face
You've never lived outside your parents' home
You haven't yet memorized the cold echo of ketamine
as it vacuums into your sinuses
like the hissing sound the sun makes
as it guillotines into six o'clock

You are nineteen, and romantic
and you and your eleven best friends move into
a three-bedroom home
A family of dropouts and shut-ins,
of criminals, and ravers, and life-experimenters

The first thing you do is throw out all of your clocks
You replace them with high-schoolers
who show up every day in time to miss first period,
bringing the morning and hangovers in their back pockets
This is where the party ended each night
There were mornings hiding around every corner
So you kept the shades drawn all day long
but drawn shades are a lousy substitute for sunset.

Your telephone lines withered and died
The television was shut off a week ago
You stop working so you have enough time
to make money, going on long journeys
made of many short deliveries,
You are nineteen
and for the first time
your life has a purpose
For the first time, you're an over-achiever

Sometimes, if you were lucky,
the weekend enveloped you like a mushroom cloud
and you and your family hunkered down and locked in,
getting lost in the maze you built together,
fashioned out of blacklights and police-beckoning techno,
filling your ears with anonymous electric heartbeats,
hammered into the rhythm of windshield-wiper blades
and c-c-cut over late nineties Madonna