

# The Band

Curt was very drunk and as he leaned over the bar counter, he delivered an oration to the barman, *"life should not be a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in a pretty and well-preserved body, but rather to skid in broadside in a cloud of smoke, thoroughly used up, totally worn out, and loudly proclaiming, 'Wow! What a ride!'. So exclaimed Hunter S. Thompson, who was a writer and a wild son of a bitch, who rode a BSA A65 Lightning motorcycle with the 'Hells Angels' and who upon his death had his ashes shot out of a cannon. He committed suicide by gunshot, very much like Ernest Hemingway."* Curt, finished his speech to the bewildered barman and turning to his band mates, he raised his glass, *"here's to Hunter S. Thompson and Ernest Hemingway, and here's to Jacko, who claimed he saw the devil with horns, just before he died."* Everyone raised their glasses, *"to Jacko."* The barman shook his head, picked up another wet glass to dry with his cloth and murmured, *"crazy bastards."*

The group of friends stood at the bar and began to argue over religion and what would happen to them after death. Jacko had died of a drug overdose and they had permission by the council to cremate him in the back garden of his estate. It had been a grand affair and the glow from the huge bonfire lit up the whole area but the smell of burning flesh did not sit well with them, even although they were out of their minds with drink and drugs. Curt's 'Native Indian' dance around the fire, screaming, *"go Jacko, go"* was much appreciated and everyone joined in. Anyway, quite how the conversation at the bar had turned to the subject of death was anyone's guess, but afterwards, most of the blame fell on Mick, who was a born-again Christian. He made his case, *"I am changing my ways, there is a God, I believe there is a heaven; Jesus died for our sins."* Jim, the agnostic, cut in, *"I have an open mind on whether there is a God or there is not, I cannot prove either way."* Curt, who was a staunch atheist, opened up, *"you are both nuts, who in their right mind can believe in a myth, there is no God, give me a break."* Pete, the roadie, exclaimed, *"none of you will be disappointed when you die, look at it logically, it is so simple - if you go to heaven and there is a God, you will not be disappointed and if death is just an eternal sleep without dreams, you will never know, so again you won't be disappointed. Anyway, if there is a God and heaven, you lot aren't going there."* Mick, interrupted Pete's ramblings, *"Christ, we have a philosopher amongst us and he's right; let's get drunk."* The group downed more drinks and then headed over to the theatre.

They hit the stage to a loud burst of applause, Curt was wearing his favourite red tee shirt with the words 'Fuck the Elites' on the front and on the back 'Down with Fascism' which seemed to go down well with the crowd. Cheers and *"fuck the establishment"* could be clearly heard amongst the crowd and applauded. Curt had quite forgotten that he had over 100 million dollars in the bank and drove a brand-new 2006 Ferrari F430 sports car. A few weeks before, he had flown his private plane to Maranello in Italy to be shown around the factory that made it; he was even introduced to Frank Stephenson, the designer of the car. The deceased Jacko had been replaced by Reg, the new drummer, whose real name was Reginald Carruthers-Smythe; his

parents owned a large private estate in Yorkshire. Two hours later, and many of their hit songs later, Curt finished the gig by ripping apart his T shirt and shouting, *"power to the people"* which received a thunderous applause as the band went into overdrive, producing a huge cacophony of sound from their guitars and Reg's drums to end it all. The band left the stage and before the applause had stopped, they were out into the night air, into the limousine and heading to their hotel.

At the bar, Reg raised his glass, *"here's to Jim's new autobiography."* Jim intervened, *"stop, no, I shelved it, the book was dull and upsetting."* Pete, the roadie, burst out laughing, *"you mean it was crap?"* The band joined in on the laughter and Jim was not pleased. He replied, *"living a crazy depraved lifestyle seemed okay at the time, but writing about it, really upset me."* Mick chimed in, *"Jim, me old pal, it's what our public expect; drink, drugs, riotous parties and fast women. I think you should go to church and become a 'Born again Christian' like me."* Jim snorted back, *"yeah, yeah, I am surprised you have not been hit by a bolt of lightning; some Christian you are; you were shagging the hotel owner's daughter last night and she was young enough to be your granddaughter."* The band burst out laughing when Mick made a cautious look up at the ceiling and then he laughed along with the rest. Several drinks later, a few snorts of cocaine, and the lot of them, with the exception of Reg, who had retired to bed, were in the limousine. Alf the chauffeur, headed along Sunset Boulevard and through the multi-coloured and brightly lit Sunset Strip, with its huge colourful billboards on the buildings, its boutiques, restaurants, nightclubs and to their destination, 'The Viper Room' in West Hollywood.

As they entered, they were greeted by applause from celebrities and the elite who meet to eat. Even the performing rock band on the stage, paused their performance to applaud them. Pete reckoned it was out of respect for wrinkled old men who were still rocking in their old age and judging by the way they staggered to a corner table with its plush red buttoned bench seats; rocking was an apt description. Curt and Mick gave him some funny looks as he sat down with a huge smile on his face. The Viper Room was styled similar to the old Harlem Jazz Clubs with its huge covered awning outside at the front door; its name clearly displayed in large letters and the bright lights shining on the sidewalk. The look and the ambiance of 'The Cotton Club' of the 1920s springs to mind, only the cars outside had changed. It exuded dark walls, red and blue ambient wall and floor lighting; multi-coloured ceiling lights and the walls decorated with picture frames, which included famous rock bands and some promoting 'Jack Daniels Whiskey'. As usual, Curt, Mick and Jim ordered copious amounts of alcohol and were surrounded by women, eager to take them to bed. The heavy metal rock band on the stage rocked the building whilst Pete was bored; his job was to make sure that by the end of the night, they all managed to crawl out of the club and back to the limousine.

Much later, Pete found Jim sitting on his own at a table in a dark corner with a bottle of Jack Daniels; it was half finished and he was quietly weeping. Pete sat down beside him and put his arm around his shoulder, *"what's up Jim, is it Elsa again?"* The drink had weakened Jim's spirit and he murmured to his friend, *"I feel so bad about it all, she was my love, and I let her down. I dumped her for another woman; after 5 years*

*together, I just dumped her and she committed suicide."* Pete attempted to console him and not for the first time; Elsa had passed away some years back but every time Jim became drunk and was left on his own, his demons came back to haunt him and they brought with them his regrets, which were many. He had often overdosed as a result but they never let him die, he was always brought back to life. Pete sat with him, removed the bottle and ordered coffee in an attempt to sober him up. Curt and Mick appeared with a couple of young girls on their arms. Curt blurted it out, *"not this again Jim, are you still crying over that broad. She killed herself, she was nuts; it was never about you; she just sought attention and overdid it with the pills. Let's go Mick; Pete will you see to Jim and we will meet you back at the hotel later on?"*

Pete nodded, and watched as they left, the girls still giggling in their arms. He murmured to himself, *"why do young girls embrace the patina of wrinkled old men, those masters of debauchery, those fallen pillars to whom society turns a blind eye; those men who have repeatedly demonstrated their lack of morals and encouraged an adoring youth to tread an immoral path. Wrinkled old men who walk the same path; incapable in their old age to tread another."* Pete helped Jim to his feet and outside they found the limousine was gone, so Pete hailed a taxi and they headed back to the hotel.

He managed to calm Jim and finally get him settled into bed. The hotel staff had watched the pair stagger into a lift and the hotel manager had feared that the suite of rooms set aside for the band would be wrecked. The manager had visions of another television being thrown out of the top floor window and onto the street again. As Pete closed the bedroom door, Alf arrived, cursing that he had been pulled out of the driving seat of the limousine and had watched Curt drive it away with Mick and the two girls. The vehicle was weaving all over the road and as it disappeared into the distance, he saw a police car pursuing it, with flashing blue and red lights, and the siren wailing. Pete came out with more philosophy, *"one day, Curt and Mick will push the boundaries of their well-being too far, it is a fine line that is drawn between modesty and hubris. One can feel the limit and those who are wise will come to recognise it and fear it, because it invariably leads to a fall from grace, even injury and in the worst case, death."*

Out on the streets of Los Angeles, Curt, was driving the limousine like a mad man possessed and now had several police cars chasing him. Mick shouted, *"faster Curt, they are catching up, head for the Santa Monica Freeway and we can bale out down at Pacific Park."* The girls were screaming in the back of the vehicle and Curt screamed, *"shut the fuck up, what with the police sirens and you pair, I am losing it."* The limousine reached the freeway and they headed down to the coast. Curt's foot was hard on the pedal and Mick's eyes were bulging as he looked at the speedometer. *"For fucks sake Curt, we are doing over 100 miles an hour, do you not think you should slow down a bit?"* Curt shrugged, *"slow down, I am just getting started."* He switched on the CD player and ZZ Top blared out in mid track, *"she don't like other women; she likes whips and chains; she likes cocaine....."* Reaching over, Curt dipped his hand into the open glove compartment, and pulling out a handful of cocaine powder, he threw it over his shoulder to the women in the back and stuffed some up his nose with a loud snort. *"Yeah man, who's the man now, I am fucking flying."* Suddenly

the limousine struck the rear of a low 'open top' sports car, and as it ran up the back, the heads of the occupants were torn off in a brilliant flash of red blood which spurted all over the front windscreen blurring Curt's view. Mick stared in horror as the heads of a man and a woman flew past his window. Before Curt could react, the limousine flew over the freeway side barrier and started a steep descent towards Olympic Boulevard, some 50 feet below.

Back at the hotel, Pete went to check on Jim and was horrified to find him lying face down on the floor. The bed covers were thrown back and he could see white powder strewn all over the bed. He turned Jim over and reeled back when he saw his dry fish like eyes staring up at him and his mouth and nose were covered in cocaine powder. Pete sat back on the floor with his back against a wall and stared at the lifeless body. He wondered how he was going to tell the band when they came back and how could they all go on with the tour, now that Jim was dead. Little did he know that the band would continue to play but in a very different theatre. Back and below the Santa Monica Freeway, Olympic Boulevard sustained a massive impact which it survived but the limousine was not so lucky and neither were its occupants. The vehicle crumpled and exploded in a massive fireball as its fuel tank burst and a metal spark on the roadway ignited it. Curt, Mick and the two girls were instantly incinerated, rather like a fly landing on an open fire. Their limbs shrank back as the searing heat melted their body fat and later the emergency services would find their charred and blackened remains in the car and scattered all over the area. Just before the crash, the last words the screaming occupants heard, came from Curt, *"fuck me, what a rush."*

Curt was the first to awaken and looking around he could see he was lying on a large marble stage surrounded by a massive circular stone amphitheatre which rose up high above him with thousands of people standing and looking down at him. It stretched beyond his vision, and up into the darkness. Mick and Jim were beside him and they sat up, rubbing their eyes. Behind them a drumkit with clashing cymbals was in full beat, its drum sticks held by Jacko whose hands were red with blood. Curt shouted, *"hey Jacko, I thought you were dead?"* He shouted back, *"I am dead you fucking idiot and so are you."* The peoples' voices rose to a crescendo, *"sing, sing, you panderers, you seducers, you philanderers, you frauds; sing for us."* Mick stood up and saw the audience was naked and standing barefooted in what appeared to be mud, which was dark brown and steaming in the night air. One, who was near the stage shouted, *"welcome to Malebolge, this city of corruption, where we stand for all eternity."*

Suddenly, Curt realised that he was completely naked, as were Mick and Jim. He tried to cover his private parts but his hands refused to react, instead he found a microphone in his right hand and guitars appeared in the hands of Mick and Jim who began to play to the beat of Jacko's drums. The two of them seemed like marionettes held up by strings and Curt joined them, his voice burst out into his favourite song and he started to dance around. He sang and danced until his throat was sore, his feet were raw and bleeding and they played until their fingers were burst to the bone with blood running over their guitar strings. The pain was excruciating and yet they could not stop; the massive crowd cheered them on. Curt could not stop, he

jumped about like a mad demented demon and could only sing one song, which he was forced to repeat, over and over again, ad infinitum, for all eternity.

The crowd cheered and even those who seemed so far away, managed to hit the band with handfuls of excrement.

### **Copyright Conditions**

This article is free for worldwide distribution by electronic means or hard copy on the condition the copyright is maintained whereby it cannot be used for commercial use without the owner's permission. Richard Lawrence has asserted his right to be identified as the 'Author of this Work' in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

Website: [www.lawrencephotographic.com](http://www.lawrencephotographic.com)

Adapted from [Ghost & Horror Stories](#)