

ASHEVILLE

Aaron Smith

In the late-night café in Asheville, a hippie-earth mother, no doubt struck by the drunken late-night post-Widespread Panic show munchies, stands up on her chair and screams the blaring Jawbreaker to a disparate and uninterested crowd of diners,

"My daughter's a bitch! A little two-year-old *bitch!*"

Everyone turns around from their meals and stares, sluggishly buzzed and anthropologically intrigued for a moment before returning to their conversations that flow through the room, forming a river of babble.

Hippie-mama throws back her handkerchiefed head and laughs triumphantly, proud to have caused a stir. Inebriated and eager to maintain her position as center-of-attention within her dreadlocked clan by any means necessary, she squeals, "I'll tell you what: Scotty-Too-Hotty" slurring now, "is soooooo fuckin' fine. I'm gonna call him right now. YES, I fuckin am, Girl! You know the cutey, the gangly one!" she squeals with delight, licking her lips and fumbling with her cell phone despite the halfhearted cries of protest from her more reasonable and mild-mannered female companions, leaving a sure-to-be-embarrassing-tomorrow voice message for Mr. Too-Hotty. She grins smugly at her tribe and brings it home:

"You know the only thing I really want from a man? Some dick. . . A nice *thick* dick."

Her friends cackle and snicker, "Girl, sounds like you need some double A batteries." Another mutters, "D batteries are more like it" and they explode with laughter. It's Friday night and everyone in Asheville is shit-faced. People are no longer respecting

humankind and its creations.

Enveloping vines and moss seemed to be dragging its decaying carcass back to the infernal depths of Comtempuourichassholeville, a subtle ode to the arrant and ongoing class juxtaposition that plagues this fertile motherland. In time all will again be consumed by the Earth leaving no trace of us or the wars we've waged, molesting everything in our path and I certainly won't miss it. There can be only one.....

the rigid social boundaries that dictate that you probably shouldn't talk to people that you don't know. The orderly, intuitive traffic pattern on the sidewalk no longer applies; tourists stagger in and out of your invisible but firmly defined lane, reeling across the pavement like boxers in the final moments before the knock out. On the long walk home, my ex-girlfriend's old roommate, former acquaintance, now junkie stranger, sidles up in front of me and mutters something, asking for my pair of clean underwear. I veer my way around him but am cut off at the pass by some sloppy, lost country boys who ask me how the hell to get back to the Days Inn and Christ, I can't help them--I have no fucking clue where the Days Inn is, even though the town is only about three blocks long. I am crisply and bitterly sober after a month and half of trying to reduce my life-expectancy with a multi-pronged attack on my vital organs through a strict dietary regimen of coffee and beer, taking the night off

only to find myself antsy and irritable. Everyone's having fun I catch myself thinking, and I could be too. It's a classic white male move, choosing self-imposed solitude and exile and then resenting the implications that go along with it. Wearing a plumage of feathers and then raving with appropriated oppression when you are pointed at and called a peacock. I realize I have obviously chosen the wrong day to swim against the beery current, and wander around like dog, slobbery-mouthed and desperate for a bone. Something to calm my nerves, to help me get to sleep when I've veered off the highway and over the guardrail with the stimulants and depressants, artificially prodding myself onward with uppers, downers, lefters, righters. The party pounds on twenty-four/seven, lurching further into oblivion with every carbonated whoosh of a popped can tab, on weekends the whole affair taking to the streets to function as a social pressure release valve. After some metered reflection, I realize that it must take certain finesse to be the sober guy, myself being predispositioned towards unfounded resentment and spite. To be at church, rapt in the swirling mass, getting saved and losing your shit but without having partaken in the ritual sacrament. Really feeling it without that sweet, inhibition-loosening brew and still being respectful enough not to play mean tricks on us drunk people or steal our wallets. It seems that one would have to become drunk, as Baudelaire suggested, without a fermented yeasty beverage.

Ken Kesey, godfather of LSD, implored the acid-scorched generation to take the next step and abandon the substance altogether, advocating that the hippies spread their neural eagles and find enlightenment without leaning on the splintered crutch of pyschoactives. Of course, this bold declaration was ill-fated because Kesey's personal conclusions conveniently intersected with what the FBI demanded him to do so he wouldn't go to prison. "Come on, Kesey—Get out there and tell those Hippies that enough is enough! Time to cut it out!"

Come on. Seriously? This really illustrates how out of touch the FBI was with reality at this strange period of American history, but nonetheless created a very un-cool collusion of interests that was not looked upon fondly by the already paranoid and repressive counterculture. "The Hippies", those herd-like stragglers, coming in late to the LSD game and just starting to vibe those drug-addled moments of enlightenment Man, concluded that Ken Kesey was trying to Narc them out of their artificially-induced bliss, and had no problem dethroning and marginalizing him from the very scene he helped found.

The depressing conclusion one could reach is: Even if an angelic redneck like Ken Kesey descended upon us to show us how we could get truly fucked-up on LIFE, without licking a colored tab or gargling fermented and distilled beverages, most of us would probably nod our heads at the appropriate intervals, staring at him through glazed-over, cowish eyes, half-listening, half-thinking about Myspace, before saying goodbye and wandering down the street to shell out for dollar beers.