

Alpine Dolphins

Order and chaos in a strange, macho Disneyland

Disneyland is not necessary. I mean, it's only a couple hours away, but it's just not worth paying the \$40 it costs so I can run about scaliwags in some sterile-fantasy theme park.

Just like Alice (you know which one), I ate the Mushroom that altered my world. And after I rode that 10,000-mile, brain-scathing, traveling hurricane -- like sliding down on my spine on razors -- I landed in Daytona Beach, Fla.

I found my wonderland.

It was a quiet night. I leaned over the railing, watched the small, endless waves create the dull-pound-purr sound that constantly envelops the city. I walked inside the bar; the pop-metal cover band wound along a crowd of only 100 or so.

I walked back into the foyer and saw Jay and this scrawny kid sprawled on the floor, Jay beating rapidly on his head and screaming at him:

"You don't never go around hitting people."

He hit him in the head again, and I got him off the kid. The kid's girlfriend is standing there screaming, scratching and crying. I take both of them out the door, and the scraggly little kid turns around and smacks me in the chest.

I grab him and throw him a few feet, and the girlfriend starts whining again. I push him around a bit so he'll go away -- that's all I really want them to do is go away -- then I go back inside the bar in time to see Vinnie, another bouncer along with Jay and myself, land a poorly performed, spinning back-kick to the face of this large, fat, backwoods Georgia-boy. He and his three buddies square-off against the bar, and we go to getting them out.

I grab one of them, lock him up with a full chicken wing and pick him up off the ground. His feet flail about, and a couple customers join in.

Many of the patrons come here just for the fights.

The weight and motion of the added people prove too much for me, and the whole lot of us goes down on a table of sorority girls -- drinks go whipping across the room, the band keeps playing, and the crowd starts taking bets on the victor.

I move quick and grab the fat boy I'd locked up before he gets any notion of what's up; we get them outside, and it's not over yet. They are mad and mean, from all that tree bark and hickory moonshine, and it looks as though our only option is to kick the crap out of them when Ron, the mighty 6-foot-6 Samoan, bursts through the door and ka-thwangs a lead pipe against a metal light pole and roars some profane thing about kicking a certain part of their anatomy.

He moves toward them and they seem really interested in conducting themselves like gentlemen. This is good. After all, it's a quiet evening.

And order reigns. The waves still pound the beach, and aside from the music it is calm now. Vinnie, Ron and Jay bounce around freaked out and hyperactive due to the massive amounts of adrenaline and cocaine in their systems, so they light up. This is a group of five or six, and we stand around and brag about the display.

I don't recognize the two who said that. There are so many around here who come from all over and stay for a bit -- long enough to scam what they can, then either get married, arrested or move on to the Big Time in Miami. The scam is the root idea behind Daytona Beach. It's an anarchist carnival for all. The entire city spans 23 miles on a large sand bar, and it comprises several towns from Ormond to New Smyrna, and Daytona reigns party central. Each city is separated by maintaining its own police force, mayor, council and on and on.

It makes it very easy to hide. You live in one city, work in another, deal in yet another. Nothing

COVIAN
Kevin

costs too much if you know the right people.

And if Daytona is party central, the Pier is dead-center of central and boasts the highest scam rate of all.

"Eh, brother, I'm your friend, ya know? There are people here ya can't trust, so it's a lucky thing for you ya found me. I'll take care of you."

Then he leads them around the corner where he and eight of his tiny, beach-scum, runaway cronies jump the gullible trio of frat-boys and scam away all their Spring Break finances.

I used to see it happen time and time again standing around at the door of the Pier -- standing, it seemed, at the very door to the Gates of Hell.

Many of the patrons frequented the bar because they thought it was the Gates of Hell, too.

We survived the night, and I needed to stay late and see that the band departure went smooth. The band busied themselves with their equipment. I had orders not to help, so I sat there drinking beer, watching them work their butts off.

I took the opportunity to look around the bar. It was grand, if you could see through the tacky, holiday-glitter, lounge-lizard coverup.

The room was vast and set out over the ocean. Huge windows

composed most of the south and east walls, increasing the impression of space triple-fold. This was a large room. Opposing stages faced each other like thugs in a dark alley; there was a dance floor in the middle and two bars at either end.

The floor and the walls and the ceiling and the doors and the bars were covered in a short, plush, red shag with little black spots, most of which were the ghosts of cigarettes past.

I'd dreamt of this room. I'd seen it in my dreams, and now I sat in it. The scene was this: Someone built the Ocean Pier 70 years ago so I could experience it tonight. It had been a quiet night. A quick flip-out like that was not uncommon, and it sure beat absolute chaos.

Absolute chaos happened when the place bulges with a 1,000 people, the foyer is packed, and a fight breaks out inside while a group of 15 assorted minors hound you with fake IDs, and little minors are running out the door and puking over the railing while an undercover cop is standing there telling you you're going to go to jail unless you get every last drunk minor out of the bar.

Then it felt like chaos.

But chaos was quiet now, and order was the loudest as the band babbled and moved the equipment from stage to winch-lift and down to the trucks on the beach. The tide was coming in, and they had to hustle or sit it out for six hours. They were grouchy, depressing and lethargic, and I really felt like leaving the room. I went to the roof.

Life looked different on the roof. A blood-blush sun in the process of scamming day from night stopped to flip me a tip of his hat, and the wind showed up with a stolen stereo and a pound of seaweed. Who could ask for anything more?

I sat on the railing of the balcony watching this fiasco when a dolphin broke the surf, flipped up and over on her back and rode the wave for 20 or 30 meters. It was a fine ride, and she seemed to enjoy it though she didn't repeat her haul. I was truly impressed. I'd lived in this city for nine months now, I'd drank with burned-out bikers and beggars, whopped-up and kicked the butts of all the stringy beach scum, dawdled with hookers and spoke briefly with the crack lords of Second Avenue, but this ride shamed them all.

It's an amazing world.

Peace reigns now as the dolphins ride the gnarly ones . . . peace, that is, for a moment.

Then some girl on the beach starts screaming, and some drunk who swam out too far starts drowning, and the whole natural order of Daytona Chaos is restored.

I smile, watch a surfer swim out to save the drowning guy, watch a pack of drunken kids beat on the guy who made a grab for the girl. I

look out to the sea, and the whole mess is gone.

You hear a lot about all the really terrible things going on in the world provoked and provided by all sorts of different people. You hear loads of whacked-out disinformation. You're told to abide by one system and reject another, and the biggest joke of all is that chaos will exist in any system. There cannot be order without it.

If you don't understand chaos, just ask a metal-head.

Gazing up the beach, I knew it would be time to leave this place soon. The season will end -- there'll remain only slim tourist-pickings -- and it will be me and 100,000 sun-wrinkled grapes called locals bickering and squabbling over the last woman in a bikini, beating each other senseless over the last moron with a camera and a fifty-dollar bill in his or her touristic hand.

This is our hell . . . and at this point in time, I commandeer order from the people waiting to pass through, waiting to trade one hell for another. What else should they do down here on the planet?

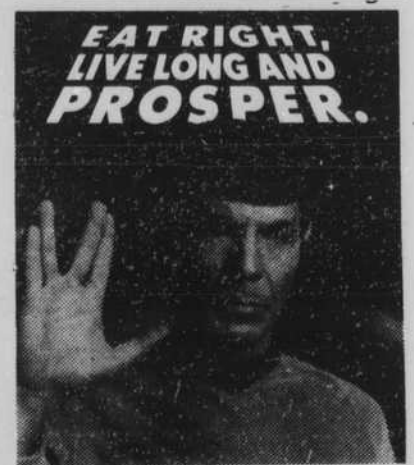
Some people like paying wads of money to play in a world where all the nasties are toothless and foam-padded, where the ride always ends where it started, and the smiling attendant lifts the harness holding you in and asks you to exit safely down the gangplank.

Others prefer to mix a bit more reality with fantasy.

"Disneyland?"

"No thanks, don't need it."

I remain, Anomie.



EATING RIGHT IS HIGHLY LOGICAL.

Fill Her Up.

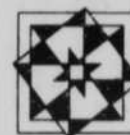
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