



# Alpine Dolphins

Surreal performers on the bitter stage of Daytona



Meanwhile, literary whims whisk windy thought back to Daytonaland.

This does, however, present a problem.

The first story I wrote about Daytona Beach, Fla., where I introduced the character Anomie, ended up thrashed about like a K-mart kite in a rip-tide winter wind by the Powers That Be, the editorial staff. My editor said the article was vulgar and that it didn't quite convey the meaning I was looking for.

Well, since no one really read the original; rather, a butchered remnant, I don't need to apologize for offending anyone.

So I am not sorry. Though I need to tell this story, and as such I think it would be best if I clued everyone in on my perspective of Daytona Beach.

Did you ever see "Escape From New York"? Kurt Russel as Snake Pliskin, the ultimate criminal, sent in by the U.S. police force to rescue the president of the same, or die.

It's quite a thriller.

As a wonderland, Daytona was sort of like that to me. Not that I was Snake Pliskin or anything. I never had to save the president or die while I lived there. It's just that the place was wondrous, awe-inspiring and vile. All this contained on one 23-mile-long sandbar.

Daytona was filled with all the runaways, neurotics, psychotics, petty thieves, walking assault charges, kleptomaniacs, nymphomaniacs, voyeurs, exhibitionists and, of course, the dreaded and severely over-prosecuted drug-users, abusers and misusers, who fled their home towns which were places like: New York City, Chicago, Atlanta, Boston, Washington, Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Cleveland and last, Lincoln, to come and live out their lives in a perpetual state of hazy-lazy violent decadence.

Decadence, debauchery and surfing are what Daytona is all about. And the surfing sucks.

Let me give you one quick example -- Jim and Tooley, newly arrived from New York and newly settled across the street from where I lived at the time with two other traveling buddies. Tooley was not the second kid's real name. I didn't know his real name.

When we were poor, which was all the time, the five of us would live off this restaurant directly on the Halifax River called Marker's. We'd eat hors d'oeuvres and drink beer and Jim would slap Tooley on the back of the head and say "Eh, Tooley?" like one of the three stooges.

A couple weeks later, Jim got pulled over and arrested. I never saw him again. Tooley told me why.

"We pulled these jobs up in New York," he said, "stereos, VCRs and stuff. I used to carry the tools."

Hence, Tooley. So my dilemma is this: How to

tell a story about this collection forenamed and not talk about sex in anything other than sterile terms, and, most difficult, writing like no one in Daytona Beach ever used a swear word.

I might create the same vivid picture of Japan using no Japanese references. Though, in the interest of stale journalism I will try.

And another thing, stop reading this story right now if you feel at all uncomfortable about the hard carnal nature of war-zone neighborhoods where extremes like vice

Kamper and I were roommates. The hotel was primarily for old folks, but we were young, and they liked that. There was a 7-Eleven directly next door to the hotel. I think they put it there so the old guys wouldn't have to walk so far to get their soda and cigars at night. But it was a different story tonight because the 7-Eleven was freshly robbed. There were police officers and police dogs running about and two black guys talked nervously to three serious-looking white policemen. The old men from our hotel sat on the porch, rocking peacefully, smoking cigars and watching the action. We kept walking.

"Kamper, we need to keep that convenience store crime spree in mind, I mean, if ever things turn ugly and we want some sort of steady income to fall back on."

"Nah. If things ever turn as black as that I'll head to Mexico. Find a nice village girl, sit in a bar, drink tequila and write novels."

Down the street we walked past another convenience store. This store was not being robbed so I went in to buy a pack of cigarettes. Kamper waited outside. I was paying the elderly Greek woman at the counter when I noticed a picture on the wall behind the cash register of a girl whom I immediately labeled as the "most beautiful woman ever photographed," as if she had won the Miss Universe Pageant or something. She had medium-length brown hair and blue and white-cap-white eyes, and she looked happy and thin.

I walked back outside, rejoined Kamper, we walked down Second Avenue to the liquor store.

"What 'choo boys want, man? What 'choo need?" asked this tall and lanky black man, seemingly popping out of nowhere. "Ya'll want smoke? I got some herb that'll knock ya on your butt!"

"Nah, we're OK," I said. "Ah, man, 'choo want coke? Got some real fine blow, fresh off the boat."

"Nah, thanks for offering, though."

"Man! I mean, what 'choo need anyway?"

"I want a bottle of tequila," I said, and we walked into the liquor store. We bought a pint of tequila, walked out of the store and the same man walked up to us again:

"I'm sorry," he said, "we seem to have gotten off on the wrong foot. My name is Vincent, I am newly arrived from the Bahamas. Now, I know you don't want anything at the moment, but I wanted to let you know that I am a good man to know around here. All these boys work through me. You do need to watch yourself, you know. There are some people you can't trust. If you need anything, you find me, and I know I can help you out."

"Know where we can find child slaves?" Kamper asked.

## COYMAN Kevin

and virtue fight for the whole of the glorious mad kingdom. It's somewhere the feint-hearted don't want to go. If so turn the page, before you are reminded of -- and offended by -- similar morally bankrupt notions that hide in the shadows of your heart.

"Have another drink," I said. "You need another drink."

"I don't want another drink. Not here at least."

"What's wrong with here? What's wrong with Crooks Den?"

"Here puts me to sleep," Kamper said. "I'm tired of watching Kelsey jiggle."

Kelsey was the bartender at Crooks Den, a bar that was one large irony. Kelsey looked as if she just finished doing aerobics. Always. She usually wore outfits with high waistlines and no neckline whatsoever. This pleased most of the customers; the fact that her breasts were covered with nothing more than an inch-and-a-half of stretch fabric. On the walls of the bar were portraits of criminals gone famous: Al Capone, Bonnie and Clyde.

The underlying theme of the bar was this:

CRIME DOESN'T PAY!

This was the great irony in that most of the patrons of Crooks Den were criminals in their own right. Actually, most people are criminal in one form or another. Most of these criminals, outlaws if you prefer, made their living scamming odd jobs, selling stolen goods, whatever to make a buck. That's the way it was there.

"Let's go find a prostitute," Kamper said. "I feel like I want a woman. A brown-eyed, 14-year-old, Mexican girl would be perfect, but I'll settle for a thin, black crack addict from Daytona."

"We'll need a bottle of tequila."

"Of course we will."

We walked the night through an alley and out onto Ridgewood Avenue. We passed the hotel where



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