

Alphaville

"Message in a bottle"

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the air was thick like honey, without a breath or breeze,
but filled with heat. jerry lay on his mattress and stared
at the ceiling.

a rusty fan with grubby grey blades that would never
turn again, was hanging above him like a huge dead
insect. the distant roar of the montego bay expressway
some three miles away, had started a few hours back.
no sound was coming from the beach.

jerry sat up and tried to peer through the grimy
window-pane. the day was slouching against the hut
like a wounded boxer. the sun brooded venomously
yellow above the bay.

a new day. hallelujah!
he got up staggering & tripped over the empty whisky
bottle on the floor by his bed, kicking it across the
shabby room and under the sink where it joined an
army of other empty bottles.

shit, good lord and hallelujah!
his head was thundering. sunlight which was pouring
through the window-frame in four thick beams
corroded his eyes.

the water container beneath the window was empty. he
sat down at the wooden table in the center of the room.
a cigarette butt was floating in the half-empty coffee
cup in front of him. shit.

somebody knocked at the door. "come in," he
growled. the door opened with a creak. an angel
walked in. he sat down across from jerry and put two
bottles of whisky on the table. "message from him,"
the angel said. "drink."

without a word jerry opened one of the bottles, its
message stuck in its neck as always. he pulled out the
note and took a big gulp. then he sniffed the alcohol-
drenched note. the smell of whisky. everything here

smelled of whisky as if to cover the stench of the immense garbage dump at the foot of which his hut stood. he listened outside.

distant roaring, nothing else.

write down what you see was the message. at last something simple enough.

""he's not here anymore, right..""

it was a rhetorical question.

""what do you care, you get whisky, so wr ite,"" the angel replied coldly.

""not here anymore,"" jerry insisted. ""pissed off i bet, and you guys are stuck here, bored out of your brains.""

""you're talking bollocks,"" the angel said without the slightest sign of emotion.

""what the fuck. thrown half my life into this god-forsaken bay, all these god-forsaken stories.""
the angel got up. his wings rustled quietly.

""we're all just doing our job. just you drink and write.""
then he disappeared. the door didn't even creak. he'd simply disappeared.

it was always the same. okay, he had the whisky, hallelujah! and all these god-forsaken heathens with their god-forsaken cars, they had whisky too but they would never fork it out. that's why he preferred the angel.

he took another gulp. the sun was at its peak, directly above the hut.

the heat was murderous. jerry plucked the butt from the coffee cup and drank it dry in one big swallow. then he reached for the bottle and his bleached umbrella and stepped outside. he squinted his eyes and looked across the still, blue sea. not a single ripple. not a single seagull.

this was hell and he was supposed to convert the devils. that was that.

he walked down to the beach, planted the umbrella in the grubby sand, settled down beneath and pulled the note from his pocket:

write down what you see.

in the distance, the wreck of an old steamboat poked out of the lazy tide. the sky stretched across the bay in a breathtaking blue. the air shimmered. a large lizard crouched on top of a stranded oil barrel. now and then its tongue darted from its mouth.

suddenly he remembered how as a child he had once found a colony of wild bees in the forest. back then in europe before all the shit came down. his father had told him that all the bees would follow their queen.

but what happened if the queen flew too fast? or flew the coup?

had enough? go to hell, my people??

he gulped again. and what about the people? did they always follow god? with all their damned crap, their god-damned civilization & their thrice damned wars, always following, one upon the other?

what if god had enough of that?

another gulp.

praise be to the lord and jack daniel's.

life goes on.

even without god. oh man. how he longed for the night. the heat would stay but the darkness would devour him with all his whisky and all the god-forsaken light. and maybe he'd dream: of coolness, wind and dawn, of rain-swept forests, of bees and honey... cool honey. instead he was squatting drunkenly in front of this stinking dump, preaching to heathens.

hallelujah! and what did god do? - brought whisky. a triple hallelujah!!! he started scribbling on the back of the note. now and then he raised his head and squinted at the radiant blue sky. no doubt about it. up there was nothing but metal and steel. and beyond that, greyness and waste. and god had pissed off. that was that. painted over everything with his merciless blue.

as he wrote, he poured back the whisky. at last it was done. he stuffed the note into the empty bottle, corked it and threw it weakly into the water.

how often had he done that? thousands? millions?

and who fished them back out of the sea? were they always different? damn it, why did they never answer? jerry stood up with a groan and trekked back to his hut. - ""not a single god-damned answer...""

the door closed behind him with a creak. there were
rumbling noises, clinking of glass, ebbing curses,
abrupt silence.

the umbrella stood lonely on the beach in the glowing
embers, melting into unalterable eternity.

but then, reluctantly, a foreign, distant sound mixed
into the sleepy silence. above the sea a light wind had
picked up. music blew across.

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