

INDIAN SUMMER

Zachary Swan is not a superstitious man, but he is a very careful one. Like any professional gambler, he has survived by taking only calculated risks. So, in October of 1972, when he decided to throw a party to celebrate his most recent return to New York, he decided to throw a small one, and his caution was inspired less by the fact that it was Friday the thirteenth than by the compelling reality that on the mantelpiece above his suitcase there were three and a half kilograms of 89-percent-pure cocaine.

The cocaine had entered the United States that morning in the hollows of three Colombian souvenirs fashioned out of Madeira wood. They included a long, colorfully painted rolling pin, the symbol of marital bliss in Colombia; one rough-hewn statue, twenty inches high, of the Blessed Virgin; and a hand-wrought effigy of an obscure tribal head, about the size of a coconut. The fill had been made a week earlier in Bogotá. The load had passed U.S. Customs at Kennedy Airport, New York. It was carried through and declared: "Souvenirs."

The arrival of these artifacts at Zachary Swan's beach house in East Hampton, Long Island, launched a celebration which would not end until the following morning. It began at eight p.m. when the Madeira head was cleaved top-dead-center across the parietal lobe with the cold end of a chisel. Within minutes of this exotic lobotomy — a procedure reminiscent in equal measure of desperation combat surgery and a second-rate burglary attempt — the skull yielded up 500 grams of high-grade uncut cocaine, double-wrapped in clear plastic.

By the time the skull, which looked like that of a shrapnel victim, was reduced to ashes around the andirons of the fireplace, the celebration had assumed ceremony and the coke was performing fabulous and outlawed miracles in the heads for which it had been ultimately intended. They belonged to Swan himself; his girlfriend Alice Haskell, twenty-four, a children's fashion designer; Charles Kendricks, thirty, an Australian national and sometime employee of Swan; and Kendricks's girlfriend Lillian Giles, twenty-three, also an Australian. The Bolivian brain food they had ingested was only one course in a sublime international feast which featured French wine, English gin, Lebanese hashish, Colombian cannabis, and a popular American synthetic known pharmacologically as methaqualone.

It is difficult to verify at exactly what point in the proceedings (possibly over dessert) Swan's originally calculated risk became a long shot. The party went out of control somewhere in the early hours before dawn, and the steps he had taken in the beginning to minimize his losses were eventually undermined by the immutable laws of chemistry — his mind, simply, had turned to soup. He was up against the law of averages with a head full of coke. The smart money

pulled out, and the odds mounted steadily. By sunrise, Swan was beaten by the spread.

Amagansett, New York, is situated 120 miles due east of Manhattan on the coastal underbelly of Long Island. One of several oceanfront resorts on the fringes of Long Island's potato belt, it owes its maritime climate to the temperate waters in the leeward drift of the Gulf Stream. The region was abandoned by Algonquins in the wake of colonial sprawl, a mounting overture to Manifest Destiny which brought New England to the outer reaches of the Empire State, and Amagansett, a tribute to the Indians in name only, is the custodian of a Puritan heritage. The whales are gone but the weathervanes remain. An occasional widow's walk acknowledges the debt to the sea. Anchors and eagles abound. George Washington would have been proud to sleep here.

In the off-season, order prevails. Time struggles to stand still. But when the weather breaks and the trade winds come in, the elders of Amagansett, like their colonial predecessors and the Algonquins before them, find themselves volunteers in a counterassault on cultural blight — minutemen knee-deep in the onslaught of souvenirs, fast-food and ersatz antiques. A kind of thug capitalism asserts itself. The tourists who come screeching down upon the town and the local retail sharks who surface to feed on them provoke an embarrassing display of provincial paranoia; and every summer, the town fathers, helpless, unhinged, watch their community move one irreversible step closer to the dark maw of the twentieth century, visibly shaken by what they consider to be a pronounced threat to Amagansett's Puritan soul.

Their dread has taken an inevitable turn. Amagansett has

become a working model for an aggression/response approach to municipal government. Symptomatic of such an approach is a curious brand of frontier law enforcement, characterized by an allegiance to the principle that “. . . we got a nice quiet community here, son . . .,” dialogue resonant of hanging judges, pistol whippings, and the application of rifle butts to the dental work. You’ve got until sundown, as it were. In Amagansett the Wyatt Earp spirit runs especially high between the months of May and September, but a residual strain lingers through late autumn, tapering off appropriately around Thanksgiving, after which only the locals have an opportunity to break the law.

This is what Zachary Swan, forty-six, a pioneer whose embrace of the Puritan ethic had never been an all-encompassing one, would come up against on the morning of October 14. He and his friends would be arrested on the beach at sunrise and charged with public intoxication. And out of this circumstantial confrontation between the energetic bounty hunters of Amagansett, still juiced on adrenalin generated in the summer tourist-hunts, and a man who in six months had spent more money on cocaine alone than he had paid in state and local income taxes in twenty years — out of this head-on collision would grow a Federal investigation spanning at least two continents, twice as many international boundaries, and criminal jurisdictions as diverse as those covered by the United States Department of the Treasury and the traffic division of the East Hampton, Long Island, Police Department.

At five a.m. Zachary Swan, surrounded by \$100,000 worth of cocaine, was smiling. He was smiling at the Madonna over his fireplace and dreaming of an island off the coast

of Ceylon. Sprawled on the floor athwart three sleeping dogs, struggling to stay conscious, he looked like a besotted country squire out of the pages of an eighteenth-century novel.

Dawn was approaching. The room was quiet. The party had downshifted dramatically. All motor activity not essential to life had been suspended in the interest of the cardiac muscles. The body, in the grip of the downs, was making sacrifices.

Somebody had an idea (remarkable under the circumstances).

“Let’s go to the beach and watch the sunrise.”

A response, identifiable only in the deepest methaqualone funk, struggled to solitary life somewhere across the room. It contained many vowels. It was affirmative. Call it a sentence. A phrase. Someone had answered.

(We are on the threshold of human interchange here, speech, verbal commerce along the barren avenues of Quāālude City. Communication at this level, although sophisticated in its own way, can best be described as haphazard. It is a kind of space-age remodeling of traditional counterintelligence techniques — scrambled messages, predistorted transmissions, sympathetically programmed transceivers — a kind of mojo cryptography which contains no universal cipher and is efficient only when two people are doing the same kind of dope.)*

Out of the chance marriage between this one remarkably conceived idea and the crypto-response which followed, there blossomed, like a flower in time-lapse motion, what was soon to be a legitimate conversation. It was force-bloomed according to the principle governing the first law

* See Appendix I.

of psychogravitational dynamics: *The quickest way to come off downs is to do some ups.* Follow the Quāāludes with two or three lines of coke and you can throw even the most desultory dialogue into high gear. There is order in the Universe.

Monosyllables became murmurs:

“The . . . sun.”

An odds-on favorite to rise.

Murmurs became phrases:

“See . . . the . . . sun.”

But nothing was taken for granted.

That the sun would not rise was a remote possibility, but one which nevertheless marshalled a certain amount of attention. Unnecessary risks, such as standing up, were postponed while an analysis of the odds for and against the sun’s coming up at all was made. This delay was characteristic of severe psychochemical shock, but surprisingly it provided the first hard evidence of progress. (It marked the appearance of key polysyllabic words — participles, certain adjectives, an occasional predicate nominative — and diphthongs. A subordinate clause was pending.) The Quāāludes were still throwing their weight around, but it was a futile display of power; their defeat was imminent, and signaled moments later:

“We haven’t got much time,” someone said.

A clear, audible statement. The cocaine was closing in. A decision, the final factor in the psychogravitational equation, was inevitable now. It would lead to activity and thus certify the successful application of Newton’s first law to the infinite possibilities of drug abuse. In fact the decision came almost immediately, a tribute to the quality of this particular blow of coke:

“Let’s go,” someone decided.

And so, at the zenith of the cocaine ecliptic, activity was resumed. Status quo. What goes up must come down; what goes down must come up. Q.E.D. Physics, man. But now, with four people behind some heavy coke (one of them a certified Frank Sinatra fan), anything was possible.

Phase II . . . Overdrive. Out-and-out mobilization. Tide tables were checked. Weather information from around the world gathered. Analyzed. Data was collated and patterns were charted. An expeditionary force was provisioned.

“We’ll need plenty of drugs.”

Yes. Of course. Consider the possibilities. Imagine the appropriateness of it. Standing in the Atlantic tide, welcoming the sun back to the United States of America. We, the people, bent, holding enough dope to fix three Kentucky Derbies. Enough to capture the imagination of . . . yes . . . even the Miami Dolphins. How fitting. How just. (How dangerous.)

They chose the Volkswagen because it was aimed at the beach, not unanimously unaware, certainly, that they were also choosing the only car in the driveway that could float. With their ranks bolstered, and their oxygen supply severely depleted, by the added company of three hyperventilating Labrador retrievers, a total, then, of twenty legs, each jockeying for position, any two feet at the ends of which might have been operating the accelerator and the clutch (the brake, reportedly, was used rarely, if at all), Swan and his friends reached the ocean through the combined application of dead reckoning and the gratuitous hand of God. (It is whispered in the cloakrooms of America’s drug underground that *He* looks out for the heavy user.)

A joint, eighty-dollar Colombian, passing clockwise

around the cockpit, outlined their efforts in a surreal, purple haze, and acting as a sort of gyroscope it provided slight, but presumably adequate, stabilization. It also pushed everyone's carboxy-hemoglobin level to the red line, bringing on that shameful and subversive Reefer Madness (manifest only in the Labradors, however) hinted at in arcane government manuscripts. It was quality dope, and its sharers were suffused with the magnificence and intergalactic splendor of star travelers. But at their energy/output ratio, given the specific gravity of their load and the negligible horsepower of the Volkswagen, they looked more like the Joads leaving Oklahoma.

Hark, hark,
The dogs do bark,
The beggars are coming to town;
Some in rags,
And some in jags,
And one in a velvet gown.

“Hark, Hark,”
from *Mother Goose*

They erupted like circus clowns out of the overstuffed automobile and onto the beach, a tumbling agglomeration of weird, multicolored ragamuffins. For a moment it was hard to tell the humans from the quadrupeds. And then the dogs hit the water. It was not long before the idea caught on, and within minutes they were all stripped down, ready to celebrate the Rites of Spring — late.

The sun was on the horizon and all seven were bobbing in the surf when in the distance an intruder appeared. A jogger.

He approached, moving at an even pace along the waterline, his face flushed, his breathing steady, his body drenched with sweat and glory, radiating that all-American, infinite faith in the cardiovascular benefits of discomfort. He was about fifty-five and well-fed. Swan recognized him as the owner of a local nursery. It looked as if he were going to pass by, until he saw the strange variety of clothing, like a forbidden invitation, leading to the water. He stopped. And then he looked. When his eyes met Swan's, chivalry was dead. He did not return the smile — admittedly a bizarre one, glassy at best, but everything Swan could muster — he simply stared, squinting against the sun, saying nothing. He was still, and he remained that way, in mute confrontation.

And now Swan, forsaking the smile, staring back in mute defiance, returning the look . . . *yes, we're out here swimming . . . stoned . . . Immaculate . . . spawning on the current . . . all of us . . . breeding tiny and rebellious monsters . . . the Enemy . . . us . . . go on, . . . lock up your daughters . . . scream . . . you sad and friendless man . . . you'll dream of us tonight . . . I know you're going to turn us in, you son of a bitch.*

Without a word, the man left. He continued along the beach and out of sight.

"He's going to turn us in," Swan said.

And he was right.

Somewhere in the accumulated misspending of what was someday to become known as his youth, Zachary Swan was taken aside by a man much older than he and confronted with what, at the time, was quaintly referred to as the cold truth about life. "Son," he was told, "there's no free lunch." He did not believe it then, and now, for the first time in

forty-six years, Zachary Swan had hard evidence to show in support of his opinion.

“Mine was rare without the pickles,” he said, “and give me a side of fries with that . . .”

The chow wagon moved rapidly along the cell block, and Swan was left with Suffolk County’s answer to winning the hearts and minds of the people.

“. . . hold the ketchup,” he mumbled.

Three days in Riverhead and he was as close as he had ever come in his life to an overdose . . . *another jailbird, DOA/ HAMBURGERS, poor bastard didn’t even get the tourniquet off, cover him up, nurse . . .* the mayor must be from Texas, Swan thought, cow country; a Hindu would starve here . . . *Hare Krishna, pardner.*

Swan washed the dry lump down with a calculated intake of jail coffee, a 70-percent solution of refined sugar, viscous, the consistency of syrup. A diabetic would not last an hour in the slammer — one shot of this coffee in the right place and you could throw an eight-cylinder Chevy onto the scrap heap forever. Swan swallowed the slush and felt the soft embolus of the hamburger suzette skidding down his esophagus into that vast wasteland once remembered as his stomach.

On Saturday afternoon, just prior to its second ration of ground beef, that same stomach had taken the punch that was to slow it down for the next two years. It was delivered by a police officer in plain clothes. He was looking at Swan:

“We found drugs in your house,” he said.

Swan’s established digestive patterns changed radically and forever at that moment. It was the beginning of a

progress report. One that would grow tedious. He would become indignant at what the same detective delivered in the way of an uppercut:

“The word is out that you carry a gun.”

The word is out? This cop either watches a lot of television or he reads *The Daily News*. I’m an executive, for Christ’s sake. I belong to the Westchester Country Club. Charlie, I own stock in some of the largest corporations in the world. My wife was on the Dick Cavett Show. What is this guy talking about? The air duct, Charlie, drop it down the fucking air duct.

While Zachary Swan was parting with his stomach, Charles Kendricks, code name the Hungarian, was parting with a sterling silver coke spoon of great sentimental value. He dropped it through the grill of the air shaft that ventilated his cell on the second floor of the Suffolk County courthouse. His nose twitched goodbye. Where had he gone wrong, he wondered.

They had been busted on the beach. Two patrol cars. That was understandable. It was a slow night and the thought of two young women swimming in the nude must have appealed to the boys on the night shift. Kendricks tried to imagine them spilling their coffee when the carburetors kicked in. They got there fast, but not before the Volkswagen was under way . . . *the Volkswagen, the latest reincarnation of the Dachau boxcar, the unimpeachable symbol of the Fatherland’s relentless effort to demonstrate that the Devil himself prefers canned food*. Lillian, at the wheel, had just lost the game of musical laps that began when the four shivering getaways paused in their escape to fight over the three warm-blooded dogs, a regrettable delay under the circumstances, he thought, but then, too, it had taken them a while to get into their clothes. At the time Kendricks blamed it

on the earth — spinning so fast, while at the same time . . . *if you can believe it, revolving around the bloody sun.* He remembered Swan trying to get both feet into his pants at once — cutting corners this way, he supposed . . . *but not standing up, man!* He recalled that Swan mumbled a lot . . . *yes, officer, the Kendrickses here, our friends from down under, are members of the Australian Olympic Team, swimmers, you see, and they have just crawled in from Sydney . . . my wife and I were not expecting them until tomorrow, of course . . . but then the Gulf Stream and what not . . . Gibraltar tomorrow, isn't it, Charles . . .* then, “Follow us . . . public intoxication . . . stick around . . .” and now the gun . . . all that dope . . . it all came back to Kendricks, whose nose had started running. The spoon disappeared with a forlorn rattle.

Fingerprints and photographs. More hamburgers. Then the handcuffs. At one a.m. the four prisoners were reunited before a judge and arraigned. The men and women were then driven separately to Riverhead, home of the Suffolk County Jail. They were disinfected and wardrobed. And then they were confined. The Ides of October. Sunday mornin', comin' down.

On the night of the party, Swan had loaned Kendricks some clothes, clearly a mistake, for when they were discovered to be wearing matching briefs, the processing officer ordered the guard on duty to “put these guys on different floors.” They saw each other only once in the four days that Swan was there. On that occasion Swan learned his first lesson in prison discipline. Kendricks was standing four places ahead of him in the physical examination lineup, and Swan, who had been out of boot camp for at least thirty years, started forward to talk to him. He was rescued by his fellow inmates . . . *where you goin', man, they're gonna smack you . . .* who were

obliged to demonstrate the series of casual pirouettes by which forward and backward progress along a supervised line is correctly achieved . . . *see, man, you're just talkin' to me for a minute here, and we're just shufflin' our feet, right? and then just like magic you're lookin' that way and I'm lookin' this way, and there you are, and your friend's comin' this way, see that.* And you've both got all your teeth. It took them about three minutes to get together.

"How are you holding up, Charlie?"

"The coffee sucks."

"What did they tell you about phone calls?"

"I reckon they're going to let me make one after lunch. Jesus, if it's another bloody hamburger I'll shit."

"Call Seymour," Swan said.

"Where's your beard gone?" Charlie asked him.

"They made me shave it."

"The bastards."

"There's something wrong with these people, Charlie. They take a mug shot of me with a full beard. And then they shave it off. Can you figure that out? I can't figure it out."

"You're near fifty. You've brought the average age in here up to approximately twenty-two. You tell me why they have to play Frank Sinatra and Tony Bennett on the fucking Muzak."

"You call Seymour. Give him Sandy's name. I'll get us a lawyer."

Kendricks yawned. He nodded and turned around.

"Charlie, watch out for this guy, I hear he goes for fellas your age. Keep an eye on him. Don't let the stethoscope fool you; if he smiles, you're in trouble. I'll write soon."

Charlie made the call. Sandy never came through.

* * *

Swan opened his eyes. Another bad night. The man in the cell next to his had been masturbating again. Late. Their beds were each part of the same bunk, one elongated bedspring built into and passing through the concrete wall that separated them — the man had been at it again, and with every stroke Swan's bed shook. Jail, he decided, was miserable.

The library boys came around. They preceded the hamburger by about an hour.

“Bookmobile.”

“Terrific.”

“What are you in for?” they wanted to know.

Swan told them. They looked at one another.

“Don't stand trial here,” was all they could say.

A black prisoner who occupied the cell opposite Swan's overheard the conversation with the library boys and felt obliged to say something to Swan. It amounted to:

“Hey, man, you didn't happen to get any of that stuff in here, did you?”

The hamburger came.

While Zachary Swan was washing his hamburger suzette down in the Riverhead Jail, a young Canadian man with blond hair and a horse-latitudes tan was stepping from a jet onto the runway at Kennedy Airport. He was traveling alone and traveling light. And he was traveling on a false passport. And in addition to his expense money, the young man was carrying \$5,000 in cold American cash. Within an hour, Swan, by way of his Constitutional rights, would have a lawyer and have his bail reduced. Within two hours, by way of a noble gesture, Swan would have \$1,000 in cash in his hand, and the young Canadian, who had come from nowhere, would be booking a flight south.

“Who was that?” his lawyer asked when the four prisoners were released and eating their first lunch together in five days.

“A friend of mine,” Swan said.

“He must be a very good friend.”

“He is. We’re in the same business. We’ve known each other for about two years now.”

“What’s his name?”

“Canadian Jack.”

“What’s his real name?”

“Your guess is as good as mine. I’ve known him pretty well for about two years, and for two years I’ve known him only as Canadian Jack. In my business you don’t ask your friends a lot of questions. And you especially don’t ask them, ‘What’s your real name?’”

Swan’s lawyer smiled.

Ernie Peace, of Peace, Lehrman & Gullo, Mineola, Long Island, had been recommended to Swan by a personal friend. It was only a coincidence, according to Swan, that the friend was, by profession, a narcotics detective. Swan had had to assume that there was no one better qualified to rate a lawyer than a cop, and he was right. Ernie Peace was one of the best. A lot of narcotics detectives thought so, and many of them had found out the hard way. Peace sat across from Swan dressed in an unimpressive double-knit suit, a white shirt and a blue tie. He was a shorter man than Swan, about the same age. His build was average, his hair was short, and all in all he was a very unprepossessing fellow. He was one of those people who seemed always to be thinking about anything but what you were saying, looking here, looking there, taking it easy, preoccupied with everything else but you — he was also one of those people who five minutes later would quote

verbatim what you had just said. He was smiling now, a kind of smile Swan had seen many times. Swan was pleased. It was a gambler's smile, pleasant, shy, and not a few parts lethal. Ernie Peace was measuring his man.

What Ernie Peace had on his hands was a middle-aged cloak-and-dagger freak, a man who betrayed a wealth of information on bugging devices, police technique, international drug traffic, Customs procedure, organized crime, pseudo-tribal FBI newspeak, and every other contingency covering his work; Zachary Swan was a man who possessed an encyclopedic knowledge of every conceivable high-level money transaction in the world. He even knew how to beat the phone company out of a dime.

Zachary Swan was tall and trim. His posture would have embarrassed his father. He had a strong handshake, an engaging smile, and a gentle voice an octave below middle C. He had liar's eyes. They were bright blue, cool, and very hard to ignore. He had a small birthmark on his left cheekbone. His hair was short — prison-length — and thick, going from brown to gray. He looked his age. It was because he did not act his age that he was here today. He was wearing about \$600 worth of clothes; he was drinking a Martini and chain-smoking Kools. He handled himself well for a man under the gun.

“O.K.,” Peace said, “the way it's going to work is like this. I can get the rest of you off. The DA's not really concerned about you anyway. But I want the whole truth. Everything. And then,” he said to Swan, “we'll see what we can do about getting *you* out of this mess. Now, they are going to get cooperation from the Federal authorities, so I want you to tell me what the Feds know.”

“I don't think they can make a smuggling charge stick. I covered myself pretty well.”

“How?”

“Well,” he said, “smuggling’s easy.” He lit a cigarette. “Anybody can do it, and a lot of people do, believe me. They do it a million ways. Some are smart, some are very stupid — for instance there are people who still get busted with false-bottom suitcases, which I want to say right now is something I never used. It is absolutely the worst way to smuggle anything. It’s a sucker move. It’s the first thing a Customs agent looks for — before he even takes anything out. He puts one finger inside and one finger outside, and if his fingers don’t find each other you’re in trouble. He’s got a ruler and he measures. If the math goes against you, forget it.

“If you’ve got any brains at all, smuggling is easy. It’s covering yourself every step of the way that’s tough. If one of my carriers gets busted, he walks away. He’s got excuses down the line. No way they can break his story. And that’s the trick. You’ve got to prop up your carriers, because if they talk, you’re both finished. My people stand up because they know they are going to walk. Is the smoke bothering you?”

“No, go ahead.”

“Most smugglers use mules, usually a girl, and she gets paid \$1,000 a kilo to walk the load through Customs. Now, tell me, how are you going to say it’s not yours if it’s strapped to your back? And when the mule gets busted, nothing she can say is going to help her. She’s finished, because her man’s disappeared. It’s really sad, but it happens all the time. And that’s the way most smugglers operate. Say you’re carrying. He’s paid you a thousand and given you an airline ticket. You’re broke, you want to get home. One of his lieutenants follows the load through Customs — if you get tossed, it’s you and the lions. He’s gone. I don’t operate that way. If you carry for me, you’re guaranteed to walk away.”

Peace sat back in his chair and looked around the table.

It was apparent that the others had heard the sales pitch before. He did not pursue the Federal question any further. He simply nodded and leaned forward.

“Now, they found a lot of cocaine in your house. And they found a gun. I’d be interested to know why you told them where the gun was buried. Apparently all they found in the house were the bullets.”

“That’s right. The gun was buried under the pebbles of the patio.”

“And you told them that.”

“Right.”

“Did they threaten you?”

“No.”

“What happened?”

“They said if I didn’t tell them, they were going to take the house apart board by board until they found it.”

“So?”

Swan looked at his friends. Then he looked back at his lawyer.

“Well, you see, they missed the load.”

“What do you mean they missed the load?”

“You said they found a lot of cocaine in the house.”

“They did.”

“How much?”

“The police say several ounces.”

“Yeah, that’s what the judge said when he arraigned us. I wasn’t sure.”

“That’s what it is. And that’s how the charge reads.”

Swan put his fork down. He looked at his attorney:

“Yeah, well, they missed the load, then. You see, on the mantelpiece, in the house, right now, there are three kilos of cocaine that they *didn’t* find. And if the police lab is right, it’s about 89 percent pure.”