

Darla Monica

By Sheila Naranja

Chapter 2: Tombstone Month

Autumn '99 began with Tombstone Month. It was a time for reflection on one's life: a time to come up with a personal epitaph. For Brad Yayger, it was the burial of a fruitless relationship with Canis Personality, the Canine Lady. She was in the process of corrupting the judicial process through her crooked personal attorney, White Power Sam. Brad was in the process of celebrating a victory over the Toxic Avengers, a criminal racket that poisoned people into various states of disability and death. They were quite proud of the way they tap-danced on Stephen Jay Gould's body with carcinogens. Such is the nature of criminal psychopathy.

Brad had ripped into the organization with his patented Zipper device. It was a sweet little procedure that used recursion to liberate members of the organization and their victims. They would be eternally grateful to Brad for its magical qualities and extraordinary effectiveness. The Naval Misfits would be scared schittless by its power in rendering them impotent. They would not fully realize that powerlessness for another two decades during Operation Bonehead, the Get Fresh Crew's operation to bring them down altogether.

Brad began the day with breakfast on the back deck of the house he purchased with the Canine Lady a few years before. She had left him in an effort to increase her prospects for victory in court, but it actually weakened her standing. Brad reflected on a recording he had made a few weeks before when he observed that the neighborhood was "teeming with life... and extremely high mortgages." It would be his first foray into podcasting.

Carry Grant was rudely awakened by a phone call from Greta Garbo. There was yet another fire to fight with Fun Macro integration problems. The Cluster Phuk skeleton crew, left behind by the demise of the product line, did everything they could to support legacy customers, but they had a tough row to hoe. Their counterparts at Orbuncle were always foisting changes on them that broke Sci-Bass infrastructure. A patch to the field with a supposedly critical fix turned into a critical nightmare. It acted like a virus that could not be reversed by simple removal. The incident would result in a restrain-of-trade suit against Orbuncle. Fun Macro engineers would come to testify in court about the extent of the damage and the time invested in reversing it. This was merely the first day in a three-week nightmare for Sci-Bass customers who trusted the Fun Macro patch process. Musk-Koggi happened to be one of them.

Back in San Francisco, Brad sipped his coffee as he reviewed the events of his break-up with the Canine Lady. He was especially distraught with the way she used her children as pawns in the process. He looked back at his own frustration in being helpless to assist the children as they suffered abuse in her hands. The hardest news on that front came when the boy failed to fondle Brad's hair. The incident occurred during a supervised visitation session. When they were together before the break-up, he would allow the bambinos to play with his hair. He presented his hair for fondling to the boy during the visit. The way the boy recoiled indicated that he had been slapped while fondling the hair of the Canine Lady. It shook Brad to his core. She had admitted to being slapped around by her own mother, and did not object to the abuse.

Supervised visitation was a sham. White Power Sam did everything he could to put the kibosh on the visitation process. His personal files are full of notes on his efforts to undermine the process with one site or another. Brad eventually gave up pursuing visits with the children and took to undermining the people he held responsible at the Courthouse. He crafted fliers for distribution to Courthouse employees denouncing three of the people responsible for visitation management. These were twisted and distorted into “veiled threats.” Pressure on the trio wound up driving them out of the county. It was a victory Brad savored.

Back in L.A., Carry grabbed his car keys and headed for his usual parking spot. He did not like firefighting at Stow Rage, but it was the best he could do on short notice. The server farm was located on the historic Route 66 in East L.A. It was an industrial strip just south of the stunningly beautiful San Gabriel Mountain Range. The gorgeous landscape always reminded him of the stories Brad told of his visits to the White Mountains in New England “in a previous life.” Carry planned to grab a muffin and coffee from a quickie drive-through café on the way there.

Brad looked forward to the Y2K event at the end of December. His favorite computing platform was good to go until 2038 when 32-bit timestamps would expire. They would be replaced by 64-bit timestamps long before then. Only antiquated systems such as proprietary I.B.M. (I’ve Been Moved) systems were at risk of breaking when the date field rolled over from ’99 to ’00 at Midnight on the last day of December. It was a bug that engineers predicted in the ’60s. They advised their managers to go with four-digit fields, but boneheads insisted on optimization with two-digit fields. Unknown to Brad, the Naval Misfits had major headaches during the roll-over. (But that is fodder for a very different framework.)