

DRAFT – unfinished ...

The Goat King: a Kentucky legend ...

by Daniel John Sullivan

(c) 2016, <http://goatking.info>

DRAFT – unfinished ...

Chapters ...

1. FLASH – KING OF THE IMPOSSIBLE!
2. What friends do ...
3. Bon voyage and shit ...
4. Animals, they can sense when he's around ...
5. A.U.M.
6. Götterdämmerung
7. Escape plan
8. Exegesis

DRAFT - unfinished ...

Chapter 1: FLASH - KING OF THE IMPOSSIBLE!

“Your fat, round, ass does not float Dan. I can see you there, in the darkness. Waddling your way down the hillside ...”

His words, the words of Tad Miller, echoed through the hills - but it wasn't fucking magic or mystical, it was the half-ass array of rusty old speakers, all wired together, in the shittiest and most dissonant way possible. Sure, the words could be made out, the music, the essence of the song - but these old tinny speakers were the true torture.

Why my mind focused on the speakers, their audio quality, is beyond me; I should be worried about the crystal-meth enhanced husband-and-wife duo chasing me down this hillside clear-cut in eastern Kentucky. It's funny that we meet this way, you and I, not at the entry point of a tale, but rather near its zenith - near the crescendo, when fat, middle-aged, software engineers typically get tossed into the great hole of nothing, somewhere, not far, from where the Atari games used to be made.

My name is Daniel James Morgan. I'm half irish, half swedish, and mostly a mess. I ended up on this hillside, running to within my heart's capacity for stress, because I, like most these days, am just looking, searching, hoping, and fantasizing about my “brass ring”. My chance to get rich ... before all the shit falls apart ... before “getting rich” is impossible - and we are all relegated to some sort of “human reservation”, tended over, farmed, by Kurzweilian monstrosities, gone amuck, in the pursuit of the techno-surreal and everlasting agony.

I saw the chance to become a big-shot, to get famous, to get “known”, for people to say “gee, look at how smart that guy is - that genius!”. But instead I'm likely seconds from death, minutes if I'm lucky and these two maniacs decide to play with me like spry two legged cats playing with their prey, their little mouse, rolling down the mountainside.

“... I can smell you Dan, you have the sweet smell of regret and fear ...”, Amanda was the worst.

Amanda Miller, Tad's “Kentucky wife”, had the air of privilege, of entitlement, but without the discernable wealth, education, or poise. I know, I've barely known them both, for barely 4 weeks, and mostly in

DRAFT - unfinished ...

the last few absurd days - but she creeps me out. She's like that weird girlfriend, your buddies' girlfriend, that is really hot, beautiful, but also insane. And I don't mean "I have 5 cats" crazy - that crazy is manageable. I mean the crazy where you might find 5 dead cats buried in the basement, under the floor boards.

When you first meet Amanda, it's like "crap, this dude is lucky to have her", and then, over time, it sinks in. It's like when she said "you know Dan, not everything Hitler did was wrong", with that sweet, sultry, twang. Sure, because her voice is sexy, and she is red-headed, and beautiful, and purportedly (and likely) 25 years old, well ... you try to stand up to it. "Dan, here is my design for a free-energy device ...", and as you imagine her, Tad's wife, stroking your thigh, well ... you do it bro ... you stand up to it. However - crazy beautiful is still crazy.

And now, dressed in some half-ass ceremonial garb of some ancient and unknown celtic tribe, this beautiful young woman, voluptuous, athletic, a mother, and a meth-head, is chasing me, hunting me, and will, when she feels like it, fire an arrow through my "miserable, treacherous, diseased" heart.

And yes ...

I'm running ...

For my life ...

Because I had the temerity to informally accept a job as Chief Technology Officer for P.O.W. - People Over World!. When I first met Tad, and discussed P.O.W., its purpose seemed reasonable enough - to create a social media community motivated primarily by free-association, privacy, and human dignity. As I got to know Tad, his wife Amanda, and their 2 year old daughter Cassandra, well, I came to realize that P.O.W. was likely nothing more than a scheme for making cash, to buy crystal-meth. I wish I could say Tad and Amanda's plan was more complex - and it might have been - but it didn't appear to be more to it. Sure, there was that macabre scene in the kitchen, last night, or early this morning, but I'm still not sure what I saw. It could have been a stony hallucination OR a vision of one adult serving another adult roasted baby at 2 AM. Yes - that's been my week.

During this last week, of course, we discussed "VOLCANUS" - Tad's plan to bring back the gladiatorial games, with a "Pompeii Theme", set in the Kentucky countryside. His "test site" was this

DRAFT - unfinished ...

hillside, here in Nettles (KY), a relatively primitive obstacle course of ditches, holes, booby-traps, and other low to medium risk dangers. I knew the main path, the logging roads, and so I stuck to that - there were no traps on it, I'm sure, we drove his jeep down that fucking trail.

Logging roads covered these hills, they'd been farmed multiple times in the last 200 years. Old logging roads became forrest trails, and Tad's little maze of danger was simply 300 plus acres of hillside - and some of it filled with cliffs, drop-offs, etc. And then there was the "bridge". Tad called it a bridge, it was, in fact, a fallen pine tree - which lay across a crevasse, a narrow canyon, of about 30 feet. The canyon itself was just 30 feet across ... and about 200 feet deep. It was a giant crack in the sandstone, and lime, worn by thousands of years of a steady flow, the Nettles River, rushing below. Not a big river, but a steady flow - arising from some deep aquifer or spring, and more than this I do not know (nor care to).

And amongst this glorious expression of Tad's sociopathy were the speakers - old, nasty, things with the patina that can only be found on soviet era electronics or shit you might find in North Korea. Tad had his walkie-talkie wired into that fucking, howling, crackling, red-neck contraption of electric noise.

"... YOU MADE ME A PROMISE DAN ... WE KEEP OUR PROMISES IN KENTUCKY ...", Tad was, in fact, Canadian.

Tad was an undocumented Canadian living in Kentucky, an "illegal", as he called himself, living a "low profile existence" in Nettles. And Nettles is a pretty town, with a low cost of living, and if it weren't for these two freaks, and their freakishly intelligent kid, like "village of the damned" kid, I'd move here, stay here, live in Nettles - but now? - now it seems like I might die here.

Tad's voice would be bad enough, but while they chase me, while I pant and trip and scrape my way down this mountainside, as lightning clasps above, and dark clouds fill a late summer evening sky, I could hear the rest - the soundtrack of my demise ... that shitty song by Queen that was made for that shittier movie, "Flash Gordon". Sure, I love Queen, but this song is weird - and weirder still was Tad's fascination with it. He must have been 2 years old when that film came out, and it was a terrible film at that. But, somehow, someway, the archaeology of stale pop-culture seeped its way into Tad's narrow

DRAFT – unfinished ...

consciousness.

Tad would leap, run, prance, to the tune of that fucking song.

“FLASH ... AH, AHHH ... SAVIOUR OF THE UNIVERSE!”

Tad was dressed in his gladiatorial outfit – which really amounted to biker, football, and other kinds of shit gear thrown together to make a person look like a gladiator. He would have been welcome on the movie set of the original “Road Warrior”, with Mel Gibson. In reality, the corporate logos, as faded as they might be, showed through on his pastiche armor – revealing a pre-apocalyptic expression of a fractured spirit imbued with the crudest desires and objectives. His weapon of choice was his “safe” ceramic/carbon sword. Of course, the “safe” sword could cut through brush, saplings, and could even be used to hack down small trees ... but Tad was convinced it was a “safe” sword because it wasn't steel. When he first told me this, I merely smiled, and thought to myself “he's just eccentric, succesful people often are”, but that was wrong. He wasn't eccentric, he was/is a delusional meth-head.

The Flash Gordon song was only a few minutes long, but for those few minutes I did feel as if time had stopped – and, in defense of the universe, I had smoked a LOT of Kentucky weed in the last few days. I used to mock Kentucky weed – I was the hipster jackass, living in Indianapolis, at the fashionable Riley Towers. I had moved there “from Seattle, and I knew good weed” - how I must have pissed off the hipsters of Mass-Ave when I said this. Truthfully – the “legal weed” of Washington and Colorado had become a shadow of the black-market plant we had once known.

The song played, and I ran ...

I ran past the plastic targets ...

Plastic mock soldiers, covered in that green algae that seems to stick and grow everywhere in the south, especially in Kentucky and Tennessee.

I ran past those worn reminders, of long-bow practice, and a friendship that turned sour too quickly.

“... you were my bud ... I let you meet my family, I opened my soul to you ...”, Tad's whispers crackled over those fucking speakers, with a background howl of “Flash Gordon”, and the winds that were picking up.

DRAFT - unfinished ...

As this chase began - Tad and Amanda chasing me down the hill - a storm had rolled in, a series of dark thunder-heads, black-gray mountains in the air, moving over the Smoky Mountains and our direction. It was 10 PM or 11, I wasn't really sure. This little drama had begun with me trying to catch a taxi to Louisville, a 500 dollar taxi ride, and the minimum price to escape Nettles without a car of your own. Nettles was set in the old mountain communities that had not been ravaged, not yet, by the insult of "mountain-topping" and other forms of coal strip mining. Sure, Nettles had loggers - farmers of the hillside. But they planted responsibly, and the hills, even those pockmarked with clear-cuts, held that old majesty that likely only the native americans of old understood - or could understand.

However ...

Given that most of my blood had been drained from my cerebral cortex, and mainly I was going with "instinct and fear" at this juncture, these deeper thoughts seemed wasteful - but that was my mind. Even in mortal peril, I would analyze the shit out of everything.

I was 90 seconds ... perhaps 2 minutes ... into this chase, this pursuit, and I knew I was getting close to "the bridge". That fucking pine tree, old and rotting, lay strewn across that f'ing impasse. I would have to cross it ... but I was afraid of heights ... vertigo ... really kind of recent vertigo ... since my sister died of cancer.

Random - but important.

My sister died of cancer several years ago - the details are not relevant. It was a tough time, toughest for her, for her kids, and for all of us - but I really didn't react well to the whole thing. She, my sister Nancy, was only one year older than me; my first thought after she died was "am I next". I know, that's crazy. Just because my sister died of cancer does not, logically, imply that I too will die soon of cancer. But I had just turned 40 years old, and I was divorced, and, in general, a nihilistic cynical prick. I loved her, my sis, but I didn't know how to respond - so fear took over, and it manifested itself as a newly found phobia, a fear of heights, elevation, long distances of infinite regret.

"... if I can just pull it together ...", that's what I was thinking ... pull it together.

But this wasn't "training", this was real. I wasn't "thinking about" getting into shape, or "thinking about" taking a martial arts class -

DRAFT - unfinished ...

which I never did, I simply “thought about” doing ... and procrastinated ... and then forgot. Nope - this was dead real. I was being hunted by two crazy people, in eastern Kentucky, with NO cell phone towers in range ... so no 911 ... and I might be able to cross that stupid pine tree bridge, but then what? Really? It's not as if those two, with chiseled bodies, youthful muscularity and flexibility and the juices of “love” imbuing them with an unstoppable, and stupid, force of righteous fire. Sure, what they were “angry” about was an inchoate mixture of non-sequiturs and fragmented reasoning ... but that's, again, because of the meth.

And the “meth” ...

They were fuelled by it, driven by it.

I was driven by a few mexican-style cokes and some primo weed ... but I wasn't on that meth rocket fuel. These two banshees were ... as they whispered their taunts across the scratchy noise of those eldritch speakers.

The lightning was striking the nearby hills, and small fires were already starting to burn - so a hazy smoke, along with the darkness of late evening, and the flashes of lightning draining me of my night vision, and the rain storm, all making it near impossible to see more than 20 feet ahead, if that. Amanda and Tad were within shouting distance, hell, speaking distance. I couldn't see them, but I could smell them. They said they could “smell me” when I arrived - “the odor of Monsanto and GMO and chem-trails”. But, those two - and their use of fresh lemon juice instead of deodorant? (yes - I could smell them also)

“fuck ...”, Amanda's arrow struck me in the leg, missing the major arteries ... I think ... fuck.

Without my knowing it, Amanda had maneuvered ahead of me, near the pine tree bridge - a great spot for a wounding shot, but not a kill ... she didn't go for the kill?

“HA! DAN YOU FUCK! HOW DOES THAT FEEL!”, Amanda howled and screamed these words ... and for a moment ... the briefest moment ... I believed her when she said she was descended from ancient celtic nobility. In her voice was the scream of some primordial self, cascading with emotion.

I was bleeding, but not badly ...

I was in pain, and I could barely drag my left leg, which now had

DRAFT - unfinished ...

a carbon-composite hunting arrow sticking into it, and running through it ... like some gag ... but it wasn't a gag.

I made my way off of the trail, I knew this would make little or no difference - they both knew where I was, and for some strange reason I was still alive. Sure, Amanda had shot me, but that was part of this game too - I was now a wounded animal, more dangerous, perhaps ... but from my perspective I could see no danger. I was a non-threatening fat man before, and now I was simply a wounded non-threatening fat man.

I hid off of the trail, in the darkness, below the cover of rain and wind and a late evening's Kentucky darkness.

I sat there, huddled, partially covered in branches, for what seemed like hours - but it had been barely 15 minutes.

I could tell that the damn "Flash Gordon" song was on some kind of fucking loop. Repeating, endlessly, mocking me as I die, slowly, from blood loss and, eventually, infection. Amanda had bragged to me that she would smear her feces on her arrow heads, for those special beasts she wanted dead - and "dead in the worst way".

I could see the tip of the arrow, it looked tarnished enough, brown enough, but how could I really tell - using the ambient light from lightning flashes.

They, the two of them, began circling my location - still from more than 50 feet away. I was 200 feet from the canyon, the pine tree bridge, and the far-flung hope that somehow, someday, if I get across that damn thing, I will "escape" - but even after I cross it, I'm still 20 miles from the nearest town, home, or anything. I was miles into the mountains of eastern Kentucky, up trails not even Google knows exist - and likely places where a "Google car" would be blown up, set ablaze, by the locals who would prefer their anonymity to "tourists".

"... FLASH, I LOVE YOU, BUT THE EARTH HAS ONLY 14 HOURS LEFT!!! ...", that wretched song, the chanting of the two druggie banshees, and the cacophony of wind and rain and thunder was making for something kind of surreal - I would say, near perfect, if one were trying to impersonate reality.

"... WE SEE YOU FAT MAN ... WE SEE YOU ... YOU CODE MONKEY FREAK ... YOU ARE NOTHING TO US ... YOU ARE FOOD FOR US ... WE SEE YOU FAT MAN ... DO YOU SEE US? ...", they chanted, they yelled,

DRAFT - unfinished ...

they sang, they danced. If it weren't for the arrow, the murder-stalking, the horrid nature of this affair, I would be impressed with its subtle artistry. In some queer way, these two “Kentuckians” had managed to re-create a dark corner of our collective unconscious ... not a corner we would want re-vivified ... but brought back, from ancient times, nonetheless. And, I thought, “fuck, if they can embrace life, and struggle, and try, despite the chemically induced schizophrenia gripping their brains ... what can't I? WHY CAN'T DAN TRY?”, and it was at that moment that I moved for the canyon.

The two were busy dancing, perhaps even having random sex, anal, oral, etc. ...

I saw my window, and I slowly crawled, dragging my wounded leg, through the brush, the thicket, and yes ... fucking “nettles” ... “Nettles - not an ironic name”, is all I could think.

After about 10 minutes of crawling, I was inches from the pine tree ...

A mere foot, or two, from my chance to escape “VOLCANUS” and Tad and Amanda and that dread little Cassandra, all of two years old, and already reading Nietzsche and Bukowski ... and Tad and Amanda said, “well, that's normal”.

I got up, pulled the arrow out of my leg ... fuck ... I don't know why I did that ... they always say, “don't fucking pull the arrow out”, but I did. The blood, which had been a trickle before, was now a torrent ... mixing with that harsh, late-summer, down-pour ... as if God were having a bad day, and kinda sad, and crying profusely.

“... don't be a pussy, do it for JOHNNY!”

I loved that movie, “The Outsiders”, growing up - never read the book, but I loved the film.

When Matt Dillon says “do it for Johnny!”, well, he does it with such vigour, such blood-lust, you can't help but believe that hell win ... somehow ... and not go down like “Butch Cassidy and Sundance” ... and shit ... or the “Wild Bunch” ending.

This little affair for me ...

This adventure in Kentucky ...

This was feeling like some strange mixture of “The Wicker Man” (the 1973 original you fuck) and “The Running Man” ... the one with Arnold.

DRAFT - unfinished ...

But this is no fucking movie ...

And there will be no dignity in the shallow grave they dig.

I stepped up to the end of the pine tree, not even attempting to look down; I knew, if I looked down, I would be in trouble ...

I moved slowly ...

Edging across that narrow gap ...

Of 30 or 40 feet ...

And below is the Nettles River ...

Noisy enough, from 200 feet above ...

And behind me ...

Taunting me from the woods ...

Were Tad and Amanda.

"... FLASH - KING OF THE IMPOSSIBLE!", on that note I felt the fast, cold, hard, piercing jab of Tad's sword.

He was only 10 feet away from me, when I began to cross that ravine or canyon. He was waiting, like a cat, like some strange jungle cat, with the instincts and the affect to enjoy his hunt.

He moved fast, from behind, as my attention was focused on the crossing, and the constant roar of water below.

His move was not the "coup de grace" he had always discussed - the "swordly work of revenge", as he would say. He would "chop off his enemy's heads" and then disembowel - because otherwise "it wasn't civilized". So, I expected, to , well, expect nothing ... to be beheaded and therefore without memory of some "final blow" or "mortal wound". Tad had promised, if I ever betrayed him, he would cut off my head - and I wouldn't see it coming. Instead, he had jabbed me between the ribs, enough to get me really bleeding, but not, again, enough to kill me ...

I stood there, trembling, for about 10 seconds - after Tad had removed his sword. He stood there looking at me, smiling, knowing he had outwitted me and sent me to my doom.

What happened next is a blur ...

I passed out ...

I fell down and off the log ...

Falling 200 feet, or more ...

Hitting some branches on my way down, but not slowing me down enough to save me.

DRAFT - unfinished ...

And then, with a smack, I hit the canyon floor - not the water mind you, that would have been less brutal. Nope, I had managed to hit the 5 or 6 rocks that shot up like stony lances, with jagged, back-breaking, edges and enough teeth to tear me to pieces on impact.

I don't know how long I was unconscious, I don't think it had been more than a few minutes - to let me drift off, and die, well, that would have been too merciful. I deserved to feel this pathetic death, a broken man, a busted spirit, and yet, I thought, not defeated.

I was dead, sure - and that mad couple mocked me, from above ... but I had chosen to risk everything and to do something "different". And now, at the end, well ... I could say that at least.

But not the life passing before me, with the light disappearing - I'm not seeing that, my whole story ...

That's what they say ...

They say, at the end, you see your whole life pass before your eyes. Who says it? Really? Who can report such shit? The ones who didn't die? I really don't know what to believe here.

What I will say, as I lay here broken, bleeding, with a femur or some other bone shooting through my spleen or liver or ... fuck ... I'm bleeding, ripped apart, and not nearly paralyzed enough to dull the pain. The branches along the side of the canyon wall had broken my fall ... but I was mortally wounded, minutes from death, and in terrible pain. I wish I could describe the pain. My 5 sisters, one of whom is now dead, would chastise me for using the word "pain", "... you don't know Dan ... not until you've had kids". Well, I've never given birth to a child, and likely never will, but this is really fucking painful ...

And amidst this pain ...

And my immanent death ...

And the two whaling crack-heads, jumping, prancing, circling overhead ... almost as if they were flying ... but they weren't. They were just performing their football-touchdown victory dance, hundreds of feet above, on the cliff's edge, with lightning flashes to accentuate the taunt.

With all of this going on, I didn't think about "my whole life" - but I did ruminate on the last few weeks.

The hope, dreams, fantasies ...

The expectation of wealth and power ...

DRAFT – unfinished ...

The disappointment that comes with knowing that a potential business partner might be a crystal-meth addled sociopath with a worldwide cult-of-the-personality scheme, and potentially in the first stages of amphetamine psychosis.

I analyzed the fuck out of all of this ...

(as I lay there bleeding to death)