

The Hippie on the Beach

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When I was 15 or so I was hanging out on the beach in Kewaunee, WI. I often hung out on that beach when I'd stay with my uncle Chris and his wife Jean in that part of the state. My father and his wife would sometimes allow me to stay with my uncle and I noticed I never got reported for things they considered misbehavior at my uncle's. It didn't take much for my parents to find things to punish me for when I was a kid. I just had to look at them cross eyed, pretty much is all it took most days.

I walked down the beach about a half to three quarters of a mile and found a semi-grassy and sandy spot to hang out and not be disturbed so I could watch the gulls and listen to the waves. I put down my blanket and hung out for awhile. I walked to the water a few times dipped my toe in. Kewaunee is on the shore of Lake Michigan, and the sand on the shores of the Great Lakes tends to be "soft" unlike the ocean shore. I found some smooth natural polished rocks and picked them up and went back to my blanket and sat down.

I had my camera with me. An old Kodak Instamatic camera. I think I took some pictures of the lake that day. The shoreline had cliffs. A lot of people think Wisconsin is terribly flat or something - it isn't. People who've never seen the Great Lakes expect they can see the other side of the lake. You can't. I don't think the Lakes have tides, per se, but the waves can get up to about three to four feet high.

I wasn't expecting to be approached. I didn't see the person until they got within like 20 feet of me. It was definitely a hippy. He had long brown hair, a moustache, and he put me on guard. I don't remember what color his eyes were. I didn't know what he wanted. It occurred to me that he looked like the pictures of Jesus I had seen, but I didn't know about that. I was completely skeptical of that whole idea as well. In any case the person was suspicious, but I let him hang out with me and asked him if he wanted to sit down.

He did. I remember we talked about taking pictures. There was a sandy dune/cliff thing behind me and I was thinking about climbing it for better pictures at some point and I was talking to him about climbing it for better pictures and maybe finding a shortcut. I talked about my uncle and how I was staying with family. I didn't stay on the beach too long though, cause this was obviously a grown man and I was a teenager and I just didn't know.

I was molested when I was about 7 by a different uncle related only by adoption several different times. I was sent to live with my father because of "behavioral problems" when I was 10. I was being abused physically, emotionally and psychologically at home, and that never happened at my uncle Chris and aunt Jean's. My father has ever been very neglectful - he doesn't seem to care what I do, think or feel *ever*. I didn't hear from him until I was 10 when I moved in with him, and he never put more than three words together to form a sentence when I'd try to have conversations with him.

My mother died in 1973 in a car crash. I was raised by her husband from the age of 4 to 10 and his new wife. I spent a lot of time outside. I spent a lot of time trying to connect to

something. Trying to figure out where she was for sure. I knew she was still around. I could feel her and I was pretty sure she was in Heaven. Nobody had good answers for me. “Nobody goes to Heaven unless they repent for lying” “Catholics don’t go to Heaven” “Blah blah blah blah” “Dreidels are evil from the devil,” etc. etc. etc. My mother was no saint and I’m sure she lied as a kid. In the instant she died she had no time for repentance for that in the car crash. I wasn’t Catholic - my stepfather’s new wife sent me to the Lutheran church when I lived with them. (My father’s family was Catholic however and is Black Irish stock to boot)

All these things were going through my mind when I was talking to this man on the beach.

I never said anything though. I didn’t know. Maybe he was going to hit on me? Maybe he’d follow me home? Maybe he was going to offer me drugs? I was really scared too. I had chosen this spot because it was isolated. I wasn’t mad, but I was surprised. The conversation never got very deep. I thought about asking some clever question or making some clever remark to test this person and decided against it. I decided I was just mad enough at God that I didn’t really care anyhow.

You see, I was mad because I didn’t know where the Native American kids were. I didn’t know about white religions anymore. When my stepfather remarried, he chose a 17 year old Native American girl as his wife and my new mom. I adopted her. When I was molested my baby brother was in the other room and I was helpless to protect him.

The other kids didn’t like the interracial parents I had. They threw stones at me on the way to and from school. He was violent and racist himself. He pulled me aside when I was eight just to tell me what a “squaw” was. Makes me angrier every year.

Her name is Peg. She’s a Buddhist. She told me my mother is an angel in Heaven and rainbows are a sign of peace from God to humanity. I don’t know why she sent me to the church at all..... I still can’t figure that out completely.

I said I had to get back home, good-bye and walked away from the man on the beach and tried to climb the dune. It was a lot harder than I thought it was going to be. Took three to four times as long as I expected. It was sandier and steeper than I realized. I got sand in the camera a bit. But I stubbornly refused to go back down to the beach. Eventually I made it to the top of the dune.

Later I learned that angels are a different species. She is in Heaven though and I have no patience for anyone that tells me any different these days - especially based on any superficial garbage. They can fly up there, which is pretty much what angels do, right?

Maybe it was Jesus. Maybe not.

Peace, love and freedom.

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