

In memory of John Lennon, who was assassinated 30 years ago today, the following excerpt has been made available from

GRIM REAPER: End of Days (ISBN-13: 978-1-935142-16-4)

in which Lennon plays the role of helping a character through a life-changing transformation - something he's been a part of for years. We hope you enjoy the captured essence of the legendary singer/songwriter/peace-maker.

The moon slipped behind storm clouds, once more casting him from West Drive's snow-covered tarmac into darkness. Unseen branches tore at his clothing and face, unseen roots caused him to stumble and fall. He was hopelessly lost, separated from his wife, exiled from deliverance. Regaining his feet, he groped his way forward another eight paces—

—only to run into fencing along the edge of a partially frozen wetland. The impasse unleashed a wave of panic. His bearings gone, his faith diminishing rapidly, he knelt in the snow and prayed, more an act of desperation than of salvation.

The wind died down. Then he heard it . . . the gentle strumming of an acoustic guitar.

Wiping back tears, he followed the sound, finding his way through rows of American Elms before coming to a clearing that intersected with a vaguely familiar path.

The man was in his forties, seated alone on one of a dozen benches

situated around a circular mosaic. Oily brown hair hung past his shoulders. A gaunt pale face, framed by long sideburns. The signature wire-rimmed glasses were slightly tinted. He was wearing worn jeans, a denim jacket over a black tee shirt, and appeared not the least bit concerned about the cold. The guitar rested on one knee. He was measuring each chord as he felt his way through an acoustic rendition of a song recorded nearly four decades earlier:

“. . . playing those mind games forever, some kinda druid dudes . . . lifting the veil. Doing the mi . . . ind guerrilla. Some call it magic . . . the search for the grail. Love is the answer, and you know that—for sure. Love is a flower . . . you got to let it . . . you got to let grow.”

John Lennon looked up at Paolo Salvatore Minos and smiled. “I know what you’re thinking, lad. Truth is, I thought about singing “Imagine,” but that would have been a bit clichéd, don’t you think?”

Paolo knelt by the Imagine mosaic, now visible in the returning moonlight, his body shaking with adrenaline. “Are you real?”

The deceased Beatle tuned a string. “Just an image in space and time.”

“I meant . . . are you a ghost, or is it this damn vaccine?”

“Don’t believe in ghosts, don’t believe in vaccines either.” A roar grew louder in the distance. “Listen to them . . . murderous bastards. Praying for Jesus to arrive on his white steed like some rock star . . . as if Jesus would have any part of that chaos.”

“They’re not sinners. They’re just looking to be saved.”

“Yes, but salvation, according to John the bloody Apostle, is a right reserved only for Christians. Ironically, that would exclude Jesus, too. Toss Rabbi Jesus into the fire pit on the right, lads, the Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and the rest of the lot into Satan’s pit on the left. Once they’re gone, we can reserve the infighting strictly among the Catholics and Protestants, the Lutherans, Episcopalians, Pentecostals, Mormons, Baptists . . . who am I forgetting? Wait, I know, we can call for another war in the Holy Land, this one to sort out whose church is the real church of God.”

Paolo grabbed his head. “No, I can’t hear this . . . not now, not on Judgment Day. You were such a hero to me, but this . . . this is heresy.”



“Aye. And be sure to count Rabbi Jesus among the heretics.”

“Stop . . . please!”

“Paolo, listen to me. We’re all God’s children. All of us. The real sin is man’s refusal to become what we are. Spirituality isn’t about religion, it’s about loving God. Two thousand years of bickering, persecution, hatred, and war, all caused by some silly competition over who Daddy loves best. All we have to do is love unconditionally. When each man becomes his brother’s keeper . . . that’s when everything changes. It’s not too late. Look at me. I grew up angry, then I found my purpose.”

“Your music?”

“No, lad. Music was merely a channel, a means of delivering the message.” He strummed a chord. “Love is the answer . . . Sorry, I’m a bit off-key.”

“John, I need to know . . . is this it? Is this the end?”

The former activist put down the guitar. “Destruction is a self-fulfilling path, but so is peace. Murder has become a billion-dollar industry, with greed and selfishness leading mankind toward oblivion. It must be stopped. As a Christian taught to believe out of fear, you need to decide what it is you want more—the destruction of the world and the so-called promise of salvation, or the peace, love, and fulfillment that transforms every human being on the planet.”

“But how can one man . . . I mean, I’m not you.”

“You mean you’re not an insecure, egomaniacal, angry musician who abused drugs and alcohol?”

“Come on, John. You risked your career . . . your life to speak out against the Vietnam War. You mobilized millions, you saved lives—”

“And how many lives have you saved by feeding the hungry? If history has taught us anything, lad, it’s that one man, one voice, one mantra can change the world. Now tell me, what is it you really need?”

Paolo wiped the tears streaming down his face. “I need . . . a car.”

John Lennon smiled. “Follow the path across West Park Avenue to my old building, the Dakota. There’s a parking garage next door . . .”

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