

## DREAM: ISLAND.... 1974

Palmer & I were sent to the island as temporary replacements for the deputies who had retired. Ordinarily this would be a great assignment, a sizable island in the south Pacific with adequate village amenities. It was far out of the tourist loops and pretty much wild except for the village at the cove. What made it unpleasant was that a murder had taken place recently and we had to monitor the coming & going of people and be on the lookout for suspects. We were checking new arrivals one day when a couple with a ten-year old son caught our attention. The couple had that 'oddness' about them that would be hard to explain but instantly flagged them for suspicion. Wariness, lack of flow to their walking gait...the kid particularly demanded attention. He was grotesque in facial expression and seemed wracked by mental agonies. He was ranting about guns, so we detained them. The boy needed to be restrained so we locked him up. The mother complained bitterly... but we told her: there are few people living here and few coming & going, so there aren't many other suspects. "You've got a kid there who's psychotic and obsessed with shooting and revenge."

I've been feeling very light-headed since coming to the island. My duties seem to be floating away from me and I'm not able to think in sequences. But at the same time I feel springy and fearless. I want to be generous. I'm talking with George about this the next day and he agrees that there's something 'in the air'. But we have to pay attention to the murder case and soon there is a reason to. The father of the mad boy has been seen with a rifle on the landward side of the only sizable building in the village. I decide to go after him. As I round the corner I see he's right there in front of me, so I pull my gun and command him to drop his. He hesitates...and then drops the rifle. My partner arrives and holds him while I fire off twenty caps from my gun. It's a cap gun! Everyone is shocked. I just shrug, saying, "I knew it would work. Anyway I don't want to hurt anybody." That light ambient grace is flowing through me as if I were a policeman for a Utopia.

There is a mystery about the father. He is moody and lean-faced, and he refuses to talk. We feel sure he has a piece of knowledge that will solve the murder. Even his wife admits that he has the answer. While we talk to her, there is an uproar from within the building. Yelling and crashing sounds. It's a modern two-story office building with a long glass & aluminum front facing the ocean. Kind of an air terminal & headquarters. Suddenly there is a roiling surf all around us even though we are on the landward side. It engulfs us, up to our shins...and we see that it isn't water. It's very noisy and white, and manages to crash and churn with no discernible cause. We hold fast to the stairway and then it recedes. People run for cover, yelling. I try to see thru the windows to the beach, but all is obscured by a huge white shadow. Palmer says "Christ! If that's a tidal wave we're done for!"

It comes to me to doubt this. Something is Different. I make my way to the far end of the building, away from other people. As I get to the end I'm suddenly radiated with affection. The scene before me seems exalted or charged with ambrosial vapor. Beyond the building there are many long cylindrical creatures that are rolling and shuddering. They look like giant mollusks from the Triassic era. They seem dense and unresponsive...they can only roll a few yards this way and that, and their skins are leathery blue. It is dangerous to get close because they weigh many tons and their movements are hard to predict. Now we realize that they have always been right there but they were protectively colored and still... so we paid no attention.

I walked over to the beach and was staggered by its beauty. There is no storm, yet everything is whitened as if by a winter storm. There are patches of snow on the sand and ice chunks in the water. Of course! It hits me forcefully that we are so far south that this is the advent of winter. The

commotion we just went through is the Change of Seasons as it happens this close to Antarctica. The beach is full of a new type of bird, large and white with a double beak. They are absolutely still and I feel that they carry great significance by the way they stare at me. I remember Darwin's amazement at the strange life on the Galapagos. One could very well just stay here and record observations of the fauna for the rest of one's life. Try to understand the bizarre ecology. I'm drifting into this reverie. Why not?

I turn back to the landward side of the building and...years have passed while I was staring at those birds. Years! It is dusk and in the dark thick orchard people are furtively huddling behind trees and darting from one to another. I remember that my partner and I have remained here because the family we detained has not revealed their secret. I go into the orchard feeling confident to settle everything. I find them and make them accompany me down to the stream where we sit and prepare some food. Talking things over, it becomes apparent that the father simply will never reveal his secret. The case will never be solved. We five, Palmer myself, and the family, will be stuck here for the rest of our lives.

While eating, the father borrows my knife, and then slashes his thumb deeply. Then his palm. It bleeds only a little, but the skin opens up in a deep ravine. I realize he has no interest in living. My partner suggests we take a raft over to the nearby island which is renowned for its lush tropical growth. He says it is now plain that we are just living out our lives here like prisoners, and therefore we should go to the Island of Fertility and Fruit...the Island of Death. We all agree, and with no particular feeling prepare to raft across. Palmer comes aboard with a mating pair of tropical vultures and declares that these birds shall be our emblem, or totem, since our reason for living is only to die. We all agree.

The other island is amazing in its florabundance. It teems with plant life and smells fetid and rank with decay and vegetal sex. Almost everything is edible and the fruit and flowers are flaring and beautiful in orchid-like display. The vultures quickly multiply and a dozen or so are now mingling with the plants along the estuary. They are more like big geese, stately and quiet. The males are jet black. The females walk alongside their mates but they are taller, with arching, pendant necks, and a lacy crown. They are silvery & translucent & elegant. This place is the End. No melancholy, no regret. Clarity and accord with the environment is our song. A thread of excitement at the richness of stimulation. And the richness of our coming deaths.