

Life's a Blast

By Kenn Hartmann

Davey Boy spent his teens skateboarding, biking and blowing shit up and by shit I mean abandoned edifices on the suburban frontier and by edifices I mean more precisely a board-up building, a derelict shed and an old cement silo standing alone on prairie as a fading reminder of some lost farmer's vision. Of course, I never met an American teen who didn't like to blow shit up, I'm sure they're out there, I just never met any in my circle of fine fellows a county judge once called "maniacal hoodlum thugs." For the most part, those fine fellows who did like to blow shit up employed the usual assortment of Lady Fingers, Black Cats and M-80's and targeted mailboxes, school toilets and some rumor circulated about a cat's ass. Nobody did things like that when I was around, especially hurting animals because I was dead set against any kind of cruelty, so mostly it was tin cans, buckets and maybe a pop bottle if you didn't want the 2 cents return. Besides, I had picked up a 22 rifle when I was eleven to occupy my attention. But Davey Boy was different. Davey Boy took everything to another level.



Back in my teens, in the 60's my technique on a skateboard was quite proficient, one foot on board, one foot plodding on street, then coast for a while, freaking awesome, I had it down. Meanwhile, this was in the early 80's by the way that this story took place, Davey Boy built a half-pipe vert-ramp in his backyard and could drop in, grab air, kick flips and even do an ollie. He rode a Raleigh 10-speed that he personally customized everything, shocks, brakes, seat, rims, everything. And when it came to fireworks Davey Boy blew right past the roadside 4th of July stand and went right into making pipe bombs. I'm talking foot long pipes bombs, maybe an inch or two in diameter that could blow a hole the size of a garbage can lid through the wall of a cement silo. By nature, Davey Boy definitely had a knack for being off the grid.

Davey Boy rolled up on his Raleigh with a 12-pack slung in a rucksack across his back and a little pouch of reefer neatly hidden in the handlebar. He wanted to discuss the previous day's excursion. When on a mission, Davey Boy travelled light, no pack, no beer and no weed, just a big, fat pipe bomb tucked into his waistband. So yesterday when he swung by to show me the pipe bomb, I asked "So wat yu gonna do wit dat?"

"Blow up the silo."

"Not da silo. I like dat silo."

"It'll get torn down. Everything does."

"It could be a landmark!"

"Corporations don't care about landmarks, they already cut down the oak forest for a factory, the prairie will be a parking lot, you know that," said Davey Boy. "Besides, I already blew a hole in it the size of a bowler hat just last week. This'll be the size of a sombrero."

I appreciated his hat analogy, it was definitely easier to picture him committing the crime with a frame of reference in mind, so off he went to do the deed and today when he arrived at my palatial shack with his rucksack, I patted him down to make sure he wasn't strapped with ordinances and invited him into my pad.

My living room was Spartan, perhaps not the right word, Spartan without warrior connotations, the frugal Spartan, in fact forget Spartan, think barren, shockingly so, just my motorcycle and easy chair, I guess you could say, living the good life, living the dream. Nice wood floor, except for oil stains and burnout marks, evidence of some vodka fueled tomfoolery I'd rather forget. I had lost my couch weeks earlier. This young biker chick slinked on in with her huge, possibly rabid mongrel mutt named Kokomo and I only remember the mutt's name because she kept shouting, "Kokomo don't shit there! Kokomo don't piss here!"

While doing my duty with her behind closed doors (I didn't want that foul-breath mouth-drooling beast eyeing my naked ass) dogs do what they always do when trying to articulate displeasure at being separated from the action, Kokomo ate the shit out of my couch and by shit I mean fabric, stuffing, cushions, springs, the freaking wood gnawed into splinters, plus I'm sure he marked his territory a couple times on it too. "Kokomo, don't eat the couch!" I dragged the whole heap to street and left it on curb for trash men.

Davey Boy asked, "hey, where's couch?"

"Eh," I answered, not a word really just a verbal exhale. "Have a seat." I gestured toward the easy chair.

I sat on my bike, an iron head Sportster. We sucked beers, smoked weed. I suggested burgers. We hovered around makeshift grill, a stainless steel bucket, one my dad used to boil corn but somebody shot a hole in it, perhaps intentionally or a ricochet. A damn fine stainless bucket ruined until I turned it into a grill. The bullet hole provided a nice vent for the charcoal. We garnished burgers with Morton's finest.

"No pickles?" asked Davey Boy.

"Doubt it. Check fridge." He came out with a half bottle of Vodka. "No pickles?" "This'll do."

When I asked him why he has to blow shit up he launched into a brief history of explosives from the Tang Dynasty onward, even referencing diatomaceous earth which we played with in grade school science class and fulminate of mercury which I remember Ensign Pulver playing with in Mister Roberts. But why must you blow up the silo? I like the silo. "Besides, I saw your mother yesterday, she's concerned."

"She knows I blow shit up?"

"I don't know, just concerned about your general malaise."

"I feel fine. Where'd you see my mom?"

"At the freakin' library, fer cry'sake! She's the librarian! Whach-u think, the f'n likker store?"

The night progressed as it were, finished off vodka, finished off in a haze, shall I say? Davey Boy passed out upright in chair cradling empty vodka bottle like it was some young precious newborn babe. I retreated to bedroom, but no bed, just my air mattress and sleeping bag. In the morning, with Davey Boy gone, only the litter left, bottles and cans, ash piles and general detritus I noticed a nasty aroma, too nasty to describe with my meager vocab, but seriously nasty none the less and it emanated from the chair. I looked askance, like "huh?" The chair looked fine but the smell was like a dead cow's stomach turned inside out in the hot sun. The cushion looked fine until I flipped it over. "Oh fucking mother of all foul stank!" I grabbed the back of the chair, held my breath and dragged it to the curb hoping this wouldn't reflect too badly on my already tarnished esteem with the trash men.

Davey Boy had no recollection or explanation. "What the hell do you think happened, Davey Boy? Somebody just walked in the door and puked in my chair?" Davey Boy felt it was possible since the door was unlocked when he left. I admitted anything was possible "but dude, that's some terroristic shit puking in my chair like that." We remained friends but drifted apart. He dynamited the silo at least a dozen times and it still didn't topple. He finally took a sledgehammer and busted out the last strand that held it up.

A few years later Davey Boy bought a motorcycle and swooped in to show me, all proud and sober. He gave up drinking a week earlier and said the motorcycle was going to straighten out his life. It was a modest rice burner and I told him it was nice. I didn't ask him about his bombing escapades. That was the last I saw him. His mom called a week later to say he had been killed. At the funeral, some remnants of the maniacal hoodlum thugs, who all looked less maniacal, being the fine fellows they were, speculated on what happened. Someone speculated rather sinisterly that he got "nudged" off the highway by a government SUV. Someone else speculated he had an insurance policy and it was suicide. I just speculated being sober a week wasn't long enough for Davey Boy. Being sober a week for Davey Boy would for someone else be like being drunk a week. I just think he couldn't handle it.

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1 Samuel 16:7, James 2: 1-4

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