

Black Sun

By Gary Carson

I

Duke pulled into Colfax after a brutal deadhead - two days through Colorado and Nevada, a blur of truck stops, crank and short blackouts in the cab.

Nobody gave him a second look. He dropped the rig at the lot, grabbed some food, then crashed for ten hours at a Super 8 on the highway. The radio alarm blasted him awake: Art Bell talking UFO's and gray aliens on Coast-To-Coast A.M. It was four in the morning - the Day Of Revenge. He got some coffee, then walked over to pick up his load.

Moths swarmed an arc light over the lot gate. The warehouse used to be a transload facility for animal feed, but now it was the staging ground for the end of the world. Duke shivered and rang the bell. A bolt lock clicked. The old man opened the door, his shadow fanning across the dock in a frame of yellow light.

"Ever' thing's ready." Gramps passed over keys and papers, his hand knotted with tendons, a Black Sun tattoo on his wrist - the symbol of infinite light and the secret philosophy. "They finished loadin' an hour ago. Cleaned up good. I put the switch under the radio." He squinted, his eyes cloudy. "Red knob on a black box. Turn it all the way to the right...that's all she wrote." He lit a Pall Mall, the match flaring in his cataracts. "Ten thousand pounds of ammonium nitrate and fuel oil primed with TNT. It's stable enough, but you flip that switch in the middle of the span and they'll never know what hit them."

Duke didn't say anything. He stared at the blacktop, watching a beetle crawl over a broken bottle.

"We won't forget." The old man shook his hand. "Ain't nobody gone forget what you done."

Duke's rig was a Mack, six axles, with twin exhausts and a 40-foot trailer. He pulled himself into the cab, strapped in and turned it over. The diesel caught and rumbled, pipes muttering, and he could feel the vibrations down the levels of his spine. He backed out with a clash of gears, braked in a wheeze of hydraulics. The old man stood in the headlights, giving him the Roman salute.

Duke worked the transmission, put it in low, then clattered out of the lot, banging over potholes on the way to I-80. A quarter moon drifted through clouds over the Sierra, watching him like an ancient eye.

Next stop: rush hour on the Bay Bridge.

II

The Feds had him under surveillance the whole time. Duke spotted one of their tail cars, but it fell back on the highway and he never saw it again.

Hunched over the wheel, he rolled through New England Mills, Weimar and Heater Glenn, heading towards Sacramento and the Central Valley. Taillights floated through the dark and the wind fluttered in the vents. He turned on the radio as the sun cracked the mountains, glinting on Lake Combie west of the Placer Hills.

The radio spewed trash and propaganda. Punching buttons, he skipped over the news: a Viagra commercial, some hip-hop and a spot for the latest diet pill. A shock jock asked a stripper her cup size, then cut to a break.

The pawn in the White House ranted about militias and right-wing extremists.

Duke turned it off. He ran nasty flashbacks.

Two months ago, his son died in Iraq, his wife divorced him and he volunteered to blow himself up to kick-start the Revolution. When he came to his senses, it was too late to change his mind. You're our driver, his cell leader told him. Die for the Race or we'll blow your head off.

A meth bust had saved his life.

The BATF knocked down his door a couple weeks later and popped him with five pounds of crystal, sixty grand in cash, a sawed-off Mossberg and a copy of the Turner Diaries. He flipped after a six-hour talk with the Feds downtown. Thirty years or rat off The Order - that was the deal. ZOG needed a high-profile bust to justify the War On Terror.

Duke caved. He turned informer.

Call it a sweet relief.

III

The Feds were waiting for him at a rest stop a couple miles from Clipper Gap. Duke pulled in and parked the rig by the johns, then he climbed down from the cab and walked over to a white van and a panel truck parked by the exit. Dawn bled over the dark hills. Bugs clouded the lights by the picnic shelter and the air smelled like crap and damp grass.

"Give me the keys." Special Agent Johnson of the Internal Security Division stood by the van in his trench coat, smoking a cigarette. The van door opened and a couple goons stepped out, carrying tool kits and wearing body armor under vests marked BOMB DISPOSAL. Duke gave Johnson the keys and he passed them to one of the goons. "Take your time, OK? We don't want any accidents."

"They rigged the primer to a switch," Duke said. "Black box with a red knob under the radio."

"That's what they told you, anyway."

Voices babbled on a scanner in the van. Five suits wearing headset mikes got out of the panel truck and walked over to the rig, circling the trailer, checking the cab while the bomb guys unpacked their gear on the blacktop.

"You had a tail." Johnson blew a smoke ring. He looked like an insurance salesman, but he had the eyes of a robot. "The CHP pulled them over a couple miles back."

"I ain't surprised."

"Two skinheads in a black Ford," Johnson said. "They were there to make sure you didn't back out."

Duke didn't say anything.

"We'll disarm the bomb." Johnson checked his watch. "Don't worry about that."

"Why not stop it here?" Duke asked. "You got the truck. You can round them up

any time.”

Johnson shook his head.

“We need you to follow the original plan all the way to the end.” He crushed out his cigarette and shoved his hands in his pockets, watching the Disposal Team open the trailer doors and climb inside Duke’s truck. “Drive into the city and stop on the bridge per instructions. We’ll have three teams on you the whole way and we’ll stage the bust in the middle of the commute - right in the middle of rush-hour traffic.” He smiled to himself. “The Director wants maximum exposure before the budget hearings next month, so just stick to the program.”

“What happens then?”

“We’ll have a Nazi roundup on Prime-Time Live.” Johnson shrugged. “You go into Witness Protection.”

IV

The show hit the road.

Johnson and his team followed Duke through Sacramento as a red and bloated sun came up over the Central Valley. Clouds piled over dairy farms and orchards on the horizon. Dust devils whirled through grubby towns full of wetbacks and bikers.

Duke listened to CB chatter, watching the traffic in the rearview. He spotted the white van a couple times, hanging back in the cruise lane, but he knew there were a dozen cars around him - Feds watching his every move, tracking the beeper they had planted in his cab. A helicopter dogged him for a while, then it circled to the west and vanished.

The miles ticked by at sixty-five. Dixon. Vacaville. He spaced on the highway, bugs spattering the windshield, the rig bouncing over ruts in the road. He wasn’t worried about setting off the bomb; the Disposal Team had pulled the primers and clipped the leads on the switch - he could see the wires lying on the floor. The load was inert, Johnson had told him when he handed back the keys. Duke was hauling a trailer full of fertilizer and oil: ten-thousand pounds of rolling dud.

Fairfield. Suisun City.

The traffic got worse, the rig struggling on the hills in American Canyon. He checked the radio and caught a news report: fifty dead in Baghdad, a car bomb at a mosque, mortar fire on the Green Zone. He flashed on his son - dead at twenty in a war based on lies. He saw his wife split with her luggage, burned out on hate and fear, the meth deals and bikers, the Aryans plotting revolution and the downfall of ZOG. It’s all over, she had said. It don’t matter any more.

“The Director of the new Internal Security Division denied reports that he plans to step down,” the radio jabbered. “Faced with growing criticism in Congress, he said that budget cuts and opposition to his new guidelines for domestic surveillance threaten the security of the country. In a statement released today, the Director accused his critics of downplaying the threat of domestic terrorism, calling them appeasers playing politics with the lives of American citizens. It may already be too late, he said, to stop the next attack.”

Duke turned it off. He wiped his hands on his jeans.

He made Vallejo, passing Mare Island, then stalled in gridlock on the Carquinez Bridge. The Bay glittered below, rippled by gusts, sails cluttering the water off Novato. He saw the helicopter again, circling the bridge like a dragonfly, its rotors flashing when they caught the light. When he checked the rearview, he spotted the white van two cars back, stuck behind a Beamer in the slow lane. He thought about ditching the truck, but he couldn't do it. Johnson had threatened to charge his wife as an accomplice if he crapped out on their deal.

The traffic started moving again.

He drove through Richmond and El Cerrito, rolling past Golden Gate Fields and Eastshore State Park. The Berkeley Hills spread to the east and San Francisco rose on the peninsula on the other side of the Bay, the skyscrapers in the Financial District a jumble of glass and steel in the haze of the Pacific. He had made it on schedule: 8:15 a.m., the height of the morning commute. Eight lanes of traffic crawled along the water, thousands of cars and trucks heading to work in all directions.

He was sweating, his heart thumping, his hands damp on the wheel.

The Bay Bridge loomed ahead, eight miles long, the east span running from Oakland to the tunnel on Yerba Buena Island, the west span with its double decks and suspension towers connecting the island to San Francisco. The feeder highways had backed up for miles and the westbound commute flickered on the upper deck of the Bridge, five lanes of traffic crawling bumper-to-bumper, windshields flashing 200 feet above the water. A quarter of a million cars, trucks and buses crossed the Bridge every day.

The Order had picked its target well.

Duke followed the Eastshore Freeway and merged with the traffic backed up at the toll plaza. Metering lights flashed in a haze of exhaust. Horns blared. Cars maneuvered for position at the gates. Twenty minutes later, he paid the six-axle toll and started up the bridge, checking both his mirrors as fifteen lanes converged into five on the truss causeway. Rising on the east span, he could see Alcatraz, Angel Island, Tiburon and the San Rafael Bridge miles to the north. Dark clouds piled over the Pacific.

He entered the Yerba Buena tunnel, an echo chamber full of exhaust, brake lights and glossy windshields. The pulse ticked in his throat. He licked his lips, squeezing the wheel and checking the rearview. The white van had vanished in the flood of traffic. He hadn't seen it for miles.

The commute had bogged down somewhere ahead and it took ten minutes to reach the end of the tunnel. When he came out on the west span, the traffic stopped completely, moved forward, then stopped again. He took a breath, then put the rig in neutral and turned off the engine, settling back in his seat to wait for Johnson and his goons to stage their big arrest.

The white van was behind him somewhere and he knew there were Feds all around him, tracking his beeper, talking back and forth on their radios. They would have to get out and run through the stalled cars, block off the traffic, shut down the bridge in the middle of the commute. It was going to be a mess. The traffic would back up for miles, engines overheating, cars running out of gas. Johnson was going to get his publicity.

When the traffic started moving again, he just sat there, waiting to get arrested.

The drivers trapped in his lane pounded on their horns, but they couldn't get around the truck and the noise got louder and louder. Duke closed his eyes, thinking about his wife. He had trials ahead, years of testifying against The Order, but when he finally got clear, maybe he could save his marriage, try to put it together again with a fake name in the Witness Protection Program.

Someone pounded on his door and he opened his eyes, expecting to see Johnson or one of his goons holding a badge up to the window, but it was some angry commuter yelling at him to move the rig or get on his radio for a tow. Duke flipped him off and closed his eyes again. For the first time in months, he felt kind of relaxed. It was over. He had delivered his load.

Then the cell phone hidden under his seat started to ring and the wireless pulse triggered the primer.

A black sun opened in his head.

Infinite light.

Darkness.

Nothing.

IV

The explosion vaporized the truck and destroyed five lanes of traffic, cars and buses flying apart as the fireball flashed across the span and the shock wave punched a hole in the deck, smashing windshields a hundred yards away, scattering axles and tires and engine blocks as the blast echoed through the city. Cars tumbled over cars. Cables snapped. A wall of burning oil surged through the tunnel, clouds of black smoke boiling over Yerba Buena, then the upper deck collapsed, spilling tons of concrete and steel onto the lower deck, which buckled and split, dropping the eastbound traffic into the Bay.

Agent Johnson could hear the screams from Point Emery two miles to the north. He put away his cell phone and walked back to the white van, where two of his men stood by the open door, watching the smoke drift over the burning bridge.

"Call the units," he said. "Tell them to start the raids immediately. Secure the warehouse in Colfax and call in the forensic team." He lit a cigarette. "Remind them that evidence in this case is classified as Sensitive Compartmented Information requiring Special Access Clearance and media access will be restricted to Senior Command by orders of the Director."

Sirens wailed in the city. Johnson watched the agency helicopter circle the island, filming the carnage for early release.

They needed maximum exposure.

*Gary Carson is a former journalist and IT geek currently trying to break through as a thriller writer. His short story Dog Breath was published in the Fall 2003 issue of **Hardluck Stories**. The first chapter of his novel Lizard Flicks and his essay "The Process Of Elimination: A Crime Writer's Guide To Contract Killing" were published in the Jan. 2006 issue of *Noir Originals*. In 2006, he signed with Jenny Brown Associates, Scotland's leading literary agency.*