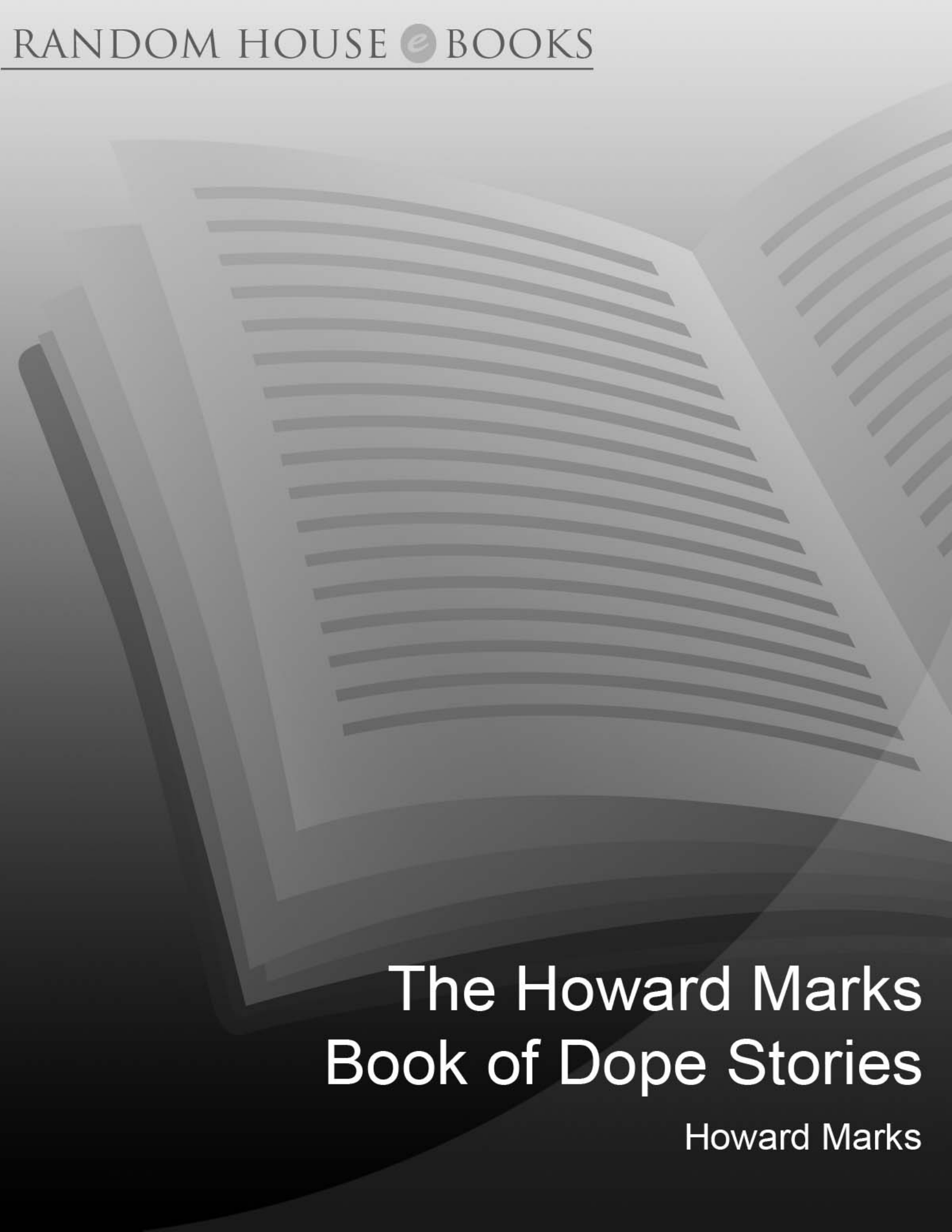


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# The Howard Marks Book of Dope Stories

Howard Marks

## About the Author

Born in 1945 in Kenfig Hill, a small Welsh coal-mining village near Bridgend, Howard Marks rose through Oxford University and the British Secret Service to become 'the most sophisticated drugs baron of all time' (*Daily Mirror*). In 1996 Howard wrote his autobiography, *Mr Nice*, which remains an international bestseller in several languages.

In 1997, Howard performed his first live shows which received excellent reviews throughout the national press, and his now legendary one-man comedy show, *An Audience with Mr Nice*, continues to sell-out at venues throughout Britain.

Howard Marks has his own hugely popular website ([www.mrnice.net](http://www.mrnice.net)), record label (Bothered), and cannabis seed company (Mr Nice Seed Bank). He writes a monthly column for *Loaded* and has written features for the *Observer*, *Evening Standard*, *Time Out*, *GQ*, and the *Guardian*, campaigning vigorously for the legalisation of recreational drugs.

ALSO BY HOWARD MARKS

*Mr Nice*  
*Sénor Nice*

# **THE HOWARD MARKS BOOK OF DOPE STORIES**

EDITED BY

Howard Marks

VINTAGE BOOKS  
London

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This book is dedicated to the memory of my father,  
Dennis Marks.

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Acknowledgements



*Dope:*

Information about a subject, especially if not generally known

An additive producing a desired characteristic

A substance added to increase effectiveness and improve properties

A chemical substance taken for the pleasant effects it produces

Dictionary Definitions

## INTRODUCTION

WHEN I WROTE *Mr Nice*, I did so with fellow elderly hippies in mind as potential readers. I was, therefore, truly astonished to discover that its unexpected best-seller status was primarily due to its popularity among people several decades younger than I was. Through a plethora of media interviews and several public book readings, it became clear that the predominant reason why so many adolescents and university students read and enjoyed *Mr Nice* was their frustration with the law prohibiting cannabis consumption and trade. Until then, I had no idea of the extraordinary extent of cannabis use by young people today.

Despite having made enormous amounts of money through illegally trading cannabis, I have never been able to begin to see this as a justification for condoning any prolonging of its prohibition and have always supported its legalisation. In the past, I had to do this clandestinely or anonymously: it would have been unforgivably unprofessional to do otherwise. After the publication of *Mr Nice*, I found myself swamped by the spotlight of media attention. I determined to use my sky-rocketing notoriety in as responsible a way as possible and to do whatever I could to hasten the day that cannabis would be relegalised.

My first high-profile attempt to move towards cannabis relegalisation was to smoke a joint at a London police station and offer myself as available for immediate arrest and imprisonment. The police declined. It occurred to me then (perhaps for the first time) that the police were not the enemy. Most policemen choose that profession for completely honourable reasons, such as protecting the society they love: they did not join up to imprison people for smoking herbs. Policemen have walked the streets far more

than the rest of us and know what the problems are and what causes them. The ones that I've talked with, almost without exception, do not see the consumption of cannabis as problematic, but they do see the law prohibiting it to be so. I cannot think of any law that has done more damage in terms of social upheaval, parent-child alienation and police-public hostility.

Although it's hard for me to imagine anyone deciding to favour the prohibition of drugs after reading this book, its purpose is not an appeal for legalisation. The drug stories and extracts herein are chosen on the basis of their interest, rarity, amusement and provocation.

I suspect that all anthology compilers are plagued by which criteria to adopt for ordering the chosen extracts. I certainly was and longed for the sudden acquisition of an undefinable skill, somewhere between that of a hard-working house DJ and that of a full-time bibliographer. Do I do it by drug, by mood, by content, or by time? Eventually, I decided to let the order reflect my and many others' journeys through the world of drugs: a period of wonderfully gentle and civilised discovery followed by a smattering of learning, a far more intense and raw discovery phase ending with extreme frustration with the social taboos surrounding drugs, then a long but finite period of living from drugs, and finally an eternal time of living with them.

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTO IT

**Mordecai Cooke**

***The Seven Sisters of Sleep***

Author's Dedication

To all lovers of tobacco, in all parts of the world,  
juvenile and senile, masculine and feminine;  
and to all abstainers, voluntary and involuntary.

To all opiophagi, at home and abroad,  
whether experiencing the pleasures, or pains  
of the seductive drug.

To all haschischans, east and west, in whatever form they  
choose to woo the spirit of dreams.

To all buyeros, Malayan or Chinese,  
whether their siri-boxes are full, or empty.

To all coqueros, white or swarthy,  
from the base to the summit of the mighty cordilleras.

To all votaries of stramonium and henbane,  
highlander, or lowlander.

And to all swallowers of amanita, either in Siberia or  
elsewhere  
these pages come greeting with the best wishes  
of their obedient servant.

Published in 1860 by James Blackwood, London

**James Grey Jackson**  
***An Account of the Empire of Morocco***

THE PLANT CALLED hashisha is the African hemp plant; it grows in all the gardens; and is reared in the plains at Morocco, for the manufacture of twine; but in most parts of the country it is cultivated for the extraordinary and pleasing voluptuous vacuity of mind which it produces in those who smoke it: unlike the intoxication from wine, a fascinating stupor pervades the mind, and the dreams are agreeable. The kief, which is the flower and seeds of the plant, is the strongest, and a pipe of it half the size of a common English tobacco pipe, is sufficient to intoxicate. The infatuation of those who use it is such that they cannot exist without it. The kief is pounded, and mixed with *el majune*, an invigorating confection, which is sold at an enormous price; a piece of this as big as a walnut will for a time entirely deprive a man of all reason and intellect; they prefer it to opium, from the voluptuous sensations which it never fails to produce. Wine or brandy, they say, does not stand in competition with it. The hashisha, or leaves of the plant, are dried and cut like tobacco, with which they are smoked, in very small pipes; but when the person wishes to indulge in the sensual stupor it occasions, he smokes the hashisha pure, and in less than half an hour it operates; the person under its influence is said to experience pleasing images: he fancies himself in company with beautiful women; he dreams that he is an emperor, or a bashaw, and that the world is at his nod.

*An Account of the Empire Morocco, 1968*

**Howard Marks**  
***Morocco***

AS I APPROACHED, a blanket of mist that had covered both of the old cities of Fes el Jedid (New Fes) and Fes el Bali (Old Fes) gradually lifted and revealed an underblanket of several hundred thousand satellite dishes covering an enormous basin of ten thousand tiny streets of medieval mayhem, the *medina*. I entered through one of the *medina*'s many imposing gates through which no cars were allowed to pass. The passages quickly become narrow and steep, with right of way given to weighted donkeys. Craftsmen were beginning to ply their trades in leather, carpets, wood, jewellery and spices. Aromatic whiffs of herbs, spices, succulent kebabs, fresh honey cakes and bread made everyone's mouth water. Dazzling coloured hanks of yarn, kettles, cassette players and shoes were suspended wherever there was space. Losing myself hopelessly in this labyrinth, I headed down bustling, twisting alleys lined with tiny shops selling multicoloured garments, sequined slippers, brassware, tooth-cleaning twigs, spices and baked goods. All purchases, expensive and cheap, were tied up in black plastic bags. Deeper down still, pharmacies and herbalists displayed dried skins of lizards and snakes, leeches, scorpions, live hedgehogs and terrapins. These alleyways, I knew, hid magnificent homes and gardens behind their blank uncompromising walls. Unlike that of Europe, Islamic architecture aims to enclose space, to create a sheltered garden from a wilderness, relating to the deep-felt need to turn away from the outside world and look in upon a personal oasis. The Muslim concept of paradise is a place of abundant cool water and shade.

But at 3 p.m., the whole of the *medina* seemed dry, hot and sunny. Wandering around in an obviously futile attempt to find my bearings, encountering one dead end after another, I was quickly approached by a succession of people offering to be my guide, to lead me to my hotel, to show me the mosques and museums, to take me to the merchants who sell goods at the cheapest possible prices. I am always

glad to have some sort of guide in foreign parts and am often amused by needlessly aggressive tourists cold-shouldering potential helpers and then consulting, with confusion and puzzlement, their imported obsolete maps and anecdotal guidebooks. It is a ridiculous but revealing insight into Western attitudes. Obviously some guides are rogues, but just look into their eyes and hire the nicest. (Forget anyone wearing dark glasses.) I settled on one named Rachid.

‘Can you get me out of here?’

‘Of course, sir.’

I followed Rachid down a few ancient passageways, liked his gentle company and arranged to meet him after dusk the following night. I would use him to find out the city’s secrets and keep an eye on my back.

Just over twenty-four hours later, walls emerged from the dark night. Rachid emerged from the walls.

‘What would you like to do, sir? Go to a museum or eat something?’

‘Is there a restaurant with music?’

Among the countries of North Africa, Morocco offers the richest, most vibrant and diversified musical tradition and the most articulated contemporary documentation of the many stylistic cultural roots of so-called white African culture. The character of the music heard today in Morocco is a result of the many complex historical vicissitudes of the country, of its ethnic make-up and geographical location.

‘You want belly dancer, sir?’

‘Not really. Do you know Jajouka music, Rachid?’

‘Yes, sir, but there is none here tonight in Fes.’

Jajouka is pagan ritual music that invokes the gods of fecundity, much like the ancient rites of Pan. The Jajouka revere hashish and are known for their 1969 recordings with Rolling Stone Brian Jones.

‘Any other music about hashish?’

‘There is Heddaoua, sir, playing in a restaurant I know.’

The Heddaoua are storytellers of an errant religious sect who normally perform in the squares and market places of small Moroccan towns and villages rather than city restaurants. They recite poems, maxims and proverbs in a strange, allusive and magical language and with a particular style of rhythmic diction. The ultimate scope of their message is an invitation to give one's self up to hashish, as a source of freedom and an aid to meditation.

The restaurant was the standard sumptuous *medina* palace. The Heddaoua appeared carrying weird lanterns, crouched on a rug spread out in front of rows of empty bottles and vases of artificial flowers, symbolising a blossomed, magical garden. Live doves rested on the shoulders and heads of the performers. They work in couples, and their form of recitation consists of questions and answers. The recurrent theme is an invitation to smoke. I asked Rachid to translate.

Light your pipe  
Smoke your pipe  
The Almighty will give you peace  
Smoke and drink small sips of tea  
The Almighty will set you free  
From your tribulations  
Smoke and breathe deeply  
He who is jealous will know misery.

The message was fairly clear, and I was aching for a smoke.

Rachid placed a mixture of kif and hashish in a small clay bowl, which he gently placed at the end of an exquisite cedarwood pipe, handed to me and lit. It was as good as any I'd had for the last twenty years. Perhaps I could squeeze some time for a visit to the hash fields, if only for old times' sake.

The mellow silence following the departure of the Heddaoua was suddenly punctured by ear-shattering



clashes of heavy metal. In walked four males, each wearing a fez with its tassel spinning in time to the rhythm and each pounding enormous iron castanets. Instant frenzy spread through the restaurant. The Gnaoua is a spiritual brotherhood of Sudanese Negroes who, like the Heddaoua, normally perform as musicians and acrobatic dancers in the market places of southern Morocco. They use percussive instruments only. The music is closely related to Mali and Senegalese and is used to exorcise evil spirits. Heads are banged on stone flags, as the musicians eat glass and cut themselves with knives. This was wonderfully mad and made me more determined than ever to revisit the hash plantations.

*What is a weed? A plant whose virtues have not yet been discovered*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

## **Isabelle Eberhardt** ***The Oblivion Seekers***

IN THIS *KSAR*, where the people have no place to meet but the public square or the earthen benches along the foot of the ramparts on the road to Bechar, here where there is not even a café, I have discovered a kif den. It is in a partially ruined house behind the Mellah, a long hall lighted by a single eye in the ceiling of twisted and smoke-blackened beams. The walls are black, ribbed with lighter colored cracks that look like open wounds. The floor has been made by pounding the earth, but it is soft and dusty. Seldom swept, it is covered with pomegranate rinds and assorted refuse. The place serves as a shelter for Moroccan vagabonds, for nomads, and for every sort of person of

dubious intent and questionable appearance. The house seems to belong to no one; as at a disreputable hotel, you spend a few badly advised nights there and go on. It is a natural setting for picturesque and theatrical events, like the antechamber of the room where the crime was committed. In one corner lies a clean red mat, with some cushions from Fez in embroidered leather. On the mat, a large decorated chest which serves as a table. A rosebush with little pale pink blooms, surrounded by a bouquet of garden herbs, all standing in water inside one of those wide earthen jars from the Tell. Further on, a copper kettle on a tripod, two or three teapots, a large basket of dried Indian hemp. The little group of kif smokers requires no other decoration, no other *mise en scène*. They are people who like their pleasure. On a rude perch of palm branches, a captive falcon, tied by one leg.

The strangers, the wanderers who haunt this retreat, sometimes mix with the kif smokers, notwithstanding the fact that the latter are a very closed little community, into which entry is made difficult. But the smokers themselves are travellers who carry their dreams with them across the countries of Islam, worshippers of the hallucinating smoke. The men who happen to meet here at Kenadsa are among the most highly educated in the land.

Hadj Idriss, a tall thin Filali, deeply sunburned, with a sweet face that lights up from within, is one of these rootless ones without family or specific trade, so common in the Moslem world. For twenty-five years he has been wandering from city to city, working or begging, depending on the situation. He plays the *guinbri*, with its carved wooden neck and its two thick strings fastened to the shell of a tortoise. Hadj Idriss has a deep clear voice, ideal for singing the old Andaluz ballads, so full of tender melancholy. Si Mohammed Behaouri, a Moroccan from Meknes, pale-complexioned and with caressing eyes, is a young poet wandering across Morocco and southern Algeria in search of native legends

and literature. To keep alive, he composes and recites verse on the delights and horrors of love. Another is from the Djebel Zerhoun, a doctor and witch doctor, small, dry, muscular, his skin tanned by the Sudanese sun under which he has journeyed for many years following caravans to and fro, from the coast of Senegal to Timbuctoo. All day long he keeps busy, slowly pouring out medicine and thumbing through old Moghrebi books of magic. Chance brought them here to Kenadsa. Soon they will set out again, in different directions and on different trails, moving unconcernedly toward the fulfilment of their separate destinies. But it was community of taste that gathered them together in this smoky refuge, where they pass the slow hours of a life without cares.

At the end of the afternoon, a slanting pink ray of light falls from the eye in the ceiling into the darkness of the room. The kif smokers move in and form groups. Each wears a sprig of sweet basil in his turban. Squatting along the wall on the mat, they smoke their little pipes of baked red earth, filled with Indian hemp and powdered Moroccan tobacco. Hadj Idriss stuffs the bowls and distributes them, after having carefully wiped the mouthpiece on his cheek as a gesture of politeness. When his own pipe is empty, he picks out the little red ball of ash and puts it into his mouth – he does not feel it burning him – then, once his pipe is refilled, he uses the still-red-hot cinder to relight the little fire. For hours at a time he does not once let it go out. He has a keen and penetrating intelligence, softened by being constantly in a state of semi-exaltation; his dreams are nourished on the narcotic smoke.

The seekers of oblivion sing and clap their hands lazily; their dream-voices ring out late into the night, in the dim light of the mica-paned lantern. Then little by little the voices fall, grow muffled, the words are slower. Finally the smokers are quiet, and merely stare at the flowers in ecstasy. They are epicureans, voluptuaries; perhaps they are

sages. Even in the darkest purlieu of Morocco's underworld such men can reach the magic horizon where they are free to build their dream-palaces of delight.

Circa 1925-27. From: *Shaman Woman, Mainline Lady: Women's Writings on the Drug Experience*, eds Cynthia Palmer and Michael

Horowitz, 1982

*I do hold it, and will affirm it before any prince in Europe, to be the most sovereign and precious weed that ever the earth rendered to the use of man*

Ben Johnson

## **Charles Baudelaire**

### ***The Playground of the Seraphim***

WHAT DOES ONE experience? What does one see? Marvellous things, is it not so? Wonderful sights? Is it very beautiful? Such are the usual questions which, with a curiosity mingled with fear, those ignorant of hashish address to its adepts. It is, as it were, the childish impatience to know, resembling that of those people never quitted their firesides when they meet a man who returns from distant and unknown countries. They imagine hashish drunkenness to themselves as a prodigious vast theatre of sleight of hand and of juggling, where all is miraculous, all unforeseen. That is a prejudice, a complete mistake. And since for the ordinary run of readers and of questioners the word 'hashish' connotes the idea of a strange and topsy-turvy world, the expectation of prodigious dreams (it would be better to say hallucinations, which are, by the way, less frequent than

people suppose), I will at once remark upon the important difference which separates the effects of hashish from the phenomena of dream. In dream, that adventurous voyage which we undertake every night, there is something positively miraculous. It is a miracle whose punctual occurrence has blunted its mystery. The dreams of man are of two classes. Some, full of his ordinary life, of his preoccupations, of his desires, of his vices, combine themselves in a manner more or less bizarre with the objects which he has met in his day's work, which have carelessly fixed themselves upon the vast canvas of his memory. That is the natural dream; it is the man himself. But the other kind of dream, the dream absurd and unforeseen, without meaning or connection with the character, the life and the passions of the sleeper: this dream, which I shall call hieroglyphic, evidently represents the supernatural side of life, and it is exactly because it is absurd that the ancients believed it to be divine. As it is inexplicable by natural causes, they attributed to it a cause external to man, and even to-day, leaving out of account oneiromancers and the fooleries of a philosophical school which sees in dreams of this type sometimes a reproach, sometimes a warning; in short, a symbolic and moral picture begotten in the spirit itself of the sleeper. It is a dictionary which one must study; a language of which sages may obtain the key.

In the intoxication of hashish there is nothing like this. We shall not go outside the class of natural dream. The drunkenness, throughout its duration, it is true, will be nothing but an immense dream, thanks to the intensity of its colours and the rapidity of its conceptions. But it will always keep the idiosyncrasy of the individual. The man has desired to dream; the dream will govern the man. But this dream will be truly the son of its father. The idle man has taxed his ingenuity to introduce artificially the supernatural into his life and into his thought; but, after all, and despite

the accidental energy of his experiences, he is nothing but the same man magnified, the same number raised to a very high power. He is brought into subjection, but, unhappily for him, it is not by himself which is already dominant. 'He would be an angel; he becomes a beast.' Momentarily very powerful, if, indeed, one can give the name of power of what is merely excessive sensibility without the control which might moderate or make use of it.

Let it be well understood then, by worldly and ignorant folk, curious of acquaintance with exceptional joys, that they will find in hashish nothing miraculous, absolutely nothing, but the natural in a superabundant degree. The brain and the organism upon which hashish operates will only give their ordinary and individual phenomena, magnified, it is true, both in quantity and quality, but always faithful to their origin. Man cannot escape the fatality of his moral and physical temperament. Hashish will be, indeed, for the impressions and familiar thoughts of the man, a mirror which magnifies, yet no more than a mirror.

Here is the drug before your eyes: a little green sweetmeat, about as big as a nut, with a strange smell; so strange that it arouses a certain revulsion, and inclinations to nausea – as, indeed, any fine and even agreeable scent, exalted to its maximum strength and (so to say) density, would do.

Allow me to remark in passing that this proposition can be inverted, and that the most disgusting and revolting perfume would become perhaps a pleasure to inhale if it were reduced to its minimum quantity and intensity.

There! There is happiness; heaven in a teaspoon: happiness, with all its intoxication, all its folly, all its childishness. You can swallow it without fear; it is not fatal; it will in nowise injure your physical organs. Perhaps (later on) too frequent an employment of the sorcery will diminish the strength of your will; perhaps you will be less a man than you are today; but retribution is so far off, and the nature of

the eventual disaster so difficult to define! What is it that you risk? A little nervous fatigue tomorrow – no more. Do you not every day risk greater punishment for less reward? Very good then; you have, even, to make it act more quickly and vigorously, imbibed your dose of *extrait gras* in a cup of black coffee. You have taken care to have the stomach empty, postponing dinner till nine or ten o'clock, to give full liberty of action to the poison. At the very most you will take a little soup in an hour's time. You are now sufficiently provisioned for a long and strange journey; the steamer has whistled, the sails are trimmed; and you have this curious advantage over ordinary travellers that you have no idea where you are going. You have made your choice; here's to luck.

I presume that you have taken the precaution to choose carefully your moment for setting out on this adventure. For every perfect debauch demands perfect leisure. You know, moreover, that hashish exaggerates not only the individual, but also circumstances and environment. You have no duties to fulfil which require punctuality or exactitude. No domestic worries – no lover's sorrows. One must be careful on such points. Such a disappointment, an anxiety, an interior monition of a duty which demands your will and your attention, at some determinate moment, would ring like a funeral bell across your intoxication and poison your pleasure. Anxiety would become anguish, and disappointment torture. But if, having observed all these preliminary conditions the weather is fine; if you are situated in favourable surroundings, such as a picturesque landscape or a room beautifully decorated; and if in particular you have at command a little music, then all is for the best.

1910. From: *Hashish: The Herb Superb*, vol. II of *The Herb Dangerous: High Historical Writings for the Modern Haschischin*, ed. David Hoye, 1973

## **Johnny Edgecombe**

### ***Calypso Train***

JAKE WAS REFLECTING on the first time he met Skyman. It was on his eighteenth birthday. His dad had bought him a new bike. He had forbidden Jake to hang around the waterfront with thieves and fornicators – the riff-raff. He reminded Jake that he had spent a lot of money on his education. Jake knew what he was going to say next.

‘The wages of sin.’

Jake came from a long line of Preachers, as far back as way back. His old man had been trying to convince him to become a Preacher too. Jake often wondered if his father really believed all that shit he laid on his congregation. But he assured him he wasn’t going near the waterfront. He was just taking his bike for a spin.

Jake took his bathing trunks off the clothes line, tied them on to the handlebar of his bike and started to ride out of Kingston, on the coast road. He was feeling good as he rode along the coast taking in the scenery.

He rode for about fifteen to twenty miles out of Kingston. He came to a nice cove with a sandy beach and decided that it was a good place to stop for a dip. There was only one boat in the bay and apart from a Rasterman painting his dinghy on the beach, there wasn’t anyone else around. There was a groovy little shack in the right-hand corner of the cove. Whoever made it had done a good job.

Jake felt a wave of admiration for the Rasterman, who was among his father’s categories of riff-raffs, ganja smokers and layabouts, as he watched him painting his dinghy like an artist. He stood there for a while, enjoying the Rasterman paint, seeing him stop from time to time to take a toké on his pipe.

Eventually he walked over, towing his bike and smiling.

‘Hello, Raster, what’s happening?’



The Rasterman didn't reply right off. He looked at Jake for a while. His eyes aloof – the shutters almost half closed. Skyman knew that apart from the authorities, no one else was aware that he was back in Jamaica; if anyone was, he was reasonably sure that they wouldn't recognise him. Just the same he didn't talk to many people.

He guessed that the young guy was from Kingston, he seemed a nice enough guy.

'What's your name?'

'Jake! What's yours?'

'Just call me Raster, for the time being.'

Jake knew, right off, that Raster – or whatever his name was – wasn't a real Rasterman, but you wouldn't know that by looking. His dreadlocks were very impressive and he had a full long beard, streaked with grey hairs. Jake was intrigued.

'Can you paint?' asked Raster.

Jake smiled. 'Yes, but not as good as you.'

'Well, grab a brush anyway.'

Jake was elated. They painted in silence for a while, Jake looking at Skyman from time to time. Every now and then Skyman stopped painting to reload his pipe. He picked up his corn-husk pipe from a makeshift workbench. First he would clean it carefully with a pipe-cleaner, testing it a few times, until he was satisfied. Then he fished into the small pocket on the front of his white T-shirt and brought out a white draw and extracted a fat bud before replacing the bag like it was a prized possession.

Jake noted the pungent smell of the herbs as it mingled with the paint in his nostrils, as Skyman crumbled the bud. Then the Rasterman took a king-size box of matches from the bench and started to light his pipe. He circled the bowl with the fire about four times, puffing gently each time, to effect an even light. Satisfied that the light was good and the pipe was drawing freely, he dragged hard and deep, the bowl glowing, as if about to catch light as he filled his lungs.

He held the smoke for about a minute before reluctantly letting it go and automatically moving to pass the pipe to Jake. Hesitating a moment, he looked at Jake.

‘Hey, man! You smoke?’

Jake wasn’t really lying when he answered that he did. He had burned a few joints on several occasions with some of the guys from his school and dug it. But he had not indulged too much because he was aware that the worst thing that could happen to him was for the Preacher to hear that he had even tried the ‘Devil’s Weed’. But this was different.

Jake took the pipe without any hesitation and started to puff gently the way Skyman had done. Realising after the first puff that the pipe was ready, he hit it and tried to hold the smoke like Skyman but he felt that his head would explode if he didn’t let go. He opened up all his valves and for all he knew, when he started to cough and he felt like his head was going to come off, smoke might have been even coming out of his ears! Skyman took the pipe from Jake and gave him some coconut water. Jake had drunk a lot of coconut water but now he felt like he was tasting it for the first time. The taste was so lucid he even thought he could see it.

Within minutes hot beads of perspiration gathered on his forehead. His mind was scrambled but he was acutely conscious of himself, as if he was filming everything he did. He felt that the sun was getting hotter and he had to get out of it. He wanted to tell Skyman that he was going over by a tree to sit in the shade for a while, but he couldn’t string the words together. He saw himself gesturing, pointing at a tree. He realised he was still holding the empty coconut. In other circumstances he would’ve scooped out the jelly and enjoyed it before discarding it, but right now he couldn’t think what the hell to do with the thing. He was relieved when Skyman took it from him in slow motion and told him he could use the hut.

Jake looked at the hut, sure that it had been much closer a while ago. He wondered about his legs, he knew that they were there because he was still standing, but he couldn't feel them. He looked down at his feet to make sure that they were facing the right way. He started to walk but his legs wouldn't move. He had to get out of the sun. His underclothes were already sticking to his body. He almost fell over with the first step. His legs were so heavy he had to lift his foot very high to compensate for the weight. He was doing a kind of knees-up walk on his way to the hut, mindful of each step as his feet seemed to stick in the sand every time he put them down.

By the time he got to the hut, Jake was exhausted. All he wanted to do now was flop out. He made straight for the bunk bed, which seemed to come up to him, as he flopped down on it. Now he was floating up there in the ceiling, looking down on his helpless carriage. He became aware that it was he, I and I, and not his mother or the Preacher that was in charge of his carriage. He saw a new dimension and knew there wasn't any way back.

He was counselling himself about some immediate changes he had to make, when he fell off the ceiling and the bunk began to spin and rock as if he was on a boat. He eventually fell off the bunk. Back in himself, laying there on the floor Jake had decided he wasn't going back to bed when the floor started to perform as well. He couldn't decide which was worse - the floor or the bed, but in the end he opted for the floor because he figured he couldn't fall any further.

The floor was spinning faster and faster as if it was about to take off. He held on as long as he could, but the experience had wasted him. He let go and flew around the universe a few times before he fell into a deep sleep.

It was not only deep, but long. The sun brought him back among the living the next morning, with the sound of the sea, as it gently washes the sand. It was a nice way to wake

up. Jake was feeling fresh and new until he realised that the sound of the sea washing the sand wasn't a familiar sound first thing in the morning. And he wasn't in his own room, on his floor. Then it all came back to him in a flash, so vivid that it was hard to decipher what was real, fantasy or dream.

Jake got up from the floor without giving a second thought to his legs. He had an urgent need for a piss. He looked for the door. There were two. He hurried for the nearest one, almost tripping over his bike. He was smiling as he relieved himself, thinking this was the best piss he had ever had.

He had wanted to piss since last night but the floor was spinning so fast he couldn't get off and when he dreamed that he had found a place to piss he couldn't find his cock. Jake went back into the hut; he had never felt better. He didn't see much of the hut yesterday apart from the bunk but now he noticed that there was a table with a hurricane lamp on it, two chairs and an open cupboard with fifteen suits hanging in it. Each suit carrying a silk shirt. Jake moved nearer to the cupboard for a closer look. Now he was really knocked out, these suits were a collection of the finest rags he had ever seen. You know, the stuff only the rich Americans can afford; sharkskin, silk and cashmere. On the floor were seven pairs of shoes made of snake, croc and calfskin. Three matching belts hung in a corner. Jake tried to visualise Skyman all done up, without his dreadlocks. His perceptions were of a guy who looked like a million. Top drawer. Plenty of class and a lot of style. Jake had found a hero.

Jake undressed and got his swimming trunks from his bike, put them on and went looking for Skyman. He walked back towards the spot where they were painting the dinghy. It was no longer there. He looked out to sea, the boat was still there with the dinghy tied up astern. Skyman came up from below with a broom and bucket. He made out the name of the boat – *Seafree*. Jake waved. Skyman put down his bucket and waved back. Jake took a long run to the water and dived

in and started swimming towards the boat. He thought about his parents, it was the first time he had ever stayed away from home under such circumstances and was amazed at himself that he felt no anxiety, it was more an obligation to phone and let his folks know that he was okay. He made a mental note to do that and went back to the task of swimming all the way out to *Seafree*. It was a tidy swim by most standards but he was a fit young guy and he made it easy.

Skyman tossed a ladder over the side for Jake and invited him to come aboard. As Jake got on board and sat on the rails to give his heart time to adjust its beat, he noticed the sound of jazz and that familiar smell of ganja coming from below. Skyman came over and extended his hand.

‘Hey, man! How you feeling today?’

Jake smiled, full of confidence with his new being.

‘Great! But I wasn’t doing so good yesterday! I only just made it to the hut.’

Skyman smiled back.

‘Welcome to the club.’

*Calypso Train, 2001*

*O thou weed!*

*Who are so lovely fair and smell’st so sweet*

*That the sense aches at thee, wouldst thou hadst ne’er been  
born*

William Shakespeare

**H. H. Kane**

***A Hashish-House in New York:***

***The Curious Adventures of an Individual Who  
Indulged in a Few Pipefuls of the Narcotic Hemp***

‘AND SO YOU think that opium-smoking as seen in the foul cellars of Mott Street and elsewhere is the only form of narcotic indulgence of any consequence in this city, and that hashish, if used at all, is only smoked occasionally and experimentally by a few scattered individuals?’

‘This is certainly my opinion, and I consider myself fairly well informed.’

‘Well, you are far from right, as I can prove to you if you care to inform yourself more fully on the subject. There is a large community of hashish smokers in this city, who are daily forced to indulge their morbid appetites, and I can take you to a house uptown where hemp is used in every conceivable form, and where the lights, sounds, odors, and surroundings are all arranged so as to intensify and enhance the effects of this wonderful narcotic.’

‘I must confess that I am still incredulous.’

‘Well, if it is agreeable to you, meet me at the Hoffman House reading-room tomorrow night at ten o’clock, and I think I shall be able to convince you.’

The above is the substance of a conversation that took place in the lobby of a downtown hotel between the writer of these lines and a young man about thirty-eight years of age, known to me for some years past as an opium smoker. It was through his kindness that I had first gained access to and had been able to study up the subject of opium-smoking. Hence I really anticipated seeing some interesting phases of hemp indulgence, and was not disappointed. The following evening at precisely ten o’clock I met the young man at the Hoffman House, and together we took a Broadway car uptown, left it at Forty-second Street, and walked rapidly toward the North River, talking as we went.

‘You will be probably be greatly surprised at many things you will see tonight,’ he said, ‘just as I was when I was first introduced to the place by a friend. I have traveled over most of Europe, and have smoked opium in every *joint* in America, but never saw anything so curious as this, nor