

The Escape

By William Thomas Sherman

It was late summer for Durcy and so far high school vacation had been spent lying out on the lake with friends or sunning at local beaches or playing guitars with Graham. Now only a week was left before freedom would be all over. Today it was raining and he sat in his room reflecting on what a good time they'd had. Certainly it had gone by unusually fast, unlike many previous summers. Unfortunately that was now a problem since there was only a single week now to do anything. That last week therefore must be utilized to the utter ecstasy that could be squeezed out of it. From somewhere in his mind popped an idea: a trip to the mountains in Graham's beat up Volkswagen bus; adventure on the road, fresh green hills with lots of dirt, maybe even girls.

He sprang up from his bed to give Graham a call.

"What's up," said Graham answering.

"Not much, except I've got an idea. There's only a week left before school starts, so what do you think about taking your bus and going up to the mountains?"

"Sounds great! I heard that Davis had been gone the past few days and was soon going off to college."

Scotter Davis, a not altogether peaceable or charitable person, was a pot dealer Graham was in debt 60 dollars to, and much of the last couple of weeks had been spent evading him. Now Davis consequently had only a few days to get the money from him before he was going off to college, and after that he would be gone a good three to four months, giving Graham plenty of time to catch his breath while he was away.

"We'll need some money," Graham suggested.

"Well, I have some money. You owe me 20 bucks."

Graham knew he was caught.

"I can get you money and some money for this trip. But you have to do me a favor. Here's the deal There's this old jewelry of my grandmother's which I found in this little box sitting tucked away in the attic, and I'm sure they're at least worth a hundred dollars for the gold in them. All we have to do is go down to the pawnshop and you sign for me as being over twenty one."

Durcy somewhat reluctantly agreed.

"When did you think of leaving," asked Graham?

"How about tomorrow," said Durcy?

"O.K. so we'd better go to the pawnshop now then."

"Yeah, I will have to go to the bank to get the rest of my money."

"Ok," said Graham, "I'll be down there in ten minutes."

Having removed the jewelry from "the attic," Graham went outside to his red Volkswagen bus parked outside the house. Although little was of greater value to Graham

than his bus it had one major flaw, namely it needed be either jumped or rolled off some sort of incline to get the ignition going. Sometimes it had been started by being pushed till it reached up to 10 mph necessary to get it running. Even so the bus was his pride and joy, a symbol of his freedom and independence, paid for all by himself. Almost. Actually he'd gone through a lot of crazy schemes to get money, like selling his tape deck or an antique Persian rug, which like the jewels wasn't really his to sell, though granted no one at home really noticed their absence. He'd tried jobs but not being terribly responsible, they usually didn't last a week. At work he was a good worker. As well, he was good natured and got along with people. But he had the unfortunate tendency to not show up if he didn't feel like it. He invariably meant what he promised. But his sometimes careless and lackadaisical nature, not so much dishonesty, prevented him always going by what he'd said.

As the bus came into the driveway of Durcy's home, Durcy jumped in.

"Let's go to my bank first"

"OK," said Graham.

They then drove into town. After making the stop at Durcy's bank, they drove over to a small shopping plaza, and after parking the bus went into a shop which had a painted sign which read "Loans and Guns."

The rather overweight, middle aged woman behind the counter looked over the little trinkets of gold, chains, bracelets, charms and odd items in the box Graham laid before her. The stuff looked like brass to Durcy, but he knew he was no judge to tell. Graham was giving the lady some story about the jewelry, and making her clearly understand there was gold in those pieces she was handling.

"It says fourteen karat on there somewhere," he said.

The woman weighed it in her hand as if it were a scale.

"Yeah, there's definitely some gold you go there," she was saying. "But you see I can't tell how much. I don't have the testing equipment."

Durcy thought she seemed sincerely helpful.

"You might try some of the shops in Seattle. They could probably give you a correct estimate. But I couldn't."

Graham picked up the jewels fumbling. "O.K. I'll guess we'll try downtown."

Leaving the pawnshop, the two got in bus which started with a blasting cough as it rolled down the hill, from where it had been parked. Graham said he knew a place in Seattle, but Durcy said he didn't want to go all the way into Seattle. So the former said he'd go by himself, it being understood that it would be easier for Graham to sell jewels in Seattle, since he could fake being over twenty-one there.

After dropping Durcy off at his home, Graham with audacious aplomb left suburbia and rolled in the direction of the freeway. In the matter of some minutes he soon found himself in the city maze, with all its various and unusual lights and sounds, colors and people.

Past that clock tower he knew of the shop he could try. As he arrived on the street he had in mind, across from the pawnshop was an open parking space. Not only

was it located at the top of an incline, but it was free. He went round the block, so as to bring himself in at a proper angle, and subsequently turn off his bus there.

The shop was filled with numerous and sundry odds and ends: typewriters, watches, knives, boots, guns, VCRs, toasters – to name some of them. The place was a store house of a million pieces of junk, but their sheer number gave the place an air of a meticulous collection of pieces put together after much time and consideration.

An old man with hairy arms was at the counter selling a harmonica to some kid, when Graham walked in, bells ringing at the door as he did so. The boy with the just purchased harmonica went out, and once more the bells on the door.

“What can I do for you,” the old man asked.

“I wonder if you could check this old jewelry of my grandmother’s.”

The man opened the box Graham laid before him, taking out the different jewelry bracelets, rings and broaches.

After browsing them over piece by piece, he stopped and asked “where’d you get these son?”

“They’re old jewels my grandmother gave me to sell to get money to pay off my car.”

The old man stepped back.

“Excuse me a moment will you,” he said to Graham, and then walked into a nearby back room where he apparently spoke a few words with someone there. He then returned and once more started looking over the pieces more closely.

The bells on the door rang again, and in a few seconds a serious looking, middle age man in a casual dress suit was standing next to Graham.

“Can you verify that is your jewelry,” the man suddenly asked?

Graham didn’t know what to make of the question or the man.

“I’m detective Silverman of the SPD. Would you come with me please?”

Graham felt like someone slapped on the head, and tried without success to think of something to say. The detective pulled out his badge for him and led Graham outside to his car. The man behind the counter stood back quietly and watched them leave with the bells on the door ringing as they did so.

Hours had past since Graham dropped him off, and Durcy was itching to know what had become of him. He knew Graham couldn’t be depended on, and meanwhile had been planning and arranging his things for the trip. At this time, but for Graham, he was pretty well set to go.

But where was Graham?

Durcy sister shouted from downstairs there was a phone call for him. He came from his room to go take it.

“Hello,” Durcy began.

“It’s me.”

“Where have you been? It’s almost seven o’clock.”

“Well I can’t get into it all right now, but I’m in the King County Jail.”

Durcy sighed.

“Do you think,” Graham asked, “you could get a hundred dollars for my bail. I could pay you back for sure on this one -- obviously.”

“I haven’t got that much money.”

“Ok, well I’ve got to get off now. I’ll probably call you back in a little bit.”

“Ok,” said Durcy and hung up.

“So much for our great escape to the mountains,” he thought.

As he did so, Durcy happened to notice today’s paper. One of headlines read:

“\$100,000 in Jewels Taken in Robbery”

“An unidentified youth broke into the Monarch Brothers jewelry store robbing it at gun point, making off with an \$ 00,000 in gems and other jewelry...

“The thief Mr. Simmons said drove away in a red Volkswagen bus. The youth was described as in his late teens, blond hair...”

The description could fit Graham, Durcy considered, except Graham had brown hair. He wouldn’t be so stupid as to do something like that, would he?

The officer at the desk had told Graham they didn’t have any evidence of his being the youth involved in the Monarch hold up. But his speeding tickets amounted to a hundred dollars, and which hadn’t been paid. Graham now sat in his small detention trying to think of how he could come up with the necessary bail. Suddenly he saw through the glass doors he saw Max, a cop from his hometown whom he knew in a friendly way, coming in. Somebody must have got word to Max about his being in jail. Perhaps he’d come to help smooth things over since Graham, after all, was not the one responsible for the Monarch Brothers robbery.

An officer came into Graham’s cell ten minutes later telling him his bail was now up to 175.00, Max having brought in additional tickets Graham owed for.

“A-----,” said Graham to himself as he rubbed his chin.

The police had contacted his parents, as Graham having told them he’d taken the jewelry from home. Not long after this, his mother found out the antique Persian rug was missing.

Graham observed the trouble growing around him with same casual heedlessness as he did almost everything. His parents said they wouldn’t pay his fine

unless he agreed to sell his pride and joy. He needed time to think about it, and decided to spend some time in the Jail.

The same officer who'd told Graham about the extra fines was leading him down the hall to the main jail cells. Graham was not much afraid of what type of characters he'd face, all sorts of criminals, no doubt. But he was street smart and could handle himself just fine. Another policeman, a big, tall black guy, unlocked the cell.

"Well," Graham thought, "at least I'll be away from money hassles and dealings of home."

Just then, Scooter Davis, sitting in the cell looked up to see the new arrival.

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