

the forty-fives

HIGH LIFE
HIGH VOLUME

Well, it seems like it could have been yesterday, or five years ago, or ten or twenty for that matter. I can't be sure of anything anymore. All this medication they give me makes it hard to remember. One thing for sure, though, those men of The Forty-Fives are one of the reasons I'm locked away in this very room today.

All four of 'em – Malone, McMurtry, Renshaw, El Tidwell – they were here when I was checked in. And a bunch of damned troublemakers to boot, if you ask me! They would go on and on for hours about how they were some kind of “rock-n-roll” band who'd traveled the world over playing music for people. I had to hear all about how they opened up for all kinds of famous names, some of whom they claimed to tour with. It all sounded pretty preposterous to me.



Naturally, they also claimed to have been to a bunch of recording studios over the years where they worked on a handful of albums. Apparently, they had been released all over the place and people actually bought them. What a bunch of fools!

At first I thought maybe they had been in the same military unit together. Their stories were always identical and it appeared they were suffering from the same sort of mass trauma or delusion. Frankly, they made my problems look pale in comparison.

We had some of the same therapy groups together and occasionally I'd follow them back to their room. I'd sit there for hours and watch them as they'd have what they called a “singles” (or 45 rpms) party. They would play me all kinds of records by Chuck Berry, The Beatles, The Stones, CCR, The MC5, The Who, old Stax stuff, Motown, George Jones, Elvis Presley, pretty much everything. They said that was where they got the idea to start their “band.” Right.

They were all quite charming in their own individual ways and I'd frequently follow them on their escapades. One night they shared with me their elaborate plan for an escape. They were fed up with the system here and what they heard was going on in the outside world. They thought if they were on the streets again they could make some kind of a “difference”. I thought they'd really gone off the deep end and wanted no part in their scheme.

I didn't have much contact with them for a few weeks and then one night, shortly after “lights out,” Renshaw woke me up and handed me a guitar made out cafeteria trays, some rope and a toilet seat. “Here, you might need this after we're gone” he said. Then I heard a terrible crash from across the room as I saw El Tidwell throw a sink through one of the outside windows. All four of them ambled out and sprinted across the lawn. The alarm sounded and the guards went after them. That was the last I ever saw of them.

About a month later one of the orderlies gave me a box of stuff he'd cleaned out of their room. As I opened it, a chill ran down my spine. It was all there - records, cd's, singles, t-shirts, photographs, tour itineraries, the keys to a Ford van, guitar strings, drumsticks, etc. The next day they upped the dosage of my medication and I've been stuck in this room since then. Goddamned Forty-Fives!

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, PHOTOS OR TO SET UP AN INTERVIEW, PLEASE CONTACT

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