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CONFESSIONS OF A "HIGH PRIESTESS"
AMERICA'S NOTORIOUS "LOVE CULTS"

BY
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By the Queen of New York's Society "Bee Harem" and Sister of Aleister Crowley's "Scarlet Soul" Girl, Who Reveals the Inner Secrets of Weird Rites Practiced by Cranks, Clairvoyants and the Dupes the World Over Including Fresh Facts on Dowieism, the Omnipotent Oom's Colony of Bluebloods, Charles Garland's "April Farm" and the Black Mass Mystics of Europe.

Six months after Aleister Crowley, head of the Devil-Worshippers and self-styled "Beast of the Apocalypse," branded my sister Leah, in New York, and made her his "scarlet bride" by the weird rites of his unholy "church," he left America and took her with him to Europe.

She wrote me that she was happy for the first time in her life and had found her "true destiny."

A little later she wrote again, sending me many photographs, telling of a startling experiment which Crowley was conducting in a park and villa which he had leased at Cefalu, Sicily, near Palermo.

He had established a colony of which he was the head and "god," called blasphemously "Collegium Spiritum Sanctum," where he was trying to put into actual practice his two favorite doctrines,

"Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law"

"Every man and woman is a star."

It sounded like a wonderful doctrine. It was Crowley's idea to create a race of super-men and super-women, who, because of the strength of their own wills, could indulge, if they pleased, in all the things which hurt ordinary "weak mortals," without any injury to themselves—drugs, cocaine, opium, whiskey, free love.

"In themselves they are harmless," Crowley used to tell me in New York. "They are even valuable and useful in producing ecstasies and mystical trances—but they are not for weak people.

"No man or woman has ever been destroyed by these things, but only by his own weakness. I admit they are dreadfully dangerous to ordinary people, but once a man or woman has learned perfect self-control, they are as harmless as water."

Crowley's "abbey," motivated by this daring theory, attracted a group of odd and interesting people. Among them was Jan Wolfe, the beautiful American actress; Raoul Loveday, a brilliant young Oxford student and poet; his wife, Betty May Loveday, also a beauty; a young French woman interested in esoteric cults whom I knew only as "Ninette," and perhaps a dozen others.

Crowley promised them no less than a sort of Moslem paradise-on-earth, where, after going through his courses of training, they could indulge in anything and everything without hurt to their bodies or souls.

Only after going through his course, however, to learn their "true wills," were they permitted freedom, and some of the things he forced them to submit to, in order to learn the "mastery of their own souls," were absolutely appalling. Jane Wolfe told me afterward of how Crowley made her spend thirty days clothed only in a coarse robe of scratchy sackcloth, on the top of a barren rock, in the sunshine and rain, without shelter, with only bread and water for food, "contemplating her own soul" and strengthening her "will."

But the thing I want to tell particularly in this chapter is not what Crowley did to the grown-ups, but his astonishing application of this doctrine to young children, particularly to little Hansie, my nephew, whom we afterward kidnapped and brought to America to save him from the effects of Crowley's diabolical doctrines.

Hansie was Leah's son. He was two-and-a-half or three years old when Crowley started the colony at Cefalu. He was the colony's prize baby, though there were half a dozen other little children there, of various ages.

In the case of children, Crowley did not believe the course of training which he prescribed for grown-ups was necessary. He believed in encouraging a child, from earliest babyhood, to do anything and everything it wanted—absolute freedom, without restrictions of any sort.

Leah wrote to me of how Hansie decided at about three that he wanted to taste some brandy which she and Crowley were drinking. Crowley handed him the whole bottle. He took a swig of it, burned his mouth, made himself drunk and ill.

As soon as the poor little kid got over it, Crowley brought him the brandy bottle again, and said, "Here, Hansie, you can have all of this you want, any time you want it. If it is your true will to burn your mouth and make yourself sick, go ahead and do it."

Leah says Hansie never touched the bottle again, and at that time both she and I thought there might really be something valuable in Crowley's ideas.

But like a lot of other theories, it broke down badly in the end.

When Hansie had reached the age of five, my other sister, Mrs. Alma Bliss, Hansie's aunt, decided to visit Cefalu and see how Leah and her little nephew were getting on.

When she arrived in Crowley's "holy monastery," she found it a most unholy mess. Crowley and my sister had plenty of money when they started the colony, but their funds had gradually run out. Crowley had left one of his lieutenants in charge and had gone off with Leah to Paris to arrange about the publication of a novel which he hoped would bring in more funds.

In their absence, five-year-old Hansie had the run of the place and was being left more or less to his own resources. He had developed into an absolute little savage. He refused to wear any clothes at all, because it wasn't his "will." He could swim and climb like an animal, and spent his days prowling among the rocks and hills on the seashore behind the villa, stark naked.

Yet Hansie wasn't well, despite this primitive outdoor life. He ate irregularly, and food which was none too good for him. At five years of age he smoked cigarettes continually. He was literally a little "cigarette fiend." He had no respect for grown-up people, and he spouted Crowley's teachings in defiance of all efforts to reason with him.

"I am going to be Beast Number 2," he proudly declared, "and when Crowley dies, I shall be the Great Beast of the Apocalypse."

My poor sister, Mrs. Bliss, a good and noble, but thoroughly conventional woman, was shocked to the depths of her soul. She knew only one way to deal with children, and that was the old-fashioned way. When she tried to take a package of cigarettes away from Hansie, he picked up a stick of wood and attacked her like a little wild beast.

She telegraphed Crowley and Leah. They told her to let the child alone and mind her own business. Ninette and the others at the "abbey" refused absolutely to interfere with Hansie.

My sister's conscience would not permit her to leave the child there, in such surroundings. But what could she do?

She did the one thing that seemed possible. She kidnapped Hansie. She promised to show him the world—and this delighted him. She promised to take him on a big steamboat, and he became as eager as any normally brought-up kid to go with her.

One night, when she thought they were all asleep, she fled from the "abbey" with Hansie in her arms. Ninette followed her, screaming and threatening the gendarmes, but Mrs. Bliss had a carriage in waiting and got safely on the boat for Naples.

Arriving there, she went straight to the American Consulate and explained the whole situation. The London Daily Express meanwhile had been attacking Crowley's colony and demanding its suppression. The Consulate could give no official aid or recognition of what was actually a kidnapping—but they felt that Mrs. Bliss was more than justified morally, and she was permitted to sail for America with little Hansie, "Beast No. 2."

My first knowledge of all this came in frantic cable grams from Crowley himself. He raged like a devil. He wanted me to have my own sister, Mrs. Bliss arrested on her arrival in New York. He wanted to know if there wasn't some state in which kidnapping was a capital offense, so that he could have her hanged. If he couldn't do that, he proposed to have her deported back to Italy and sentenced to solitary confinement.

Of course, all that was just his raging. Any court in the world would have recognized that, no matter what the technical violation of law my sister had committed, she was morally justified in the course she had taken.

Then I got a radio from Mrs. Bliss, announcing that she was bringing Hansie to my house in New York and that she wanted my help and co-operation.

You can imagine my feelings! Fancy being confronted with the responsibility of helping handle a child who had been taught from childhood that he was a _____ and that his true will was the only thing he must obey!

He behaved himself well enough on the _____ by the _____ the change of _____ the adventure.

After the first few _____ had him at my home, things _____ worse than I had anticipated. He believed that he was a great personage and that we were nothing but servants

to wait on him. He fought like a wild-cat when we didn't want to give him cigarettes. He had apparently _____ used in some of Crowley's _____ ceremonies, and he had an idea that it was the proper thing to kill anyone who opposed his will. He would _____ an umbrella or walking stick or anything that came to hand and attack savagely when we tried to _____ him. He got in such rages that we would give him cigarettes occasionally to quiet him.

About a week after he arrived, now _____ episode occurred, trivial in itself, _____anged his spirit and was the beginning of his complete "reformation."

One day I offered him some picture books _____. He threw them down in a rage _____.

"A curse upon you stupid women. I want you only to play chess with me."

Crowley had taught him, at the age of _____ (as I learned afterward), to play _____ game of chess—and it fortunately so happened that I myself am considered to be a pretty good player.

"All right, Hansie, I will play chess you." We both became absorbed in the game, which _____ close, and I finally managed to beat him, _____ pawn ending.

Instead of flying into a rage at the defeat, he was delighted.

We played again, and he won, and the third game I won. And he said very sweetly at the end of it.

"I do like Auntie Marion. You are a pretty lady and not as stupid as I thought."

From that time on I could make him do almost anything I wished by promising to play chess with him if he would be good. Another thing he loved was watching the wild animals at the zoo. A promise to take him there as a reward for goodness would always make him immediately tractable.

I think my readers will be happy to know that we finally succeeded in changing him completely—and without breaking his spirit at all. We did it by kindness and by appealing to his pride.

We got him finally to give up cigarettes entirely by proving to him that only bad, tough little boys smoked cigarettes in America, and that he was a little gentleman. He had abandoned all his bad habits and is developing into a first-rate, fine, manly little chap, of whom I hope we some day will be proud of.

What would have become of him if he had remained with Crowley, I cannot imagine. A few months after the episodes

which I have described, the Italian government exiled Crowley from Italy, following the death at the "abbey" of the young Oxford student, Raoul Loveday. He died actually of enteritis, but his widow, Betty May Loveday, published articles in London accusing Crowley of the most abominable practices and declaring that her husband's illness had been brought on by dreadful magical rites, in which Crowley had compelled them to cut the throat of a black cat and drink its blood.

A letter from Leah, received only a week ago, tells me that she is in Berlin and that Crowley is in Calcutta, studying again the magic of the Orient, after which he plans to return to Berlin and re-establish his cult in Germany.

He had hoped to do it in America—but its last stronghold here, which was, strangely enough, Detroit, has also "gone smash."

What an astounding and tragic chapter in the real history of American "love cults" that was! I was thoroughly familiar with that episode. I was in Detroit at the time.

A middle-aged, rich publisher and owner of a big office building and a magnificent home, grew interested in Crowley's cult and helped establish in Detroit a branch of the mystic "O.T.O."

Domestic tragedy followed immediately for him and his. His first wife went to law and filed sensational divorce proceedings against him soon after the establishment of the cult in Detroit by Crowley in person, declaring that he had been converted to Crowley's "Do what thou wilt" and "free love" theories.

But he soon found a second wife, Bertha Bruce by name, who was described as a "bobbed-haired, fiery beauty," who was to become the "high priestess" of the cult, and who admitted on the witness stand that she was known to the initiates as "Bruce of the O.T.O." Crowley's doctrines didn't seem to work out very well with them either, for soon they were separated.

She said:

"I still bear the whip-marks from my twenty-nine days of horror as the mystic bride of this cruel man. Trial marriages mean torture."

This man and his friends, in the scandal which followed, denied most of the charges of Mazie Mitchell. He said it was untrue he had ever participated in any of Crowley's ceremonies—but the publicity alone, regardless of the extent of his personal connection with the "O.T.O.," was enough to kill it forever in Detroit.

There are still hundreds of members of Crowley's cult in the United States. There are forty or fifty in New York alone. But they carry out their practices in secret.

(To Be Concluded.)