

Use Hostel

By Samuel Alexander

In the year 2014 A.D., that is, 0 B.U.H., mankind was faced with extinction by ebola. The governments of the world decided to sponsor one last epic novel, to burn everything else so that this one novel would be mankind's only legacy, so it had better be fucking good. That one novel was called Use Hostel.

“Is it evil to pretend to be evil for an evil purpose?”

Chapter 1

Welcome to Use Hostel

If you like to travel for luck, there once was a perfect place for it. Traveling for luck means putting yourself through hells where only luck will save you, and doing it in a far off land. The perfect place was called Use Hostel. You pronounce it like “Youth Hostel” with a lisp. Don’t worry, they won’t notice your lisp, it’s full of exotic folks, every cusp of the earth. By the laws of probability, every author should risk death to improve his writing, I fancied that’s what I was doing there, ‘cept the truth is I’d never write shit.

Use Hostel was a tall thin skyscraper in the middle of downtown. The view was like a desert, if that desert was painted like a city. Use Hostel was a tower in that desert, with nothing for miles around. Tall doesn’t mean it was big. It was so thin, its total volume wasn’t much more than a spinster’s cottage, and that’s not even counting her cats. Instead of stairs or ‘vators, you’d climb up a ladder through everyone’s rooms. Instead of a toilet, you’d piss out the window, I hope you’re not scared of heights. If you took two thousand capsule hotel caps, stacked one on top of the next, it would be a fancy version of Use Hostel.

Tallman was standing on the Use Hostel roof. He was balancing on the heels of his feet, long leather shoes draping over the edge. He was smoking an over-long cigarette, laboring to suck the smoke so far. Shortman and I were beside him, down on our haunches, we were not as fearless as he was. We were spitting at the city below, it was a typical evening. Inventing dirty jokes and passing a bottle ‘round. God I miss Use Hostel.

The room right below us, highest room in the ‘stel, belonged to the fat woman. She’d got fat by staying in her room all the time, and now she was too big to leave. She depended now on roofcrawlers like us. Tallman, for example, would toss her the butts of his cigarettes, and she’d gobble them up like fries. As we stood there that evening, we could hear her a-singing. See, that’s how exotic the Use Hostel was, all its customs so backwards the fat lady sang at the start.

Beneath the fat lady was a mexican named Jesus. He’d sit in his room all day singing and jerking off, a smile on his innocent face. We didn’t really like

him all that much, but we liked his car. We'd take wild joyrides in it, banging up the city, taking advantage of our diplomatic immunity. Jesus was desperate to make us like him, he'd always be buying us food, bringing us babes, turning our water to wine. We tolerated him cuz of this, but we always made him sit backseat.

We were actually just about to take the car on the night this whole thing started. Not for a joyride but work. At Use Hostel, as part of your rent, you gotta do work. Not hard work, mind you, and it was well worth it as you'll hear very soon. Our job that night was to go pick up a res'. We always jumped at the chance to do pickups, we could put in impressions before the management got their chance. With Tallman in charge, we had our own little youth hostel mafia going. We'd hook people up with forbidden books, get our hooks in them before they could make any other connections, then jack up the prices once they were hooked. Jesus would say we were fishers of men. Our businesscards said: "You ban it, you buy it." We were making enough cash that the city was ours, but that ain't saying much, the city was everyone's as long as they were foreign.

Tallman flipped down his fly and squeezed out a piss. Then with a grunt we were off. We'd perfected a technique where we'd go down in freefall, grabbing the ladder at intervals to stay below terminal 'locity. We waved to our friends on the way down, Tallman tossed someone a book. We called our little operation "The Library", Shortman could never say that without face going crooked with childish laughter, haha. "Be sure you don't let your books overdue," Tallman would say, crackling his knuckles through his mirth. No-one had actually done it, but the implied threat was enough for us to assert dominance. We were dictators crushing the opposition.

"Amigos, let me come with you," said Jesus, he was smoking a shit-joint, no I mean that literally, it's what people do here. We couldn't refuse, cuz he had the keys. "I am the way, the truth, and the light," he would say, jangling those keys in Tallman's face. Tallman would lunge for them with his teeth, snarling and clenching his fists. Jesus thought it was funny, I think he was autistic myself. We piled in the car with its busted-out windows. Held our breaths as the engine sputtered poisonous gas, then with a blast we were off. The wind in our hair, Tallman grinning, holding his long cigarette in his teeth, Shortman and I rough-housing in the front seats. Jesus sat in the back jerking off like usual.

We took a shortcut to 'Arrivals,' crashing through the runways. Some flights were delayed as we mooned 'em. We drove through the terminal honk-honk-honking the horn, everyone assumed we were janitors. Imagine the resident's surprise when we pulled up behind him, screeching to a stop so close the bumper knocked his briefcase from his hands. He was decked in suit and tie, we howled with glee, I quickly made Shortman a bet, \$20 says no rent for a month. You'll see what I mean shortly.

No sooner was Tallman out of the car, he was shaking the businessman's hands, introducing himself in Queen's English and opening his trenchcoat to reveal hidden bookshelves. The businessman's eyes lit up all excite-O, we could tell he was very naive. Before we even got back in the buggy, he swiped his card

through Tallman's illegal reader, buying three banned books on credit. "Hold your breath," I said, as the engine's poisons gasped. He was so engrossed in his reading he barely more than nodded to Jesus.

Once we got to the 'ostel, the manager's son came out, the living image of Kim Jung Un. He looked at our friend with disgust, he made no secret he didn't like capitalists. "Welcome to Use Hostel, mang," said the kid. "Your first job is to clean up the walls."

"What? You're mistaken," said the man, "I've come here to stay."

"Yeah, of course, man. You stay in Use Hostel, we gotta use you. That's what the name means. 'Less you're here to 'subsidize,' that is."

And that's the way Use Hostel works, dear reader. We reel 'em in blind, these shakers and movers, they think they'll have an adventure, a romp with hostel sluts. Then we rake 'em over the grill. They've never done a day of work in their life, and they won't be ready to start at Use Hostel. So we extort a hefty fee from 'em, 'subsidizing' is what we call it. A great cheer went up the whole length of the hostel, and Shortman passed me a twenty. Then came the chanting, 'Subsidize! Subsidize!,' followed by the rain of rotten eggshells and grease, young hearts hazing our new sugar daddy, making him feel properly welcome.

God I miss Use Hostel!

Chapter 2

Background on Jesus

Let me tell you what brought Jesus to stay at Use Hostel, it's a funny story. All his life he'd been known as "The Healer". He healed people, not with a magical power, neither with medicine, but with good sense and intervention. To give you an example, imagine you're an old man living alone in a big house full of memories, and one day Jesus comes knocking on your door asking to show you a sales catalog. You let him in and, while giving his sales pitch, he happens to see the jigsaw puzzles and electric train sets that belonged to your poor dead son. He takes the entire day off and sits with you playing with those old toys, rekindling feelings you never knew you'd lost. That's the kind of healing Jesus did.

Well, one day he went to visit his father, and on the way there he got to thinking how he could help him. Jesus' father was very short and weak, had been all his life, and bald to boot. When you met him he'd point at you with one weak outstretched finger. You'd never imagine him in a dance club. And it occurred to Jesus that that was probably where his father needed healing most, to remember days of glory.

So Jesus gently guided Dad away from Mom for awhile, and walking together by the river in the park he said: "Dad, tell me about the women you loved before Mom."

But then Jesus' dad wept. "Oh, son, how can I keep this from you any more? I never loved any woman. I could never even get a first kiss."

After admitting that to his son, Jesus's dad actually got weaker. He limped around with shame ever after. It was the end of Jesus's good luck streak. Since shortly after that, Jesus couldn't show his face at any of his relations', without a warning about his 'healing'.

Jesus went through a hard patch. He wasn't welcome on peoples' roofs, so he would lurk around spying for anyone patching up leaks, then he'd gather the throw-away roof-tiles, spend the night under those.

He took up binge drinking, and turned it into bungee drinking. He ended up in rehab. But there's a happy ending, he made one great friend at each of his twelve step programs. And each of these friends all told him the same: "Seek

out the Use Hostel. You are needed there.”

Chapter 3

They break a banned author out of jail

You may have heard of jailbreaks where the prisoners dig their way out. We helped with one of those, but not in the usual way. Tallman insisted on doing it in style, so we tapped in to some of that Use Hostel labor, and we tunneled a way for the car.

The prisoner was a certain author of banned books. He'd been locked away for subversive literature and subliteral verses. You can imagine why we were interested in having him. In the cutthroat competitive black market for books, it was like having a nuclear bomb. Imagine his surprise when the car pulled up outside his toilet, the bumper knocking the lantern off his table. (We would later find out that it burned down the whole jail.) We kicked through what was left of the wall and we napped him.

"What the fuck took you so long?" he said to Tallman. "I've got half a mind to sue you."

Tallman playfully ruffled his hair. "I'd be worried if I thought you had half a brain, Doc." We waited to hear the prison sirens blaring before taking off, it was the genius of our plan, use the alarms to muffle the sound of the engine.

"Hey Yu, I don't think you've met Doc before," Tallman laughed, tossing his tie back over his shoulders to blow like a cape as we burst into the daylight. (That's how tall Tallman was, he bought his neckties at novelty costume shoppes, filling the Use Hostel dumpsters with mutilated vampire gear.) "Shortman! Introductions!"

"Oh man, Doc's the meanest," Shortman looked up from his vidya. "Tell 'im about the time you killed all those dudes, Doc."

"Bastards called me a Philistine," said our doctor wiping his specs, they'd gotten dirty during the jailbreak.

"Ahh, an attack on your literary credentials," I said, trying to sound wise.

"What the fuck are you talking about?" He peered at me through the dirty spectacles. "No, I'm a real Philistine. Nothing pisses me off more than when

you insinuate things about my people.”

“Where is Philistine, anyway? One of those Middle Eastern countries?” Jesus piped up. We’d all forgotten he was even there, he’d been calmly smoking his painkillers through the entire operation.

“You ever seen one of those pictures of Israel, and it has, like, this littler, fragmented country scattered inside it?” Doc said.

“Oh, Philistine is Palestine,” I said.

“No, ya moron,” he gave me a quizzical look like he was checking whether we were driving on the right side of the road. “If you look at the tiniest little piece of Palestine, you’ll see it’s a perfect copy of Israel, only smaller. And inside that little Israel, there’s a tiny copy of Palestine, and that’s Philistine. Those are my people.”

“Tell ‘im about the novel you’re workin’ on,” said Shortman.

“I’m travelling the world, visiting its diverse indiginous populations and pissing ‘em off,” said Doc. “Pissing on their elephant graveyards and shitting in their elephant cans. Mixing up yesterdays ancestor’s with tomorrow’s cinammon toast. See, my goal is to write a novel where every single line has been cursed. I didn’t think of a title yet, I’ll have to come up with something particularly cursed.”

“You should name it after our youth hostel,” said Tallman with a laugh.

“Your hostel’s too weird, man,” said Doc with a laugh. “If Alice saw it, she’d look down at Toto and say, ‘We’re not in Wonderland any more’!”

“Hey, you ever write anything about nihilism?” Jesus asked.

“I’ll tell you a story about that,” said Doc, realizing he had his specs on backwards he quickly fixed them. “I was at an airport once when I got one of my bursts of inspiration, and right at that very moment, my pen ran out of ink. There I was, in a foreign land, flight in fifteen minutes, both sides of the self-walking platform going the wrong way, and nothing to write down all these brilliant thoughts pouring into my head. I’d’ve shouted them aloud, but they’d have got me blown up by the TSA. The three kings themselves couldn’t get past security these days, you know. To add insult, when they finally did give me a pen, it was to fill out one of those landing cards. Imagine this long-bearded Philistine, maniacal gleam in his eye, scimitar in his belt, feverishly scratching divine revelations about nihilism on the back of a landing card. The TSA took the card away, who knows where it’s at now, they probably burned it. But here’s the thing, if the whole ordeal didn’t happen, I wouldn’t have this story to tell you now. So that’s kind of my philosophy: you win some, you lose some, it all evens out in the end.”

“Far out, man,” Jesus blew a pair of smokerings, one for each lens of the doctor’s eyeglasses.

“Why didn’t you use your cellphone, dumbass?” said Shortman.

“Shit man, they got a road block ahead,” Tallman spat, he could spit further than the length of his cigarette, but just barely.

“Eye of the needle man, eye of the needle,” said Jesus.

“It’s cool, I came prepared,” Doc said. He rolled up his shirt to reveal suicide bomber gear. Shortman and I quickly untied the dynamite, Jesus lit the fuse

with his vaper. “The ice did shit with a thunder-fit, and Tallman steered us through!,” said Doc in a ridiculous falsetto-poetic voice, as we blasted our way past, “That’s Poe, by the way.”

“No it ain’t, ya boob!” Tallman kicked him playfully in the shin, the car started weeving all over the road. The force of the whiplash sent Doc’s glasses flying into the night. “That’s T.S. Eliot!”

“You can’t even spell T.S. Eliot!”

The air was filled with half-burned pages, swirling around like a tornado. Doc snatched at one of them and went ballistic. “Fuck man, shit!” “What is it?” I said. “They filled the roadblock with my papers!” He stood up and shook his fists furiously as his persecutors behind him. I was glad he’d lost his suicide vest. Jesus absently grabbed one of the pages, crumpled it up into a tiny little ball, and smoked it.

The car crashed into a ditch, and we all got out and started hunting around for the doc’s glasses.

Chapter 4

The Doctor is Received

The first thing Doc wanted to do with his newfound freedom was to pay a visit to his father's grave. This was easy enough, his father was buried in the Flying Graveyard. You've never heard of it?! I'll tell you all about it. It's the most convenient option around. When your loved one dies, you don't need to worry about transporting the body, the Flying Graveyard will fly to you. Likewise, when you want to pay a visit, like our good friend the Doc, you just call 'em up and make an appointment. If you don't have room in your house, they'll hover over your roof and you can climb a ladder to come aboard. Where is the Flying Graveyard when it's not flying, you ask? LOL, you really are new here. The Flying Graveyard is always flying, it was retrofitted from an old Soviet cold war bomber. Bitch is nuclear powered. Rumors say some of the graves still hold old warheads, hammer and sickle and all. You can feel at ease knowing the statue of Lenin keeps watch over your dearly departed. If you're looking for cheap travel options, you can even book a ticket on the Graveyard, it's the cheapest flight around, but you'd better bring a jacket, it gets cold in a graveyard at 30,000 feet. We launched the passenger option as part of the Use Hostel's continuing effort to make traveling more affordable. Oh, I didn't mention that? Yes, the Flying Graveyard is a subsidiary of Use Hostel. Tallman has made it quite clear that if anyone mentions the conflict of interests, he'll make 'em wind up dead.

"Don't be fooled," said Doc as the five of us stood looking at the tombstone. In solemn letters it said 'Here lies Doc Sr.' "It's just one of the aces up my shirt. Watch." He rolled up his shirt and produced a combat spade (he hadn't even changed from his prison outfit yet). In no time the Philistine had dug open the sarcophagus, but instead of the body, it was full of papers. "Government would never think of looking here," he said with a wink, packing the papers under the straps where the dynamite had been.

There was no vacancy at Use Hostel, so it was decided Doc would share my room. Then one by one his seventy-two brides started arriving. I'm sure you've heard of the phenomenon where women fall in love with imprisoned serial killers. Well it's worse with imprisoned writers. Because of the shortage of space, each of the seventy-two brides had to share a room with one of the Use Hostel's

regular men. Tallman and Shortman pulled strings to get the prettiest two. Every night, one of Doc's brides would come for a visit, and I'd be obliged to turn my chair facing the wall. Then in the morning he'd howl with outrage about how she'd deceived him with a promised virginity, how he was cheated, and all that. When the bride staying with Tallman came, the Doc said: "Virgin! She's slept with every animal in the African safari! Not only that, every inch tastes like cigarettes." The only bride he was remotely happy with was the one staying with Shortman. "She's no virgin," said Doc the next morning, rubbing his sore knees, "but she's pretty damn close."

One evening the Doc and Tallman were out on the town and I was guarding the fort. In came Tallman's girl, dressed like a concubine. She sat on my lap and coyly asked if I'd like to share her sleeping bag that night. I got real excited at the thought of snuggling up so tight with such a crunchy mama. But the sleeping bag was so loose it was more like sharing a tent. In fact it was so loose I tossed and turned fitfully. At one point I woke up soaking, afraid the hostel was burning, it was the cigarette smell. The girl had an unamused look on her face. "When is Tallman getting back," she said boredly. A few weeks later she missed her period. Doc was furious, as a writer he's very particular about grammar. Fortunately Tallman had a novel method of fixing missed periods. Imagine a stork flying along, and someone sticks a long cigarette through a tube into its beak. This stork, it inhales the smoke, and this happens day after day, month after month. Eventually the stork delivers a sickly baby, weak and blinking with lung cancer. The surgeons do everything they can, but we ain't cured cancer yet. As for the umbilical cord, Shortman keeps that, don't even ask me what he does with the thing, for all I know he jumps rope with it. Shortman has a saying he always says: "Life is nothing but a drug called *umbilical cord*." Doc would laugh and say: "I might be the only man who still feeds through the umbilical cord. Any time I've got writer's block, mom sends me her corny story ideas, it's the finest protein for my babyish story-telling brain."

In order to ensure the doctor's productivity, we set him up with a kind of hamster wheel. Instead of revolving it with your feet, you'd revolve it with your fingers. The faster you typed, the faster it would spin. The Doc would sit in there for hours and hours, typing furiously, it was so cute the way he thought if he could just go fast enough he could get somewhere. Tallman was thrilled with the output that it generated. Me, I wasn't so happy, the squeaking kept me up late. One day when Doc was out clubbing with Tallman, I couldn't help but give the wheel a try. But I was such a wretched writer, the thing went backwards!

Chapter 5

The Amateur Church

The management was worried about morals around the hostel, so they asked us to build ‘em a church. We rounded up some of the most well-traveled men staying with us, sorted ‘em by their beard length. Tallman passed around a spiral, told every man to write down what he knew about churches.

“Does anyone have a Bible?” asked Shortman.

“I’ve got The Brothers Karamozov,” offered Old Ivan. Old Ivan was a sad specimen, always wanted to be a barber, but no-one would hire him, so he had to work at noodle shops, abusing his proud hair-cutting tools to cut ramen and spaghetti.

“Good enough,” said Tallman. “Anyone else?”

Doc supplemented the Brothers with a copy of “Before the Law” torn out of the novel around it. He also threw in some extra pages of his own. The author would leapfrog in his grave if he knew the way we were using it.

“Man, has any of us even pushed foot in a church?” asked Old Ivan impatiently.

“I broke up a wedding once,” Shortman offered. He showed off the golden rings on his two fingers.

We didn’t have any holy ground for a church, so we built it out sideways, jutting out from the hostel. An engineer would have taken one look and burned up his license. Then we got in a very long argument. If the church was sideways, which way should we put the cross? A right angle would make it too phallic. But if it was parallel to the hostel, it would be perpendicular to the church. In the end we had to strike a compromise, we hung it upside down. Tallman liked it, he would go there on calm days, hang there from the cross arms like monkey-bars. Smoking a longass cigarette, it was hard to say which was longer, the cross or the cigarette. With his nose below his mouth he would inhale the smoke right back in where it came from. It was a smoke ouroboros.

How did we get the cross there, you ask? We asked Jesus, of course. Crafty bastard found this dis-assemblable IKEA cross. He was able to carry it up at his leisure. Some screws went missing, and we had to shorten the right arm of the cross, make it a bit asymmetric.

It was too awkward for plumbing, so if you wanted baptism, you had to lug the water up yourself. Forty gruesome floors up the ladder, with Shortman and Tallman whipping your back. After you were done we'd throw out that bathwater, one time we accidentally threw a baby out with it. In order to cover up the incident, we made it a regular ceremony. We hadn't planned on child sacrifice at the start, but it's better than murder.

When we were done with it, the management didn't like the color. In the end we had to build an identical copy on the opposite wall. On the plus side, if you looked at the hostel from afar, it would look like a cross by itself.