

## John who loved God

By Zombee (@bennettdavidian)

John thought Elvis was underrated. He knew that sounded weird, what with Elvis being "The King" and all, but Elvis' legacy hadn't endured in the way his successors, The Beatles, had. John liked The Beatles early songs, but he thought that most of the music they released after *Help* was self-indulgent and stupid. As far as John was concerned, the Free Love, Tune In, Turn On, and Drop Out ethos of the late 1960s was a maximalist fantasy filled with contradictions and doublethink. Elvis was anything but square. Elvis liked dancing and dressing provocatively. Elvis liked doing drugs. Elvis liked riding motorcycles. Elvis thought going to jail was sort of cool. But Elvis didn't think it was cool to tell your parents to go fuck themselves. He didn't think it was cool to get so blasted out of your mind on acid that you fuck up your job as a mailman. Elvis lived in reality, and people, thought John, don't want to live in reality anymore. Elvis may have not always been exactly what he said - he didn't actually LIKE being in the military - but he always delivered on the things he promised. The hippies - with their sincere belief that frying your mind all day and humping all night would bring about The Age of Aquarius - did more damage by saying what they believed to be true than Elvis ever did by lying. Until the day he died, Elvis was there when people needed him. The Beatles broke up because one of them got an annoying girlfriend. Elvis was underrated.

The kids didn't like Elvis because the kids didn't want to be told what was cool. They just wanted to have their feelings validated. This is the reason that most kids at John's school had gone their whole lives without even *picking up* a Bible. John's heathen classmates so feared and resented the power of Christ who is Lord that they based their opinion of John completely on the fact that he could sometimes be seen reading the Bible while sitting at the edge of the schoolyard. Never mind that John could much more often be seen drawing, which was the main thing he liked to do. No. To his classmates, John wasn't "John who loved to draw" or "John who loved Elvis." John was "John who loved God." As far as nicknames went, it wasn't that bad, but John would have preferred it if his classmates just called him "John."

How Elvis was underrated, how hippies were loser scum, how his classmates were scared of accepting Christ who is lord, these were the things John thought about as he sat in The Gas Shack waiting for boaters to come buy gasoline. John had a lot of time to think while doing this. He only got about ten customers per day. Since the gas tanks on boats are quite large, it was worth it for Mr. Bell to pay John to sit in this gas shack all day and wait to pump gasoline, but it did result in John having even more time alone with his thoughts than he did at school.

John had gotten the job at The Gas Shack entirely because he had spent the final days of last August hanging around The Gas Shack talking to Mr. Bell's son Dylan. John liked Dylan fine enough - he had found it a little off-putting that Dylan talked about his girlfriend (whom John had decided, based solely on Dylan's description of her, was a dumb bitch) so much - but his real reason for hanging around The Gas Shack was boredom. Late into that summer, when most of

the tourists had left, and John's cousins weren't around, there was little for John to do. And so he had taken to sitting around The Gas Shack and asking Dylan questions like "Do the people at your college who take acid fail out?" And "If a girl says that she wants to do anal, do you call her a whore, or just walk out of the room?" John was pretty sure that Dylan didn't like him much, but Dylan tried his best to answer John's questions, and never asked John to leave, so John kept asking questions, and never really left until the day he and his parents drove back to the city.

The next March, when it became clear to John that he and his father - but not his mother - would be returning to the cottage, John called Dylan and asked if he would be working at The Gas Shack again. Dylan said that he wouldn't be. John had other questions for Dylan, but before he could ask them, Mr. Bell took the phone from Dylan, and, while referring to his son as "ungrateful" offered John the job at The Gas Shack. John said yes, so John got the job. John got a very okay Job.

The only real problem John had with his job resulted from him becoming pretty sure pretty quickly that Mr. Bell was having an affair with the teen girl who ran the bumper cars at the amusement park. John thought this was disgusting, but he didn't want to quit. Besides, he wasn't totally sure that he was right. So, John kept the job, because he wanted to buy a motorcycle, and because he didn't like being stuck in the cottage all alone, and because he liked getting paid to sit, and draw, and think about Elvis. John loved Elvis, but John also loved God.

After finishing his 21st ever shift at The Gas Shack - the actual business had no name that anyone aside from Mr. Bell knew, but John called it The Gas Shack on account of the fact that it was a shack in which a man sat while waiting to pump gas - John headed over to Donna's Dairy Bar to get himself a burger and some fries. John preferred to cook food for himself, but the fridge in John's parents' cottage had broken over the winter, and John's father had yet to get it fixed even though he promised to almost four weeks earlier. John was mad at his father. If John were a man of lesser character, he would have called his father a faggot.

John was about half way through his meal, frustratedly staring at his now essentially empty wax-paper ketchup cup - when John was a kid, Donna's Dairy Bar used to have bottles of ketchup that they would leave on the tables, but this summer, Donna's had changed its service, and now each order came with a very tiny wax-paper cup filled with ketchup. It was enough ketchup for roughly 11 french fries. It was very stupid - when he noticed a very attractive girl sitting at a picnic table a few feet from his own. She was dressed head to toe in a white tennis uniform. Her hair was golden blonde. She had thin, red lips, and full breasts that shook when she laughed. She looked like Grace Kelly, well, maybe a little like Jayne Mansfield ... but still a lot like Grace Kelly, whom John had become very interested in over the winter when he had watched the film *Rear Window* roughly twenty five times.

The woman's name was April. When John first noticed her, she was sitting at a table with her younger sister, May, and her boyfriend, Cole, who went to college and played rugby.

Yes, John noticed April and found her interesting, but he looked away after only a moment. John tried not to concern himself with girls, not because he wasn't attracted to them, but because he found most of them to be intolerably foolish. In fact, he was personally very concerned about the alarmingly high number of them who were sluts. Then John overheard April say "I like it when musicians act. Even if they're not good at it; I don't think it really matters. They have a natural carisma that just makes you want to watch them. That's why Elvis did all those movies: they kept making money because people just want to see icons do *anything*."

John loved Elvis. John loved Elvis, and God, and for the first time, he thought that maybe he could love a girl, this girl, whose name he didn't know, but who looked nice in her tennis uniform, and whose breast jiggled when she laughed.

John wanted to talk to April, but he wasn't sure what to say. Also, he didn't want to deal with the big retard she was eating with. Still, John knew he had to talk to her. If this were a movie, and he were Humphrey Bogart, would he go talk to her? Yes. So he had to. You don't get to be like Humphrey Bogart by not acting like Humphrey Bogart.

While choking down the last of his criminally ketchupless fries, John took out his notebook and began to sketch April. Not all of her, just her shoulders, arms, and torso, and then her waist, down past the hem of her skirt, and to her sneaker cover feet. He drew those parts of her because they were what he was thinking about, and also because he could avoid accidentally making eye contact with the big retard as he did it.

Eventually, the retard excused himself and went to the bathroom. That was John's opportunity, and he took it.

Hi

Hello

I'm John

Ummm, hello John, I'm April.

I drew this.

John then handed the drawing to April. April's sister, May, spoke next. "Oh, my God," she said, looking at the sketch. "Wow," said April. "This is actually really good." And it was. It was a really impressively good drawing. It was detailed and lifelike, but with liberties taken to suggest experience and emotion.

There was a pause in the conversation.

So, can I keep it?

Yes. It's for you.

Well thanks, John.

May spoke next. "You know dude, my Sister has a head. It's right here above her tits. Which you drew, and gave erect nipples."

Just then, Cole, who went to college and played rugby, returned from the washroom. He took a seat and offered his hand for John to shake. "Hey there, man. I'm Cole."

John ignored Cole's hand and spoke to April. "There's a drive-in theatre about fifteen minutes up the road."

Oh yeah?

They show old movies there. I don't know what they're showing this week, but last summer I saw *The Girl Can't Help It* and *A Fistfull of Dollars*, and they were both really good.

Very cool.

You should come with me. I don't have a car, but I can borrow my Dad's.

There was a pause. Cole, who had placed his hand at his side by this point, was confused.

May spoke again. "Look, buddy."

"Shhh," April interrupted. "Well John, that's nice of you to ask. But Cole here is my boyfriend. So I can't really go see a movie with you."

Oh, that's fucking gay.

There was another pause

But, I still want to say thank you for the drawing. I really do love it.

Good. Bye.

Then John walked back to his picnic table. He picked up his sketchbook and left immediately. He felt bad, like Abraham when God told him to kill Issac, except worse, because Abraham had a son, which meant he had gotten pussy. Plus, he got to talk to God, which was cool. At that

moment, John would have switched places with Abraham, or even Issac for that matter. Actually, John sort of wished that he was Abraham and that his father, John Sr., was Issac, and that maybe, in this scenario, God wouldn't call things off at the last minute, and John could stab his Dad in the fucking chest.

When John arrived at the cottage, his father was still not there. So John put Eddy Cocraine's "Summertimes Blues," on repeat, and listened to it while watching "Rear Window" and drawing. John thought about how awesome Grace Kelly was. She brought Jimmy Stewart lobster while having very high cheekbones and sexy legs, and when that wasn't enough, she helped him solve a murder to prove to him that he didn't have to give up his job to be with her. John had never met a woman like that. The girls he knew mostly talked about how they needed to be "treated right." John didn't have a problem with this per se, but it always bothered him that women seemed to advance this expectation without even mentioning what they would give in return. From what John could tell, what women mostly wanted was for other women to be jealous of them, which was not something that John was particularly interested in aiding. Encountering this leading-with-expectations attitude made John feel bitter toward the girls he knew, but he worked to feel indifferent. If these women wanted to be self-absorbed and shallow, it wasn't actually any of John's businesses.

Still though, John thought that it must be possible for things to be different. Grace Kelly existed. She was real. John could see her with his eyes. He could hear her talk. And, as he sat in the glow of the television, finishing a drawing of Cole The Retard having his entrails ripped out by Zombies, John thought that maybe, in April, he'd found a woman who was a little bit like Grace Kelly. He also thought that he needed to find out for sure if Mr. Bell was sleeping with the girl who ran the bumper cars. What if Jimmy Stewart had just ignored his suspicion that his neighbour had murdered his wife? Would he have gotten pussy then? John didn't think so.

Then John started to pray.