

Kings



Allegedly K. A. Dave

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By

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Introduction

In 2012, I joined a writer's group, the Southend Quills, not because I had any real aspirations to be a writer, but because a woman whose company I really enjoyed had started going and I tried not to miss any opportunity to spend time with her.

Surprisingly though, I found myself enjoying the experience, sharing stories from the vivid imaginations of very creative and talented people. I particularly enjoyed the writing exercises that our moderator would dream up for us to work on between meetings, and then read out to the group at in the beginning of the next.

This story came from one such writing exercise. The brief was simple, choose a famous person who had died and continue their story.

This is my humble interpretation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jamie". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'J' and a long, horizontal flourish extending to the right.

It was done.

As the Ambulance drew away from the palatial mansion taking with it the frenzy of photographers and camera crews, he slipped quietly out of a back door, and felt the cool Santa Barbara air on his face as he checked the sky for news helicopters. Had there been any, they would have spotted a pale looking man in his fifties, whose slight build made him seem much taller than his very average height, padding across the immaculate lawn to a dirt road beyond, where a car was waiting.

He paused to turn and look back at the home he was leaving for the last time, he was leaving with nothing but the clothes he was wearing, well, not exactly, he had outwitted the record company executives who thought they had him completely under their control, but utterly underestimated his shrewd knowledge of the record industry and coupled with a few shrewd investments he had been able to squirrel away several million dollars in a Swiss bank account.

“Come on man” the driver of the pink Cadillac, was getting impatient, he was an overweight man with thick white hair and looked remarkably spry for a man in his 80’s

“Come on, it’s getting cold out here, man” the driver said again, revving the purring engine for emphasis.

The man paused for a few seconds longer, swept a few strands of dark curly hair from his face, slid into the passenger seat and they were off, the Cadillac seeming to glide over the rough dirt road leaving a plume of dust in the wake of its aerodynamic tail fins.

“Thanks Aaron, I couldn’t have done it without you”

“It’s no problem, but we still got quite a ways to go yet, man”

Aaron said turning up the country and western music on the stereo to earsplitting levels and settling his bulk into the soft leather seat.

It was going to be a long drive indeed.

Two hours later, they had crossed the state line into Nevada, and on into a small town called Henderson just outside of Las Vegas. Aaron drew the car to halt in front of a large ranch house on the edge of town set in desert scrubland and framed by distant mountains. He leaned across and retrieved a large envelope from the glove compartment.

“Just as you wanted man, your new name is Ben, Ben Josephson, 55 years old and a retired architect. All the details and instructions are in here” Aaron handing the package to Ben.

“I don’t know how to thank you Aaron” He said, climbing out of the car.

“Don’t thank me, thank Lisa-Marie” and moments later Aaron had swung the now dusty pink Cadillac around in a wide arc and then he were gone in a fury of dust, chrome and Dolly Parton.

Ben turned to the ranch house to find the Doctor waiting for him.

Although the recovery was long and arduous, the surgeon had been an artist. Ben’s previous botched plastic surgeries had been corrected and now he was virtually unrecognisable.

Following Aaron’s instructions he had bought himself a modest house on the outskirts of the town, and for the first few weeks after his face had healed he reveled in his newfound anonymity doing those ordinary day to day things that his fame had made impossible,

but by the fourth week the novelty of normalcy had worn off and he soon discovered that the thrills and excitement of food shopping and waiting in line at the post office were vastly overrated.

He even resurrected his interest in drawing and painting, but he found that his heart was not in it, he was a musician, a singer, a dancer; music was in his soul, so despite the explicit instructions in Aaron's envelope warning him to stay clear of anything that would tie him to his former identity, Ben bought an abandoned warehouse and transformed it into a Performing Arts Studio, he would use his skills to teach others.

Black Cat Studios became reasonably successful and quickly gained a good many students most of whom were hoping to make a career for themselves on the nearby Vegas Strip. He taught by day but in the evenings Ben would write songs, and submit them to music publishers under the pen name William Jean. Not surprisingly, all of them were snapped up immediately.

Things seemed to be going well for Ben, until one afternoon he received a call from Aaron.

“Uh Hey man, we gotta talk, meet me at that diner outside town on I-15, I’ll be there at 8:00” Aaron seemed tense and didn't wait for a reply.

It was a surprisingly busy night at the diner, Carlos, the owner almost considered calling in a busboy for an extra shift, but he thought better of it. He took some coffee over to a sprightly old man who sat alone

at a table by the window, and the thought crossed his mind that he seemed awfully familiar.

“Thank you very much, man” Aaron said, just as Ben arrived to join him.

“Can I get you anything sir...” his voice tailed off, his eyes wide in recognition, as he looked from Ben to Aaron and back. Ben did not seem to notice.

“Uh, No, no thank you”

Carlos backed away dumbfounded, a wide smile spread across his face as got back behind the counter, he picked up the phone and began to dial, but put it down again “Who is going to believe me” he thought, chuckling to himself.

“Goddamn man, didn’t I tell you to keep a low profile?”

“Huh? I don’t know what you’re...”

“The songs man, the songs... William Jean? You practically wrote your name on them man” Aaron said sharply, as he ran bony fingers through a thick shock of white hair, but as harsh as he sounded Ben could see his lip curl mischievously, he relaxed and chuckled:

“Well, it’s not like you haven’t dressed up and let a few people see you sometimes” and with that the two men laughed raucously, several of the diner’s patrons looked around in mild annoyance.

“C’mon man, the TV and papers are all out looking for this Billie Jean and you’ll be in a whole heap of Turkey do-do if they find you”

“I know, I know, no more songs, no more William Jean” Ben sighed.

“Good man, so how are the steaks here?”

The two men ate together and talked for nearly two hours, their conversation liberally sprinkled with more riotous laughter to the chagrin of the other diners.

As they got up to leave, Aaron pulled out his wallet, but Carlos held up his hand.

“It’s on the house gentlemen; it was absolutely my pleasure sirs.”

Aaron could see the lights of the Las Vegas strip shimmering in the distance as he held the door

“Man, I really like Vegas, but I sure do miss Memphis” he sighed, as he stepped out into the cool desert air.

Carlos burst into uncontrollable laughter as the door closed behind them, because he knew, with certainty, that he was the only one in the whole diner who realised, that **two** kings had just left the building.



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