

Carousel

by Angie

We're captive on the carousel of time
We can't return we can only look
Behind from where we came ...

- Joni Mitchell

I stretched on my favourite oversized lounge, a tall cold one within reach, and sighed. I felt Nigel jump up and creep up until his snout rested on my chest. I moved my hand until I could stroke that soft place where an ear meets his head. Nigel gave a soft grunt, the sound he makes when he's completely content.

Aren't we a pair? About the same age now, old chum.

Sixty-five! Still got all my parts and most of my hair, just a few aches to remind me I ain't 30 anymore. Wouldn't wanna be. The parts all work, yeah, even that one, and my lady plays me like a violin. The kids are doing what they're doing and I'm proud of 'em.

Life is good. But I'm 65 dammit! Can't help thinking about where I've been.

Easy Street laid it out - but that had to be written, and not just for me. A memoir to leave the kids. A lot of people my age get that urge. The end of the tunnel ahead, or something. Cathartic. Yeah, it was. Not easy at to relive all that and write about it. Lot left out - good as well as bad. Sequel? Nah. Let 'em guess!

Family kept me sane all these years, gave me something to come home for, made it all worthwhile. I'm fucking lucky. I wish every motherfucker in the world had this. Would be no fucking wars then!

At work, I was fucking lucky too, even when I thought I wasn't. I dug inside for every role, but took even more away. Yeah, those dudes - and lady - they are the true story. Fuck, they made me what I am now. I close my eyes ... the better to reflect a little, you know?

I can see them, circling like Indians around a wagon train, or horses on a carousel. Ok, I get the message. What better day to reflect?

Amroukar is looking at me, a shit-eating grin on that ugly face. Yeah, he tapped places in me I didn't know existed. Worst and best experience in my fucking life! Found out how ... physical ... acting can be. Fighting the fucking weather, the fucking ground and frozen streams in bare feet, trying to find out what made a fucking caveman tick. Beautiful, wild places. First time for so much. Fuck, yeah. Never again, but thanks bud.

Salvatore hobbles into view. My face twisted into parody. Fuck, shortening myself to five feet was brutal. The guy was brutal, but he had a soul. He just wanted to be left alone with his vices. I can relate, bud. Nobody leaves you alone in this world. Ya gotta take the punches with the kisses. Sean made it right. An experience never to forget that. Rose in name, but not bad otherwise either.

Angel saunters into my range, grins at me and waggles his hips like Elvis. Kept my face in that one. I learned to laugh at myself and Guillermo made me do it. That fucking nose scene! And the underwear. I was parodying myself, almost. Grasping, struggling, wanting. You wanted to be just what I did, if I had the face for it. Shit, Cronos was a set unlike any other. Nobody but Guillermo could have pulled that one off, or pulled it out of the fire!

Vincent walks up in his cloak, his leonine face curious. A face that became more mine than any, ever. You made me a fucking sex symbol! I learned how to be loved and not crack. It was pretty physical, but I was in good shape. I learned how not to swear in sign language, kiss in prosthetics, talk around fangs, roar, and show emotion in 16 inches of prosthetic.

Silence, yeah, I learned silence too. How to shut up. How to ... what's that word the dons use ... emote ... yeah. How to rip out a piece of my heart and give it to ... all of them who watched. Shit, even my soul got exposed. Every day I drowned in you, lost myself in what you were, found the quiet place where you and I could just be.

Loved what you were, where you were, who you were. We were too much alike, my friend. I miss you.

And when it ended in 1990, and for years after, who could fucking forget? Voice work. I have you to thank for that, Vincent. Gold record - *Of Love and Hope*. Coulda been the title of my life. Shit ... but that stuff paid the bills when my face was poison.

Then a bunch of crap one-offs, more voice, more crud. Then out of the dirt, a diamond ...

One strolls up, bare-chested, showing that muscle I'll fucking never have again! Another strong, quiet type. I felt him pull at me, as if, deep down, I ached for something, loved someone I couldn't have. Hard choices man. That's my life. You understand.

Then more voice, more disappointments. And they wonder why I skipped over it all in *Easy Street!* Then the one and only ...

Sayer of the Law is staring at me now. Even though I know he can't fucking see me. Spooky. Yeah, whole different fucking experience. Not too demanding, you, but my first time on a big budget movie. Brando. Shit. The man had presence. A force of nature. Whole thing was a like a dream. Patience. Yeah, I learned patience in spades - and how to listen. And learn.

Then more forgettables, voice, TV ... yeah I see ya all. Then finally, in 1998, a regular paycheque.

Josiah slouches, legs apart, head tilted, grinning. Yeah, bud, I see ya! We did some stuff. Riding a fucking horse for the first fucking time. Nothin' prepared me for that! No foam rubber to hide behind either. Great scripts, great guys, dust, horse sweat, horse buns. Oh yeah, and pain in places my wife discovered. But loved you. Strong silent, like the others. Maybe we were too fucking silent in that series. But the viewers loved us, fought for us that last year. Felt jinxed when it all ended. Another brilliant series falls on its face!

Followed by ... what else ... more voice, more bit parts, gloom and doom. Hard to believe how much of that I did. Yeah, I know ... I should be grateful. At least we didn't starve ... quite. No thanks to me.

Then 2004 and Hellboy ... yeah, Big Red

Hellboy raises that clunky left arm and grins with those big teeth. Ironic that they decided to put the prosthetic on THAT arm! Being a southpaw never felt so ... awkward. Other roles, even Vincent, let me use my leading arm ... sometimes, anyway. Josiah shot with that hand. But Guillermo knew me. He knew I would love the character. It was like going home. It was me under that red rubber. Except for the cats maybe. Huge sets, hard work, long days. I got in shape, surprising even Guillermo. Fuck, I was 53 when I did that. And felt every year of it.

Lots more voice and other stuff ... then ... what did they end up calling it? Yeah, *Uncross the Stars*. A romantic role for yours truly, and fuck me, in my own face.

Bobby looks at me and shakes his head. Met some great people there. Retirement town. Not for me, but shit, it was laid back, mellow. But in the end, just another desert, another lost film, another dead end.

Then, finally, along comes Hellboy 2.

See big guy, I have patience. Hadda watch out for the cats. Had Nigel then. But lots of freaky sets and people. Re-uniting with Doug and friends. Trippy. Fuck, Guillermo could turn a funeral parlour into a carnival! A few years older, and man, it was brutal. But Red gave me confidence. I felt I had made it this time.

Then more voice, more stalemates getting the picture now?

Felson looks at me. Didn't forget you pal. Another stint on a horse, this time in fucking Croatia. Got in shape again. Nick and I hit it off. Swords and dust and effects.

Then more of the same old. Woulda probably continued that road if not for Sons in 2008. Pushing 60 and finally a break.

Clay stands legs apart, hands on belt, scowling. Yeah, laughter was not your thing. Humour was usually at someone else's expense. Didn't talk much. Another silent brooder. No heart. Toughest role I ever played. I stretched my chops on that one. Wasn't pleasant, some of it, but I did it, and learned. Yeah, even in my 60s I can learn. Know the chops, so I can concentrate on the rest of it, the stuff that fires or freezes the blood.

Those other guys, talented sons of bitches. Reminded me of me back when. Intense, dedicated. We were like family, like the series. Sometimes it was hard to tell the difference. Hard to wind down at the end of the long shoots. Fatigue. Dirt. Yeah, those too. Acting ain't brain surgery, but it sure sucks the tar outta you some days.

But it was a game changer, that role. I found great indy stuff between the seasons, got into it, found young film makers I admired, wanted to see them do what they want. The roles were good, the shoots short and sweet. Sons let me choose to do what I enjoyed - playing roles different to Clay, different to anything, use my skills in intense little roles. Palate cleaners all. Kept me sane.

The Job, Bunraku, Acts, Mutant, Kid, Poker... and *Frankie*. I see ya all! Fuck, as if I could forget?

Phyllis looks at me and shakes her head. Yeah, I know, there's a first for everything. Playing drag, no budget, bedlam, crazy people, rush to wrap. Charlie looked about 17. I tried to show that even an ugly transvestite has a heart.

I have to sigh, because after that, more voice. Hey, I'm not knocking it, not at all. I love it. Easy to sit in front of a fucking mic and just let it all go south -- and east and west too. Beats watering the weeds.

Then Hannibal Chau wanders to the fore, those fucking shoes clicking. Where the fuck did they find those? Guillermo always surprises me with something. Kept my face, had some laughs, great sets, Charlie ...

Then a lot more indy roles between SOA seasons, the meat in the sandwich, yeah. Fuck, they were fun and I kept my face. Met more folks I respected. So far outta Hollywood they weren't even on the radar.

Then some more voice. My fallback. But at least I did get a Disney one in there. That was an experience!

And now ... well the judge is flying high. Great role. Great people - all younger than me. Yeah, that's how it is these days. I'm an old fart. No getting around that.

Hellboy 3 is still rumoured on IMDB. Fuck, that thing hangs over me like a fart. Everybody wants to know, says encouraging shit, but nobody wants to front it. Could I do it now I'm 65? Told Guillermo my action days are slipping away. He just shrugs. French got nothin' on him for *c'est la vie!* He always has several projects going. Pacific Rim 2. The first was great. Charlie encased in a ton of metal again, probably losing weight the way I wish I could. Wonder what he's up to today?

What no more to see? Show over? Nah, just another chapter to turn. Retirement not my thing. Frightening even ... to everyone, except you my little bud. Take you everywhere I can, and you're always there for me.

There's a crash someplace and I wake up, suddenly realizing I had been asleep. Fuck, naps come easy these days! I look around. What was that noise? Can't see anything. Then I reach for my beer and realize it's on the ground, leaking. Fuck! I pick it up, but there isn't much left. I swig it down and realize if I want to stay here lounging, I gotta get up and grab another. Well, maybe I should go in and listen to something mellow while I'm at it.

What the fuck time is it anyhow? Do I care? Nah. At my age, the clock is no friend. I don't even wanna think about tomorrow, today. Just wanna forget the world and do almost nothing. Except nothing ain't possible. Not if you're alive. Ha! And I am! I made it to this fucking age!

Praise that god I love. This is the life. This is *my* life. Fuck the rest of the world!

END