

NOT - A - FU- CKING - TWITCH!

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...The money ran out in no time. There were days when I was flipping a coin to decide whether to buy milk for tea, or a pack of cigarettes. Inevitably I had to look for freelance work. It was my first New York summer and the apartment had no air conditioner. It also had no table. When I finally picked up illustrations for *National Lampoon* and *Marvel Comics*, I had to paint them resting on my knees. Bill suggested I work at the loft whenever I needed, and gave me a key.

He'd started a monthly column for *Crawdaddy Magazine* called *Time of the Assassins* and for a few months I also supplied illustrations for that.

I was at the loft one night finishing up one of them when he came home from a dinner party. He'd had a few drinks naturally. He came over and placed a piece of hash on the desk.

"Here! I got a present for you!"

"Well thanks Bill. I'll smoke it later."

"No man! It's not *dope*! It's aphrode-*e-e-e-siac*! Ted Morgan* gave me a bunch of it. Got it down in South America. Says it really works."

"Great! I'll save it for a special occasion."

We talked about the picture for a while then he wandered off.

Five minutes later I noticed it was very quiet. As I was packing up my stuff to leave I saw the back of his head on the other side of the kitchen counter. He still had his hat on. It wasn't moving.

I figured he'd fallen asleep in the chair so I crept over to wake him.

When I came around the corner of the counter, I found him very much awake; sitting in his boxer shorts staring intently down at his crotch.

"Not-a-fu-cking-*twitch*!" he said.

Another time when I stopped by, I found him busy at the stove. Plastic shopping bags covered the kitchen counter. He'd read an article in *High Times* magazine proposing that opiates could be extracted from lettuce. *Lactuco virosa* - wild lettuce - does have such properties. Head lettuce from Chinatown does not. Nevertheless, Bill had decided to commit himself to an all day vigil over a saucepan to prove things one way or the other; watching pounds of lettuce distil down to a black tar.

When I asked him later how it had turned out, he said that it had tasted like shit and it hadn't done shit. As always, he knew whereof he spoke.

It made sense that he would encounter the occasional dud. His quest for mind-altering chemicals covered a territory few if any, have

dared countenance. In the course of his life, he sampled just about everything in the pharmacy and washed it down with just about everything in the liquor store. That the endeavor resulted in one of the most far-reaching imaginations in literary history is testament to his methods. Given the fact that he would continue to create to the ripe old age of 83, his liver by rights should be in The Smithsonian.