

The Father of Uranus
By M. Stefan Strozier
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Not too long ago, in the countryside of upstate New York, near the Finger Lakes, a dramatic event occurred. Flowerman Bronson, leader of the commune *Seekers of the Father of Uranus*, found himself before a crossroads. His hands tied behind his back, he was forced into making a decision.

Flowerman Bronson was a charismatic man, as might be expected of a person leading, or otherwise directing, the lives of some 200 people. He was about six foot four, rather thin, even gaunt; perhaps, due to his vegetarian diet. For much of his life, however, he had been a stout, athletic man, who ate extra helpings of beef at every meal and had even been an all-pro linebacker at Penn State in 1964, in the position of tight end.

His long locks of curly, blond hair flowed gracefully behind him, reaching to the small of his back. His skin was pale, contrasting sharply his strikingly clear, blue, piercing eyes. They were eyes, with which whoever made contact, would surely feel as if Flowerman were reaching into their very soul. Needless to mention, Flowerman was keenly aware of the power that his eyes and his entire charismatic nature wielded over other people.

Flowerman's name came from one of many rules, which governed his commune. The rules; or rather, laws, were similar to Plato's Laws of the Republic, which briefly governed the "perfect state" on a small part of the Island of Crete, centuries ago. The rule regarding names instructed that a person shall retain their surname upon joining the commune, but another member of the commune will provide the new inductee with their first name(s).

So the person who named Flowerman was Red Herring Turning Leaf Johnson. Red Leaf, as she was called, was a beautiful woman with soft, cream-colored skin and striking black hair. Walking hand in hand, as they did, across their communes' property, butt-naked, the overseers seemed like a God and a Goddess. Indeed, this was one of their fantasies.

In the wintertime, life was harsh and members of the commune hunkered down inside of their Swiss-style, log cabins, rarely coming out. The bleak landscape became cruel and empty. Sadly, one winter a cabin full of adults and children perished by freezing to death. To honor the victims, in the spring, after the corpses has thawed, they were cremated; and, their ashes were smoked in marijuana cigarettes.

However, from the spring to the fall, world came alive and the deep waters of the Finger Lakes were clear and beautiful. Some commune members, skilled in the

craft of woodworking, built an elaborate water purification system, made entirely of all natural parts, such as filters of carbon and magnetite rocks, in order to be able to drink right from the pristine waters surrounding their lands. The water a strange, metallic taste, though.

"Heavy metals are part of nature too," Red Leaf said one day, dismissing a nasty rumor that lead might be among the metals in the water purification system.

The crops the members grew: corn, beans, all manner of vegetables; and, even some fruit, all grew on the commune property with success. Since the members could not eat meat; or, even fish and eggs, they had to grow a significant amount of vegetables and grain, which they stored for the long winter, in order to survive on this sustenance. There was never a shortage of work to do. Therefore, alcohol was illegal in the laws. Initially, there was a minor revolt regarding this law by certain members; but after time, everyone made adjustments; and, although the commune lost a few key members (the writers and poets of the group, primarily) who could not tolerate this rule, ultimately, everyone was better off for it.

Other hallucinogenic drugs (including, of course, marijuana), such as LSD, peyote and magic mushrooms, were legal to anyone over age 12½ In fact, the commune partook of an evening smoke in the Great House every night. The Great House was a structurally questionable, long wooden structure. It had no walls. There were many hand-woven baskets inside on the ground. During high winds, the Great House swayed dramatically; but it never seemed to collapse. The burning fire was a beacon for everyone to gather, before turning in. However, there was no hole in the roof for the flames to escape; so many members had to monitor the fire, to ensure the roof did not catch on fire.

Flowerman did not rule outright. He had a hand-chosen council, each picked for their wisdom, sense of love, or overall harmony with nature. There were five members of Flowerman's council, not counting Red Leaf, who operated as an advisor. The council members were: Buffalo Pigtail Magpie Smith, Feather Rise Beesting Planski, Long Salmon Sunrise Grimes, Large Mouth Bass Owl McClellan; and, Raven Spoken Hamster Goldstein. The council convened after the evening smoke and the other members had turned in for the night. Flowerman began the meeting by reciting the sacred canto:

Mercury, Venus, Earth, and Mars are the inner planets. Their father is Jupiter, whose brothers are Neptune and Pluto. The father of Jupiter is Saturn. The father of Saturn is Uranus. Who is the father of Uranus?

"Here, here," council members replied, gravely, seated in a big circle, around the fire.

"Fellow Seekers, we have arrived at a crossroads," Flowerman said, slowly

standing. The fire had been reduced to simmering coals. No one was close to the fire because it was a hot August evening. The council remained silent, curious about the issue present before them.

After a five minute pause, where he stood looking at the dark night, Flowerman continued, "As you know, council members, we own over 100 acres of land; and, the far southwestern twenty acres have always been under contest with the local county. Well, today, when I went into the Land of Urbanites, I received a letter from the country judge, who has made a ruling that the county will be confiscating that section of our land. The so-called, "his honor" says the sheriff will come to take what we share with nature of Wednesday..."

The council members visibly shook from this drastic news. After a long silence, Buffalo Pigtail said, "Flowerman, what day is today?"

"I think today is Tuesday."

"Oh," said Buffalo Pigtail.

Large Mouth said, "Flowerman, this is a very bad thing. What shall we do?"

"I propose that we stage a sit-in, and meet the government officials when they arrive. We shall all sit defiant, arm in arm.

"Here, here!" The council cheered, seeing the wisdom of their benign leader. There was silence, while the council members sat quietly, thinking.

"Flowerman, can we hold a poetry reading, in celebration of this news, tonight?" Feather Rise asked gently. She was the peaceful one. She was thin, white and attractive.

"Yes, and can we have group sex after the reading?" Buffalo Pigtail quickly added. She looked sort of like Gertrude Stein. Feather Rise and she had named Long Salmon Sunrise, a recent member.

"Yes, of course," Flowerman said.

"I have poem," Raven Spoken said. Everyone looked at him, so he rose and neared the fire, so the light illuminated his face, enhancing the effect of his beautiful words of verse. He began, after a pause:

Penis, penis, penis, penis
Pee pee, peeeennis?
Hello, Mr. Pee pee
Are you there for me?
I have to go wee wee

Nixon is Satan
I love New Mexico!
Stick your tinny winny penni
Into my vaginy opening
Vaginy winey
The baby-killer soldiers are evil
Whooooooooo
Tushu, lulu, whoopy-dupsy...

Raven Spoken Hamster suddenly stopped reciting his poem, a look of horror on his face. Large Mouth, alarmed, said, "Raven Spoken, are you okay?"

Feather Rise said, "That was so beautiful; so much powerful imagery. I really loved the part about Nixon. Have you published your poem yet?"

Raven Spoken shouted back, "Don't interrupt me until I am done with my poetry!" He continued by letting out a loud moo, as if he were a cow, followed by his verse:

Old McDonald is Nixon
Old McDonald is Nixon
Old McDonald is Nixon...

But again, curiously, Raven Spoken paused. This time, however, Buffalo Pigtail spoke, without pausing, "Oh, I get it! Old McDonald had a farm; and on that farm he had a Nixon' Old McDonald had a farm; and on that farm he had a Johnson.."

Raven Spoken became visible agitated, screamed at the top of his lungs; and, ran away. The council looked at each other in discomfort. As if sensing the need to break the awkward silence, Long Salmon said, "Maybe we should start the free love?"

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The next day, the entire commune woke early; and, forgoing their chores, dressed in lavish, hand-sewn costumes, made entirely of all natural ingredients: lettuce, cabbage, spices and herbs; and, other leafy vegetables. Armed with cymbals and chimes, wooden clackers; and such, the happy group strode across the green hills to the southwest in one long line, spanning half a mile in length. Everyone had flowers in their hair. Members sang political songs, typical of their generation, such as *Four Dead in O-hi-o* and or new-age songs, such as *The Age of Aquarius*. At this last song, Red Leaf said jokingly to Flowerman, "Let the sunshine into Uranus too." Members recited wonderful free-verse poetry; often, original works; but also works from famous poets of their generation, such as...Billy Collins...or, well, anyway, a chorus of gentle songs and poetry filled the

warm, spring day.

Unfortunately, halfway to their destination, it started raining heavily.

Drenched, miserable, a little sad, the group of adults and children reached the end of the road. The road connected to the small town of Haldermanville, some ten miles away. It was eleven o'clock in the morning, still drizzling slightly. After several attempts, the beautiful people formed a wide ring of love, encompassing the road. And then Flowerman did something unexpected. He took off his army rucksack (which he got from serving two years in the reserves, successfully avoiding that Vietnam War) and laid it on the ground. He un-straped, opened it up; and, began passing out handful after handful of large marijuana cigarettes. Everyone cheered, especially the children. He instructed the group to light up at the exact time that the evil government officials arrived.

Four police cars and one unmarked vehicle crested the grassy hill where the commune members sat waiting, at ten-thirty, a small dust cloud in their wake. The vehicles stopped shy of the group; and, parked on the right side of the road. The sheriff climbed out of the front car, which was the unmarked one. With a loud “ssstick” from many books of matches or lighters, the group lit their marijuana cigarettes in non-violent, political defiance. The hippies puffed hard for several minutes, while the sheriff and his deputies dismounted their cars and organized. The smoke, exhaled from the hippies, hung low in the damp air. A soft breeze gently blew the cannabis smoke in the direction of the officers of the law. The government officials soon took notice of the distinctive sent.

The sheriff was a short man, about five foot five. He wore a wide-brimmed hat and chewed at a toothpick. His gun holster hung at his hips a little low. He had a slight smirk on his mouth. The sheriff knew Flowerman well and walked right toward him. The sheriff directed his deputies to wait a few meters back; and, when he gave the signal, to draw their weapons and be prepare to fire. Flowerman stood up as the sheriff approached and they stood toe to toe, Flowerman towering over his adversary.

The deputy leaned his head to the right, wearing his wry grin. He twisted his toothpick with his tongue against his lips, nervously. He said, “Flowerman, I’m gonna be nice and pretend that I don’t see you breaking federal and state laws; and, county violations – gonna give you one chance to clear yourself and your hippy freaks outta here, right now.”

Flowerman smiled, broadly; and said, “Do you want to smoke a marijuana cigarette, sheriff?”

The sheriff’s grin left his face, which turned red. He turned and whistled at his deputies, who all drew their weapons and splayed their legs, wide. Chaos immediately ensued. By now, everyone was a little high on THC, especially the

sheriff and his deputies, who had a low tolerance. One of the deputies ran back to the vehicles and turned on all of their sirens and lights. The alarming incongruity of the police sirens and lights destroyed the powerful harmony of the circle. The sheriff punched Flowerman in the stomach, hard. Flowerman doubled his tall frame over, crying, "Uugh!"

The sheriff kned Flowerman in the groin, violently twisted his arm behind his back; and, slammed him on the ground, hard, cutting Flowerman's face. Seeing this, the hippies cried out in horror. The deputies, their hands shaking; but seeing their leader in firm control, did not move.

"Hey hippy, how does the pavement taste?" The sheriff said to his adversary, angrily shoving Flowerman's face around on the ground.

Red Leaf suddenly, stood up from the wet Earth and shrieked, "Stop it! Leave him alone, you baby-killer!"

The Sheriff, ignoring her, cuffed Flowerman; and, leaving him squirming on the ground in agony, stood back up, drew his .38 caliber pistol, raised it high in the air, and said in a loud voice, "Now! All you hippy freaks have 24 hours to leave your commune. We are coming in there with tear gas and smoke you pot-smoking weirdos outta your wormholes! You hear me?"

And now, reader, we arrive with Flowerman, at his crossroads. For, this is where Flowerman was forced into making a decision, which is a difficult, if not impossible, thing for a hippy to do. Flowerman had to choose between non-violent protest and violent resistance. Non-violence did not seem to be working. And, the stakes were high. After all, many commune members were wanted criminals. In fact, every member of Flowerman's council was a card-carrying member of The Weather Underground. They each had a rap sheet, consisting of crimes such as damage to government property, resisting arrest, possession of controlled substances, tax evasion; and, even, conspiracy to overthrow the United States Government. Eating pavement, Flowerman had no choice and we understand his position. So, raising his head, he shouted at his troops of peace and love, "All beautiful people attack!"

Sadly, however, Flowerman's orders were ignored and the entire commune got up and ran away, across the wet grass of the rolling hills.

The sheriff turned to his frozen deputies and shouted, "Don't just stand there; go git those Communist bastards!"

The deputies ran after the commune members; but slipped in the muddy ground. Two pistols fired by accident, at random. One bullet hit a police car; the other hit Large Mouth Bass Owl McClellan in the right butt cheek. He fell, holding his rear. Some deputies managed to tackle commune members and handcuff them.

Then, the sheriff fired six warning shots into the air; and, the commune members, who had not gotten away, stopped in fear. The deputies encircled them.

When the sheriff and his deputies finally restored order, there were 69 commune members placed under arrest, including Flowerman and his entire council. The press immediately dubbed this group "the sixty-nine who did time," and a controversy soon arose.

The mayor of Haldermanville, Mr. Jim Jones, had a mixed blessing. On the one hand, he had stumbled on several hard-core felons, fleeing from the law; nine, to be exact, including Flowerman, Red Leaf, his whole council, and two others members of the commune: Two Wolf Whalebone Luigi and Parsley Sage Rosemary Thompson. As the FBI descended on his little town. Mr. Jones got his 15 minutes of fame.

On the other hand, however, some powerful US senators and congressmen, federal judges, union bosses, etc, were calling Mr. Jones on a regular basis. Many members of the commune had come from prestigious, mostly liberal, families who had lost track of their family member for years; and, these families were exacting supreme pressure on the mayor to release their family member.

The mayor held daily press meetings, during which he kept saying, "We're taking everything under consideration;" or, "Justice will be served in the appropriate manner to all parties involved."

In the end, all of the "sixty-nine who did time" made bail and were released on misdemeanor charges of using and growing an illegal substance. (The small town Western Union got a lot of business.) The county issued an injunction and seized the commune, with its withering crops and wild animals eating the vegetable and grain storages. And, saddest of all, the Great House finally fell to the ground, in a triumphant crash that no one heard.

The nine, hard-core felons, however, were tried and easily found guilty. They were convicted and transferred to the federal prison Sing Sing, in upstate New York. However, due to one last push of political influence, the council was allowed to remain together for the duration of their twenty year terms; and, they were housed in a special section of the prison. Their lives fell into typical prison monotony: three daily meals, TV; and, a whole lot of bridge games.

Flowerman Bronson's heart was broken. He gathered his council as often as he could, by the basketball court, when all inmates were breaking in the courtyard. The council was officially widened to include Two Wolf Whalebone Luigi and Parsley Sage Rosemary Thompson. But sadly, the council became dark, and ideals such as love and peace turned into bitterness, escape, revenge. Feather Rise Beesting turned to prison diction to express her anger. Large Mouth Bass Owl became an avid weightlifter. Red Leaf organized a pyramid scheme

involving cigarettes, which she controlled with a deft draconian flair. Much to her and the rest of the council, the pyramid scheme worked! Soon, the council began to exert authority over the entire prison population. Rewards were established, as well as penalties. There were prizes and contests as well, such as "Prisoner of the Month" and "The Nobel Prize in Prisoner Life" and others.

Flowerman, seeing that he could control people once again, became happy. He started a benign experiment in mind control: join the Seekers as low-level members and receive more cigarettes. Prisoners became Seekers right and left, no longer believing in God; instead, wanting to know more about "The Father of Uranus." The prisoners, who already afforded Flowerman a healthy prison respect for being "strange," came to fear him outright. Officially, the new Seeker-members were known as "Prisoners Explicitly for Entropy in Prisons" or PEEPs. Thus, in the words of Flowerman, everyone in the prison became, "One of my PEEPs."

Every night, Flowerman studied astronomy in his cell. He burned his incense. He read his scientific journals. And, one night, in the French publication, *Journal de Physique* he stumbled upon his grand discovery. A huge comet called ~~Dette~~ Dab̄rshzurt 00 (named after the two famous German astronomers) would be passing directly overhead in just two days. This was no ordinary comet; but one twice the size of Haley's Comet or Hale-Bopp. This was it! The comet would take the Seeker to the Father of Uranus! Flowerman was ecstatic; and, he let out a loud yell, overjoyed at his provenance.

There was no time to waste. Flowerman pulled every string he knew, arranging for a large amount of cyanide to be smuggled into the kitchen, posing as a bag of flour, to a Seeker working there. The cook poured the deadly power into a huge vat of grape juice.

Simultaneously, Flowerman put the word out for every inmate to get a cup of grape juice at supper. That night, at dinner, the inmates ate their dinner meal; but did not drink from their Styrofoam cups.

At 6:04 p.m., precisely when the comet was flying above Sing Sing, Flowerman took his last bite of food, which happened to be cheesecake, picked up his own Styrofoam cup of poison; and, stood on the table. He did not have much time to speak. The commotion would alert the guards to action.

Flowerman spoke to the packed mess hall, gesticulating majestically, "Seekers of The Father of Uranus...the time has come, the stars are in alignment; and, the moment of the future is upon us! Seekers, we shall now board the spaceship known as ~~Dette~~ Dab̄rshurt 00 and travel through time to find the Father of Uranus! Red Leaf, assume the position at starship controls; Buffalo Pigtail Magpie and Two Wolf Whalebone, the guidance systems; Feather Rise Beesting, to sick bay with Parsley Sage Rosemary; Raven Spoken and Long Salmon Sunrise, the

weapons system. I will sit in the captain's chair...all other Seekers will remain below in the steeage section for the duration of the journey! Now, raise your cups for the toast!"

The guards were running across the room, toward Flowerman's table, as fast as they could. Flowerman continued:

Mercury, Venus, Earth, and Mars are the inner planets. Their father is Jupiter. His brothers are Neptune and Pluto. The father of Jupiter is Saturn. The father of Saturn is Uranus. Who is the father of Uranus?

"Who is the Father of Uranus?" The inmates said back, raising their Styrofoam cups up high.

"Drink, drink, Sing Sing!"

The End.