

Defiance on the Road to Decay

KillToParty | 16 December, 2018 | by Billy Pratt

“Old elephants limp off to the hills to die; old Americans go out to the highway and drive themselves to death with huge cars.”

“I’m not dead, and I’m not for sale.”

The waning days of August. After midnight; 2AM about to roll around as inconspicuously as the 80,000th mile on the odometer of an old girl who won’t quit. “Not quite ready to bring it down just yet.” Miles of quiet. Last man standing. Watching the tide roll in. Everything leading to this feels weighted and opaque- a dull ache only noticeable in moments of stillness.

When you’re young, there’s a timelessness to the hours before dawn. They dissipate in the moonlight. The keys to your dad’s old beater open up the world around you like never before- possibilities expand beyond the infinite. Everything takes on a veneer of significance. Sitting at a diner and only ordering coffee. Telling ghost stories on old country roads. Hopping fences and exploring graveyards.

Once this is lost, it’s gone for good. You get to an age where late nights just feel late. But you search for little bits and pieces of it. Maybe you drink to forget that the clock is always watching; a grim, invasive specter.

I like teaching because it affords me summers off to do as I please- so I can have moments where the clock is less relevant. Even still, you never manage to forget that your time is almost up.

If you have anything left to give- any mark left to make- you’re coming up on “now or never.” This is something an adult can never forget- no matter how many drinks he’s had.

But on the beach at 2AM, I can dip my toes into the realm of the timeless. Close my eyes and for a scant moment feel at one with the world around me. If you’ve never felt it, even if just for a moment, you’ll think I’m selling you on some bullshit- but it’s true and it’s beautiful. And it’s only for a scant moment until I’m reminded of why I’m at the beach at 2AM, as electricity pulses down my spine and my legs anxiously fumble about the sand.

I’m at the beach at 2AM because I’ve been awake for the past forty-eight hours.

If masculinity is power, there is a defiance in masculinity. The masculine man lives on his own terms, resisting the world’s inertia insisting he conform. He assesses risk and reward, and takes pride in making his own decisions.

No better a glimpse of defiant masculinity than the combat sports fighter. He understands the game- he evaluates the risk, he visualizes the reward. Even the losing fighter garners the respect of *participation*- the only participation trophy that matters- and walks away with a warrior’s honor and the gorgeous women who find that irresistible.

The feminized world cannot come to grips with the defiance of masculinity. It misunderstands the high-risk/high-reward dichotomy and believes the participants are *unaware* of the risks or else they wouldn’t hunt for rewards. The feminized worldview is steeped in consumerism- the proverbial activity punch-card at summer camp; the bucket-list life- where the longer life is understood as the better life. If not for a long life, how else will you enjoy food, wine, and travel?

This worldview is ideal for women, who are natural consumers. Western civilization has always been arranged for female comfort, and without the constraints of expectation- modern women are no longer expected to be... much of anything- life becomes an endless summer camp.

The bugman exists as an infection of consumerism. To the bugman, there is no higher degree of satisfaction than money and women- not wicked in their own right, but neither should be ends in themselves. The masculine man will demand a deeper experience, spitting in the face of risk to attain something which transcends what the bug can understand. When a bug's goal is money and women they'll settle for achieving either with the least amount of energy exerted- leaving them enslaved to a master both at home and at work.

When Robert Frost wrote “[A Time To Talk](#),” a reminder that there is more to life than working, the perspective was masculine. It is the masculine inclination to use the time you have for productivity. The masculine inclination is not to consume but to *produce*, so much that Frost felt as though a reminder was needed that there is *value in moments of rest*— that a man entirely consumed with productivity is a man living in isolation. There exists both a time to work and a time to talk. The bugman, as infected by consumerism, does not understand life this way- always looking to minimize effort and maximize pleasure- the bugman cannot stop talking.

“A Time to Talk” is critical for the masculine man- a necessary reminder that productivity can be an abyss.

I have this moment when a co-worker asks me what I did over the summer, and inevitably tells me of some week-long cruise or trip to Wally [World](#), where I think of loperamide hydrochloride. If you didn't know, loperamide hydrochloride is more commonly sold as Imodium AD- an over-the-counter diarrhea remedy. And I have this moment, where I think of 3AM, lying in bed, and reading about the [dangers](#) of taking Imodium to treat opiate withdrawal.

It's a funny story, I swear.

When a man transcends the feminine, summer camp, bucket-list life and becomes attune to looking at his time on Earth as productivity maximization- pure creative output, total content-mindset- he looks for ways to squeeze the most blood from a stone. How can I sleep best, when it's time to sleep, and work hardest when it's time to work- risks, be damned. It was toward the waning days of Spring when I discovered Kratom.

Kratom is the darling, miracle drug of the self-improvement community. “I credit Kratom for helping me to accomplish just about everything I've achieved in the past six years,” explains a popular internet guru, “unlike many natural dietary supplements that do nothing, Kratom can seriously help anxiety, depression, addiction, motivation, sleep, etc.”

Wow, all of that and *etcetera* too?

“Kratom works by stimulating your opiate receptors. It has ‘opiate-like’ effects. However – Kratom is NOT an opiate... This is what makes Kratom far safer than all other ‘opiates’ that are addicting and subject to overdose... Less “lethal” than alcohol and even Tylenol – which kills almost 1000 people a year.”

Less lethal than *Tylenol*? What's the worst that could happen? I mean, it's not an opiate- it's *opiate-like*. It's not a drug, it's a *supplement*.

What the anti-drug crowd never mentions is the difference between drug use and drug abuse.

Conceptually, these are separate and distinct- however difficult it may be for the drug user to *avoid* abuse. The masculine man, captain of his own ship, can assess the risk and visualize the reward.

There are upsides to drug use for the masculine man, looking beyond the depth of consumption, to maximize his productivity and creativity. There's a reason writers are alcoholics, opiate and cocaine addicts- because it works. Snort a few lines and open up your word processor; get into a flow state, feel your own presence, laugh like a maniac at your own jokes, enrich your mind-body connection- pure creative output, total content mindset. The masculine drug user isn't looking to masturbate his emotions with an artificial light show-Â the masculine drug user is obsessed with squeezing blood from a stone.

Arguably the best Stone Temple Pilots album is "Purple" (1994). Maligned for being a few months late to the grunge party, and maybe edging too close to parody with their debut, "Purple" redefined STP's sound by replacing the darker, grungy riffs with trippy, psychedelic rock. More was possible with this lighter, experimental version of the band- gone was the joyless sludge of "Dead and Bloated," replaced by the radio friendly "Interstate Love Song." Gone was the histrionic "Wet my Bed," replaced with the understated "[Vaseline](#)." The Pilots no longer had to explicitly sell you on their dark intentions- they would allow the music to convey it organically, as with the subtly haunting "Kitchenware and Candybars."

The cover art to "Purple"- a smiling baby, riding a dragon through the clouds while a group of angelic ladies look on with wonder- was found printed on the first bag of heroin Scott Weiland ever bought. In fact, a lot of "Purple" is about Weiland's heroin use which began on their first tour; "Unglued" hits on the manic height of experimentation while "Vaseline" confronts the sobering reality of addiction.

According to his own [account](#),Â *Purple* was recorded "outside of time and space." With heroin, Weiland was able to tap into theÂ *timeless space* of youth-Â a place of pure creativity. Maximum possibilities- pushing thingsÂ *beyond the infinite*.

"Moderation is masturbation"

Finding my sweet spot with Kratom took a bit of clumsy trial-and-error.Â The powder tastes like dog shit, so the flavor needs to be masked. I fell into a groove of taking it toward the late-afternoon into evening; this quickly became, very precisely, 5:15pm. I would time my after-work gym session to finish around 5pm, so I could be home by 5:15, mix my fifteen grams of Kratom with almond milk and flavored protein powder (a bolder flavor, like chocolate-malt or rocky road worked best), and get to work.

Kratom was fantastic for productivity. I'd sit down to write and let the words take on a life of their own- outside of time and space- pure creative output, total content mindset. I was happier on Kratom and more social. Soon I was taking Kratom before social obligations and dates with women (something I did at this time).

I was better with girls on Kratom; I felt one with body and mind. Moderation is masturbation; I went from "once-in-a-while," to *every other day*, to every day. As addictive as Tylenol and as safe as coffee. I had found a way to squeeze blood from a stone.

A concrete, static timeline is inherent to drug use- heroin is not known for its generosity. After

producing a fantastic third album with Stone Temple Pilots, Weiland had hit his creative peak and came tumbling down. Within months of releasing the wonderfully bizarre “Tiny Music... Songs from the Vatican Gift Shop” (1996), the Pilots had to cancel their supporting tour, pulling out of a coveted spot opening for the KISS reunion, and would soon disband entirely.

Weiland had traded long-term stability for short-term creative mania, like finding the invincibility star in Super Mario Brothers, and was saddled with a debt to repay.

I began feeling awful so gradually that it wasn't immediately noticeable- it felt more like a new normal. Kratom isn't heroin. The decline isn't sharp- it's subtle. I noticed that I was losing my trademark, high-energy morning enthusiasm; getting to work was becoming a drag. A symptom of getting older, I thought.

I was more irritable, more prone to frustration, more prone to insomnia, more prone to constipation- getting older *sure is weird*. My legs began to constantly ache- was my leg-day really that strenuous? I found myself counting down the hours until 5:15... and when summer rolled around, I figured that I'd dose earlier and then hit a second batch after-five.

Double the dose, double the productivity. Total content... something or other? Actually, I was shitposting on Twitter more than I was doing any real writing- I wanted that hard, immediate dopamine hit. I was distracted and aimless.

I had gotten what I could from Kratom and it was time for a break. No problem, I had thought- a few weeks off to clean-up and recharge the old system- then I could get back on and get back to work.

Pacing my tiny kitchen at 10pm- heart racing, legs aching- dealing with denial over the heavy dose of reality that was overwhelming me. The worst case, I had assumed, was some kind of psychological attachment- addiction for the weak- something that I could push through with sheer will. I had quit smoking earlier in the year, and yes, I had spent the week compensating with pizza and ice cream, but I took care of the fucker. Will and determination- I could push through anything. But I was never expecting a *physical addiction*. Fuck, I'd never been physically addicted to anything- I didn't know *what* to expect.

Kratom came with a debt to be paid.

Turns out Kratom is highly addictive- funny, right? It's not a supplement, it's a *drug*. It may come on slowly but it ends up mimicking genuine opiates- *opiate-like*, indeed.

It was the beginning of July and it suddenly became clear exactly how I would be spending my summer vacation.

Scott Weiland would fall between relapse and recovery for the rest of his life. His work would never again reach the height of the mid-nineties. Each relapse took a little more out of Weiland, chipping away at him so gradually that it was hardly noticeable at first. He would re-unite with the Pilots only to be fired a few years later- he began losing his voice and wouldn't be able to get through an entire show.

Compensating for his failing body, Weiland doubled-down on his drug use- but what had worked in the past to push him to his spiritual limits had only served to destroy what was left. Weiland died a shell of himself, a walking [corpse](#)- he had pushed things as far as they could go, he had ran out of content; he passed-on with nothing left to give.

The moral of the story is that there is no moral. Real life doesn't work that way, Charlie Rose. Two-thousand words later, and I don't have some grand conclusion or massive realization. Know the rules of the game and decide how you want to play- a long life of potential mediocrity or a creative energy that

burns with the fire of one-thousand suns. The defiant man can make this decision for himself and deal with the consequences of his actions- both short and long-term. Dip your toes in the water of creative-mania and maybe you can get out alive- fully immerse yourself and watch it kill you.

| “Today I saw the sea. I’m no longer [afraid](#).”

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