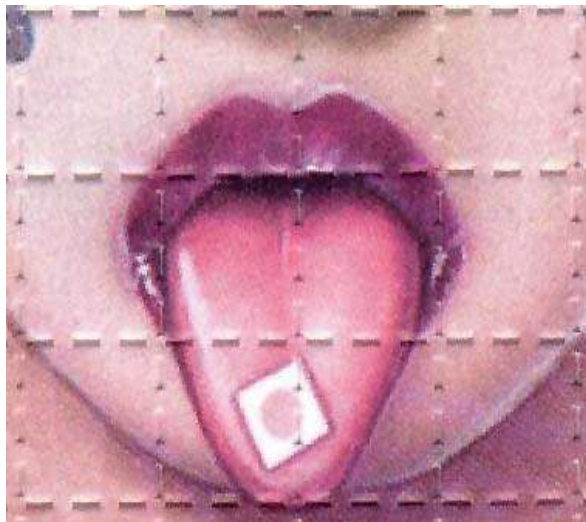


Point 19: The Point of No Return

A story of how LSD rewrote my teenage years.

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Two hits of acid later and our Tuesday night was ready to begin. Nothing beats having an intense psychedelic trip with your best friends—ON A SCHOOL NIGHT! Just as a side note before we venture any further into this sick and twisted night of hallucinations, I just wanted to inform the reader that I surprisingly made my highest G.P.A. that year, my junior year; the same year I dropped acid over one hundred times. The gang, not like the ones in Compton but my group of friends, consisted of my hippie-protégé little brother Austin, my dread headed black friend Max, and my best friend/ right hand man Zakk—oh and me of course. It was a typical Tuesday night for us; chillen at Zakk's house smoking pot and playing video games. It was probably around ten or eleven o'clock, because I remember being tired when our buddy Stout showed up knocking at the front door. Stout, a long-curly headed teenager, was the product of an

East Tennessean upbringing combined with excessive music festivals trips. Within the time it took Stout to brush off the cold and remove his heavy jacket he was rabbling on about “Lucy.”

Being an experienced tripper, a title created and earned by my group of friends, I knew exactly what Lucy was. Lucy is a slang term for Lysergic acid diethylamide or LSD; more commonly known on the street as acid, blotter, doses, hits, fluff, or Mary Prankster—if you can get the good shit. Reaching into the pocket of his tight skater pants, Stout removed the tin foil containing the acid. With a gigantic smile he asked, “Ya’ll tryna trip?”

I think the answer was a given because at that point in our lives Austin, Zakk, Max, and I were psychedelic fiends. We knew it was a school night and that tripping meant sacrificing an excellent education for a night of non-stop laughter and hallucinations. Although I’m no scholar or politician...I do know that the best nations are hallucinations and when it came to the acid regime I was very patriotic—I mean psychotic—well hell I don’t really know what I mean, but you do. Moving on to the story, the excitement in the room was hysterical and we hadn’t even dropped yet. Oh by the way dropping means to take your hit of acid for all you straight edge freaks. Dropping acid is probably much different than people think. To take acid, if its blotter paper, all you do is rip off the amount of hits you want, usually two for me, and put the tinny square piece of acid paper on your tongue. This is also called dosing. So we all snatched a little white hit of blotter acid off the living room table and threw it into our mouths. After we dosed up, it was time to plan an adventure because in about an hour we were going to be hallucinating and laughing our balls off. (That’s just an expression, I doubt it’s possible to laugh to the point that your balls detach from your body, but hey anything’s possible on acid.)

After a few minutes of pondering the crew decided we wanted to go camping. Camping was brilliant because it demanded adventure, imagination, and most importantly it allowed us to be rowdy and insane in an environment other than Zakk's mom's house. My brother Austin blurted out, "Alright mother fuckers, how we gonna get there?!"

By "there" Austin meant Norris, Tennessee where our camping site was. The site was locally known as "Point 19"; a small campground consisting of a river and a few acres of woods. The name Point 19 more than like derived from the interstate sign that someone stuck in the middle of the campground that literally read, brace yourself for this shocker, Point 19! Austin raised a great point though considering our future state of mind. Everyone knows people cannot drive when they're tripping; so we had to have a non-tripper drive us. Wasting no time I called my girlfriend Lauren. As the phone rang I devised a multitude of lies and reasons as to why Lauren should drive us an hour away to camp on a school night. This is the best I could come up with, "Hello, oh hey what's up?...Oh, I was calling because the fellas and I wanted to go camping and get out of the house...why you ask?...well because Zakk's mom and step-dad are arguing so it's kind of awkward here. Do you think you could help us out?"

Thank God and the all mighty John Lennon that Lauren said, "Yes."

From the time it took Lauren to drive from her house to Zakk's neighborhood, we all began to trip. An acid trip is a lovely, yet sometimes overwhelming experience. Tripping on LSD is like having the best Adderall buzz possible while being able to convince yourself of ANYTHING your mind can think of!—all while enforced by hallucinations. When I say hallucinating I do not mean acid is strong enough to make objects appear from thin air; so you do not have to worry about a magic leprechaun appearing right before your eyes and freaking you

the fuck out, no that is not acid. Acid trips are the brains ability of tricking your mind and central nervous system into believing your ginger friend is the mascot off the lucky charms box because he decided to wear a green shirt the night you consumed psychedelics. What I loved most about acid is that it was designed and strictly meant for the strong minded. “Bad Trips” only happen to those who cannot control their thoughts. Fortunately for me—I could. All my friends could.

My process of thought concerning misconceptions of acid trips was rudely interrupted by my girlfriend’s car horn. “BEEEEEEPPPPP!”

Zakk ran to his bedroom window to see who this beeping intruder was. Of course I knew it was Lauren, but I don’t think he did. By this point Zakk had to of been feeling his acid because the kid scurried his puny body to the window as if he heard war chants from Comanche Indians. And that’s what acid will do to you; it supplies endless energy accompanied with the anxiety of a wounded war vet.

Stepping outside for the first time while tripping is like being introduced to a whole new world. The sky is unusually bright and the skyline seems low enough to reach up and pluck stars like guitar strings. I was probably playing a Stevie Ray Vaughn riff as I made my way to Lauren sedan. Man did I feel good! As a side note for acid consumers, a reliable survival kit to have while hallucinating is water for hydration, good vibes such as music (preferably live), and trustworthy people because who you trip with and your environment basically determines how your trip will end up. Good friends laughing and telling funny stories while hyped up on LSD makes for a fun night. Tripping in a dark place while isolated or with sketchy people will have you crying your eyes out, begging the almighty John Lennon to please make it stop!

All of us trippers piled into Laurens Hyundai; with me riding shotgun and Austin, Zakk, Max, and Stout crammed in the back seat like Mexicans or sardines, or maybe even Mexican sardines, I don't know but the car was a tight fit for all of us.

Surprisingly, the car ride to Point 19 was silent. Lauren had no clue that we were all tripping, so keeping our mouths shut was the only way to ensure this didn't change. We pulled up to the campsite and I kissed Lauren goodbye. As soon as the gang gathered our tent and supplies from Lauren's trunk we all darted for the woods. I felt like I could run forever!

By now it is probably around one am and I could see every star in the sky. The unforgettable moment of the night is when we all were gathered up on a cliff overlooking the river flowing beneath us. Our positioning on the rocks allowed us to see the outskirts of the city of Oak Ridge. While staring into the distant with a mind full of acid induced imagination, I noticed a red moon. Without taking my eyes off of this red phenomenon, I relayed my hypothesis to the gang. I said, "Hey you guys, that red moon kind of looks like a mushroom cloud from an atomic explosion."

I thought I was being clever by making this comparison. I failed to realize that the gang took me a little too seriously until my brother Austin replied with, "I mean, that is right above Oak Ridge, where they made the atomic bomb for D-day. What if that's an explosion that hasn't reached us yet!? What if the world's ending!?"

Now any sane person would know that a red tinted moon is not an atomic cloud, but we were not sane. We were hallucinating on very powerful acid and now scared for our fucking lives! Zakk and Stout got the hell out of Dodge by breaking for the woods. I'll never forget what happened next. I look over at my dread-headed friend Max and I notice tears rolling down his

face. Mind you this is an intimidating black man who rarely shows emotion whatsoever, he's the cool one of the group. I was tripping so hard that after witnessing Max sobbing I too convinced myself that we were experiencing Armageddon. Max, a man of few words, blurted out in his thick Chattanooga accent, "Man, I didn't get to tell my mama bye."

Maybe it was the acid causing the group of us to burst into tears of laughter or maybe it was the fact that Max is a grown-dread headed black man whose usually the tough guy of the group, the guy who steps up for us when punks at school are talking shit, but tonight at Point 19 Max is a cry baby bitch tit who forgot to tell his mother bye before the world burned to ashes on the night of Armageddon. (Mind you—Max thought it was the real Armageddon, not the Sci-Fi film starring that bald headed fuck Bruce Willis). Max was crying from fear; we were crying from laughter—oh the irony. As I wiped the tears of joy from my eyes, my vision was clear again. Well clear enough to remind me that I was peaking. Peaking is the most intense part of an acid trip; it's the climax or for you nonliterary or celibate people out there, peaking on acid is like when Charlie from Willy Wonka is taking the canoe ride to the fountain of chocolate, so many unexplainable images and colors are flashing right before eyes and all your mind can do is try to catch up to what you're seeing, but cognitively it just cannot wrap itself around things it's never seen before. Crazy I know, but all the while you're laughing hysterically. Acid is one hell of a drug.

Everything from that point on is a neon blur. Unexplainable.

I guess you can say Point 19 really was the point of no return for us. Well mentally the point of no return. As the gang and I stood at the edge of the woods waiting for Lauren to pick us up, I noticed that my shoes were missing the laces and my brother Austin was missing a chunk of

hair near his neckline. The weird part about it, well one of the peculiar things, is that none of us really knows what happened that night. It's all just fragments of recollection; caused by the faulty camera in our heads in which we call our mind.