

## Cinders, a Trump Card

Written by Alex Baer

Friday, 05 August 2016 16:14 - Last Updated Saturday, 06 August 2016 12:57

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Most people know when something is missing. Sometimes, it's a perfect word to finish a thought, or else a certain condiment to take the sandwich to "perfect." Me, at this odd moment at the crossroads of the American Experiment? I am missing certain writers.

Some writers are compasses of their eras, helping us find our way forward. Others are beacons, to illuminate where we are, where we might want to go, or avoid going. Some are just comfort and solace --good company during whatever storms and strife we hapless, knot-headed humans have stumbled into *this* time.

Think of them as providing inspiration, companionship, guidance, patience, understanding, sympathy, empathy -- all of it: Mother, Father, Confessor, Lover, Professor... They are the whisky by the campfire, the hearty breakfast after a long night's gabbing into early hours, the hot coffee when you trod in, soaked in a cold downpour.

They help pick up the pieces, reorient yourself to the stars and the fates, and give heart for the journey ahead. The best writers give you a sense of being perfectly equipped for the tasks ahead, for being in the right place at exactly the right time -- even for doing what *needs* to be done, however grand or unpleasant.

And, *man*, do we have some things which need to be done in *this* country.

Hunter S. Thompson, in his prime, could help us make sense of them, as could Ken Kesey and Tom Wolfe. And, Mark Twain, Jack Kerouac, Kurt Vonnegut -- the list is as long and winding as the road America itself has plodded on and trod.

These are some of the giants we are missing today. And, when the truly great giants of thought and mind and spirit are not around, people will take almost any excuse to look up from their labors a sec, try to get their bearings, rest their eyes a spell.

This is part of the problem: Where are the Giants now? Feels like we're in a limbo ghost town,

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watching tumbleweeds wobble and whip past us, leaving us looking down a dusty, windswept dirt road, waiting for the supply wagon to roll in.

Real hot day, sun blazing down, and not a drink of cool water in sight. Nothing but dust in the mouth, and nothing but swirls of dust in the air. No giants of thought and insight to help us past this stretch -- just our own minds, and whatever is left of our souls. Just a lot of little stick men, straw men, all made of dust -- ashes and dust, caked together with dried spit.

\* \* \*

America remains a great and grand dream. Lots needs fixing but lots of things are still just fine. We're no longer Number One in many things, as most of the world defines quality of life, or achievement, or what-have-you. But we're still Number One in many things, and in many ways -- some of them figurative, in our hearts and spirits, and some of them in provable, actual fact.

Somewhere along the line, however, many of us crossed over into a new space. That new place is not especially helpful, not for those who went down the new trail, nor for those who refused to follow.

The new place is one where people worship empty dreams -- new beginnings without work. New rewards without effort. This new place has people in it who guarantee everyone can convert losses into wins, *no questions asked, no sweat equity required, no money down, no deposit* , and definitely *no* return.

It is a land of deep feelings, very light on facts. It is a land occupied and sown by Republicans since 1987, when a little thing called the Fairness Doctrine was pulled out by its roots, and rightwingnut media bloomed, oozed, festered.

A power struggle ensued. It is still being fought out today, stronger than ever. Its founding giant is a small man, but is also a legend and demi-god in his own mind, and in many others' minds, too. He insists on a wild type of rabid ignorance and personal arrogance in his rank and file, *no questions asked*.

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This small giant is getting the devotion and reception demanded. The giant, and its followers, have been carefully nurtured by the GOP since 1987, fed on a steady diet of lies, mistruths, and self-serving propaganda, scape-goating, and falsehoods.

Now, it is time for the reaping -- even though the time for any leadership and steering is long past, the reins jerked from the hands of the drivers, the sun-baked leather brittle, snapped.

Freewheeling's the thing, now, see -- bouncing down the face of the cliff, the invigorating breeze in the face is everything! The feeling of moving forward, hair blown backwards, everyone moving faster and faster...!

\* \* \*

It is difficult to tape bits of paper to cinders. The cinder sloughs off bits and crumbles, reshaping itself. The cinder sheds the bit of itself on which anything else tries to attach to it. The tape is inert, carrying small bits in its glue, clotted and useless, no longer sticky.

Truth never sticks to small giants, either. We've seen this a lot, since 1987, and more than ever. It has been a ride of hypnotic fascination for many, moving from disbelief, that such insensitivity and cloddishness could masquerade as insight and honesty... that the heights of moronic prattling and non sequiturs could ever be taken for diplomacy and intelligence...

The barriers of Reality were pushed back -- slammed back! -- and reshaped in brutal, uncaring fashion. Slowly, the spell is starting to wear off. It has been a long time coming. The spell was first cast, long ago, in 1987, as a way to draw dullards and dimwits to the altar of illusion and dust, where dreams might be made whole again, where lies could become truth, where feelings might become fact.

The small giant welcomed them all into the expanded circle of the clan, for it suited his plan, for the moment, to do so.

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Finally, some have started to clear their eyes of the cinders and dust, and allow tears to slowly improve their vision. Even with new misgivings and shocks, they continue to support the small giant, even while looking to each other for clues on how best to calm their growing reluctance to keep saying yes.

The best anyone's managed, so far, is to continue to voice support, perhaps thinking that their voices will find footing to object, later on, as they continue to speak.

The small giant was well pleased: He had survived hundreds and hundreds of truths, any one of which would normally have brought down any other giant. The praise of the supporters only reinforced the belief of his special, invincible nature.

The small giant of cinder and ash still walks among us, swirls of black, inky dust appearing in the air wherever he speaks, nourishing his supporters as if every word were from sweet, freshwater springs, set far into the desert.

\* \* \*

It's a shame we do not have some of those missed writers to help point out the crossroads we travel. It's also a shame, because half of our nation could use some tips, on how best to help the other half of us come awake, shake off the ash and the dust, and avoid this chipped and rocky path to more ghost towns, daymares, and ruination.

Those writers are not here. All I can do is play my one Trump Card, and remind you that the small giant marks his territory, putting his name on vacation spots he rarely owns -- always his action of *first* resort.

... and that choosing a small giant made of cinder and ash, which speaks dust, should be our very *last* resort -- an option best left unexercised, until the very end. Then, let him select his own name, when alone, the last one in this world. Let him grin widely, pleased at making the

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world in his own image.

Then, alone, in that world, let all ashes be ashes, and let dust remain dust, as it always must.

Until that time rolls in on us, let us look toward other giants, instead, even if they not be fresh from the spring. Looking up at giants is the thing, not down, at small men.

\* \* \*

"First, the Doc said there was Asylum. Out of that good intention grew Bedlam. Now, I dunno about you," the old desert-rat prospector told his donkey, Hotay, lighting his pipe, "Even if they look the same to most people, I know which place / prefer livin' in."

He got the cooking gear out of the packs on the donkey's back, proceeding to make camp for the night. "I also dang well know where I don't."

Hotay brayed, scuffed the ground.

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### **Today's Bonuses:**

*Hotay speaks out:*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gROO7xSTxfY>

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*Moments to make you wonder: Too much of a good thing?*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jWv1TGZ8-s8>