

The Coatspuller

John Sinclair

1967

THE POEM FOR WARNER STRINGFELLOW

OCTOBER, 1966

Detective Lieutenant, Detroit Narcotics Squad, who has been single-handedly responsible for busting me on two separate occasions for possessing & selling marijuana and who stumbled into my new apartment last night by accident over a year since the last time he saw me & two years to the day after he first busted me—
Warner you are living in another century, this new one started while you were running around in circles chasing dangerous criminals to keep the city safe from marijuana & people like me—"I know what you are," you told me last night, "and when I get you again you ain't gettin' off so easy. I'll DROWN you
you worthless prick" you said
But it won't be so easy "next time," Warner, if there is a next time, because this whole new thing is getting so far out of your clutches
you don't even know what it is—except you can sense it with what senses you have left, you know somehow that things ain't what they used to be, that this world is changing so fast
you haven't even got a place in it no more
Your old-time power & control have no place in this world, Warner, & as long as you keep trying to hang onto them you'll just get farther & farther behind
until you die, Warner, until you're dead.
Not too long ago, Warner,
I would have given anything
just to get my hands around your neck
and choke you to death
But that time is past, there's no need of it, you'll die anyway
any thing will, when it stops growing

& there's no more need for it
in the world—
There's no need for you now, Warner, tho it may take 20 years
before you or the people you have made it your life to lie to
find out your uselessness & criminality—
You can't make me a criminal, Warner,
you should know that by now, & your prisons & courts
don't scare me any more, I know what you are
& I don't hate you any more, I won't let you trap me
in that tiny little bag of yours, I won't respond
the way you have to have me respond
because it's too late for that now, Warner,
it's just too dam late for those games,
the whole fucking UNIVERSE is right there in front of our eyes
& it's all I can do
to stay open to it now
while it's still "my" time
Even the 6 months you got me in your prison, Warner,
only made me stronger & less afraid
of the puny fear traps
that are your only tool—what're you gonna do, Lieutenant Stringfellow,
when you have to try to arrest
all the people younger than I am
who smoke marijuana every day
& don't even care about you at all, when you come to bust them
all they'll do is laugh in your face, you're so funny, you come on
like someone on your tv set, all the 1930s shit,
or 1950s, the century changed
at 1960, you're as out-of-date
as the House Un-American Activities Committee
who tried to scare the young cats in 1966
& these cats showed up wearing Revolutionary War costumes
laughing at you—
it's 19sixty-six, Warner,
there is no thing to fear
except your jails, & they'll fall soon
they're fallen now, they don't mean anything any more
& even if you kill us all off that's no big thing Warner,
we just get born again
more & more aware of what's really happening in the universe
but it's too late to kill us all, you missed your chance
in 1959, before the whole thing really started
you've been playing that funny shit for 2000 years
& all you've got is a gun & a badge & a house in a nice neighborhood
& a car & a tv set
& you can't even talk to your own kids, they just don't wanna hear it, you send them to psychiatrists
& they go over to somebody's house & smoke reefer
listen to the FUGS & John Coltrane & Sun Ra
& don't even think about you until they have to go home
& what a drag that is, Warner, going home to their atrophied parents

who are dying in their living room chairs
watching BATMAN on tv
& dancing the frug with Jackie Kennedy in their dreams
What kind of life have you got, Warner,
when you have to sit & think about me
for over two years, and I'm 25 now, what're you gonna do
with all these fucking kids
who are crazier than I am
& don't care what you do, you ain't nothing to them, & in
four years Warner, half the U.S. population
will be under twenty-five years of age
You're HOOKED, Warner Stringfellow, you're strung out
you've shot so much of that dope in your head
that shit Harry Anslinger & Hoover sold you
but all it is is JUNK, Warner,
& you can't keep selling people junk forever
they get hip to you, they don't want any more of it
they've had enough, they want something REAL, Warner,
& you just ain't got it to give to them
They don't care about titles no more, Warner, a lieutenant
ain't nothin but a cop, & a cop ain't shit
They wanna see who WARNER STRINGFELLOW is,
& what he does with himself, that badge & title
ain't gonna fool nobody no more
not like it has, they'll do like I do &
call you by your given name, even
if you lock me up again, you're the one who's trapped
in all that Aristotelian bullshit, the world is
not black & white, it's
all colors Warner, all you need to do
is open your God-given eyes and see it
& I hope you do,
you're a man too,
all of us are,
and every man is made to be free
I love you like I do any natural-born man
but you got BE a man, Warner, not a cop
you got to open yourself up or be
shut off completely
as you are now
from the world of human beings
Come on out of that jail, Warner,
let your criminals go, you've just trapped them
in your silly bag, & there's no need for those games,
we're all lovely & free Warner,
we're all human beings, & nothing you can do
can ever change the universe
I get up to change the record, Eric Dolphy
OUT TO LUNCH, it's 7 in the morning & the world
changes too, it moves farther

away from where you are, my wife turns over in bed
she's probably dreaming about you—you put her in jail too,
Warner, but only overnight, & you took her man away
for six whole months—we celebrated our 1 s t anniversary
while I was in your jail, & it only made us stronger
& more together than before—you see
how puny your bullshit punishments are. And now
we'll bring our own baby into the world
& see what it can do for you, even tho you want to
wipe out its father
even before it's born
& my wife feels sorry for you, Warner
just to show you what you're up against with us.
she really won't play your silly hate games—
that poor man, she says, he must spend all his time
thinking of how he'll get us—doesn't he have
anything better to do with his life?
And what can you do with her, Warner,
shoot her? Or lock her up? The problem is
what're you gonna do with your self, Warner Stringfellow?
Let me leave you with that. What will you be in 5 years,
Warner, an Inspector? Like poor stupid Jimmy Fike
at the House of Correction? Why don't you
quit playing games, Warner, & grow up to
be a MAN Like the rest of us
(This is the story you wanted me to write about you, Warner, the one you asked me about again last night, &
it's the best I can do—
I hope you can hear it).

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