

Mr. **B**lue Sk**Y** o o o

By

Michael Tyler

WHY I LIKE IT: *Fiction Editor JOEY CRUSE writes...*

Mr. Blue Sky please tell us why
You had to hide away for so long (so long)
Where did we go wrong?

Oh, how I miss cocaine. I was always too poor to buy, but not enough to contribute, and certainly not enough to partake.

The days still exist, but the dealers (for me) don't, and ELO is just as good as they were then.

This story tickles me because of its disjointedness – what the author calls “fractured.”

Semantics aside.

Michael Tyler's, “Mr. Blue Sky,” is lovely little romp through a New Year's Eve featuring a man, a former bang buddy whom he most likely regrets not keeping around, her new James Dean, and, as you may have guessed, the upbeat and soothing tones of Electric Light Orchestra, and, I must say, that I am here for it.

There is something about this story that makes me happy, and, for you, I'll try to pinpoint it in a few words.

First off, the easy contrast between the red coat of James Dean and the blue of song – an easy comparison but a fundamental one. These two men are at odds, and the main character will always come out on the bottom.

The incorporation of music makes this piece lyrical in its own sense. The entirety of the piece you feel as if the time you are reading is on an ELO cycle. I won't even lie, I put it on in the background the entire time I read it, and it just made me happy.

There is something deeper here at work though.

I, too, have been in plays, and I, too, have called myself an actor. There is a chemistry within this story that exists because the two main characters have not only worked on stage and done each other backstage, but because there is an inherent jealousy at work.

This underlying theme, I think, makes this story. It is humorous, witty, drug-fueled, and experiences the knowledge that come from loss. There is a knowing here.

Nice work.

Five Stars.

QUALITY QUOTABLE *(for the love of language...)*

Dean asks me if I plan to wear ‘that shirt’, I nod and he replies that it’s none of his business, but it does look ‘kinda gay’ and I lower the volume of Mr Blue Sky while I recall that Sam once mentioned that Dean referred to abortion as ‘retroactive contraception’ and I restrain every instinct I possess to throw him through the nearest window.

Mr Blue Sky

And I’m sitting alone in an apartment far too disparate for a man of my professed tastes, finishing a bottle of ‘Ole John Silver’ discount rum and nodding my head in attempted rhythm to ‘Mr Blue Sky’ pumping out of thrift store speakers to pedestrians seven floors below.

Though it is far from appropriate, Mr Blue Sky still manages to spark the imagination and get the blood flowing, hands and feet join the head in atavistic appreciation as a cry of ‘Fuck you and your Electric Orchestra!’ rises through the carpet from the apartment directly below. I immediately overcome the urge to reply “*Light* Orchestra buddy! ... Fuck my Electric *Light* Orchestra!” and commend myself amid reminder that the deep breathing techniques of the Maharishi are taking effect.

The Elvis clock in the far corner strikes ten pm – for a sell-out Mr Presley can sure swing those hips – bringing forth a rush of activity as I realize that time is suddenly of the essence, appointments need to be kept, brothers and sisters in arms are to be met, New Years waits for no man no matter the false bravado of bargain basement liquor.

I raise the volume in compensation and head to the bathroom to shower.

Time to make myself beautiful.

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Emerging two and a half ‘Blue Sky’ cycles later I take a moment to appreciate the twenty-three year old reflected amid steam and poorly kept bathroom surroundings. While rum and whiskey have taken their toll there still appears a hint of abdominal definition while pectoral muscles confirm existence with requisite twitch and release, all in all fair confirmation that I am indeed ahead of the pack as it were.

Presumably such a fine specimen of manhood requires little adornment, and thus black polo and jeans seem most appropriate, suitably attired and with a run of the hand through short and – thank God – thick hair I hunt down my dress shoes, black leather boots purloined from a former flatmate in lieu of rent, and stride to the door as Sam slams her hand against the door to announce arrival.

Sam enters with her beau of the moment, this one fascinates as he appears to have not only appropriated James Dean but fully committed to the role.

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Sam and I are the rarest of beasts, friends who fucked and yet remained friends.

An actress in the best sense of the word we would meet each night backstage. I would rush to her dressing room while she was still hot with the rush of performance and we would make lust on the carpet. Hers was the only dressing room with wall to wall carpet and I always suspected this meant a lot more to her than she let on, and it was on this carpet we would lie afterward and hold each other.

And it was in this embrace that I would look at her, stage makeup still applied, mascara running at times - a tear on orgasm was her delight - and run my hands through her hair.

Her wig rather, the stage wig, long and brown, underneath her short bob of blonde protected, and it was here, so intimate and yet not so as to run fingers through a lovers wig, that I felt strangely disconnected.

And I look back now and wonder how often in those last few months I made love to her, and how often I made love to her character.

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Deep breaths, deep breaths.

And yet Dean irritates – I wish to tell him that James Dean took it up the ass and was glad for the opportunity, but I suspect he would refuse to believe me.

And we decide to spend the evening in my apartment - fuck the New Year's Parties, New Year's will come to us if it knows what's good for it - and so I phone Jo and we drink and snort, and throughout the evening I learn that Dean is an as yet unpublished poet, although he prefers to refer to himself as 'unpublishable' as he appears to hold quiet conceit that this makes him appear some sort of literary renegade ...

And my eyes mist up during one rendition of Mr Blue Sky and I find excuse to turn away so Jo cannot see, and something about this makes me less than hopeful for our future.

And as Sam bends to do another line her shirt rides up and I spot the beginnings of a tattoo on her lower back and I'm certain this is new ... or perhaps I have simply never noticed and this thought scares me to my core.

And Jo has two kinds of smile. The first comes easy while the second is earned.

And Dean disparages Neil Patrick Harris as, quote, 'Fags can't play straight' and Sam reveals that, 'When she is stoned she converses much better with the elderly,' and I recall how on our second date I drew Jo close and told her I rather liked her and her eyes moistened just so, and she replied boys had said they were falling in love with her but *this*, this less meant so much more.

And Jo and Sam speak of a former roommate who apparently was a whore, 'she simply gave compliments in place of head' and I tend to agree while Dean downs another rum and coke and slurs that at least his 'hypocrisy is consistent'.

And it turns out that Dean is the only one of us who's ever dated an evangelical, though he says it was worth it as the sex was unbelievable. She was so energetic he says, he had a theory she really got her kicks out of cheating on Christ.

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And it's 3.30am and the girls have gone to the bathroom and Dean and I are left opposite the other.

Dean is practically horizontal by this point, he attempts to lean one arm on the armrest of a sofa but misses by a foot or more and I comment that "I really admire James Dean, he was especially good in *Rebel With A Cause*," and Dean interjects, "*Rebel Without ... Without A Cause*."

"I believe it was *Rebel With A Cause* ..." I reply, "he played a man of genuine passion and he certainly came across to me as somebody with a cause."

And Dean is confused and can't quite ... put ... it ... all ... together and at that moment I consider how easy it would be to rid the world of Dean for good, and passing thought becomes fantasy and fantasy becomes fortitude and I place my hands around a cushion and lean forward and at that moment the girls emerge from the bathroom and I know that I will never forgive either of them ... and yet Dean has passed out and the girls giggle into their palms as I take the opportunity to shave his head.

He emerges looking rather like Brando in *Apocalypse Now* which he should take as a compliment as Brando was many things but one thing he was not was a faux rebel.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: *Mr Blue Sky* came about as New Year's approached and I recalled my past, and current, habit of playing my favorite song of the moment on repeat to help steady a rising mood most appropriate for the evening ahead.

I was also reminded of nights in which a particular type of affectation laden figure attempted to bring all into a circle of nodded agreement of his fractured perception of everyone but

themselves, the type of guy who had grabbed hold of an 'identity' and held tight for good or ill.

Hopefully the story captures the sparkling nights where all plans fracture though in retrospect seem inevitable or at least logical in a sense most twisted.

AUTHOR BIO: Michael Tyler has been published by Takahe, Bravado, Adelaide Literary, PIF, Daily Love, Danse Macabre, Apocrypha and Abstractions, Dash, and Cardinal Sins.

Michael writes from a shack overlooking the ocean just south of the edge of the world. He has been published in several literary magazines and plans a short story collection sometime before the Andromeda Galaxy collides with ours and ...