

Northern Mojave
April 14, 2009

BAD DESERT DREAM

The Marines were strung out underwater in the desert spring, ghastly streamers of bodies and blood snared on a sunken patrol boat, eyes open, faces distorted by water pressure, hands fixed in the act of clawing hopelessly against the smothering wet. One guy was wearing a civilian suit with a military helmet and holding a store bought semi-automatic pistol. He had a large prescription bottle in one hand and was trying to shoot me with the other but his weapon wouldn't fire. Above him I could see a light bulb shaped sun shining down, marshy grass around the perimeter and desert animals drinking calmly from the banks. But I could not reach the surface no matter how hard I struggled. An Indian dressed in snakeskins, shaking a string of rusty tin cans and saying something I could not understand, was holding me down by the collar. He had long black hair and a festering bullet hole in his forehead. The bubbles rising from his mouth took the shape of a naked woman who was beckoning to me urgently, pleading with me to come to her, to rise up, to escape this pool of death. Still I could not move. The water-muffled clatter of metal pans pounded my eardrums. A mountain lion broke the Indian's grip and dragged me to the surface with my head in its mouth...

I woke up in a strange bed with three Indian *brujos* around me smoking tobacco and chanting to guard my ability to explore the hinterlands of life and death. Jimson weed was my gateway. One sip of its seedy soup separates body and spirit. Two sips can reveal your power animal, let you see your face in death, and return to the boss reality wiser and stronger. Too much can convince your power animal to kill you forever. Having a guide can protect you against excess. Having three can sometimes coax you out of even the most dangerous circumstances...

I left the uncertainty of that place and returned to the spring for a drink of fresh artesian water.