

See AZ's chapter - end notes .

4AD

Al Zuckerman notes on the first draft

Meeting 18 December 1997 at Sugarloaf Key

What do the hippies do in the winter? Do they make guitars?

Say how hard it is to reach the commune, up and down, bad road, etc.

Priest needs some kind of bookkeeper who does the arithmetic. (?)

They rent the land, not from "the federal government" but from some particular department such as the National Bureau of Parks.

A stronger sense of the commune as a family, how they help one another. A crisis meeting over Flower's crime. When she returns from jail, there is a big communal meeting to discuss the problem.

Priest must have some theology. A theology of the chosen people, the promised land, we don't fully understand God's purpose but we know our place in the eternal scheme.

In the dream prologue, some sense of how this sacred place is untouched by the violence of modern society.

A deadline for when the valley will be flooded and everyone has to leave.

The bottler is a childhood friend of Priest's, lived for a couple of years in the commune, is now at best a semi-straight businessman. Perhaps he cannot himself take the communal life but helping them is his way of being part of it? Or perhaps he is just a street hoodlum like Priest who has found safer ways to scam.

Melanie became a health food nut, especially after Dusty started to display allergies. She will not have any meat or fish in the home. No white flour. They have to eat wholemeal pasta, brown rice, only health foods. Then one day she found Michael taking Dusty to McDonald's. To her this was like poisoning the child.

The commune is totally vegetarian.

Melanie is a guitarist and she wants to learn how to make guitars.

She comes from a divorced fractious family, and the whole idea of having all

these brothers and sisters attracts her.

Michael was Melanie's professor. She displays a pattern of being attracted to men in authority. But Michael wanted her to be an equal partner in the marriage and in bed, and she didn't like that.

The notice of eviction arrives in the first flashback.

The commune has a PO box in Silver City. Someone comes back with the eviction notice. At this point, the whole story is explained to Melanie. She is the most gung-ho of all. She has been feeling that this place is the answer to all her prayers: her kid is okay, she is okay. Now it has been snatched away.

Priest may address them as brothers and sisters at the meetings.

All the adults look after all the children as their own. Dusty can turn to any adult if he scrapes his knee.

Write a one-page portrait of each communitard, showing how Priest drew them in.

They arrived in 1970 with a truckload of brown rice. When times were hard, they ate boiled rice for days. They grew potatoes. Priest got the begging organised and disciplined. Billy Bones had a card saying: "Why lie? It's for beer."

The pioneer mentality: Now and again, the original eight talk about the terrible hardship of the first few years, how they almost starved and froze, the winter is snowed for three straight weeks, the time they ate racoons, etc. Some people wanted to leave, but Priest persuaded them to stay. Maybe some were draft-dodgers, others fugitives from justice or the IRS or left-wing groups like the SLL or the Scientologists, or from abusive parents or dope deals gone wrong.

The original eight have a name for themselves, like the potato heads or the rice eaters.

They have just finished the temple which symbolises the success and maturity of the commune. (It doubles as a school.)

They have a vegetable garden. They preserve fruit and vegetables and keep

them in a cold barn. They make quilts and blankets.

There was a ruined hunting lodge on the site when they arrived. The early homes were made of chopped-down trees, the cracks filled with mud, just like pioneer log cabins. (They used lumber from clearing the land?) Later ones are made from bought lumber. They all have store-bought wood-burning stoves with pipe chimneys. One of the original twelve knows about building, terracing, etc. Dale? Which would make it more poignant when he leaves?

Priest has two other children, ages 8 and 6, by different women.

Would Priest try to get Dale to promise to come back if the dam is cancelled? Priest is the kind of guy who will always try something. The whole scene of Dale's announcement more emotionally charged, everyone crying, a feeling that this is the beginning of the end. Others saying "Maybe I should leave too" and Priest stemming the tide.

Priest: How could he own 4 liquor stores without being able to read and write? Ordering: he lets the salesman read down the list. Filling out forms: he uses the accountant and lawyer employed by the previous owner. But he lies to the accountant about sales tax, and the tax people find out by checking the wholesalers' records.

Judy: Judy is a literacy volunteer. Teaches immigrant English? Wants to "give back"—a current catch phrase. Maybe she teaches a group of young hoodlums who are obliged to take the classes as part of their probation. A challenging task. Bring one of these kids into the story to further complicate Judy's predicament.

GED: a high school diploma but awarded in later life.

She drops by a place where a former student of hers, now going straight, is doing a responsible job, running a date center or something.

She is unable to respond to phone calls from a student who is then arrested, and she feels responsible because she was not there for him.

She is attracted to Michael but mad at herself for being so, and she thinks of lots of reasons why she should not hook up with him: he likes bimbos like Melanie; he is

arrogant; he is a workaholic, glued to his screen.

Judy's Asian heritage shows in some food preferences, clothing, some objects around the house, a bracelet or necklace of her mother's that she always wears. She uses a few Vietnamese words.

Star: She was taking the contraceptive pill until the commune prospered, then she wanted to have a baby. But only one.

Priest has two other kids, Daisy 8 and Smiler 6. He brings something back from Texas for them. Maybe he stops the truck at a store and picks up something. Maybe he buys for all the kids in the commune. Bubble makers?

Star is the commune's nurse-midwife. She is the idealistic daughter of a patrician family. Her father was an upper-class boy who became a doctor to serve people. Her mother, equally idealistic, was his receptionist. Star got used to coping with medical emergencies and even assisted at births. However, she went to expensive private schools. As the health person, she has a lot to do with Dusty.

She knows that Priest is illiterate. All the original eight do. She is his eyes and ears when necessary. Make this more clear in the first map scene. This reinforces the special bond between them.

The communards smoke dope every night but never in the daytime.

Star's cabin is the infirmary, full of bandages, aspirins, antibiotics, ointments, contraceptives. Priest's is full of tools and wood for making guitars.

Priest takes care of their spiritual welfare, Star their physical health. She has a special feeling for the kids because she delivered them. Priest delivered Flower with coaching from Star.

They sing in the vineyard while they're working. Star has a Joan Baez voice. She starts singing and they all join in.

Michael: He has one contract already, with a big construction firm, which pays his rent but little more. There is a particular company with whom he is on the verge of getting a major contract. An insurance company. This will guarantee success.