

Fire 2 May2012

As I was saying, I should have remembered the last time I had been involved in a fire in my home...

Let's go back to 1974.....when Mick dropped his bombshell at Robert Stigwood's party. We were watching a spectacular firework display, I recall, when Mick casually, it seemed, turned to Mick Jagger and told him that he was leaving the band. I don't remember Mick's reaction clearly, but he seemed astonished and justifiably put out at the sudden declaration. The Stones were on the verge of the next mega-huge American tour, which promised to make them all a whole heap of dollars. Cash that would not have gone amiss for any of them, not least Mick and I, considering the incredible expense of Keith's court case in France, which had cost the whole band (for reasons I could never fathom) a great deal of money. Mick Taylor stood to earn hundreds of thousands, we had been told; and his decision at the last minute to quit was simply unbelievable to everyone. Including, I may say, my sweet self. Though I had seen his growing discontent and despair, I thought about the fame and money stuff first and foremost – and failed to grasp the gravity of Mick's desperate loathing of what his life had become with “the greatest rock n' roll band in the world”. When Marshall Chess, in his tour manager mode, solemnly intoned to him in an upstairs bedroom at Stigwood's house, “Mick, no-one leaves the Stones and lives”, Mick's reply was swift and succinct. “Marshall, if I don't leave now, they'll take me off in a pine box”. End of discussion.

Mick and I were living in a rented house in Camberwell, South London, at the time of his departure from the Stones; and if we thought it was going to be all peace and quiet from then on, we had a lot to learn. The band and the Management were not best pleased at his sudden departure, and one of the most contentious issues appeared to be the Trust Funds that had been set up in Lichtenstein on the band's behalf. They wanted all the documents pertaining to these complicated financial arrangements back – and pronto would be fine. When Mick demurred, realising that he would probably need a few trump cards when it came to getting his just rewards from his time with the Stones, they were not amused.

A series of visitors came around after this, including the notorious Spanish Tony; who, it appears, had “worked” for Keith at some time; and who now declared to me that he was in love with Mick! He then proceeded to steal all my jewellery on his frequent calls to our house, when I caught him in search of relevant papers, I believe. Can't ask him now, as he's dead and gone. But that's another can of worms... . Go figure!!

There appeared also at this time, a shady pair of dealers whose names I can't recall (relax, you two). They came around one evening with loads of drugs, and very kindly made us a cocktail or two.....next thing I know, I woke up in the bedroom, hearing a roaring sound. I realise that we have been “Mickey Finned,” and also that maybe we weren't meant to wake up before it was too late....I staggered out of bed, and saw that the ground floor of the house and the staircase was in flames, and there was no escape. I hurriedly woke Mick, which was no easy task, and we desperately looked for a way out of the inferno. I ran to the sash windows, which incidentally had been completely painted shut and impossible to open – and slid one of them up with no

apparent effort on my part! Either I had acquired supernatural strength, or as I prefer to believe, GOD had made it open for me. Either way, it was a miracle!! I grabbed a few valuables and threw my leg over the windowsill, preparing to slide down the drainpipe; when Mick arrested my flight with these words, "Aren't you going to put some clothes on first?" Oops! I hastily withdrew, threw on something to cover my modesty (just), and slid to safety down the aforementioned pipe. Mick was swift to follow. We were incredibly fortunate to be alive. Saved in the nick of time. Till the

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