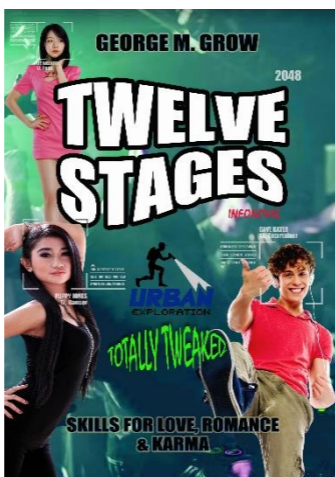
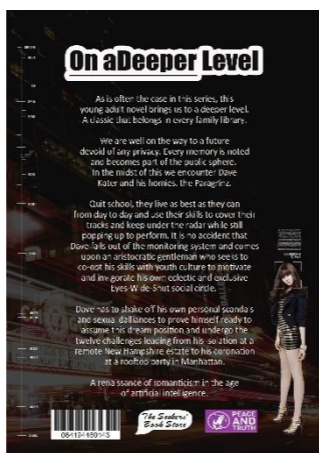


George M. Grow
Twelve Stages
Infonovel

A youth novel in youth language
about the life of a future youth gang
at the time of total digital control
and the first analog liberation
movement



From the series
The Books of Life®



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Reading sample 1

Quotes

"Dave is overcome with doubt. Has his view of the world totally chilled?"

"Dave Kater is the apolitical brutha-in-chief of all the chillouts from Montreal to Philadelphia, ideological and videological club-hopper who is only to be found where the groove is the deepest."

"In his eyes, he was not the lost sheep, the entire flock was lost. And the notion that the shepherd cared deeply for his sheep was a perfidious lie, since the whole purpose of their being out in the fields was to be slaughtered and eaten some day."

"We owe that not just to the environment and humanity; we owe that to ourselves."

"...whose great art and purpose consist in going out and bringing home a whole new life".

Bumfuck Egypt

Dave Kater wonders what the fuck he was thinking when he lit out in his buddy's ride. Now he is sitting in a ditch on the side of the road and cannot get it to turn over.

It happened in the middle of the night when he swerved to miss a white dog that darted out into the road in front of him, he is sure he heard a thump, and getting out to

check, he sees the rain washing what seem to be traces of blood and fur from the bumper.

A cursory look up and down the road shows no sign of the dog and the rain had washed away any tracks or bloodstains anyway. So not to worry. But the car ... the car.

"Cold, wet, dark," he gripes and sneezes, soaking his handkerchief. "Turn over, dammit! Don't leave me sitting here! Are you totally fucked?" Again, he tries to hit the starter. "Do it, you useless pile of shit!" Nothing but a cough and sputter. Certainly nothing that resembles the soft, reassuring purr of a running engine.

Now, Dave is standing outside, in the pouring rain, curses, kicks his white REEBOK WORKOUT PLUS SNEAKERS against the tire of the piece of shit ride, scolds, rants, picks up the collar of his navy-gray ANTONIO BRAGA HYBRID NATURAL STRETCH TOP, breathes deeply, peers in the black, overcast sky, shakes his melon, spits on the road and psychs himself, "Stay chill, dude. Raise the hood. I know some tricks. I am a mechanical whiz. And that's the engine. That big thing right there in the middle with all the wires and hoses. And here, this cable leads to the battery."

Dave checks the battery. He holds a cable to his tongue. "Pfffaaa," the juice flows through his reed. "This rain is gonna kill me. Fuck! Is Dave not made of tougher stuff? This will not kick me outta my groove. Why won't this bucket of bolts turn over? Has somebody been fucking around with it? Someone out to get me? So I die out here in the sticks! This thing is no loss in any case. He'll be glad to be rid of it. Of me too. And of all the

nights for it to rain."

It's 4 in a. m. Dave and his homies had turned up at the ARMAGEDDON. Sounds like another Netflix disaster series but it is the name of a hip club.

The club is in Tailor Street, North Corona. It's so new that you can only find it if you really have your finger on the pulse or if the hand of fate guides you there.

There's always a club which is the hippest, a dive bar that is grittier, the place everyone goes to make the scene. And right now, this is the club with the inviting name ARMAGEDDON HAPPINESS.

"Who isn't looking for happiness today," Dave remarked as he and his troop were making their way into the club for the first time more than four hours before. "Our parents, grandparents and great-grandparents were all trying to find some kind of happiness. Nobody found it. Nobody was ever happy. Everybody's gotta live within their means. Everyone is up a creek without a paddle except us, the Paragrinz. Yeahhh! Time for a bit of horrorshow! Let's see what this dive has got going for it! Can we give this dancefloor something it has not yet seen, or could even imagine?"

The shack, as Dave called the exclusive location, had a lot going for it: The grooves were phatter and deeper than the Mariana trench, the cocktails were the shit, and a sweet, aromatic mist wafted about the place. The sound was hypnotic, the beats were shakin' it and the synthesizer was wailing like it was the sub at a BDSM session. From Devil's Hip Hop to Horror Punk. Only the finest of ALEISTER'S MUSIC

UNLIMITED swelled from the cones. You never saw so many fashion models in one place. The babes were jaw-droppingly gorgeous and the MILFs were shaking it like low-hanging fruit, ready fall into your lap. And suddenly a hand reached out for Dave. The babe's bod was picture-perfect, cut from the finest, but she was wearing a werewolf mask. After it slid aside with their first kiss, his interest immediately diminished to less-than-zero. His buddies cackled, but Damon quickly moved in on her and carried her off into a quiet corner.

And because the mask she was wearing was not lost and wherever there is a cushion there is gonna be some deep pushin', things got a bit edgy between Dave and Damon, ending with Poppy slipping him the key to Dave's ride, whereupon Damon and his hookup jumped in Dave's ride and lit out to the next motel, where he set about to slip in his dipstick. Dave freaked completely. Poppy had thought there was nothing wrong fixing up a fellow in urgent need with a set of wheels, also since the plan was for the crew to just chill in town all weekend, checking venues. She called Dave a fucking rat. Told him not to make a scene of it, being a real dick about it all. The gang was on the verge of all going their separate ways.

Poppy saw a solution in giving Dave the keys to her ride. Certainly not a patch on Dave's DODGE RAM WAGON, but the back seat of a BUICK CENTURY is a perfect make-out spot. Dave was in such a rage that he ripped the keys out of Poppy's hand, hopped in her car and raced off out into the darkness.

Dave was fuming and vented out loud: "Without me, you ain't nowhere, without me, there ain't no game and nobody is even gonna get a whiff of warm pussy!"

That's true. I mean, almost true. He is the chick magnet and best possible wingman, and he has fixed his homies up with a lot more pussy than he ever carried off himself. He lined Poppy up with her last two glamorous studs. The desk clerk at the HIDEAWAY INN tells me he heard at least one of them banging away at her all night. When Dave and his folks were away in Paris for three weeks, nobody got past second base. That is something you can count on him for.

I will admit it. I love the guy. I love him so much that, if one of us was of a different gender or if we were both of a different persuasion, I would want to marry him. I know that seems odd, it has nothing to do with sex as such, but rather it is just the great personal and spiritual affinity I feel for him. And even though it sounds cliché as hell, he makes me wanna be a better person, to build on my strengths and overcome my weaknesses. Not by flattery or schmoozing but by challenging me, by setting goals that I do not even notice until I have reached them. And then just smiling, slapping me on the back of the head and saying "That wasn't so hard, now, was it?"

And that, to me, is what makes the ideal partner. Alas, nature has made us both hetero as hell, so I am stuck trying to find a female who can reach me and move me half as deeply as DK already does without trying.

It is only thirty more miles to Sherbrook. Dave is literally standing

in the rain somewhere between Lincoln and Flaconia. The night sky is mottled with lightning, it is cold and wet. The untouched wilderness of White Mountain Forest shows its most desolate side. No sign of help in any direction, and everything had started out so perfectly.

Driving too fast and barely able to see through the sheets of rain on the windshield, he thought he could make out the shape of a white dog crossing the road in front of him. He swerved, but still thought he heard some kind of thud and then - the ride went off the road into a ditch as far from civilization as you could possibly get.

It's no surprise that Dave is screwed. The POS will just not get in gear. He thinks about push-starting it, but even then he realizes that is pointless with the goddamn automatic transmission, even if he could hump it out of the ditch on his own with all this slippery, muddy grass.

Even if it doesn't seem to make sense that Dave fucked off because Damon is a real player and is not likely to total his ride, and the ARMAGEDDON is a first-class pick-up joint like almost no other, because there is no logical reason that he set out for Sherbrook, eighty miles away, and has been stranded in the middle of the wilderness leaving behind a world-class party scene that a normal person would only be torn away from kicking and screaming, there is nonetheless a strong argument for what he did: Today is Dave Kater's birthday, and not just any birthday. Indeed, he did nothing to deserve such a dissing on finally reaching 21.

The heater is on the fritz and Dave

starts to feel chilled to the bone. Dave is really pissed off, and to top it all off, he left his mobile at home so he would not lose it or embarrassingly drunk-dial one of his exes if he got too wasted. But he never got anywhere near that state because the gang went their separate ways long before midnight. Even the clock is dead, the radio is silent and rain patters like birdshot on the roof. "Poppy's ride is no great loss, but I'll be fucking dead if I don't get out of here," he utters, just before he turns on the wipers to make out something he saw moving through the windshield.

It's the dog. Or at least another white dog, and it is staring at him on the road. It is limping slightly on one leg, but he sees no blood. He gets out to investigate, and follows the dog, which turns off onto a winding side road with no signpost. It seems to keep a few steps away from him, but never loses sight. His curiosity blinds him to how wet and tired he is, and besides, if this dog has a master, he thinks, then there is at least someone he might be able ask for help.

The rain lets up slightly as he follows the dog further until the road turns into a winding path, where the dog comes to heel next to a huddled figure wearing a cape. Weird time and place to be taking his dog out for a walk, but then again, Dave never figured out what owners find in keeping pets in the first place.

The fellow looks up, petting the dog. "Just what do you think you are doing here?"

Dave explains that his car has run off the road and he needs help. The geezer did not notice the dog limp-

ing so he declines to mention anything about how he came to run off the road.

"Aha," the old man bristles.

"I could use a garage, or a motel."

"No such luck", the old dude sneezes at him.

"What?"

"No such luck, young man!!! You won't find anything of use or interest around here!"

"I'm not looking to settle down here. I want to get back on my way as soon as possible."

"Great, and so you'd better. These parts ain't entirely safe. Especially for strangers."

Holy fuck, what with this Eye-gor routine, Dave thinks to himself, staring at the old man in the black robe. Go scare other folks with your spook stories! You're barking up the wrong tree here!

But the dark figure doesn't seem to sense what Dave is thinking, so Dave gives him a piece of his mind:

"What the fuck are you on, old man? Take a look at yourself! What is this ridiculous get-up you're wearing?"

But the stranger with the black hood, which conceals most of his features and drapes down as a cowl, bends down, puts a lead on the dog and walks off, whispering:

"You can try your luck up yon hill."

"And what's up there on 'yawn hill'?"

"The castle," comes the reply, as a flash of lightning illuminates his wizened face.

"And how do you get there, to the castle?"

"Bear left along the path through the forest until you're there," the old

geezer answers and says, "But I wouldn't recommend it! Don't say I didn't warn you!"

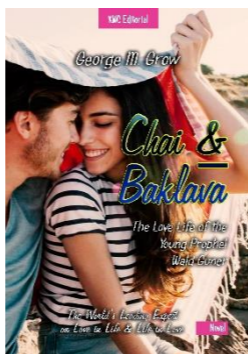
"What's that supposed to mean?"

"Just like I said," the old man replies briskly, flings the cape over his shoulder, calls the dog to heel again and drifts with weightless, long strides into the darkness broken by flashes of lightning.

The Castle

End of the reading

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