



THREE of a HUMAN KIND

Michael Sunnafrank



America's Mammon proclaims "In God We Trust," one of many myths concealing ancient truths. An empire founded on greed, theft, slavery and vengeance more than freedom or equality, and not at all on love, is bound to those values until it is redeemed from these original sins. THREE of a HUMAN KIND reveals this legacy in a single day, in the lives of three characters representing contrasting perspectives on America, humanity and, ultimately, redemption.

THREE of a HUMAN KIND

by Michael Sunnafrank

Order the complete book from the publisher

[Booklocker.com](http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/5776.html?s=pdf)

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/5776.html?s=pdf>

**or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.**

YOUR FREE EXCERPT APPEARS BELOW. ENJOY!

Copyright © 2011 Michael Sunnafrank

Hardcover ISBN 978-1-61434-265-6

Paperback ISBN 978-1-61434-264-9

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author.

Printed in the United States of America.

The characters and events in this book are fictitious. Any similarity to real persons, living or dead, is coincidental and not intended by the author.

Cover Art & Design: Tony Vitali

Cover Photograph: Don Surplus

BookLocker.com, Inc.

2011

First Edition

THREE
of a
HUMAN KIND

Michael Sunnafrank

This book is dedicated to

My Family

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To the friends and colleagues who commented on earlier drafts of this book. Thank you for your time, your thoughts, and your honesty. The end result is better because of you. And my apologies for the flaws that remain, especially those you tried to help me overcome.

To my parents, whose loving care gave me an ideal childhood and set the stage for the life I have been privileged to live. To my brother and sister who shared those early years with me, treasured memories of adventures in The Creek, of Russian Gulch, of Conn Dam, and of so much more.

To many old friends, those who went the way of the children of the '50s, those who went the way of the '60s, and those of us who walked in both worlds. To all of you from those times in a Napa, in a life, that is no more. Only fading memories now. But, oh, my friends, what times they were, what memories they are.

To my children, grandchildren and their loved ones, in hopes you will find some things of value in this tale of mine. And, more importantly, in hopes you will come to appreciate and understand your own tales.

Thank you especially to Donna. Thanks for your patience with me throughout our life together and during the many times I have disappeared to work on this book or on some other obsession of the moment. The passages that touch me most in this book, the moments that touch me most in my life, are all inspired by you.

Table of Contents

A WARNING.....	1
EAMON.....	2
MIKE.....	11
MARIA.....	26
A BACK ROAD	30
HOME COUNTRY.....	37
ANGELA	45
A LEGEND.....	50
MARIA’S REVENGE	64
EAMON’S EL DORADO.....	70
MIKE’S EL DORADO.....	75
MARIA’S EL DORADO	85
A SEARCH FOR ANSWERS	91

Michael Sunnafrank

THE CLUB RESTAURANT	103
MYLES	107
DESTINY	111
THE COGSWELL EVIL.....	116
AN OPPORTUNITY	119
WORK FAMILIA	127
CRAIG'S	133
RICHARD	142
THE TRUE DIRECTORS	145
THE COCKTAIL HOUR	148
CLEANING UP	155
ARRIVALS	158
HAWAIIAN MEMORIES	162
REUNION GOSPEL.....	171
EAMON RISING	180

Three of a Human Kind

DINNER PREP	188
RONNIE	190
DINNER SERVICE.....	197
THE PROTECTOR'S DINNER.....	200
THE CON	207
BRITTANY'S DAY	219
A RETURN.....	227
ETERNAL CHOICES.....	230
THE SWEAT	239
THE PROTECTORS	245
WITNESSES	253
REUNION ENDING.....	259
PELE SPEAKS.....	261
MYLES AND EAMON'S ANSWER	264
MARIA'S ANSWER.....	269

Michael Sunnafrank

MIKE'S ANSWER	272
AFTERWORD	279
THE TRUE ENEMY	281
ADDENDA	286
MIKE'S FAMILY	287
MARIA'S FAMILY HISTORY	292
A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE COGSWELL WEALTH	296
THE PLAN	301

A WARNING

We are being watched. All of us. All of the time. We've always known that. Always. All the prehistoric ancients knew. Knew without doubt. Look to their cave drawings, their sacrificial offerings, their burial and cremation rituals. See the items they took with them into the afterlife, the great care to protect their departing spirits from harm. Yes. They knew.

Deny it if you must. Try to believe physical reality in all its seeming complexity is all there is. Believe spiritual explanations but primitive attempts to contend with the mysterious, to cope with the fear of death, the grief of loss.

But you are wrong. You begin with a false assumption, thinking these but human creations. Think what it would mean to be correct. Almost all of humanity from the beginning of time would have to be wrong. And those who come after us, who see differently still, what of them? Are you really that sure?

No, my friend. Spiritual reality exists beyond and within our mundane reality. Of that I am certain. I have had too many experiences to doubt that. And, yes. So have you.

Sometimes spiritual reality indirectly invades our lives, sending us usually-ignored messages by way of coincidence, signs, or dreams. Odd occurrences that seem to fit only in retrospect. We justify them away. Treat them like astrological claims from our morning paper. Say that anytime we look back we can make anything fit. Then dismiss them.

But if hindsight is 20-20, why do we so willingly blind ourselves to what should be crystal clear? If upon reflection we see the pattern, the meaning, the traces touching our lives, why do we ignore it? Surely such ignorance is bliss only until reality intrudes.

Ever so rarely spiritual reality does just that. It reaches out and seizes us, voiding all our denials. And today, this day, it will.

EAMON

Eamon Cogswell was trapped in illusions of tomorrow and yesterday. He either longed for or feared tomorrow, depending on the moment and the future that moment portended. Long-ago yesterdays held the key to those futures but his true yesterdays were now inaccessible, memory unmade by years of careless neglect and reinterpretation.

Today's moments brought anticipated splendor but only in retrospect would the beginning foreshadow the ending or the road taken to that end. Eamon expected today would be filled with successes, victories, and celebrations. He was right but he was also very wrong.

The day began with a lavish Sunday brunch at Eamon's Atherton estate. Guests had gathered there to celebrate the betrothal of Eamon and Brittany Tisdale. At the moment of the formal announcement it seemed to Eamon and his guests that a fated, royal coupling had been made.

The estate was perfectly staged to convey that impression. Seating for two hundred was elegantly prepared on the marbled terrace. Lavender-tinted hydrangeas traced the terrace walls, framed by rose and topiary gardens beyond. Manicured lawns blanketed the undulating grounds, broken by a willow-shaded pond and occasional ornamental trees.

Ornate iron dining sets added to the growing sense the guests were attending an ancient rite, a fitting ritual inherited from a more civilized time. Chamber music blended perfectly into the background of guests' conversations. Eamon's Gothic mansion reinforced the illusion of old Britain, betrayed only by the celebrants' stylish twenty-first century clothing and the distant sounds of planes passing in and out of San Francisco Airport. The partygoers were clearly pleased with the pairing and the tastefully-staged affair.

Three of a Human Kind

After the celebration's ending, Brittany and her mother departed for the airport. From there they would fly to Long Island, the location of the Tisdale estate and site of the planned wedding. Joining them on the trip was one of the world's most sought-after wedding consultants. Roland's weddings were renowned works of art. He was extremely selective about his weddings but there was never any doubt he would cast his magic on the Tisdale-Cogswell affair.

Brittany initially resisted, wanting a simpler affair, but pressure from her mother and the Cogswells caused her to relent, to keep the peace. Eamon was grateful for that. To him, their love was anything but simple.

Brittany brought lasting love into his life, an emotion that had eluded Eamon for so many years he had begun to think it was nothing more than myth. There had been many girls and women in his life but he now realized almost all had been attracted by the social position and wealth of his family. That was not an issue with Brittany. The Tisdale family fortune and position in society rivaled that of the Cogswells.

More, Brittany questioned the value of wealth. She often chided Eamon for taking pride in his inheritance, insisting that she saw something of greater moment in him. He did not see that himself. But Brittany's effect on him was so pronounced that he did become a more quietly confident, caring, and even humble person when she was present, caring less about protecting or asserting his status and more about being the person she believed him to be. And that, paradoxically, was exactly why Eamon wanted their wedding to be celebrated in the extravagant manner he felt it deserved.

Upon Brittany's departure, Eamon once again noticed how quickly her influence on him began to fade. He took comfort from this. That he was not the same in her absence confirmed just how much she meant to him.

Eamon's thoughts soon turned to the day ahead, bringing him even further from Brittany's influence. He was emboldened by that. Eamon knew that when it came to matters of business, and today's was serious business, the characteristics Brittany inspired would weaken and defeat him.

This day would carry him to the family retreat in the foothills overlooking Napa's famed El Dorado Country Club. This evening the Cogswells would begin week-long meetings there with powerful associates from around the country. The group, known to members as the Protectors, was gathering to celebrate recent successes and to make several critical decisions about the future. There were always intrigues and political maneuverings with this group but Eamon knew those would be even more intense this week. Many important issues confronted them.

Eamon would have no direct involvement with any of this since he was not yet a member. He had only been invited to the week's meetings because they were hosted by his father, current Director of the Protectors. But this did present him with an excellent opportunity to observe the inner workings of the Protectors and to enhance connections with its members, an opportunity Eamon was determined to seize.

Eamon selected his roadster for the leisurely drive to Napa Valley. The powerful purr of the engine transported Eamon to the long driveway, through twin rows of tall English Elms and on to the high granite walls marking his estate's boundaries. Glancing in the rear-view mirror, Eamon caught a glimpse of his manor and once again wondered why he had purchased the Gothic monstrosity. He thought himself a modern man with tastes that were not at all reflected by this hulking reminder of best-forgotten ages. But when the agent showed him the property and mansion, Eamon found its perverted appeal irresistible. He had never understood why.

Three of a Human Kind

Leaving the gated entrance behind, Eamon reflected briefly on which route to take to Napa. The decision favoring Highway 101, crossing over the Golden Gate Bridge, came quickly. He thoroughly disliked the Bay Bridge route even though it was slightly faster at this time of day. The Golden Gate took him into Marin County, a more manicured suburban land than the East Bay.

Eamon powered up the sound system's CD player as he neared the southwest boundary of San Francisco. His favorite Pink Floyd album reminded him of his downer days, insulating him from the increasing traffic and congested housing of the Sunset District. Then on through Golden Gate Park, busy with weekend visitors.

Eamon cruised on, moving his head and shoulders to the rock beat, feeling the potential of the roadster's restrained engine. Nearing the fog-enshrouded Golden Gate, midday darkness descended upon the roadster's lone occupant. Eamon's view was now restricted to dim taillights and ghostly pedestrians futilely searching for the city's outlines. Even the bay's islands, Alcatraz and Angel, were lost in the dark grey mist.

Passing through the short tunnel in the hills overlooking Sausalito brought a spellbinding change. Eamon slipped out of fog into the tunnel and emerged in bright daylight. As a boy, the journey had seemed like entering a time warp and today that impression returned, lifting his spirit.

The highway winding down from the tunnel through the short stretch of coastal woods was unusually vacant of cars, giving Eamon the luxury of testing his car's road handling skills. Powering tightly out of the last turn, Eamon's smile reflected the sense of accomplishment the car gave him.

That feeling quickly gave way to irritation as the span over Richardson Bay brought him into thickening traffic. He switched to a traffic channel to determine how much more he

would have to endure. Instead he was assaulted by a loud, irritating talk show host discussing “feminazis and weak-minded liberals.”

Eamon quickly switched back to the CD function and a soothing instrumental as he cleared the bottleneck and came into lighter traffic. He soon found himself taking the exit toward the Sonoma cutoff. Here the open land and sparse traffic invited acceleration. Anticipating the calm of Sonoma’s pastoral rolling hills and green vineyards, Eamon accepted, slowing only upon reaching the cutoff.

But dense traffic soon reappeared, disrupting his hoped-for peace of mind. The old two-lane road was not designed to accommodate the horde of weekend wine enthusiasts, resulting in bumper-to-bumper traffic the final dozen miles into Napa. Not at all what Eamon had in mind when choosing this route.

He made a mental note to take the Bay Bridge in the future despite its urban-industrial flavor. That would be preferable to staring at the rear of the old Volvo he had trailed for the last few miles, its aging bumper stickers becoming unwelcome intruders: “Tax Death: Save The Living Poor”; “Walmart: Low-Cost Job-Loss”; “Compassionate Conservatives: Killing Us Softly”; “Who Needs Oil? We’re Gettin’ Dick ‘N Bush Lubed!”

Needing a break from the incessant line of humanity and his growing irritation, Eamon decided to stop at his favorite Napa winery. It was set a few miles off the main road and was, by request, excluded from wine tour maps. This assured wine aficionados an exclusive, uncrowded experience.

The tasting-room host recognized Eamon and ushered him to a private, white-linen adorned table on the veranda. Cheese, chocolates, sliced apples and pears were served on an elegant silver platter. Samples of wine from the best reserve label came in a variety of fine crystals, each chosen to enhance the bouquet and flavor of the selection.

Three of a Human Kind

Eamon's finger tips grasped the stem of the Chardonnay container first. He rested his forearm on the table's edge, barely lifting the crystal from the surface, and gently swirled the light golden liquid. Hypnotically, the fluid movement narrowed Eamon's focus away from all else. Raising the well-balanced glass a few inches below his nose, delicate aromas of citrus and melon came to Eamon, accompanied by a slight hint of oak. The thin-lipped rim deposited the Chardonnay mid-tongue. Eamon sensed the slightly acidic bite and refreshing coolness as it passed into his throat. Just a sip, followed by a sample of Swiss Gruyere.

Savoring the wine, the sun's warmth, the quiet, and the tranquil setting, Eamon's sense of well-being returned. Time slowed. In the vale below a deep green vineyard blanketed the earth. White clouds dotted the sky. Vultures soared majestically on unseen currents. A mockingbird serenaded in the distance. The slight summer hum coming from nowhere and everywhere soothed, even lulled, Eamon.

Falling into a day dream, an image of the future came to Eamon. That future was bright with love of Brittany and their planned-for child, a perfect replica of themselves. He let the warmth of the day and the image fill him. Fully relaxed and content, Eamon relinquished control of the dream.

The images flickered, fading into unrecognizable nebulous forms and then into a memory of his own childhood. As with so many of his seldom-conjured childhood memories it was no more than a lifeless, greying snapshot but its very lifelessness inspired anxiety. Eamon struggled to return to Brittany and his longed-for future. But all his struggling only succeeded in producing more bleak snapshots and growing inner turmoil.

Calls from crows fighting over bread jolted him back into the moment. Eamon glanced at the oddly carefree child who had tossed the bread, skipping beside her parents on the path below. Laughing and holding hands as they descended toward

an oak-shaded picnic table, they seemed to fulfill everything Eamon could ever desire.

Eamon sensed eyes upon him and turned to see an unrecognized type of bird perched on the railing. The jay-sized, predominantly grey and white bird was staring directly into his eyes. Black feathers surrounding its eyes suggested a mask, a thief. Its slightly hooked beak gave the impression of a self-satisfied smirk. A chill sweat broke from Eamon's forehead as he took meaning from the bird's icy stare. The bird was silently calling to him, waiting for its moment.

Struck motionless by the bird's gaze, Eamon struggled again and this time broke free. Haltingly, he stood. The bold crows took no notice of him. The harbinger bird took flight, gliding toward the young family. Eamon's anxiety deepened as the bird perched on a dead tree limb that hung menacingly over the picnic table. He wanted desperately to run and warn the family. But of what?

"It's a shrike, man. Loggerhead shrike, to be right," spoken with a slight southwestern drawl.

Eamon, wondering who was speaking, weakly replied. "Wha . . . What?"

"The bird, Pal. The one was watchin' ya'. The one yer watchin' now. Any idea why?"

Eamon was having a hard time focusing, making sense of this. His snapshot memories and anxiety, the ominous bird, the young family, the stranger who seemed to know Eamon's thoughts speaking to him in such a casual, colloquial manner all combined to disorient him.

He tried to work through the haze of conflicting thoughts: perturbed that a stranger would probe him in this way, yet strangely drawn to his voice; his desire to protect the young family countered by debilitating dread; the momentous day of his engagement party dispatched by the specter of an uncertain, perhaps dangerous, future.

Three of a Human Kind

Overwhelmed, he looked to the stranger. The man seemed to fade in and out of focus. Eamon guessed him to be in his early-fifties with the weathered skin of a man accustomed to working outdoors. His eyes were steel blue, yet warm, friendly, and more than a bit mischievous. That sense of mischievousness confirmed by his off-center smile. He was only average height but with a sinewy body that led Eamon to sense a ruggedness about the man.

Repeating, in a soft whisper, "Any idea why?"

Speechless, Eamon could only shake his head.

"That kind," jerking his thumb in the direction of the shrike, "They have no good use. Murders of innocents. Not fo' food or territory but because that is what they are. Nuttin' redeemable in 'em. They are of a kind, Ace. A very ancient kind."

Eamon, barely able to speak, "I . . . I don't understand."

The stranger's image began to flicker and, as it did, Eamon cried out after him. "Who are you?"

An enigmatic smile, "Watch yerself today, pal. Pay close attention and watch yerself." Then he was gone.

More amorphous forms began to take shape. Eamon saw himself, the last in a long line of sad-eyed, trained elephants trampling all that lay in their path. He obediently reached for the tail in front of him but before he took hold the elephant broke ranks, charging the trainer. A shot echoed. The rogue stumbled, sending a pleading look to Eamon for help. It wore his father's anguished face. Eamon tried to respond but was held back by something grabbing his own tail. He tried to look, to see what was holding him back, but his head refused to move.

The delusion collapsed.

Badly shaken, Eamon's senses began to slowly return. Only then did he realize he was still sitting at the table. He looked to the empty picnic table below, the birdless oak with all its

branches strong and fully alive. All he saw confirmed it was, indeed, but a dream. Eamon was filled with a sense of guilt and recrimination at allowing himself to slip into that realm. Though the whole episode was clearly nonsense, an inexplicable sense of anxiety remained.

Eamon rose and walked mechanically toward the winery restroom, leaving behind the untouched wine samples and food pairings. There he hoped to privately recover from the dream and its aftermath. He normally avoided public facilities but there was no ready alternative here and he needed time to gather himself. He splashed water on his face and washed his hands for a very long time, deliberately slowing his breathing as he did so. He then dried off before attending to his hair.

Seeing himself in the mirror had a slight calming effect on Eamon. He ran the comb through his styled dark blond hair, glancing briefly at his pale green eyes. Casual designer clothing covered his nicely tanned skin and slightly-muscled six-foot frame. The mirror-image allowed Eamon to subdue some of the dream-inspired inner turmoil. Partially recovered, he departed.



America's Mammon proclaims "In God We Trust," one of many myths concealing ancient truths. An empire founded on greed, theft, slavery and vengeance more than freedom or equality, and not at all on love, is bound to those values until it is redeemed from these original sins. THREE of a HUMAN KIND reveals this legacy in a single day, in the lives of three characters representing contrasting perspectives on America, humanity and, ultimately, redemption.

THREE of a HUMAN KIND

by Michael Sunnafrank

Order the complete book from the publisher

Booklocker.com

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/5776.html?s=pdf>

**or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.**