

*The author opens a window through which the reader can follow the life of a young man during a twelve month period. From a troubled, brutal childhood, he finds solace through heroin and cocaine. He also finds God is a cat, and magic in the likeness of a beautiful woman.*

## **ROADSONG: A Journey into Strange**

by Michael Francis John

**Order the complete book from the publisher**

**[Booklocker.com](http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/9276.html?s=pdf)**

**<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/9276.html?s=pdf>**

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



# ROADSONG

A JOURNEY INTO STRANGE

MICHAEL FRANCIS JOHN

Copyright © 2017 Michael Francis John

ISBN: 978-1-63492-357-6

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.

Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., St. Petersburg, Florida.

Printed on acid-free paper.

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.

BookLocker.com, Inc.  
2017

First Edition

## ***INTRODUCTION***

***He was younger when he traveled*** beyond a needles sting and the first breathtaking rush. At times he would wander along dark, littered trails, out behind the opium and cocaine. In the empty hours, after the warmth of morphine had cooled, leaving silence and desolation; he found other roads to travel. Through it all what did he learn? As if learning was ever the goal. He was sure his way of using junk was safe. New needles, always sterilized. Only distilled water, and as close to pure pharmaceutical products as possible.

Without guile or direction, he climbed these paths to madness, believing some great truth would be revealed. At first, it was the experience, the thrill and excitement of another reality to explore, and always the incredible pleasure floating on a vast lake of warm emotions and feelings. Friends, warned him, pleaded and yelled at him about the real and obvious dangers of addiction.

He knew better; always did, explaining that he had no problems with heroin or morphine. Perhaps *others* did and became addicted, not Em-Jay; he delighted in his immunity, believing he was special. Perhaps *others* were not concerned with clean needles or measured quantities. He was. Perhaps *others*, cowering in doorways or skid row shelters were too far gone to care. *Others* needed the rush; he wanted only the

opportunity to explore, and like those before him, experience the enlightenment he knew was waiting. His friends were not convinced, but the passion and conviction of his denials carried him forward.

The final truth and great enlightenment for Em-Jay was, that wanting had quietly become needing, and he was stranded on the rocks, washed ashore. Another loser, another junkie, swept out of sight to join the *others* in the same gutter. If any truths were revealed, they vanished quickly, like smoke, without substance, and what was left for him were memories and a few travelers tales. So, in the end, his years of worldly experience, the geometry, physics, and sciences he championed were for nothing. I believe he convinced himself his aberrant behavior could be excused, and changes to his physical appearance would go unnoticed. Perhaps I'm unfairly critical, but, I do know for sure; fear makes cowards of us all.

Through it all, he has endured and unknowingly provided material for this story. He remains forever changed, but is willing to recount his adventures for you and will do so humbly, with humor, and without regret. Although this is his story; you will hear other voices reaching out from the pages, each with a legitimate or compelling reason to claim your interest.

Okay, okay then, enough from me now. I'm sure you'll enjoy the book, and well you should; because I took the time and trouble to write it for you. I wish you all, dearest readers, very well, and take my leave, I should make room for our

## *ROADSONG*

darling Em-Jay to finish his narrative, for as you will see he remains a very dear friend.....



## **CHAPTER ONE**

*"A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."* A quotation commonly attributed to Chinese philosopher Lao Zhu. The actual origins are suspect, writings from such a learned source date from about 500 years b/c. Historical truths may dissipate over the years, but the intent of this simple message never falters. Any journey must begin with a single step, but the desire and effort to take that first step are all important. During any lifetime, any journey starts beneath one's feet. I've found many other journeys are possible, borne on turbulent currents of one's imagination. Some imaginative journeys should never be started, and some never finished.

My repetitive go to work journey, of seventy-five miles, would end at my job as it did most weekdays and some weekends. Get up, get dressed and go to work. Sometimes I would leave in anger, soon to evaporate as my journey unfolded. Other times happily, with a repressed sense of excitement for the coming ride. In retrospect, searching back over the many years riding and driving these roads and freeways one defining quality was, that miles driven or ridden were never dull. I could tell of so many experiences that moved me very deeply on a personal level. Sections of any road driven at any time may seem straight without bend or



purpose boring to some, predictable to others. Those travelers had chosen to ignore, or perhaps couldn't hear the endless song of the highways that sing of life and death.

These Roads I ride are never quiet, never at peace and never will be. Roads absorb the sweat and smell of humanity and quickly become stained by the continual struggle with moving traffic. Highways and freeways, country lanes and city streets are conduits of life. We have fought and died, loved, laughed and given birth on the roads. Hopes and desires achievements and terrible losses. All these realities, thoughts, and emotions are continually played out on our highways, and it has always been so. Each path has a personal signature each road sings a different song. Roads are important to me, perhaps because I spend such a long time on them.

Anyway, for me, about thirty-five miles riding through California's high desert hills and canyons, navigating the narrow lanes and back roads that eventually reveal a neglected, overgrown on-ramp connecting to a minor two-lane freeway. Another thirty miles south, before joining the main intersections that spasmodically vomit traffic onto perpetually congested city streets.

Three more slow miles on two wide neglected boulevards. I pass molesters, vagrants, and refugees from the previous night that are made unhappy, beneath the morning daylight. There is nowhere to hide their litter or cover any nocturnal transgressions. Nothing for them to do now but wait for evening, and take shelter in shadows from flickering street

lights and barred doorways. They wait as they always do, for nightclubs, motels, and late night markets, to entice a multitude of sinners, with false neon promises.

There is some small distraction on the streets outside the cheap motels. Wave to the women gathered there, I see some familiar faces in the little groups, and I have probably become a familiar figure to them as I pass by on the motorcycle. I like these working girls these, colorfully decorated ladies gossiping and laughing so early in the morning. A few wave back, others stare past me through tired, vacant eyes. With regret, there is no time for me to stop and chat with them or listen to their stories. I must move on again with the hustle and flow of traffic, past dingy gas stations, fast food restaurants, liquor stores, and grim broken housing projects.

At every intersection, and stop sign, I see fragmented outlines of people walking or leaning, talking and gesturing with meaningless puppet hand movements. There are darker mornings when the world around me splinters and breaks apart, and at those times I know we are all joined by a thread of failed humanity. Babies will be born with hope here, the ignorance, hardship, and poverty shall not matter. They will emerge, strengthened, resilient, and some will shine like diamonds. This dismal ghetto land is a window in time, nonjudgemental but intolerant of weakness or fools. Many will fail; Some will succeed. Like a boiling pot, discontent and anger will spill over and purge all that is here; again the cycle will continue.

So I move on from my reverie, turn under a small railroad bridge and follow the tracks from a narrow, littered gangland street for about a mile. These few blocks reek of inner city neglect and capitulation to local government apathy.

In this depressingly dirty industrial area, any flat wall becomes a canvas for graffiti artists to showcase their abilities and proclaim their dubious gospels. In most instances, imagination and bright artistic color bring sudden relief from the surrounding drab monotony. The murals also support sinister undercurrents of tension, quite appropriate in this neighborhood.

These decorative displays identify tribal boundaries, as do occasional gunshots. Depressing and dirty these few square miles are, and always, seem linked to prevailing weather conditions. Perhaps because I pass through every day at about the same time, I notice changes. In the summer or spring, the streets reflect a vibrant, bustling aspect. Autumn and winter they reveal their depressed, dangerous personalities again. Moving slowly now past a few walls of discontent and colorful decoration before turning into a fenced yard and car park. Walk through another small fenced section, across the concrete slab and into the restricted area where I spend my day and waste my time. Reverse, and then repeat the process every evening, to complete my daily grind.

## CHAPTER TWO

*My boss thinks highly of me, as I do of him. Old school* he is, but seldom questions my judgment, and even when my behavior should give cause for alarm; I am tolerated.

*"Em-Jay? Yeah, he's a good engineer, eccentric and opinionated most of the time but nothing that's a problem for us. Pain in the ass at times, but then aren't we all? Although he usually rides a big motorcycle to work and comes in looking like a Hell's Angel gangster, he's a nice guy, intelligent and respectful. Good with people too, even gets along well with Pat. Now there's a real character for you. Another biker. Hell of a craftsman, though."*

Pat is also tolerated and thinks well of the boss.

*"Yeah, he's a good ole cracker I guess."*

And so I chose to continue along this path of comfortable mediocrity, gazing into a boring, predictable future. The ever present boredom was often dissipated by the judicious use of opiates. I was concerned, but not unhappy with my choices.

Choices, Always choices, most days there was a choice of car or motorcycle, I was lucky I had both, an old Toyota with too many miles, crappy but predictable, perhaps predictably crappy, and, a sweet Harley shovelhead with a loud voice, a

baby that I love and cherish. I would usually take the bike if rain were not forecast. There were a few memorable occasions when I misjudged the weather and rode in heavy rain and snow. Sometimes howling winter winds would claw at my face with Satan's icy fingers reaching through thick gloves and heavy boots into my numb fingers and toes. My Harley-Davidson motorbike is a friend of long standing. Many miles drifting through mountain passes and across deserts, winding along coast roads and cruising freeways have bought us close, in a happy non-committal relationship.

Time on a motorcycle brings a different perspective and a very personal relationship between the highway and rider. An intangible quality, an appreciation of one's surroundings that must be experienced to understand properly. Nice people with no tattoos or body piercings secure, within better well-paid professions, do not ride motorbikes or wear scruffy leather jackets. They drive nice clean cars, returning to their nice clean wife's and husbands after their work is finished.

One memorable Friday afternoon, having finished with the seemingly endless futility of work, I headed towards home, navigating heavy city traffic to reach the freeway on-ramp. After making the turn at a major intersection, I moved slowly past a large Ford dealership forecourt. There was a woman on the narrow sidewalk walking towards me, perhaps mid-twenties medium height with short blond hair. No eye contact or any form of recognition occurred before she suddenly pulled her tank top to her chin unleashing a prominent pair of

chunky breasts. Jutting brown nipples contrasted nicely against an expanse of rounded white skin.

The moment passed. Tempted though I was, had I mounted the curb or jammed on the brakes, the pain of a probable accident far outweighed the possibility of a pleasurable encounter. I raised my hand and waved in appreciation watching, as her blurred image faded forever in my rear-view mirror.

A Jehovah Witness looking to share a sanitized version of the gospels with a stranger?

A nun from a progressive Catholic order seeking donations, and selling tickets for a guaranteed absolution?

Doubtful, although I will never know for sure. I do know for sure, that a delightful woman with her dramatic and compelling public display brought unexpected joy to a hardened, cynical traveler and, at the very least deserved my gratitude and thanks.

*And the sweet jingle-jangle of her magic triangle could be heard all the way to end of the street.*

There is a common misconception that a woman's breasts are functional, their only purpose to nourish offspring. This dreary biological concept supported by the medical professions and held as truth by members of most religious and feminist groups is wrong. As many women admit, their breasts are primarily recreational appendages. Most men and

some women have a genetic requirement and great fondness to caress, squeeze and fondle those delightful adornments. More than that, though, they evoke feelings of security and comfort with their softness and warmth. Old subconscious memories of a helpless baby and a nurturing mother return us to the beginning of my observations.

Tits are good things and confirmation that the proud owner is indeed a woman, or possibly a determined transgender. The girl who deployed her stuff for me was well aware of that obvious truth. And yes, I know a woman is a woman with or without breasts, just that I have a natural inclination toward them.

So, Lifted by tawdry visions of what could have been, I decided to stop at Pat's place. About ten miles riding in the direction I was now heading would bring me to the house. Pat's place is a welcoming oasis to a large, loosely bound group of acquaintances. A common thread retaining the group in friendship is an appreciation for fine sporting guns, art, music, motorcycles, liquor, and narcotics.

Pat Winslow is a biker, and a long time Harley rider large, tough, hairy and never to be messed with. Beneath a surly glowering first impression lurks a jovial alternative persona that occasionally sees daylight. His big arms are profusely decorated with dark inked tattoos. The mandatory biker beard is missing, showing a rugged unshaven face. His house appears suddenly at the end of a secluded trail. The property is bordered on one side by an abandoned industrial complex, on

the other an exotic animal rescue. It is a small three bedroom, single story refuge sitting on half an acre of grassland.

Pat told me he owned the property outright, paid for most of it with cash from the accumulated proceeds of cocaine sales. The mid-seventies, life, was good in Southern California if you were young and had managed to avoid residency in another political graveyard for American heroes, *The South East Asia draft*.

My bike pulled hard with boisterous enthusiasm, the rhythmic thud of the exhaust fading like an echo behind me, before changing to a happy gurgle as we coasted downhill on a trailing throttle. Soon be with friends; soon be at Pat's place. If I sit at a restaurant table, my expectation is to eat. If I go to Pat's place, my expectation is that in some way, I will be fulfilled. I don't have Allah, Muhammad or the pope. No Smith with golden tablets, Jesus, Buddha or any recently manufactured television deity to lean on, or guide me in my weakness. I know at Pat's place my empty glass will always be filled, and my words welcomed. These evenings sometimes stretch into days, for some perhaps lifetimes. Friday evening is a good choice for me leaving the weekend to recover if necessary.

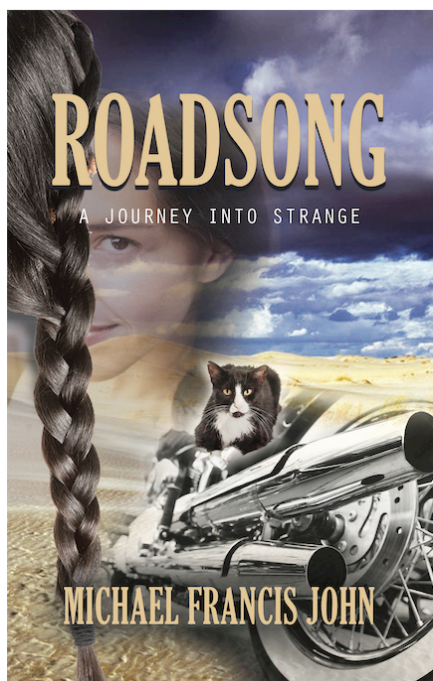


## ***CHAPTER THREE***

***Pat had two reliable income streams.*** The conventional prototype machining position he held, and his retail pharmaceutical enterprise. He delighted in displaying his skill and ability to produce complex metal parts, using a variety of machines. He also sold drugs, specializing in heroin, cocaine, morphine, opium and marijuana. Pat was as proud of his machining ability, as he was of the quality of the narcotics he sold. The drug dealing was I believe confined to friends and trusted visitors to the house. "I ain't greedy so no reason to expand, no point in flying into the radar." He always said. He was right I suppose, it seemed all his needs were met.

His lifestyle was muted, and he eschewed extravagance. No expensive car. No gaudy clothes or flashy jewelry. His dress code was rudimentary, Boots, Jeans and tee shirts. A thick brown leather jacket, worn in the winter or when riding his bike gave protection from rain and cold. The only jewelry he wore was an old military wristwatch his father had given him. For all his lifestyle understatement, he was not a humble man. At times he was given to unpredictable, almost psychotic bursts of temper, and like a sudden storm would explode with violent displays of rage.

He would never argue. Just a long icy stare then his piercing gray eyes would shine with a dark, malevolent fire.



*The author opens a window through which the reader can follow the life of a young man during a twelve month period. From a troubled, brutal childhood, he finds solace through heroin and cocaine. He also finds God is a cat, and magic in the likeness of a beautiful woman.*

## **ROADSONG: A Journey into Strange**

by Michael Francis John

**Order the complete book from the publisher**

**[Booklocker.com](http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/9276.html?s=pdf)**

**<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/9276.html?s=pdf>**

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