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The Red Pill

By Caitlin Johnstone

"To those three soldiers who got killed in Afghanistan the other day," said Ian. "They died fightin' for our freedom."

"Freedom isn't free," Bill solemnly declared as the men raised their glasses and drank.

"That's bullshit," Steve mumbled into his glass.

"Aww, come on," said Bill.

"Alright, see this is why I don't buy rounds for you pricks no more," said Ian.

"I mean why are they still there?" said Steve. "Look, Ian, I appreciate you buying us drinks, but it's fucking bullshit that those guys are even there. They're not fighting for our freedom, and neither are our boys in Iraq or in Syria or anywhere else."

"Man, shut up," said Ian.

"Hey, you set him off," laughed Ed. "Buckle up."

"The whole thing's bullshit. It's got nothing to do with freedom, it's about controlling resources and strategic locations. Poppy production went through the roof since we sent our boys to Afghanistan, and Iraq was switched back to the petrodollar right after we invaded. In 2000 Saddam took Iraq off the petrodollar and started selling oil in euros, then we invaded and right afterward they switch back to selling it in dollars like all the other OPEC nations. I'm talking like, weeks afterward. A few men got real rich off the blood of our troops. Real rich. You guys want a red pill, read a little book called War Is a Racket by General Smedley Butler. It's almost a hundred years old and it's just as true today."

"Man I hate this conspiracy theory shit," said Ian.

"Ain't no fuckin' theory man, it's just a fact," said Greg. "Just do a little research. We are being played. You think that bullshit they tell you on TV is real? The whole thing's fake and they're barely even hiding it."

"Well even their excuse for going to Afghanistan was 9/11, and that was a total false flag," said Ed.

"Ah shit, here we go," Bill said, rolling his eyes.

"It was!" Ed exclaimed. "You can learn this shit on Youtube in an hour or two. Just look up Building 7 of the World Trade Center. Research what kinds of physics would have to happen for those buildings to fall like that and tell me you still believe that shit. Do you know what the odds are of a newly trained pilot pulling off the kinda strike they say hit the Pentagon? It's impossible, and that's why there's no video or forensic evidence of it, cuz it was a goddamn missile. The whole thing was an inside job in collaboration with Mossad and the Saudis. 9/11, that's the real red pill."

"I think JFK is the real red pill," said Greg. "This country's been run by the CIA since 1963, ever since they staged a coup and pinned it on Oswald. That's when everything started getting real fucked up. The official story is so fulla holes you could drive a flatbed through it. They've been lying to us about what happened in Dallas for 55 years, and they're still lying."

"Man you guys are way further down the rabbit hole than me," laughed Steve. "I don't know about that stuff."

"Maybe the real red pill is that our whole world is nothing like what it appears to be?" said Old Pete, who'd been listening silently from a few bar stools down. "Not our country, not our government, not our culture, not even ourselves in a sense. Maybe the real red pill is that all of society is an imaginary conceptual overlay we've all placed in our minds over top of a bunch of hairless apes wandering around the surface of the earth making small mouth noises and stuffing food into their bellies. And maybe all the government, laws, social rules, economy, religion, beliefs, labels, names, the lines which separate nations, and all of human culture is just stuff we made up and all agreed to pretend is true, connected by made-up linguistic models comprised of nothing but small mouth noises we've all agreed to pretend mean certain things."

"Maybe even our very selves are illusory, in the sense that they're not at all what they appear to be. Have you ever looked at the thing that you think of as yourself? Really, truly, critically looked at it? Hardly anyone has, which is weird, because the entirety of anyone's mental process revolves around the assumption that there is a solid, tangible thing that can be found which could be called a 'me' or an 'I'. And maybe if you take a deep and sincere look within, you'll find no evidence of any such entity. You'll find thoughts, feelings, sensory impressions, but nobody actually experiences a self; it's just a bunch of appearances firing off inside the skull of bipedal primate that is molecularly inseparable from its surroundings, which are in turn molecularly inseparable from the universe. And maybe you'll come to realize that what we think of as a person is actually an impersonal ongoing process like a waterfall or a campfire; it's a happening, a verb, being witnessed by an impersonal consciousness of unknowable origin. The solid 'thing' called a self exists only as a mental story.

"And maybe that's actually where it all gets fucked up: everything is mental stories, from ourselves to our societal dynamics to the highest echelons of government and power, and we're not perceiving any of it correctly. We believe we are a separate self which stands apart from the churning tumult of the universe's atoms, and we dedicate our lives to protecting that illusory self from the outside world, a world which itself also exists mostly as story. Without our crude conceptual overlay, the world is experienced as nothing but a bunch of plants and animals moving around consuming food, reproducing, and experiencing the natural joy of being, but then we add a bunch of stories on top of the human animal about authority, relationships, jobs, goals, expectations, approval, enemies, ideas about getting life wrong versus getting it right, and all this stress and fear enters into the equation.

"And maybe that stress and fear can be manipulated by the more clever primates, the ones who understand that society is made of mental stories, and they can use that stress and fear to get the other primates toiling at awful jobs to avoid starvation, consenting to societal models which require endless violence and the rapid destruction of the ecosystem, consenting to slavery and degradation because most of those primates haven't taken the real red pill: that it's all stories that everyone has agreed to pretend are true, and they can collectively choose to stop pretending those stories are true and create new stories whenever they want to. They can create different stories about where power resides and how it operates, how resources are distributed, how much labor is actually necessary, and if they want they can do so in a way which benefits everyone on earth. They can turn this world into a paradise, and the only thing stopping them is a few clever primates who've figured out how to control the stories that are told using mass media and government manipulation."

There was silence.

"Pete, you always make everything awkward," chuckled the bartender. "Hey y'all want a real red pill? You gotta check out this guy David Icke. Do you guys know anything about reptilians?"

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