

**THE DAY THE TITANIC SANK/TAX DAY, 500,000 BC—  
(*another story about cavemen*)**  
By Paul Lambrecht

Grok wanted some tenderness.

The kind that only came from females.

The only problem was none of the females in the tribe seemed in the mood. That season had passed.

Since Belek had been swept away by the river, a chill had descended on the females' chests. And overcome by fear, they weren't bathing much, so a certain ripeness flavored the air. This had both effects on Grok, but the deeper urge, not repulsion, prevailed.

They fanned themselves in the sultry heat.

A herd of gazelles, silhouetted by the setting sun,

loped by, and there was an evening mist over the pond which welled up from permafrost melt.

It was the sort of moment which Bog in the Sky made for his creatures to enjoy. The females, in all their coy glory, seemed carved out of a block of ebony wood.

Plunko, who was the least inhibited of the males, was apparently having the same thoughts as Grok. Thought, thought Grok, that strange weather pattern of the mind.

Plunko was making advances at the girls but they were batting him away.

Maybe the moon would be right that night, thought Grok.

Plunko pouted near the cave entrance now.

That night, Melek came over to him in his nest of furs. Good old Melek. Her cub was sleeping in an alcove above her vacant patch.

They moved in unison for a while. It was very pleasant for Grok and permitted him to fall asleep soon after, even before Melek left his patch.

The next morning, Grok was even nervier and more irritable.

Melek had felt like a meal of stringy possum who kicked around in his stomach then disappeared, leaving him

with a huge gaping empty maw in the pit of his belly.

He was insatiable.

His appetite was as large as Father Sun.

Now the first sentimental caveman who ever lived was named Pinko. Pinko had been eaten by a shark, but before that he'd been the drummer in a band.

Apart from the drums, someone in the band played the mammoth gut, which was a string of sinew stretched between the ends of an arced bow of wood.

Several generations later, Mooku the gut-player's great-grandson used the gut to launch a stick as a projectile and put out Laska's eye. Soon after that, the bow and arrow--and the eyepatch--were invented.

Anyway, Pinko was in love with Marxy.

Marxy sang with the band sometimes, granted not in the role of frontwoman or some such, rather she made screaming noises from her seat in the crowd. It was often strange and beautiful or discordant and upsetting.

But to Pinko, it was always amazing and ached at his heart.

Their popular standard was a tune called MUSKRAT LOVE, which had a long gut solo, and a syncopated drumbeat, and invariably, Marxy, if she hadn't already belted in with her plaintive wailing. These moments, to Pinko, were blessed

above all others, and he wanted to live in them forever. But Marxy was a capricious heart, and couldn't be nailed down. One night, under a full moon, with dew on the grass, she had run up and kissed Pinko, and for him that had been enough to seal his fate.

But the next day Marxy was aloof and offputting. When they played MUSKRAT LOVE that evening, it was strangely silent. Pinko joylessly beat on his drums.

It was half a moon before she even looked in his direction again, padding his drum skins, composing a new beat, for a song called SHARK MEAT.

They tossed a calf into the chop of the Great Sea before and after every summer, as a sacrifice for Bog in the Sky. The first was meant to give thanks for surviving the winter, and the second was in anticipation of it, in hopes of surviving it again.

The Great Sea was a few days' journey, but it was an easy trek, and even the cubs and the old and feeble went most of the time. The tribe then bounded the beast in a semi-arc completely encompassing the cliff edge, and they approached slowly, rhythmically chanting, until the witless calf was frightened straight off. After some babyish bleating and a splash, a pattern of sinister triangular

dorsal fins surrounded the churning calf, and then sharks ripped off hunks of its bloody flesh.

Pinko had the strange idea at one such enactment of this rite that the calf served a nobler purpose. It put in the mind of the angst-ridden musician an example to cleave to, that he might vex his existence and be embraced by the tribe's bosom in one bold fell swoop. And he could wound Marxy the way she had wounded him.

Perish the thought.

After a meal of broiled yak, the tribe turned to head back towards the camp. But Pinko was gone. Marxy was nonplussed by the news that Pinko had gone BATSHIT. These artistic types. Who could figure them anyway?

\*\*\*

Grok was not a sentimental caveman. He lacked this particular pathogen, yet he was loyal to his particular cherished friends and relatives, and among them, it

mattered not whether they hurt him, or chose him, or spurned him.

In fact, apart from feeling a particular fiduciary devotion to them, he cared nothing about them or their activities whatsoever. These cherished spirits always found this odd. There was nothing Melek could do to make him pretend to care for her and her cub. At the same time, there was nothing Belek could do short of coming back to life which would make him care less for her.

Apart from these curious attachments, he was utterly and inconsolably alone.

The life of the tribe was possessed by a concern for its own welfare and unconcerned with the various attitudes of the individuals who composed it. As such, Grok accepted the tribe, and the tribe depended on him in turn. As he was somewhat valuable, those more in tune with the life of the tribe chipped in to make him happy. Grok noticed humbly this arrangement was not the case for everyone. How it must have felt to be the handsome but useless Plunko? The females gazed at him with longing and admiration in their eyes, yet when he tried to tease them out of their low caloric languor, they shunned him without another thought. And he took his rage and energy down the road.

Grok smiled at this thwarted process. He was feeling better now, about his place in the tribe, and the world.

**End.**