ROBERT SABBAG
SNOW
BLIND
A BRIEF CAREER IN THE COCAINE TRADE
AN ALL-OUT, NON-STOP
MIND-JOLTING JOURNEY THROUGH THE
DAZZLING, HIGH-ALTITUDE WORLD OF AN
INTERNATIONAL COCAINE SMUGGLER

SNOW
BLIND

"THE ULTIMATE SLIDE DOWN THE
PRECIPICE OF HIP"

Susan Brownmiller

The most authentic inside story of the big-time cocaine traffic that has hit print, and Sabbag tells it with novelistic
razzle-dazzle, setting down knife-sharp scenes as the action
moves: Mexico, New York’s big hotels, Harlem streets,
Bogota’s high and low-life—scenes and characters that make
your skin crawl...a compelling read. “Publishers Weekly

"A WITTY, INTELLIGENT, FIERCELY STYLISH, DRUG-
INDUCED, EXEMPLARY TALE." The Los Angeles Times

"A RIP-SNORTER...a marvelous, cheerful adventure of
modern times...one part Raymond Chandler to one part
Hunter Thompson." The Washington Star

"A FLAT-OUT BALL BUSTER...Sabbag is a whip-song writer?"
Hunter Thompson
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I QUAAALUDES

In the late 1960s, at about the time Richard Nixon was taking over, downs became the most popular drug on the American pill-popping market. Acid was on its way out, and speed was killing everyone in sight—it was natural that under a Republican administration young dopers would turn to the favorite drug of their parents. Just as meprobamate (Miltown) had been the drug of choice in the Eisenhower years, so barbiturates would assert themselves in the years of the “silent majority.” The most popular barbiturates at the time were Seconal (sodium secobarbital—red), Nembutal (sodium pentobarbital—yellow), and Amytal (sodium amobarbital—blue), the second manufactured by Abbot, the other two manufactured by Lilly. The newer, and far milder, sedatives, Librium and Valium—Roche Laboratories’ bid to take the sweepstakes—were still in their infancy.

Barbiturates, known to be habit-forming, hit the college campus with a reputation. Though marketed chiefly to domestic addicts and made available by the drug companies to the occasional thoroughbred, it was known that they were manufactured principally for suicides. Toting with them ensured status...if they were good enough for Jimi Hendrix, they are good enough for me. The pharmaceutical houses worked overtime—they themselves, courting slack for a...
Appendices

over time—reds put Lilly on the map and, by themselves, could be counted on to take up the corporate slack for a long time after the Darvon patents ran out.

“What in the world ever became of sweet Jane
She lost her sparkle, you know she isn’t the same
Livin’ on reds, Vitamin C and cocaine
All a friend can say is, ‘Ain’t it a shame.’

“Truckin’,” from American Beauty,
The Grateful Dead

A couple of years later, while Nixon’s back was turned—call it Ziegler’s mistake—the newspapers managed to get hold of some truly electrifying national news. A new drug had hit the campus. (Yawn.) All they had to do was call it an aphrodisiac, and their advertising revenues would triple. Great Caesar’s ghost! It was a celibate city editor’s dream. It, too, was a down, this pill, but not only would they attribute deaths to it, they would attribute WILD HIPPIE ORGIES IN FLORIDA and BARE ASSED RUTTING IN THE STREETS to this miracle drug. Get ready, Mom and Dad. (Do you know what your children are doing tonight?)

Quaaludes.

Quaalude is the brand name given by William H. Rorer, Inc., to a sedative and hypnotic agent known pharmacologically as methaqualone—2-methyl-3-oxo-5(3H)-quinazolinone—a new, nonbarbiturate hypnotic, useful, according to the Physician’s Desk Reference, in the treatment of insomnia, and designed for those cases in which barbiturates are contraindicated or where other hypnotics have failed. Because of its side-effects, or absence thereof—methaqualone is not physically addictive, though psychological addiction is almost guaranteed to the heavy user—methaqualone is in many ways preferable to the barbiturates.
Adverse neuropsychiatric reactions include headache, hangover, fatigue, dizziness and torpor. Of course, it is these reactions and others that the serious doper looks for—an absence of side-effects altogether would throw the drug off the market. Two things which make methaqualone as popular as it is are its availability over the barbiturates and its ability to knock you down without knocking you out. It goes right to the central nervous system and turns you to jelly—you are loose in about twenty minutes. The exact mode of its action is unknown (of course), but methaqualone apparently acts on a different CNS site than that of the barbiturates. The tactile sensitivity it promotes makes lovemaking preferable to baseball for a good eight hours—that is what the newspapers mean by an aphrodisiac—but after the first hour, nothing is preferable to sleep. And if you happen to play baseball the next day, you might slouch a little, off and on, at second base, as the bands come and go. It is that kind of dope.

The prescribed dosage for sleep is usually 150–300 mg at bedtime. The maximum will set you up for anything you have in mind. An overdose—a very important factor, without which its popularity would slide significantly—can get you off on anything from spontaneous vomiting, delirium and convulsions to something as far out as cutaneous or pulmonary edema, hepatic damage, renal insufficiency and bleeding, shock, respiratory arrest, coma and death. Dig it. Two-point-four grams will throw you into a coma. Eight grams will kill you—reds are faster—and most fatal cases have followed ingestion of overdoses accompanied by alcohol.

Quaalude comes in a scored white tablet in two sizes, one containing 150mg methaqualone, the other containing 300mg—the famous "714." Both bear the manufacturer's name.

Sopor, manufactured by Armar-Stone Laboratories, Inc., is the other popular source of methaqualone.
Sopors come in green, yellow and orange, 75mg, 150mg and 300mg respectively.
Parke-Davis (Parent) and Cooper Laboratories (Somafact), as did Wallace (Optimil), market methaqualone bonded to a cation—methaqualone hydrochloride. A rose by any other name...

II CREDIT CARDS AND TRAVELER'S CHECKS

In New York City, as in any major city in the country or around the world, there is a lucrative traffic in bad traveler's checks and stolen credit cards. Credit cards are marketable because the mechanism for listing the card number of any account against which theft or loss is reported is a very slow one, and it is made slower by the reluctance of many people, especially the businessman whose cards have been lifted by a hooker in a hotel room in the Tenderloin, to report the theft immediately. Traveler's checks are marketable on the same basis, but with traveler's checks there is a bonus.

The traveler's check scam (if someone is doing TCs, he is dealing in traveler's checks) works off the guarantee given by American Express and the respective banks that a customer's checks will be replaced immediately in the event of loss or theft—the no-liability clause, which makes the checks preferable to cash, streamlines crime in this area because it eliminates the weakest link in the chain, the thief. While credit cards have to be stolen, traveler's checks can be bought.

If a man like Adrian the Mogul wants some fast money, he can buy $5,000 worth of traveler's checks from First National City Bank, and Swan will give him the name of someone downtown who will pay him $2,500 for them. Adrian will pick up the $2,500, then redeem the $5,000 from FNCB. The trick with the traveler's checks is that a customer has to report them lost or stolen immediately to cover himself. New York cops know the swindle: