

*THE GRANDE DAME OF CANNABIS
TELLS HER STORY*

*This book, originally written in French by Michka,
was first translated into English by Petunia White,
then revised and adapted by Michka and Jamie Craig.*

Cover Picture: Sensi Seeds
Graphic Design: Philippe Fourquet
Layout: Charline Couturier
Edited by Jessica Bryan

© Mama Éditions (2019)
All rights reserved
ISBN 978-2-84594-249-3

Mama Éditions, 1 rue des Montibœufs, 75020 Paris (France)

MICHKA

*THE GRANDE DAME
OF CANNABIS
TELLS HER STORY*

MAMA ÉDITIONS

Michka's Books

La Grande Dame du cannabis se dévoile
Mama Éditions, 2020

Healing with Cannabis
Mama Éditions, 2017
(also in French, Spanish, and German)

De la main gauche, Une autobiographie
Mama Éditions, 2015

Medical Cannabis, From Marijuana to Synthetic Cannabinoids
Mama Éditions, 2009
(also in French)

La Spiruline, Une algue pour l'homme et la planète
Georg éditeur, 2005
(also in Korean)

Pourquoi & comment cultiver du chanvre
Mama Éditions, 2001

La Chose, Dix raisons de briser le tabou du caca
(co-author Hugo Verlomme)
Mama Éditions, 2000

Le Livre du cannabis, Une anthologie
(co-authors Tigrane Hadengue and Hugo Verlomme)
Georg éditeur, 1999

Le Chanvre, Renaissance du cannabis
Georg éditeur, 1995

Le cannabis est-il une drogue?
Georg éditeur, 1993

À mains nues
Albin Michel, 1983

Le Dossier vert d'une drogue douce
(co-author Hugo Verlomme)
Robert Laffont, 1978

Le Grand Départ et la vie sur l'eau
Albin Michel, 1977

CONTENTS

A foreword from Paris, France, by Catherine Deneuve	7
A foreword from British Columbia, Canada, by Jamie Craig.....	9
Part I	13
Part II.....	91
Photo Album	215
Appendices.....	287
How the very first Cannabis Cups changed my life, <i>High Times</i> magazine, December 2019.....	289
Nevil Schoenmaker interviewed by Michka, January 6, 2018.....	305
About Michka.....	315

A FOREWORD FROM PARIS, FRANCE

What could have predisposed my high-school classmate, who grew up in Paris, to build a boat “with her bare hands” (the title of one of her books), sail the high seas, raise children in a cabin in the forests of Western Canada, become an icon in the fight to legalize cannabis—and co-found a publishing house?

Frankly, I don’t know.

Here, she invites us into her life—her daily life, and her experience with a supposedly incurable disease. Openly, shamelessly—naïvely perhaps. But who doesn’t want to believe in healing promises when illness tries to take the upper hand?

The story turns like a kaleidoscope, and is best read in the same free spirit.

With these few lines, I wish, beyond a foreword for this book, to attest to an extraordinary life, to courage, and to tell of friendships lost and found again.

Catherine Deneuve

A FOREWORD FROM BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA

Six a.m. up at Michka's place on the mountain.

A tide of light breaks over the treetops and spills into the cabin. Almost audibly, so little else disturbs the stillness of the room. The coffee is brewing, so now there is that, too. I sweep the floor with the old straw broom, but quietly, knowing she was up late working on her book. Here, the sun beams in rather than shines down, and in these beams the stirred-up dust turns gold.

Yesterday we talked about how marijuana (which is one of the things her book is about) induces an intimation of enlightenment. Time off from the Crazy Self: the holy logic of all that is, suddenly intuited.

The new interest in its medicinal properties has overshadowed cannabis' role as a psychotropic instigator. The high is being bred out of many new medicinal strains, as though it were an unfortunate side effect. The patient doesn't want to get high, he wants to get healed. He doesn't see a connection.

You will not hear this new cannabis convert exclaim: Wow, I just had the most amazing revelation about myself!

Most of us still live in neighborhoods, and in countries, where the psychological expansion triggered by THC and its compounds is viewed as suspect. Amid all the fuss about CBD, this awakening action is now pushed aside, like the teaching of a once-revered spiritual master now lost in the lower shelves of a library, awaiting the day when it will again be brought forward.

This is not the case up on Eagle Mountain. We are in favor of the mysterious and instantaneous restoration of enthusiasm kindled by the Venerable Weed.

But we know, too, as a couple of old-timers: the glow of insight disappears, like so much dishwater down the drain, unless it translates into ordinary life.

This is the point in the vortex where Michka tends to abide.

At one moment in her story she has come back to the house where she is staying for a few days. No one is home. After months of joyous anticipation, she has finally realized that a certain man she wants to be with has other ideas on the subject. In fact, they are through.

The thought of “loss” wants to attach itself to Michka’s person. It demands a thorough and protracted hearing. She is alone, it is cold, and she is hungry.

But there is nothing so much as “the present” in Michka’s cosmic positioning. Long practiced in this art, she instinctively seeks refuge there again. Defaulting to the sheer wonder of being (in contrast to the alternative), she draws a puff on her little wooden pipe, and immediately senses new space opening up as a consequence of this latest development. Single again. How interesting! Then the examples of good fortune in her life – children, grandchildren, the seventy books her publishing house has spawned, the great loves of her life – pop up like sentinels along her path. Through the window she spots a little bird alight on an overhanging branch and apropos of apparently nothing at all, break into an amazing song. Why not, she thinks? Why not?

Michka sets forth, again and again, on her journey home.

Not much helped by her body anymore, she will admit. Beset nowadays, as it has been for many years, by random bouts of ungovernable trembling, she keeps on going without complaint. She is a Taoist in that way. She can’t deny disease—here it is!—but understands that, but for the contrast it

FOREWORD

provides, she would not be so capable of “ease,” at which she excels. You feel this, entering her “space.” Refined, considered, free of clutter, a bow to unselfconscious beauty, and always an eye to utility. Her cabin is that way, too.

Sometimes she can’t cook because she can’t chop, or can’t get a grip on the lid of a jar. Conventional medicine says her condition is incurable, though it has offered considerable respite by way of a little blue pill. “Unfixable” doesn’t sit well in Michka’s lexicon, so of course she never stops looking for the cure. She embarked at first on a careful practice of self-knowing, convinced she was the creator of her own reality. Nevertheless, the symptoms persisted. Quarts of freshly-extracted cannabis leaf juice, delivered from Holland to her Paris apartment, were consumed per instructions. No help there. Three, month-long stays at an ayurvedic clinic in India, to no avail. Two trips to Brazil, half way around the world, to the controversial faith healer, John of God, where she witnessed apparent miracles right before her eyes, but none for her.

All the while, as the Algonquin medicine woman informed her at a shamanic festival, women her age are entering a stage of heightened libido. They are eager to mate. To touch, to unite – as Michka can well attest.

She is beginning to think that maybe what she is being shown, what she signed up for, is the possibility of living with her symptoms. And the man her creative mind is manifesting will have to, as well.

This is all between times, though. Since everything is allowed, new and unexpected chances keep popping up.

Just now, having entered the kitchen, Mich throws open the kitchen door to the sun. She fetches the homemade plum jam from the shelf beside the stove and slides it onto the table. We don’t usually bother with words at this hour. A quarter of a cup of coffee is poured, hot water added... and then she uncharacteristically slathers an enormous spoonful of jam

onto her toast, takes a big bite, and chews it up slowly. At last we look at each other. “Good morning,” she says quietly, in her own beam of light now, her eyes smiling.

Jamie Craig

PART I

She left her man on February 14, Valentine's Day (as Tigrane later pointed out) yet felt joy, which meant she had done the right thing.

During the year they were lovers, she and James had made it a habit to meet every other weekend. This last time, it was James who came to Michka's apartment in Paris.

As soon as she saw him standing by the door, Mich felt slightly distant. And Monday morning, right before he left, she heard herself say (without having given it *any* thought beforehand) that she needed to step back for a while. Naturally, James wanted to talk about it. One thing led to another, and they decided to part.

Not only had Mich been happy since they'd agreed to go their separate ways ("If I'm not the man for you, you're not the woman for me," he said), but even more remarkably... How to put it?

Voilà—it had to do with her libido. She had a heightened awareness of her own sexual energy.

What? Libido, at seventy-three years of age? Libido, with her bouts of tremors and other occasional physical difficulties?

Well, yes. And, paradoxically, she felt gratitude towards the man she'd just left.

James liked to say that according to the *Quran*, a man could have as many wives as he is able to satisfy. And as far as *he* was concerned, he would add, one was plenty.

As a matter of fact, during their year together, he had been a caring lover. Above all, and this was crucial, James loved her

THE GRANDE DAME OF CANNABIS TELLS HER STORY

body, the seventy-three-year-old body she couldn't help but consider an obstacle to love.

He revived in her an image of herself as a woman, which she had lost during the storm at the peak of her physical difficulties. The period that culminated (two years before she met James) in a highly significant train trip.