

## FOREWORD

It was not that Mila's escape from Holland's Home for Unwed Mothers, in the middle of the cold winter of 1963, led straight to the mystical Mazar-e-Sharif and beyond.

First, she made a stand in Amsterdam with her child. In love with fabric and food, color and hash, and people, Mila opened Kink 22 in 1966, which offered clothing "for the happy and free," for which she herself was the principle advertisement, "always fabulously attired in a new [handmade] dress or a jungle-print silk trouser suit and wig." A victim of its own success, the operation of Kink became tiresome, so Mila transformed it into the exotically-appointed Teahouse Cleo de Merode, open noon to midnight. The teahouse so quickly became the central meeting place of the international underground scene in Amsterdam that the always-skittish Dutch police leaned in persistently and Mila was forced to close it down.

It was the Sixties and somehow she sensed it was India, of all places, that was really birthing the era. So Mila just had to go, with her child, overland from Amsterdam via Afghanistan. They loved walking, fortunately, because many of the places they favored en route could only be approached on foot. But they went by van, mostly, and boat and bus, and dubious trains and horses and bicycles and rafts, and one time on ropes.

Mila was drawn to experience like a bee to flowers. She survived on her own terms, her only rule being that it had to be exciting. So when the head dwarf of the traveling dwarf circus asked Mila and her infant daughter to join their troop, mother and child looked at one another and immediately, and in unison, said, “YES”!

Twenty years in India, off and on, moving from one enterprise to the next—sometimes merely on the basis of a change of weather—the soul of the subcontinent was absorbed like fragrant oil through Mila’s skin. And so by the time she at last returned to Europe, she had been exposed as well to the myriad Far Eastern approaches to the production and uses of hashish.

Back in Amsterdam, she and some friends opened the Hemp Hotel, where the amenities included hemp sheets on the beds, pot growing on the dresser, hemp oils, and readily available hemp edibles. The hotel was huge fun but not a money-maker (so, of course, she kept it going for years). But in the meantime, money was an issue, as always.

One night in November in 1992, Mila was doing her laundry and smoking a joint at her place in Amsterdam. Watching her clothes through the little window as they tumbled in the dryer—tumble, tumble went her clothes—she was suddenly reminded of something she had often seen in the Far East: the way they separated the resin from marijuana leaf. She asked herself at this moment—an hour before midnight while doing her laundry—a transcendently simple question: what would happen if I removed the heating element from the dryer and put in dried marijuana instead of clothes?

Wouldn’t the tumbling action gently dislodge and release the potent trichomes from the leaf and flowers? With the addition

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of a fine screen around the tub, couldn't those trichomes then fall through the screen into a waiting tray at the bottom of the machine?

What then would you have?

Pure, unadulterated hashish.

When, in the days ahead, this proved to be exactly the case, another question arose—the same question she had asked and answered so many times before in her wildly free and freelance life: could I make a little business out of it?

It was that or the Butterfly Garden she was hoping to create. And the bankers were saying the figures in her “business plan” for the butterfly venture were way too optimistic.

Thus was launched history's first hash machine, the only such advance in this ancient industry in more than 3,000 years. Mila named her invention the “Pollinator” in 1994, and they are now sold around the world.

How did Mila become the hash queen? It is the story of a journey, literally. Bring extra matches and at least a little cash if you can manage it. Other than this, as long as you have the courage of a lion, you have all you need for the prankster's road ahead.

James Craig