

Return with Vengeance

By : **Juggernaut**

Hindus believe in reincarnation and karma. VW Beetle came back as VW Jetta as reincarnation after 35 years to Juggernaut for payback for his bad karma.



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The old Dodge van was cumbersome and guzzling gas like crazy, at \$4.45 per gallon on the Big Island, it was not a good idea to lease the van from the landlady who was very picky and demanding on use of her old van, so Juggernaut decided to buy an used vehicle to use for the remaining stay on the island. On Craig's list he came across an advertisement for 2000 Volkswagen Jetta for \$2,800 with 112,000 miles. Juggernaut made an appointment to meet the seller at a strip mall in Pahoa to see the car. The seller was a young man, half Chinese and half white in early twenties, he said he wants to sell the car to get money to go to California to join her sister working as a nurse since he was not doing anything productive here on the island; his mother a Chinese American works as a special education teacher at local school. The seller came across as a decent person telling they were originally from Turlock, a small town outside Modesto in California. While working for a company, Juggernaut visited Turlock several times. The seller said he was born in Turlock and came to Big Island when the family decided to move to Hawaii. Juggernaut as usual caught up with the so called "ole talk" with the seller and developed positive opinion on the seller.

The Jetta appeared great with shining black color as if repainted, the engine was clean and the drive was not bad though Juggernaut struggled to drive the stick shift since the last time he drove the stick shift was almost 30 years ago in Jamaica. While taking the test drive, the car stalled several times for not changing the gear in time. Juggernaut forgot how to coordinate the clutch and change gear with stick shift. He got the hang of it driving stick shift in no time. Juggernaut took the VW Jetta to a local mechanic for inspection, but the mechanic was not familiar with Volkswagen nevertheless checked it superficially to declare as a good buy for the price.

Juggernaut paid the seller in cash and in Hawaii the title registration costs only \$5. Juggernaut drove to the car to his cottage only to find the driver side door cannot be locked with the electronic keyless entry device. Replacing with new batteries didn't make any difference and a new key to program would cost around \$450 at the VW dealership in town. The keyless electronic device opens the trunk, the gas tank lid and all the doors except the driver side.

In Hawaii like in some other states, an annual safety inspection sticker is required to maintain annual registration. The inspection costs \$15 at any authorized mechanic on the island. Juggernaut drove from his cottage in Pahoa to Hilo, the biggest town on the island around 34 miles to Stan's Fast Lube & Repair on Pohaku Street on a friend's suggestion. The Jetta drove fine until it reached the mechanic's place then all of a sudden steam started jetting out the engine like crazy. Confused, Juggernaut slowly steered the car into the yard. Stan the mechanic was a Hispanic American, friendly and yet business like. "Could you make a safety inspection for the sticker?" Juggernaut was doubtful since the steam was still coming out from the hood.

"I am kind of busy but I will do it," said Stan writing down the license plate number and looking at the car registration papers while Juggernaut was still worrying about the steam from the hood.

Stan checked the lights, high and low beam, the horn and the signal lights for its working order disregarding the steam still slowly coming out from the hood. On completion of safety inspection, Stan wrote up the certificate of safety for \$15. "Do you know where the steam is coming from?" asked Juggernaut looking for some help.

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“It is something to do with radiator, I don’t work on radiators, take it to Bear’s Automotive on Makaala street,” Stan turned around and walked away.

Though scared to drive a car with steam coming out from the hood, Juggernaut slowly drove to Makaala Street few miles away to Bear’s Automotive. The owner is a Japanese American, apparently lived in New Mexico for several years.

“Bad news; the thermostat to start the fan on radiator failed and the old radiator was shot and there are other electrical issues with this car as well, we are the VW experts on this side of the island, you came to the right place,” said the mechanic, a Japanese American.

Juggernaut had no choice but to go ahead and get it fixed.

“You are Indian right? You know I am familiar with Sikhism and attended a Gurudwara to sing Keertans with my Sikh friends,” the mechanic was burdened with overweight walked slowly with help of a hand-stick.

The car was fixed with new radiator, new wiring, fuse box and many other Juggernauts had no clue.

“I love the sweet sacred pudding made with clarified butter served at the Gurudwaras,” said the mechanic charging \$1400 for the repair.

“Big rip-off, his visits to Gurudwara to worship God didn’t turn him into a better person after all,” thought Juggernaut.

The car drove fine for several weeks. The gas mileage was great though money charged for refilling Freon to cool the car was a waste.

On the south east side of the Big Island in Hawaii, there are several nice beach parks but none have sandy beaches. It is all lava rock outgrowths in the shallow crystal clear waters. While the public facilities are good at these beaches, the parking lots were terrible particularly in Puna district. The parking lot at the hot pond and Mackenzie state park on Kapoho-Kalapana road were terrible. It was very difficult to steer the car between deep pot holes and sharp lava rocks protruding from the ground like projectiles on the parking lot. Only large pick-up trucks and SUVs with high clearance are safe to drive around here.

One day, while pulling out from the parking lot at the hot pond, the car fell into a deep pot hole and the way out it hit a sharp lava rock ripping a hole in the oil pan underneath. Within in minutes, a low oil warning signal flashed on the screen, ignoring the warning, Juggernaut continued to drive hoping to reach his cottage just few minutes away. Big mistake, the engine stalled shortly after, Juggernaut poured fresh engine oil from a can only to see it totally drained right through to the ground. A big fellow driving a large pick up stopped seeing Juggernaut in desperation standing next to the stalled car.

“You were lucky, Roger’s repair shop is across the street, he is a good mechanic down here,” said, Bob, a hardwood contractor living nearby on Pohiki Road.

Bob towed the Jetta into Roger’s large backyard with two huge garages. Juggernaut paid a handsome tip to Bob in spite of his resistance to accept it. Roger was originally from Colorado, son of a renowned Professor. He worked as a mechanic in Alaska for years in the gas industry before he came to Big Island with his girl friend Katie to work at geothermal plant in Pahoa only to be laid off, now working on cars full-time at his home. Katie was born in Alaska to a Japanese American mother and Scottish American army father; from her pure oriental looks nobody can believe she is half caucasian.

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“Bad news; the oil pan was busted and you drove without a drop of oil. You need a new engine,” said Roger smoking nicotine burning pipe. He said smoking pure nicotine is less harmful than smoking regular cigarettes.

“I thought it was a slow oil drip and drove less than half a mile after getting the warning light,” Juggernaut looked helpless.

“You could get away driving without water for a short distance but not without oil. You have a choice, either junk it or buy a used engine,” Roger was still smoking nicotine pipe.

“How can I get a used engine?” Juggernaut looked anxious.

“I can call a junk car dealer in Keaau, he may have a junked Jetta or even a Beetle since the engines in both are interchangeable.”

Roger got an engine for \$500 from VW Beetle junked after a roll-over accident and charged \$1300 to install it.

Juggernaut drove to Kailua-Kona from Pahoa on route #11 or Volcano Road. Route #11 was not a preferred route for the locals; they take either Saddle Road or Highway through Waimea via Hilo to Kona. The Volcano road justifies its name as it passes through miles of lava deposits on the either side of the road. The Volcano road is longer and goes around from southeast end to reach over 5000 feet above sea level through hair pin turns to reach Kailua Kona. On the way it goes through Captain Cook, a beautiful town on hill side overlooking the ocean. The death of Captain Cook was controversial, in one account he was bludgeoned by the native Hawaiians in 1780 in a dispute and his body was cooked with Taro tubers to make poi, a ceremonial dish.

On nearing Kailua-Kona, the Volcano road turns into Hawaii Belt Road and becomes Mamalahoa highway which turns into Queen Kaahumanu Highway on reaching Kona. The Big Island has one single lane highway that goes around the island splitting here and there changing names along the way. With no rest areas to stop to take a leak, the drive on single lane on the Big Island was not fun despite the spectacular scenes of ocean, mountains and valleys, and mounds of shiny molten lava as far as eye can see.

After parking Jetta in the assigned spot at the condo complex on Walua Road in Kailua-Kona, Juggernaut returned next day to the parking lot to see a large oil puddle under Jetta's engine. Roger was apologetic on the phone to hear oil leak and drove next day in a hurry from Pahoa with his wife to drive back Jetta to his garage in Pahoa to replace with brand new oil pan, new shocks and brake pads.

Juggernaut travelled on a bus from Kona to Hilo to drive back the Jetta. The bus ride was cheap only two dollars. The bus left Kona early 6:30 in the morning to reach Hilo around 10 AM. The ride was comfortable watching the entire scenic route via Waimea, if one can put up with weird crowd in the bus. Roger and Katie were waiting at the Prince Kuhio Plaza to handover the Jetta and pick up a check for \$700. Another trip from Hilo to Kona but this time Juggernaut decided to drive on route 200 also called Saddle Road. The Saddle Road was newly surfaced 55 miles highway reaches a maximum elevation of 6,600 feet above the sea-level with spectacular scenes on either side. The visibility could be a hindrance in few locations. The Saddle road joins Rout 190 to reach Kailua-Kona. This is a fast route from Hilo to Kona with less traffic and less scenic.

The Jetta was driving fine for weeks in Kona. Juggernaut drove his wife Radha around the island on her short visit to the Big Island for Thanks Giving. They drove around the island reaching Hilo through beautiful Honokaa coast, the most beautiful route with spectacular valleys and waterfalls. Back in Kona, at the Keauhou Shopping Center on Alihii Drive, all of a sudden, steam started jetting out from the hood again. Juggernaut

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got the car towed to European Auto Specialist on Honokohau Street on route 19 also called Queen Kaahumanu Highway at cost of \$65. The trip ended with Jetta back in the repair shop. Next day, Radha took a cab to the airport.

â Bad news; somebody installed a wrong valve and the coolant couldnâ t flow to the radiator busting the entire cooling system,â said the mechanic at the auto repair place. Total repair cost \$500. To add to insult to the injury, an additional charge of \$200 to replace the broken windshield liquid pump and a broken rear view mirror,

â Damn you. I am not going spend any more money on you. If you were to break down next time, I will junk you. What I did to deserve this griefâ ? Juggernaut kicked Jettaâ s tire in disgust.

â I am the reincarnated blue VW Beetle you junked in Jamaica 35 years ago cutting short my life to 3 months. I returned in vengeance as black Jetta for pay back.â a metallic voice boomeranged from the vehicle.

â No, No,â Shouted Juggernaut in shock.

â Yes, you better believe it,â demanded Jetta with a smirk on its face.

â I am sorry I wrecked you but you were the very first car I drove immediately after I got the drivers license, I was very inexperienced driver then,â Juggernaut had hard time explaining.

â I am listening,â Jetta was cool in the hot Hawaiian sun.

â You may not know I sacrificed you to save a life. I crashed you to avoid killing a drunk running crazy on the beach road near Blue Field in Jamaica,â Juggernaut was apologetic.

â Sure you saved a human life at the expense of my life. I came straight from factory in Germany in shining sea blue color to be driven along the beautiful Jamaican coast line only to be wrecked by an idiot like you. I came back to haunt you now in Hawaii to wreck your vacation. Being a Hindu yourself you believe in bad karma donâ t you?â

â You know I suspected something like this when I started having problems with you. As a Hindu, I know I have to pay back for my past bad karma sooner or later.â

â Well, you paid your dues now, you were set free now from the past sin,â Jetta sounded conciliatory.

Juggernaut sold the Jetta for a big loss on Craigâ s list and accepted the loss as payback for the past wrongdoing. Now he is ready to start with a clean slate but not with VWs but with its rich cousin Audi, BMW or Mercedes.

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