

I woke up in a daze. It's the only way to wake up when you're in a 1988 Honda Civic and the sun manages to pierce the drug-assisted coma you've fallen into and your immediate surroundings don't recall any place that you remember. The peach colored bungalows and the chain link fence and the chirping of children climbing from school buses and pulling pig tails and who still had potential and vitality slapped me with the now. I had parked next to a school thinking that I might get the quiet relief of an abandoned school on the weekend. When you're living out of the front seat of your car and using the back seat for a bureau and armoire, you find that any piece of privacy you can manufacture goes a long way towards sustained sanity in a space paranoid world inhabited by cut throats on cell phones and the demonically possessed in Chanel and Versace. It was no surprise that I got the days confused. If you asked me what month it was, I would have asked for a clue.

The tiny little car was uncomfortable and patterned for slight Japanese, not people with long legs and dope habits. It was a pain in the ass, but it was shelter and had a working radio that I would turn to NPR or Art Bell at night to keep me company. You do that sometimes in order to distract yourself. You need constant distraction to keep up the good fight and stay the course.

I moved the passenger seat into the upright position, flattened my hair with an open palm and some spit and stuffed my junkie blanket into the back seat bureau. I wanted to know the time so I lighted a cigarette and rolled down the window to ask a lovely little lady if she knew. She looked as if she could have been travelling to church with her cute white gloves, matching boots and handbag and an impossible head of hair. She moved with short quick steps. She paused for a moment to answer my question and then screwed her face into disgust. She must have seen the empty bottles of Ny-Quil that littered the back seat. She must have seen the mess that my face was in and the state of my fingernails as I squeezed my cigarette. She must have smelled my cough syrup and \$.99 Jumbo Jack breath as I leaned out of the passenger side door waiting for a measured response.

"I have nothing to say to you, mister. It's degenerates like you that have turned this quiet neighborhood into a reckless haven for sin and vice. I'll be reporting your presence to school security if I have too. And if I have too, I'll tell them you've been giving candy, matches and dirty pictures to the kids." And then she was gone.

You can never be entirely prepared for a full frontal assault on your character and when it smacks of the truth you get stung. When that happens, you have no choice but to respond. It's rarely thought out and more often than not sounds like a school yard response fueled by green baloney sandwiches on a white bread bun and lots of model airplane glue. I did my best.

"Well, lady, it's lowlife like me that... that..." my gift for words had escaped me, "Same to you, you old bat. And sit on this while you're at it." I gave her the finger. My pride hadn't been salvaged and a touch of shame crept in for talking like that to a woman who probably ate salted rocks for dinner during the depression and tap-danced for war bonds during WWII.

When a lady with white gloves threatens you with the kiddy cops, you get the fuck out of there. I had no direction. I climbed over the center console, started the car and drove towards the Del Taco on Santa Monica and Highland so that I could use the bathroom and figure out what was next. Things like this become your MO when your sleeping anywhere you can park your car or scratching to find someone's couch who might trust you enough not to walk off with their TV and VCR or rifle through their underwear drawer for something fresh.

I pulled into the parking lot and sat still for a moment listening to the radio. Earth, Wind & Fire's 'Fantasy' was on and for a moment I thought I was going to cry. It's understandable to feel emotional when your life has been reduced to a series of 'I Told You Soss'. I twisted the keys from the ignition and stepped out into the dirty California sunshine.

I shuffled around the back to the bathroom hoping that I wouldn't have to pay a quarter I didn't have. A black dude stood waiting to use the bathroom. I only glanced at him for a second and in the moment our eyes connected, he tilted his head and jerked his hand for me to come closer to him. I couldn't imagine he

had anything I wanted so I ignored him and cut through the alley and found a nice private place to piss, out of sight of the industry people, agents, b-listers, and sycophants that shared space with the trannies and hustlers and dope fiends.

When I finished, I zipped my fly and started back to the parking lot. The black kid was still there and once more he tried to get my attention. I just kept on walking. You learn to be suspicious of the kids in Hollywood, or any city, hamlet or burg for that matter. They're cutthroat, ruthless and defined by a primitive lack of fear or restraint. You watch 'A Clockwork Orange' at least once and your whole belief in a future run by the X-Box generation twists away like ash in a wind of blood-lust, predatory sex and spinners for \$19.95/mo.

I climbed in my car, turned on the radio and prayed for a cigarette and some money so that I could get well. When you don't do sick or homeless well, you become willing to try drastic measures; and simple pleas to God's mercy become routine. God and I talked only when I was fucked, and this qualified.

Until I was blessed me with a dime bag of dope and a pack of cigarettes, I had to come up with viable alternatives. I thought about carving a gun out of a bar of soap and robbing a gas station. I thought about strong-arming a woman for her social security check. I thought about constructing a basket and soliciting donations as a servant for 'The Cosmic Ministry of the Benevolent John Wayne'. I thought that I might be able to drive off in somebody's idling SUV while they ordered double mocha frappuccinos from any of a number of Starbucks in the area. If all else failed I could boost some books and CD's from Tower Records or Barnes & Noble, but that was a last resort. You learn after doing this for awhile that no one reads in LA and the only way to make money fencing CD's is to post up on a street corner and perform a song and dance with every purchase. Making quick money was a lot less hassle in Seattle.

"I'll suck all the cum out your dick." My concentration broke and I turned to see the black kid standing right beside my car. Sweat popped on his forehead like holiday lights and his eyes looked like they were struggling to jump from his head in a final effort at relief from his mania.

"No thanks, cuz... I don't swing that way."

He apologized for being forward. He hopped from foot to foot and it was obvious that he was on the shit and he wanted nothing more than to talk and bullshit endlessly about nothing.

"Mind if I sit down in the car?"

I had no plans, no pressing engagements or crucial appointments. I was free all afternoon.

"Sure", I said.

When your life revolves around dooper time and you can't stand the fingernails on a chalkboard that collectively sum up 95% of the population, you find yourself engaged in a lot of by yourself time. Eventually you reject the exclusive standards that you wear like a badge of honor in order to keep from cracking. You keep company with the killers and thieves and malcontents not out of camaraderie but out of necessity. He was big and could have snapped me in half, but he struck me as mostly harmless and I didn't make him for a killer. You learn to trust your gut when you have nothing else to trust.

The kid got in the car and we talked about things that you talk about while waiting for something to happen in a Del Taco parking lot in the middle of the day. He was amped up and electric boogalooed in 10 different directions at once while I sunk lower into the upholstery as I smoked his menthol cigarettes and tried to keep the reins on the bile that was turning in my stomach.

You have to be a gamer in situations like this and patience serves the junkie well. I was neither a gamer nor did I possess an ounce of patience. I cut him off in mid thought.

“So, you know how to pick up some extra cash?” I lighted another one of his cigarettes with one that I was just finishing.

The kid snapped to attention. “How much?”

I told him nothing serious. I didn’t have the sociopath psyche to be able crack an old lady’s skull for her rent checks. All I needed was \$20. It helps if you realize that anything more is just fantasy or good luck. You stay out of prison and away from the wrong end of a gun that way. The kid reached into his pocket and pulled out two tens.

“It’s yours if I can suck your dick.”

If you get to be as old as me you know whether you swing right or you swing left. The idea of some other dudes hairy ass and salty balls was enough to make my ass constrict like a vice. I liked women. But a friend of mine who turned tricks occasionally said that if you closed your eyes you couldn’t tell the difference. In fact, he said, most dudes sucked better dick than broads. You make sacrifices sometimes, and when you’re faced with an either/or situation it becomes a lot easier to step into new territory. I made up my mind.

“All right”, I said. “”But I gotta cop and fix before we get down.” He agreed.

We crawled through traffic down the 101 Freeway and the conversation shifted to accommodate the situation. The kid was inspired. I listened to his talk about licking ass, watching porno for 3 days straight, rolling faggots and fights with his sissy boyfriend. I was shut down. You only vaguely hear what some yahoo is talking about when you are committed to 5th & Broadway and the four balloons you are about to get. Your focus narrows and it’s easy to distract yourself with thoughts about mint chip ice cream and Jimmy Page guitar riffs when you’re about to reject 30 years of sexuality.

I exited the freeway at Broadway and parked the car. The kid stayed in the car while I went looking for Flaco or Sanchez or Chuy or whatever the hell his name was today. The bike cops were making their rounds and the dealers were scared and were staying out of sight. I found Pancho or whatever the hell his name was and gave him some more Nike money. I sprinted back to the car and made a left on 6th, a left on Main and then a left on Alameda.

I had been fixing at Phillipe’s and it had been treating me well. It was always busy and no one gave you a second look. You get comfortable with some places and you keep on going back. And besides, it was birthplace of the French dip sandwich. It’s hard to argue with history like that.

Before I got out of the car, the kid told me not to piss while I was in the bathroom because he wanted me to save it for him. My stomach turned and I double-timed it to the bathroom. Little kids and fathers from the heartland milled around the sinks and the dryers washing hands and picking French dip from teeth. I split the crowd like Moses and found the last available stall.

I put my issue together and as I was searching for a vein, I spied a tiny pair of sneakers hanging from the toilet next to me. They were kicking wildly and in time with the tune he was humming. Something I think I remembered from 1st grade sing alongs. When faced with a disturbing situation like this, it’s essential that you ignore the details and push ahead. I did. I fired the dope into my system and the youngster called out to adult waiting for him that Sean Green was going to win the game with a homerun for the Dodgers today. We finished our business. He went to the game and I went back to the car in a slightly more agreeable mood.

We circled the neighborhood and I eventually found a spot off of Figueroa by Sunset that looked all but deserted. I turned to the kid and laid out the ground rules: “Let’s get this over with. No kissing, no trying to put your finger up my ass and maybe if your nice, I might let you rub my balls.”

He agreed and I unzipped my pants and pulled my cock out. The kid cooed like he was seeing a newborn baby for the first time. I don't care who you are, if someone gets dreamy and overwhelmed when they see cock, you're going to be flattered. This was off to a good start and I made up my mind to try and enjoy this exchange. You become amenable to situations like this when it's been over a year since you've had an intimate exchange with a woman.

He got to work like a veteran with all the zeal of a street corner preacher. I did my part. I sat perfectly still and tried not to look at the back of his sweaty head or his ass that was showing from where he had unbuckled his jeans and dropped them to his ankles and was doing something akin to fucking my passenger seat.

I let him know not to cum on my car seat and he stopped momentarily but started up again, rubbing his hips and sticking his ass up in the air. I began to worry that this was going to last forever. When you do an issue of that size, there's no chance in hell that you're going to cum.

You can find it meditative though, and I watched the suits and the blue collars pass in front of my car. For some reason it occurred to me that this was just another day in naked Los Angeles and I was only one of the stories unfolding there, in the parking lot, a stone's throw from King's BBQ, home of the legendary '96'er'. The kid's story unfolded in tandem with mine and he was in no mood for contemplation, he was a dick-sucking machine. I had no objections and was slowly drifting off into a pleasant narco-nod until he started whimpering like a baby.

It freaked me out and I got nervous. How can you be sure that someone moaning like the possessed won't seize and rip your cock off with their teeth? I couldn't take it and I figured that he had gotten his \$20 worth. I buckled my pants and put the car in gear and got the hell out of there.

The kid was all aglow and looking as though he had been infused with liquid lavender. As I drove on back to Hollywood, the kid started engaging in pillow talk; and as he talked, he had a glow in his eye that I had never seen in a straight man.

"What's your favorite color?"

"How old were you when you lost your virginity?"

"How many people have you had sex with?"

"Who do you think is hotter, Brad Pitt or Ashton Kutcher?"

I answered his questions briefly, but had to admit that Ashton Kutcher was hotter. I periodically had to remove his hand from my leg or my shoulder or stop him from running his fingers through my hair. More and more, he was acting like a bitch and his Jeckyll and Hyde switch from macho male energy to effete queen was getting on my nerves.

I cut him loose on Melrose. I pulled to the curb in front of Johnny Rockets and told him to get, I had things to do. The kid did so reluctantly and not before he made me promise that he would see me again. As I drove off he stood motionless on the curb forlorn like his heart had been broken, clutching a voter registration card and a LA Xpress he had picked up somewhere.

I was glad to be leaving. I was glad to know that I could never be queer. I was glad that I had enough dope to last the day. I went to Whole Foods and celebrated by boosting a pint of orange juice and some pre-packaged sushi. As far as my days go, this one wasn't too bad. When you're on the run from yourself, you learn to keep things in perspective.

