

CURSED?... OR BLESSED?

The music was at a comfortable level as we cascaded down 71, the January wind gusting around us, causing the van to shimmer ever so slightly as we drove. The job was good, as was the crowd, and our spirits were high as the ringing in our ears slowly began to subside. We were slightly fatigued from the show, although a few of us remained rowdy and awake, mainly from the booze. Jimi, our designated driver, was not sleeping, although his aging face quickly began to tire. Our usual positions on return shift were assumed; Jimi and Stephen in front, John's legs in the middle, with Spike and Tim packaged in the rear. Spike glanced up briefly, his bloodshot eyes meeting Jimi's in the rearview.

"What the fuck you lookin' at, Barn'?" Jimi bellowed past his large teeth, his stringy hair matted to his head.

"Something very scary" Spike replied, a smirk in his grin. "How fast you going?" he followed.

"YOU WANNA DRIVE, MOTHER FUCKER?" Jimi yelled, delivering our common phrase with an extra edge.

John and Tim giggled like girls, Stephen wanted to smile, but couldn't let on he was enjoying the banter.

"We don't need to get pulled over, that's all" Spike said, slurring. "Maybe you should slow it down a bit."

"Fuck it!" Tim said jokingly, fearing his own words as he spoke.

"Yeah, fuck it" agreed John, unsure of the conversation.

"Don't worry drummer boy, he's alright" echoed from the front, Steve finally breaking his silence.

Spike bit his tongue, literally, and swallowed his words along with some blood.

We were enjoying the ride. Tim was cracking us up with his impression of Lionel Richie's mother, Jimi's out of time drumming on the wheel and John's feeble attempt to look like he knew what was going on kept us relatively amused. Stephen reminisced about his Footloose days, and Spike continued to eye the speedometer like a worried mother. It was then that Jimi and Tim spun their heads quickly, with a painful, frightening snap. A flashing reflection of blue immediately bounced from their eyes. Panic filled the van as we hustled without movement, wondering who we should toss to the pavement first. Jimi slowly pulled to the shoulder, as white light flooded our vehicle. A large, menacing figure glided slowly along the right side of the van, a flashlight in one hand, our future in the other. For a second, time stood still, as each of us had a thought of our own.

Oh fuck screamed through Tim's head, his heart pounding and his hands praying.

I'm fine, I'm sober Jimi reassured himself, his skin slightly damp.

Everybody cut, Everybody cut... were Steve's only thoughts.

I tried to tell him, I tried to tell him... Now I have to kill him were hanging from Spike's lips.

Anyone want some popcorn? was John's sole concern.

The officer quickly asked for our papers, and Spike informed Steve as to their whereabouts. At the same time, Tim whispered something to John, John sighed a quiet "oh", and returned his wallet to his pants. Steve's hand came back into view, the registration between his fingers and a piece of duct tape hanging from his wrist.

"WHAT DO YOU BOYS DO?" the trooper inquired, a stern tone in his voice.

Don't tell him we play in a band Don't tell him we play in a band Spike prayed to himself.

"We play in a band" Jimi obliged.

"I SMELL ALCOHOL...YOU BEEN DRINKIN'?"

After we explained Jimi was our designated driver and that the smell he recognized was oozing from the pores in the back, the rigid patrolman then glanced at John, realized we were telling the truth, and floored us with his words.

"I'LL LET YOU GO WITH A WARNING, NEXT TIME JUST SLOW IT DOWN A BIT."

Spike's blood began to boil with the familiarity of those words.

"Thank you, officer, we will kind sir, bless you, have a nice night, kiss your daughter for me, you can swim in my pool anytime, I'll light a candle in church. Good night, keeper of law and thank you" Jimi groveled, his once harsh, swearing voice now resembling Fred Rogers.

Indeed we were very grateful, and once we pulled our chins up from the crumb infested rug on the floor, we re-grouped, high-fived and pulled out slowly, watching the tail lights of our new friend diminish in the dark.