

Supply Hut

The “CHECK GAUGES” light flashed dimly, as usual, barely illuminating the left side of the dashboard as the van slowly pulled off onto its usual exit.

“We need to get that looked at”, slurred Tim for what could have been the hundredth time in his life. “Ahhh, it’s no problem” returned Spike dryly.” I’ll take care of that right now”, he continued, now reaching for the duct tape in his bag. “See, it stopped.”

We all smiled as the now mechanically sound vehicle pulled up to the all night Sunoco, our usual fueling ground when returning from a stint in Columbus. John’s door was first to open, and he emerged, his smile wide and his eyes narrow, immediately falling into a stumble almost sending him slamming into the hard pavement. Apparently tripping over nothing, he immediately looked for reassurance.

“You guys feel that air pocket?” he quipped, hoping for some support.

“Yeah, sure, Johnny. Those invisible clumps of air jump in front of my feet all the time” was Spike’s sarcastic response. We all laughed and began to enter the store.

Once inside, we all headed to our favorite sections. Tim immediately shot to restroom, his pea-sized bladder ready to burst, somehow re-filling in the seven minutes since we left the bar. Steve headed straight to the juice section and instantly began rubbing his chin in his characteristically puzzled way. We all knew he was thirsty, but we all also knew that he wouldn’t be drinking for a while, mainly due to the controversy. “Is Snapple really better than Tradewinds?” he asked the older lady working the late shift.

Jimi’s first stop was the sunglass rack, spinning them, trying every one on twice, and then proceeded to purchase the silliest pair available. Spike was at the counter, dozens of instant lottery tickets falling from his hands, mumbling how he wouldn’t win shit, in his usual optimistic way. John’s hands were also full. Numerous bags of chips and assorted candies adhering to his tall lanky frame made it almost impossible for him to see, so he asked Steve to guide him to the register.

“Hang on a second, Johnny. I have to get something to drink!” Steve snapped, now with a noticeable sweat working. His whiskered chin was chaffing, as apparently his hands had not left his face since we arrived at the store.

“Just pick one, damn it!”, Jimi yelled as he made his exit to the van, his new yellow framed, red lensed sunglasses on his aging face.

“Are you really going to wear those home?” Spike asked in a frightened sort of way. “You’re the coolest.”

“I’m not wearing them to be cool”, he replied feebly.

How foolish Spike must have felt now realizing that he must have bought them to combat that bright, blazing 3 A.M. sun. As Tim finally left the store, he snapped one more picture of Gloria behind the counter, whose skin had turned a mysterious shade of white since we arrived. John was right behind, crumbs already inhabiting his well-groomed goatee.

“Let’s roll!” Tim squawked.

“Let’s eat!” John interjected, barely audible with pretzels protruding in his cheeks.

“Is everyone here?” Jimi wondered, confused as to why he suddenly couldn’t see.

With that question, all eight eyes shot a discerning glance through the large glass window of the gas station and in amazement witnessed our guitar player still staring into the beverage section. He was weak from dehydration, still puzzled over which liquid would best suit his increasing thirst. Tim’s twenty second horn blast made Steve jump, and he finally grabbed his choice, and wobbled towards the cashier, his hair bouncing on his shoulders. As he entered the van, last as usual, the ridicule was thick and our patience was thin, we began ribbing him over his constant indecisiveness. Seconds later, we pulled the Menu’s wagon back onto the desolate highway. Someone broke wind and we all glanced at each other briefly, smirked, and began to head home, singing loudly to the Beatles as we drove.