

Drunk, There are Cymbals for Everything

by Charles Huschle

On the way back from New Jersey this afternoon, my dad kept pressing “seek” on the radio dial so he could find WBLS, which we listened to last night, also on our way back from New Jersey. I was driving last night because I wanted to and because I think my dad was a little drunk and when I told him I wasn't really tired, like my eyelids weren't heavy or anything, he told me that in his experience it terrified the “passenger” to hear that the DRIVER was sleepy, and that he would drive if I was tired and I didn't have to conceal the fact I was tired. He said he could give me some gum to keep me awake, it was only human that I would be tired after such a long day “tearing up the field.” He said that in five minutes he would do something to shock me into being awake, and I said, what. He gave me his mystery smile, the supercilious one. “What's the hurry?” he said. I guess I swerved a little and came pretty close to the wall in the Holland Tunnel and he quickly began dialing or texting into his new cell phone while telling me to simmer down, dude. He's obsessed with cell phones, always asking my sister, who has a BlackBerry, “How do you like your BlackBerry? I'm thinking of getting a BlackBerry.” So finally he has a BlackBerry and I think he hates it. I think he was texting some girl, maybe a girlfriend — he went out mysteriously on Friday night to see an OLD FRIEND, he said. In a way I could care less. I have no stomach for any kind of relationship about now. Yeah, me in my worldly experience of exactly one girlfriend or a girl I hooked up with anyway, two weeks ago before all this tournament shit started and who wasn't going to come and watch the games anyway, so why I bothered, I have no idea. I told my dad last night, after we finally got here, that I could think for myself. He was ribbing me about nearly having, as he called it, a “fender-bender”, with some asshole who stopped in front

of me suddenly and my dad, he yelled, "Oh SHIT" which got my attention so I looked up real quick and sure, no big deal, I was about to ram into a black Mercedes E class; of course, why I had to look UP, being the driver, well you know I was looking to the side in the side-view mirror for a sec. I braked, we stopped, that was that. So my point being, last night we played WBLS and it kept me awake, I turned the bass up to 8 and the treble to 2, but it wasn't as if my dad's singing didn't help too, to stay awake I mean. Thank god he has no voice. I can't sing either. But that's beside the point. "I'm not going to conk out at the wheel, Dad," I said. Last night.

At least my dad doesn't stand by the sidelines like a stuffed shirt, yelling, full of the braggadocio of the other dads who you could tell never played the game, never were athletic, never did anything important. You should see them with their beer bellies, the madras shorts, the pink shirts, the leather loafers (and no socks), shouting all kinds of shit at us and at the ref and at the other team's coaches, not to mention the unmentionable BRAY of the moms — "YES, Duncan!" — "Good movement of the BALL" — "If that wasn't a slash I don't know what is!" - "Come on, Blue, into the crease!" and "World! World! World! World!" as if they're on the team themselves, it's ridiculous, I prefer to have a more delicate relationship to the game, more considered and calculated, and I have nothing against the other team's players, in fact it's cool to stand in the field all smiles next to the opponent when the ball is downfield from us and to shoot the shit. I talked today to this guy from Orlando, Florida, about this red-haired girl he wants to fuck. Those were his words. Then a few minutes later we're fighting for the ball and I hit his glove so hard with my stick that his glove fell off and he was shaking his hand like a bee had stung. Later I heard that he had broken two fingers and his thumb. A game's a game, right? So my dad just stands there with his hands folded together behind his back and I can tell he's fantasizing that the other parents are thinking he must have been in the military for the way he stands, hands behind him, shoulders back, neck long and chin level with the field. He makes no

kind of demand on me, nor does he ever try bribes with me, so that's why I like my dad.

So this afternoon, we make it to the finals, we lost in the final match, remember we played four games today and we had to get up at 6:30 to make it over to New Jersey. The other team was better and I didn't play as well I could have. My dad says to me, "We do the best we can. That's all we ever do — we always do the best we can," as if that's going to make me feel better about myself. I want to tell him that things could be better and to let me enjoy beating up on myself a little. He wasn't the one getting his helmet whacked by the goalie so that it was like cymbals were over my ears each one ringing like shit. He isn't the one who spent seventy-five bucks for the tickets I got for me and that girl two weeks ago.

And now he's driving the car, he told me I was tired, I deserved a rest, and he's trying to find WBLS but when he finds it, they're playing some kind of afternoon watered-down hip hop, lots of female voices and no white or black kid rapping about cleaning out his closet. So my dad keeps switching dials and we hear the first few beats of "Bonita Applebum," and it's a radio show about this guy who made a movie about A Tribe Called Quest, my favorite band of all time. The show is great and my dad digs it too, they play all the great songs, like can you kick it? (yes you can!). We're stuck in traffic for miles from this huge pier in Newark where about a thousand containers are piled up waiting for freighters, all the way to the Lukoil gas station right before you get into the Holland Tunnel, where we stop to take a piss before we go under. We're back in the car, going through the EZ Pass lane, and then the radio show ends and I smell something disgusting. "Do you smell that?" I say, and my dad says it's just the city smell, or maybe it's a leftover from the little bomb he dropped a couple of moments ago. Why does he talk like this to me? I open the windows on my side of the car and we hear the show start up again and it's a story about a bear. There are so many things you can do with the word "bear," so many different ways to use the word, I always remember the O'Connor story about how the violent bear it away. I don't remember the story, just the

title. But the radio story was about these gay guys who call themselves "bears" because they're not the stereotypical faggy gay guys, these bears are big and they tend to be hirsute (that was the radio announcer's word, not mine; it's a good word, though, hirsute, like a suit that belongs to her, what a coincidence since it's about gays, right?). One bear was talking about his need for love and the weird thing was, he sounded all right, this guy, not gay at all, just some guy who wanted love. But it was also weird to think about this big hairy guy with some other big hairy guy. Where would they find each other? Where would they sleep? But then I thought it might be nice for the two of them, two big hairy guys together who don't have to pretend they're something they are not.

