

Walking To Gibraltar, Chapter 10: In Which A Vital Fact Is Recalled

by Frank Indiana

Late spring, summer before cancer. Frank drove Max and his pal Jason to Cincinnati for their first rock show. Less Than Jake at Bogart's. A two-hour drive for ska-punk.

Ska-punk. Crimeny. This stuff was all the rage. A whole new generation wanted to be The Specials.

The music was supposed to start at eight. They left at five to give them time to grab a bite. "Have fun, boys," Astrid called as they pulled away.

"Bye, Mom," said Max. Neither he nor Jason looked up from his Gameboy. Frank waved and smiled at Astrid. The painters—a couple of thirty-something brothers and a crew of college kids—waved back. They were on break. Eating Taco Bell and swigging Mountain Dew. The house was looking nice.

He slid a CD into the player. "Soundgarden," he told the boys. "I think you might like them."

"That's nice, Dad," said Max.

Well. He wasn't going to impress them this evening. At least they didn't care if he played it loud.

Dinner at Dairy Queen in Batesville. Arrival at Bogart's, 7:30. Great old club. Who'd he seen there 'way back when? Pure Prairie League. Zappa. Someone else. This night, the floor swarmed with kids—fifteen, sixteen, eighteen years old, hundreds of them. Loud as a roomful of cats. Pushing and laughing and screaming. Max's eye shone like dimes.

They walked up to the balcony and found seats at the railing, above the roiling sea of hormones. Jesus. He was used to being the

oldest guy at the rock show. But not by two decades. At least the bar wasn't crowded.

The light dimmed. The kids roared. Less Than Jake picked up their noisemakers. Punk guitars and walking bass. Sax and trombone on a low riser next to the drum. Backwards ballcaps and shorts and chains and flannels. The kids jumping and slamming and pumping their fists.

"That's Chris!" Max yelled and pointed. The towheaded singer with the black Les Paul. His current rock and roll hero.

The band played for two hours. Max and Jason ventured down to the floor once and scampered back upstairs. "It's crazy down there," said Max.

The encore got crazier. "Come on up and shake what god gave you," Chris recommended. A dozen kids pulled themselves onto the stage. Three of the girls flashed the band. A couple of scrawny skater kids dropped trow and flopped their little dicks around.

"Whoa!" shouted the bass player. "What's with the Cincinnati sausage party?"

Max and Jason laughed the whole way home. Frank smiled. Not his kind of music, but the kids had a gas.

Less Than Jake. Great band name, though.

"Hey, let's make up band names," said Frank. "How about The Big Wheels?"

"Stupid."

"When I was a kid, I wanted to have a band called The Young Toughs."

"The Young Toughs? Stupid."

"How about the Pompeus of Love?"

"That's not even a word, Dad."

"How about Skankin' Pickle?" suggested Jason.

"That's terrible," said Frank.

Jason and Max yelled in unison: "It's real!"

"That cannot be true."

"Less Than Jake was just on tour with them!"

When Frank walked in from work the next night, Astrid gave him a terse "Hello." Fuck. He was in trouble.

"Perhaps you'd like to tell me a little more about the show. For example, about the 'Cincinnati Sausage Factory?'"

"Of, for god's sake, Astrid. It was goofy. It was a bunch of stupid teenagers. I told you—there weren't three people over nineteen in the room. A couple of kids jumped up on stage and dropped their pants for about five seconds."

"Uh-huh. So what did you do?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing."

"Right. The show was almost over. It was the encore. Besides—he's fourteen, Astrid."

"Exactly, Frank."

He didn't know what to say. What could he possibly say to defend himself?

"Astrid. It was not a big deal. It would have been ridiculous to leave."

Silence.

"You think I should have *left*?"

Astrid beamed. "Well, it didn't take you long to figure that out, now, did it?"

Frank shook his head. "I'm sorry, Astrid. It was nothing."

"Obviously, Frank. To you, it was nothing."

And then he remembered. The third show at Bogart's. Uriah Heep.

