

Dateline: Dumbass

by Smiley McGrouchpants Jr.

Mostly it didn't go so well. There were a few flashes of interest — a few half-wake types — but aside from three, a couple and a political advocate, they all seemed to have found ways to flush themselves down the toilet, or are otherwise unaccounted for.

(And in one case, even *knowing better* . . .)

But — how daft were they? Let 'em live, I'd say, but they were too busy with their guilt complexes and self-forgiving and social patterning they barely got out of bed, much less *the gate*, ultimately.

(Sorry, kids, go back to square one . . . and *stay there!*)

But I digress.

I had a mission, a scenario to get a beat on and infiltrate.

Comfy in their slumbers . . .

It was Portland, 2006.

Dateline: Dumbass. The “evil half-wit” (as Pynchon'd monikered him; see *Against the Day*, 2006, if you “get it”) was ruling things and this made excuses, oddly, *more possible* . . .

I lit up a blighted tobacco and went to work.

My name: John Jackoff-McShitbuger. Try to say it without smiling.

Mike kept saying “poop” at this day job and chuckling, 'cause he never got farther than UMass Boston and had no balls. It wasn't clear what he was doing here — no notions of Austin, or of Olympia, or of “indie” — but it would appear he was just a symptom. He had managed a Starbucks like this guy whose band fell apart managed a Burger King — 'cept he didn't *know* it, and he *put* himself there.

Strange.

It's like (*you can almost feel me taking a drag on the cigarette, filing my report*), you pull up stakes, you plop them down .

. . . *wherever*. A post-modern phenomenon, contextless, but right there in *real life*.

It's like someone I felt bad for (*exhale*), spouting lines from *The Big Lebowski* that all of us were supposed to catch as they appeared abruptly in conversation, before he had to stop and reverse course and ask if we got it. *His* was an empathizable position.

The other guy was just an ass.

"Bad joke . . . with no *references*? HA-HA?"

Please.

Did I leave an out-of-state copy-editing job just for this?

I guess I did.

It's like that, though.

Buying a second ticket costs *real* heavy.

You didn't get your first go-round on the merry-go-round? You want to wait in line, 'til the opening comes 'round again.

Holding my ticket . . . like in that Murakami novel, *Sputnik Sweetheart*, where she comes back with her hair all grey — white. Instantly *white*. Seeing herself from the ferris wheel, thorough the open window. As the ferris wheel goes up and all the way back down and such.

Here I am . . . entertain me . . .

Ha.

So.

Take a ride past Larry Crane's *Jackpot!* recording studio — right here! in the neighborhood! where Sleater-Kinney recorded *One Beat* and Elliott Smith *either/or* and Sarah Dougher *The Walls Ablaze!* woo hoo! — and the kids are singing karaoke.

23, 24's the average age in the office. They go across the street and get drunk. They end up acting like karaoke's a big deal. One canvasser tells me she's "an old maid at 21" — but she's way ahead of everybody. One guy sings Danzig's "Mother" like it's a lark which it is — it's a *lark*.

None of them believed in *Neuromancer* or 4-tracks or anything like that (except for the aforementioned 21-year-old). Am I being unkind? When the truck slowed down and stalled — when everyone's looking round for parts — when the White Stripes came along and gave everyone a shot in the arm, to get things going again, do you even know we almost lost the patient, lying prone — if not *quite* dead — there on the table?

Who told them?

Me?

“Hi, I did a show at 3—5 in the morning, WHPK, 100 watts of power, University of Chicago, midnight-to-noon's the rock block, no-one's even *heard* of most this stuff, anyway, and The Baffler say all over everything it could, of what was left?”

Are we still breathing?

Barely.

(As William Burroughs said: “It's hard to *draw breath* in this bloody world.”)

Lotta fun talk in your off hours.

Hence, karaoke.

Bitches.

Hitches yourself to the machine.

Slaves.

Grind yourself in.

Backwards.

(In retrospect, it was unbelievably bad. I don't care *what* Janet Weiss thinks about the practice — that's her *day off!*)

Feeble, feeble . . . no fun, no fun . . . you kids are *boring!*

Some didn't know they were taking the next step in their lives (*exhale . . . flicks ash*). Fuck it — not *all* of 'em. The two, three years *my* generation'd take after college (no Vietnam), to find out you had to do a lot of *processing* after 4 years of college after straight out of high school (*stubs out butt; pulls out lighter, lights another*), whether it'd be 1 year hanging 'round the campus still (à

la Noah Bambaugh's *Kicking and Screaming*) or two years at home (as Douglas Coupland's *Generation X* or Richard Linklater's *Slacker* could tell you), these dumbfucks whip out their testicleless penises and *piss* all over everything.,

Bitches.

(Wheat were they doing . . . *protesting?*)

Fucking karaoke.

THE END

(*"We done? The interrogation . . . can I go home, now?"*)

(*"Huh?"*)

Yeah.

Odd man outs' gotta go, though . . . back to Boston . . .

BITCH!

(*"Poop? Poop? I got raped by a priest . . . uh, duh!"*)

Yeah, alright.

What-*ever*.

END ING HE

