

Mike

by Smiley McGrouchpants Jr.

“If you stumbled, the demons would devour you.”—Rich Cohen, in *The Sun & The Moon & The Rolling Stones* (2016)

“Hi, I'm Mike, and I don't wanna work.”

“I like your mom. I didn't know she shot a look of disgust at your girlfriend that was clearly racist — it was obvious what the two of you were doing up in your room, and she'd always had those issues, what with the *Mork & Mindy* episode with the “sexy ladies” in bikinis disturbing her, and all — requiring you to instantly laugh in her face. I wish you had told me about it, so I could do nothing.

“I'm *good at that!*”

“When you talk to the cops in the liberal-state of Vermont when you're pulled over for speeding on one of your ski trips with the ski rack on top of your Honda Accord with your CB coat all zipped up and you're polite, it's like picking up luggage or ordering food on international flights — seven times out of eight you get out of speeding tickets, the exception being when you're doing 16 miles over the speed limit, rather than under 15 and therefore fudgeable [and at the officer's discretion].

“I'm not experience talking to a grown adult, otherwise — who is, at our age?

“I'm just demonstrating my ‘small potatoes' worldview.

“Don't mind me.

“Take all those elements out, and — *hey*, I don't know what to expect!

“I'll stay near my parents.”

“It's true: ‘They're so open-minded they're *close-minded!*’ It's not a pat but of clever adolescent-think, more telling in how it expressed little and strikes one as the sound of finding and flapping one's wings, for the first time.

“No . . . it was such a relief! Going, as I was, as doctor's son to the State University of New York at Alfredo, New York, I was *afraid*

of (*whew!*) failure and I (*whoosh!*) was so glad you let the air out of the tires when I was (*lets breath out, some more*) unable to reach that far or face the daunting chasm of potential failure . . .

“That’s not what pre-ATM ‘CASHHERE’ cards are *for!* Even grown-ups in Albany didn’t have one.”

(*beat.*)

“Wanna play foos?”

NOTE: It’s really *not* true — since it dropped off the radar of relevance to this conversation in the years since — that Mike’s “stake in the ground” was planted, inwardly, in re: Hampshire College specifically, the one of five (5) colleges part of the Amherst College circle where one attendee at each could take classes at the other . . . life’s scary in the Northeast for a spoiled brat grappling with Vietnam-draft-less tensions of the nascent Generation X, but, in addition to *that* place, which has no core/required courses or majors, apparently, whatsoever (not unlike Evergreen in all-hailed Olympia, WA), cool shit (and *heavy lifting*, too!) does get done at UMASS Amherst, subject of the Pixies song “U-Mass” from their fifth (and then-final) album, *Trompe le Monde*, which is a G-down-to-F and C-up-to-D barre chord progression, if you have any intention of getting through college (particularly one *not* off the radar, altogether) without screaming “it’s EDUCATIONAL!” four times really loud (it’s the chorus) in some dude’s room in your dorm who has a mic and an amp for it and can pound the skins even a *little* better than Mike, here, sitting in Denny’s in Albany, NY with a Camel Light burning in his hand and no idea he’s just bitten off another “excuse” that would pale in the light of day and, hence, have to be uttered/committed to under cover of night and offhand, “hey-weren’t-you-looking?” conversation since the downhill slide since he got kicked out of the band you were in together and which you outlasted him in (don’t hurt his male pride; don’t hurt his feelings!) just *felt* so *good!* and so much better than face-front, daunting confrontation.

They must breed ‘em better in NYC (skins-hitters!).

Or Mike’s Indian, not Asian.

Or something.

(pause.)

Got excuses?

MORAL: Drummer from Dartmouth who'd been playing frat parties and made no bones about playing our originals (five were real good, the two I had hands in writing "weren't bad") and covers ("Gigantic," "Orange Crush," "Swan Swan H" — it's not "I struck *your mother* ninety times," though: OOPS!) at the alcohol-free "First Night" gig in Albany, NY (not the Dinosaur Jr. & Pixies-supporting Amherst, MA by, like, a *planet's* distance) didn't get his traction taken from him from behind his back by Mike reaching and applying his "Missoula's far; he's going to that place 'cause it's far, too" estimation (you'd have to learn from Richard Linklater it's a hip place like Austin or Athens; she didn't tell us) in his offhand-conversation *métier* . . . did he?

I have to come home to a black hole, and tumble.

No ground there.

None *whatsoever* . . . WTF?

