

**THE BITCHIN'
CAR CHAPTER**

SNARK FARLEY

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CHAPTER 1

THE MISSING BITCHIN' CAR CHAPTER

[WARNING: the following is 100% about fine-ass muscle cars and the stupid things boys (and a few girls, I guess) will do to drive them or just look at other people driving them. If you don't like cars, you can suck it – Love, Snark.]

My car, Schmurissa, was not exotic or obnoxious enough to be featured in any car magazine, but I thought it might be close. I had made all the modifications to the body in ways that were very subtle so that if Joe Robo-Citizen was sitting beside you in traffic, she was just another 1972-ish white muscle car of the type that high schoolers liked to spend all their money on.

To the true car buff, however, the smooth one-piece body, molded in shaker hood scoop, and lowered suspension were badass and to be admired. The engine had been given the Snark treatment, making close to 400 horsepower, and I had added exhaust headers and bits of chrome here and there. I also had made judicious use of some expensive aircraft aluminum fittings and hoses. I could feel

comfortable pulling up to any local car show and lifting the hood, confident that I would get some compliments.

In the spring of 1977, I started to hear rumors of what was being advertised as the world's largest car show to be held in Indianapolis. It was the *Car Craft Street Machine Nationals* and, wouldn't you know it, a wild hair flew up my butt and I decided that I was going to Indianapolis.

I invited my buddy Yoda to go with me, since he, more than any other of my friends, appreciated muscle cars and loved to go cruising up and down Texas Avenue in Schmurissa. We were both only seventeen, which was a concern to Jake and Jen, but I promised them we would be good. It was only a car show after all.

Still, they were concerned about us going up across the Mason-Dixon line into Yankee territory – a common fear of many southerners. I reminded them that I had already lived in eight states out west, and I may have fibbed a little when I told them that Yoda had a cousin in Indiana who had invited us to stay with them. There was no cousin; the only plan we had was sleeping in the car.

The day before we left, Yoda brought over a road atlas so we could figure out the trip. It looked like the best way to Indianapolis was northeast through Arkansas, Missouri, and Illinois and then east into Indiana. On the way back we planned to go through Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Louisiana. Eight new states to add to my list, which back then had not yet become the obsession that it was to become as I got older.

The morning we left I drove over to Yoda's house at 4:30 am and had to knock on his window to wake him up. I

waited and waited until he finally staggered out the door carrying two big bags.

I said, "What the hell are you bringing, man? We're only spending three nights."

He just smiled and put the bags in the back seat, one of them clinking suspiciously.

I smiled conspiratorially, "What did you do, Yo?"

He smiled back, "I may have raided my parents liquor cabinet Snarky boy! Let's go, bitch!"

We Should Have Died

We made it about an hour out of town and the sun was just coming up when Yoda decided it was time to start making us drinks. He wanted to start us off with gin and tonic because the fullest bottle he had stolen said "Dry Gin" on the label, but we didn't know what Tonic was. It turns out that dry gin by itself is just nasty, so we poured it back into the bottle and settled for sipping from a half empty bottle of Old Grandad whiskey.

We stopped for breakfast at McDonalds in a podunk East Texas town near the border of Arkansas where the girl behind the counter didn't know what tonic water was either, but her acne-covered boss told us it was like flavored carbonated water, and you could get it at a liquor store or most grocery stores. You didn't even need to be eighteen. Nothing in Podunk was open yet so we headed out of town with Yoda driving while I thought I would try to get some sleep.

I was just nodding off when I felt the car leaning to the right and the tires squealing loudly. I looked up and Yoda had a death grip on the steering wheel and was dripping

sweat from his forehead as the car barely made it around a corner on the two-lane road that was supposed to lead us to Texarkana.

I asked, "What the hell Yo? How fast are you going?"

His response shocked and intrigued me, "Well, I got bored and I decided to see if I could take that corner at twice the speed that it said we were supposed to. The sign said 30 so I was doing 60."

"Shit Yo! You're gonna kill us, man! But hell yeah, the car made it, didn't it?"

"Barely," he replied. "I think I braked too late going in."

I was wide-awake now. I told him to relax and quit griping the steering wheel so hard. "Imagine the steering wheel is Connie's boob." Connie was the girl Yoda wanted to ask out but was too scared to.

"Snark, I need all my blood in my brain right now, so shut up. Oh fuck, here comes a 45-mph corner!"

Since we were both seventeen and bulletproof, I approved heartily as he mashed the accelerator and Schmurissa jumped quickly up to 90. I grabbed the leather seat with my ass cheeks and screamed at him to go for it! That first 45/90 mph corner was one of the scariest and most exhilarating things I have ever experienced.

As soon as we made it through, however, I told him to stop. It was my turn, but first more whiskey. Yoda was a little leery of letting me try because he had this silly idea that I was not the best driver. I reminded him that it was my car, and I could leave his ass in Arkansas if i wanted to. He reluctantly agreed. Since I'm alive and writing this, we obviously made it through those first few corners with me

driving, as well as the next hundred or so just like it, with Yoda driving. We found some tonic water in Texarkana, then realized we also needed ice. And while getting ice we decided to load up on Dorritos. Then back to double the speed limit roulette.

Somehow, we made it to Indianapolis.

I have no idea how we didn't die. We spent more than 18 hours exceeding the speed limit by a factor of two with one orange-stained hand on the wheel and the other holding a gin and tonic. It was dark when we pulled into a rest area just south of Indianapolis and we tried to sleep, but the adrenaline was still pumping.

I asked Yoda, "You asleep?"

"That's a stupid question Snark, of course I'm not asleep. My heart is still racing from the fucking day we just had."

I said, "I know, I know. I'm thinking that we should probably slow down a little on the way home. We've been lucky so far. I mean we didn't even see any cops! There's no way our luck's gonna hold out."

He sighed and replied, "I'm glad you said that Snark, because if you hadn't, I would have. I'm lying here afraid to check my pants, dude. I think I may have shit myself back in Texas when I let you drive for those five minutes!"

I laughed and then he laughed and then we must have both passed out because the next thing we knew an Indiana State Trooper was knocking on our window.

I rolled it down. "Yes sir?" I asked politely.

The trooper said, "You can't sleep here son. Besides, you better get going or your gonna miss the Nationals."

"Um, how do you know where we're going?" I asked.

He didn't answer, just stepped back so I could see the rest area parking lot. There were at least twenty other muscle cars of all types parked around us. We had been so tired when we pulled in the previous night that we hadn't noticed.

Yoda said it for me, "Holy shit on a shingle!"

We were parked next to a '69 Corvette that had a blower sticking through his hood and next to him was a '71 Dodge Challenger that looked like it was ready to drag race with enormous rear slicks and a parachute and wheelie bars on his back bumper.

The Trooper told me, "Just be careful, son. We're hearing that 38th avenue next to the Speedway is some kind of mess. More than 20,000 cars are cruising back and forth, making the largest traffic jam anyone has ever seen. I'm headed that way so don't let me see you doing anything stupid."

After he left, we got out and talked to a few of the other muscle car drivers. They were from all over the country, some as far as California. All of them were heading to downtown Indy.

Muscle Car Overload

It took us most of the morning to get to 38th Avenue because of all the fine-ass muscle cars all going the same direction. I have to say that it was the best-looking traffic jam I've ever been in. When we finally got to the Speedway, it was exactly as the trooper had said... a mess. At first, we tried to join the line of cars that filled all four lanes of traffic

going both ways, but that just meant you sat still in traffic for most of the time snorting fumes.

We decided to pull over into a bank parking lot and just sit and watch the show going on in front of us. For the first couple hours we pointed out every badass and beautiful hot rod that passed in front of us, but soon we were only noticing the Trans-Ams, and not long after that we wouldn't even glance at a car if it wasn't a white Trans-Am with a blower in place of the shaker scoop.

I distinctly remember that '71 Challenger from the rest area as it passed in front of us. People along the side of the road stopped it and poured water around its rear tires. Then they waited for the cars in front of him to move out a hundred yards or so and signaled to him to lay rubber. The Challenger's hemi engine screamed and it generated a huge cloud of tire smoke before it emerged from the cloud in a wheelie! The driver had to slam on his brakes to keep from hitting the cars in front of him while everyone cheered. Then the crowd waited for the next car that seemed like it might be entertaining and did the same thing.

One thing I had never seen before was a big four-wheel drive truck with monster tires doing a burn out with his front tires. Yoda speculated that he had line locks on his rear tires, but whatever... the burn out went on so long that when he was finally done there were two piles of rubber on the street at least 6 inches high and we were all coughing.

The two of us sat there all day, skipping lunch and dinner and getting sunburned as hell. We had never seen anything like it, nor had anyone else, and when the sun

went down it just got more intense, if that's even possible. People on the streets were stopping side by side cars now and trying to get them to drag race – in a traffic jam. The world's largest traffic jam. It was insane.

Around midnight we had had enough and snuck out of the bank parking lot and wandered through downtown until we found a White Castle fast food joint that was still open. Neither of us had ever had a slider before so we pigged out and then slept in the parking lot. Two tired little boys who just had the best Christmas ever!

Back to Boring

It took us almost two full days to make it back to our hometown taking the alternate route as we had planned. We stopped and did some touristy stuff in Memphis (apparently Elvis was home at Graceland because nobody was allowed past the gate. Side note: the King of Rock N Roll would be dead in another six months).

For some reason, we had no desire to pretend we had a badass hot rod and drive home like the maniacs who drove north just three days before. Schmurissa was a really nice car but compared to what we had just witnessed in Indy, it was like driving a station wagon on the way home.

I took a couple of months for that feeling to wear off, but soon enough I was back to basking in the glow of having one of the most badass cars in my little town.

End of Episode

THE BITCHIN' CAR CHAPTER

I remember thinking that if I would just cash in that chunk of whale puke, I could build Schmurissa into a car that would blow everyone away at the 1978 Car Craft Street Machine Nationals.

Little did I know that when the date for the 1978 show rolled around my car would be gone and so would I.