

The Yamashiro Incident

Written by Dave Howard



A few years back, I went to a BBQ. There was this guy I went to college with who I always thought was a bit of a tool. Not in a bad way, just too big for his britches.

Anyways he said the oddest thing.

“One night we were having a poker night and everyone just sat around telling their best “Dave” stories.

Meaning me. This was a group of guys whose names I faintly remembered/

Really?

He rattled off a few. And I guess those were pretty funny. But why in the hell would I end up being the headline subject of an evening where money was at stake?

A few years ago at a Thanksgiving dinner amongst another set of friends, this subject was again broached. Slapshot around the table people were talking about some of their staple favorite stories about me. A few years later at a friend’s wedding reception, all these people came up to

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me saying “Oooooo... so you’re Dave Howard”

So now, I start a new series entitled “Stories My Friends Tell About Me”

Some of which I do not recall..

OR they were told differently than I remember. More detail... different outcomes.. more sensationalized. I have always had one motto about telling stories “80% of what I say is true, the rest just makes it a better story.”

This is how my friends tell it, if my friends told stories in the 1st person.

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I used to have this maroon 1983 Oldsmobile. It was solid, stable and brilliant. All matching vinyl interior, with ashtrays built into the back of the front seat, it was large enough for six which made me a very popular driver on drunken Saturday nights. It had a top notch sound system with AM AND FM radio.

Anyways I was working at this new upstart Talent Management and Production company which was, at that time the, talk of the town. Now it is still a major player, but more of a staple than the rebel pirate ship it once was. Everyone was very excited about it.

So I got invited to fancy things.

This time around it was a party at Yamashiro, this beautiful Japanese joint situated high in the Hollywood Hills. Inside there is a Japanese Garden complete with a little river and bridges you can walk over. From the view you can see all the twinkling lights that is Los Angeles. The view

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is fantastic, it looks great. I remember thinking when you are in “the view” it it’s just another 7-11. I don’t remember who the party was for, but I knew I had to be on my best behavior and look good for the evening. Especially, since I was stepping into a crapmobile at the end of the night.

I wanted to represent the company as well as I could.

I picked up Flysh (the storyteller) split a bottle of vintage (or maybe it was a 12-pack) before hand and headed out for the chi-chi in the sky.

To get to Yamashiro you have to go straight up into the Hollywood Hills. Now for a well tuned machine this would have been jaunt. But it was not a journey for a 1983 Oldsmobile with vinyl interior. Later “vinyl” would be renamed “plether.” Remember plether?

As we reached the top of the valet line

“Do you smell fire?” Flysh asked me.

Not “Do you smell smoke?” but “Do you smell fire?” Now I smoked and this was the Hollywood Hills that manages to go up in flames every few years. Odds were in our favor that it was one of those two things.

There was a third option we had not counted on.

The Olds was on fire as we drove into the valet station. Big flames. . I darted to the hood, so to see what was going on.

Ya know how folks kind of zombie-out at work? Well at this point the valet tries to drive out with

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flambe-car...

“Dude... it’s on fucking fire!

The guy is just trying to do his job, but is completely unaware of the crisis at hand. How the hell does one dive into a car soon to be engulfed?

Her fights me a bit, trying to get my crapmobile out of the way. The restaurant has to keep standards as well. I wrestle the keys from this kid and tell Flysh the plans have changed.

I get my keys and pour a big gulp on what I thought was most of the fire.

We coast in neutral back down the hill and end up at Chevron on Franklin and Highland where we finally decide to leave this fine American auto. Fortunately, across the street was “The Powerhouse” one of several bars in the neighborhood that boast that Bukowski used to hang out.

Fucking cool!

After putting in it park. We went over there. I don’t remember how we got home. Or

how I got to work the next day or how I paid for the damages to my mom’s car. But, apparently it happened.

Next up: How to throw a thieving Italian off of a train...

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