



Plasma & Wigwood a pshort pstory by Mike Bozart [rev. MAR 2016]

She was a striking, smiling, stylish, 50-something Asian lady now, who suddenly said: “Hi there, sir. You sure do look familiar. Do I know you from somewhere? A rooftop, perhaps?”

But first, let’s go back a few days. Well, really, more like years. Decades, even. We can fit through this time portal, this narrow worm hole. Button those loose sleeves. Yep. Here we go. Watch that last step. It’s a woozy doozy.

<flash> Ah, here it is: Charlotte back in the early 1970s. The Plaza-Midwood area of the inner eastside was not the dichotic yupscale gentrification/neo-hipsterdom creation it is today. It was a much seedier, completely non-trendy, often dangerous scene all the way around.

Back then, drug addicts were selling their blood plasma for another fix. Alcoholics slept it off on the sidewalks, lying in their reeking urine. An X-rated theater featured skin flicks that would have you stuck to your seat. Literally. And no-nonsense working-class greasy-spoon restaurants, where even the salads were deep-fried, were the norm. Ok, a possible exaggeration there.

PBR (Pabst Blue Ribbon) was drunk because it was American and dirt cheap – not because it was the hipster brew of choice. In fact, the current crop of trust-fund scenesters were not even born yet.

The pigeons were more numerous in those days. But, the exact reason why escapes me at the moment. Oh, wait a sec; it was the bag ladies. I remember seeing them at Central & The Plaza, near the bus stop, tossing out pieces of

stale bread. Yeah, that was it. Remember that? No? Looking elsewhere? It's ok; you're excused. Sorry about that senseless diversion.

Well, you get the picture. I'm putting this out as product. And parcel. Sometimes you have to type stuff like this to keep the story going. Or, to momentarily derail it while buying time. Ah, just a little icing on the red velvet cake, which we haven't even yet baked. But, I digress. Moving night along.

Ok, now there was this one really bad alcoholic pill-popper. He was a young white dude with light brown hair, of average build, who was a regular at the plasma donation center near Clement & Central. And, lo and behold, he got the nickname, Plasma. I kid you not.

Well, at first he really despised the moniker, but he grew into liking its fit. Sometimes after downing a six-pack before noon, he would scream, "Mr. Plasma is ready to collect!" That usually cleared the sidewalk.

Let me stop for a second and tell you that that last Diet Cherry Coke – the one that was on the office floor for seven months – well, some remnants were left on the inside of the plastic bottle after gulping it down – the same remnants which are probably on my insides now. Lovely, I know. And, hey, how about that – a sentence with a back-to-back *that*. Did you catch that? That is to be avoided, right? Write. And, yes, I do this without Adderall or sign-language sympathy. Ok, enough, enough, enough. Back to our waggish tale.

Perhaps you are now wondering: *Did Plasma have a job?* Why, of course not. *Where did he live?* Would you believe

that he rented, via a stipend from good ol' dad, a back yard 8' x 10' metal shed with no heat source for \$20/month off Lamar Avenue? And, all through the winter, too, mind you.

Yes, he wrapped himself in five sleeping bags when it got down to 10°F. Mr. Plasma slept through the frigid nights donning a found-on-the-street Sugar Mountain ski mask.

He timed his bathroom breaks like a German train. The fast-food restaurant's sink made for a quick sponge bath at 9:30 AM (after the breakfast rush had passed).

And, how did he smell? Usually as ripe as a soft, decomposing, post-Halloween pumpkin.

I can hear one of you out there asking about his lineage – so very important in provincial '70s Charlotte, you know. Well, Plasma was the son of a downtown banker. Back then downtown was called, well, downtown – not uptown. Maybe some geologic uplift in the '80s? Who knows? That's another story almost altogether.

Yes, it was the oh-too-typical story of the only-son rich kid. Pop was always bailing him out of his screw-ups. A pair of downtown lawyers stayed very well-appointed just because of the plasmatic one's misadventures in the Queen City of the South. (Trivia note: This is also the motto of the city of Cebu in the Philippines.)

Money for the essentials was never a problem for Plasma. There was no real need for a job with his next-to-nil aspirational outlook. The blood-plasma money became extra beer and pill money. It was all an endless party without an

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