

***“ You’re A Shithead! “***

I remember going to a nursing home gig one Fourth of July for a one hour party on the upper west side of Manhattan. It was the kind of hot and steamy afternoon where the air was stifling, just standing still and not moving around you at all. It must have been 98 degrees.

There were lots of long picnic tables set up under a huge awning and the nursing home residents were surrounded by the beautifully landscaped outdoor garden and the wonderful smell of hamburgers and hot dogs and chicken being barbequed on the grills hit me as soon as I entered the area where I was supposed to play.

I had just finished setting up my keyboard, amp and microphone, trying desperately to find a shady spot so the heat from the sun wouldn't melt the little plastic LCD screen on my keyboard, and was just about to start playing, when a resident sitting in a wheelchair right in front of me lit up a cigarette and blew the smoke so it just hovered there right in front of my face. When I looked to see who it was, I saw this old lady who must have been about 100 years old, the kind with one of those really wrinkled faces and her lips were pursed tightly around that cigarette as it kind of drooped down from her mouth. Now I'm not a smoker, and even if I was, I was about to play and sing for an hour and didn't really feel comfortable with that kind of thing happening right in front of me for the entire show. So I was about to say something to her when a pretty, young Latina aide, who was standing behind the woman, gave me a nod like she understood what had just happened and without saying a word, took the arms of the wheelchair and started moving the woman back away

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from me, taking her all the way around the grills and the tables where the people were sitting and after making a big circle, finally ended up coming back down this path on my left side, to bring her into another part of the garden which was behind me. I mean this place was huge!

So just as they were passing me and I was about to start playing, the old lady told the aide to stop right next to me. I wondered why she stopped, when all of a sudden she leaned over to me and said, “ You know something” and paused and I said “yes?” and she looked me right in the eye and said, “You’re a Shithead!” Well as soon as she said that, the young Latina aide kind of gasped and took off with the old lady, continuing to push her past me into the gardens behind me.

I was flabbergasted, of course, and immediately burst out laughing cause I couldn’t believe what she had just said, but couldn’t really afford to relish the moment too much because I had to start my gig. So just as I was about to start playing my first number, a supervisor came over to ask what was going on and when I told her she almost convulsed so hard from laughing she almost fell over! I guess she felt bad for me cause a minute later she came over and offered me some bottled water concerned that I was playing in that kind of heat! And man was it hot!

So I did my set, which was a lot of fun, as it usually was, cause I get to play all kinds of stuff, like Caribbean, and Rock and Roll and always seem to come up with songs that reflect the moment I’m playing in like “Hot, Hot, Hot”! or whatever is going on at that particular gig.

Just as I was finishing my last number, wouldn’t you know it but the pretty aide was coming up the path by me wheeling you know who! And like clockwork, just as they pulled up alongside of me, the old lady told the girl to stop again.

I couldn’t believe she had the nerve to say anything else, and

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curious to know what she could possibly have to say, I leaned over again and she looked me in the eyes and said, “ You know, you play beautiful music!” I was truly astonished and for a change I was quick on the uptake and said right back to her, “Does that mean you’ve changed your opinion of me? to which she quickly responded “No!!”