

God Supports

IN GOD'S COUNTRY

VANSKI IS A ROCKIN' MUSIC MACHINE AS UNCLE ELEVEN ROLLS TO ITS NEXT TOUR STOP: THE TINY TOWN OF CARTHAGE, TENNESSEE. HIGHWAY TIME IS GREAT FOR CATCHING UP ON MUSIC—AND THE BAND MEMBERS AND CREW ARE KICKING TO THE NEW RECORD BY THE ELASTIC WASTE BAND.



... CLICK!

TONY, STEPHANIE, AND JESSICA
BEN.

BEN

You call that MUSIC? That's trash. "The chocolate-covered astronaut." I could write that in my sleep. Let's see, how 'bout this?

*The chocolate-covered astronaut
All he needs is just a little space.
So he told the gummi worms from Planet Pester
To stop orbiting his almond-cluster face.*

Pretty good, huh?

GRACE

Exxxx-cellent.

STEPHANIE

You're just jealous because the Elastic Waste Band has a hit. One million downloads. People love 'em, and so do we—right guys?

JESSICA

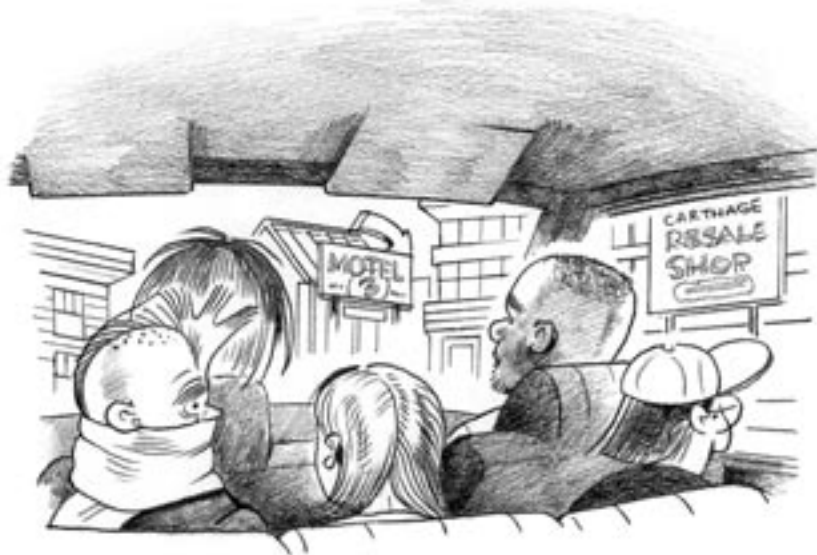
We don't tease you when you want to listen to your Tony Bennett songs before bed, Ben. Oooohh, now *there's* a cool crooner. If you're 80.

BEN

Hey, what I listen to before bed on my MP3 player is MY business.

JESSICA

Not if you play "Steppin' Out with My Baby" so loud that everyone in the van can hear it.



GENEVIEVE

Can everyone just knock it off for a sec? We are seriously lost here. The itinerary says "Carthage Junior High, 712 Fulton Street, 6 p.m. Saturday load in." I don't see any sign of a school anywhere.

GENEVIEVE

I don't feel good about this. It all looks so seedy.

BEN

Why don't you pull over and ask directions?

GENEVIEVE

Excuse me, sir. We're looking for 712 Fulton Street, Carthage Junior High. Is that 712 South or 712 North?

STRANGER

Ha Ha!

GENEVIEVE

What?

MA'AM, THERE IS NO 712 SOUTH OR NORTH . . . JUST 712 FULTON STREET. THIS IS IT. YOU'RE ALREADY HERE. AND AS FOR THE CARTHAGE JUNIOR HIGH . . .

A HA HA HA HA HEE HEE. CARTHAGE JUNIOR HIGH. WAIT UNTIL JUNIOR HEARS THAT ONE. HE'S GONNA CHOKE ON HIS OJ. HA HA HA . . .

GENEVIEVE

Don't worry, gang. I'll fix this.

That's the last time I book a gig over the Internet using a 12-year-old booking agent.

GENEVIEVE

Excuse me . . .
I'm looking for Junior.



YOU GOT 'IM, MISS. WHAT CAN I DO YA FOR? INTERESTED IN SOME COCKATOOS?

I'M WITH THE BAND THAT'S PLAYING TONIGHT.



JUNIOR

Oh. You mean the Uncool Eleven ...

GENEVIEVE

No. Uncle Eleven.

JUNIOR

Well. Now that's a relief. That's an odd name. But I thought it was even odder for a band to call itself "uncool" and all.

GENEVIEVE

Anyway ... we were SLATED to play tonight. But I'm afraid there's been a huge mistake. We thought we were booked at "Carthage Junior High." You know, as in some local middle school.

JUNIOR

Huh.

GENEVIEVE

You know, you just can't trust those 12-year-old booking agents. I mean, who would make a dumb mistake like that, confusing a pet shop with a school dance?

JUNIOR

Oh, you mean Justin? That'd be ... my son.

GENEVIEVE

Oh. Oops.

GENEVIEVE

Look, the kids in this band aren't ready to compete with barking puppies and screaming birds. They can't play here. It'd be ridiculous.

JUNIOR

What are you talking about?

I've got a contract here, agreed to by you, that calls for three hour-long sets.

GENEVIEVE

But we only have two sets of material. That can't be right ...

JUNIOR

See for yourself. That's your signature, ain't it?

GENEVIEVE

Gulp.

JUNIOR

Now, I ain't a fighting man. But every weekend, pretty much the whole town shows up expecting to hear some Willie Nelson and Dixie Chicks songs. So I suggest you get your band in here, get 'em set up, and be ready to hit the stage at 8 o'clock sharp ...

BACK IN THE VAN . . .

GRACE

But we don't have three sets.

TONY

And we don't know any country music.

JOHNNY

I don't even own a pet.

GENEVIEVE

I am so, so sorry about this. But we have to play ...



**ONSTAGE AT JUNIOR'S IT'S CRAMPED, CONFINING
... AND THINGS GET STARTED WITH A CLANG.**



OFFSTAGE

I said, "HOW MUCH FOR THAT BOA CONSTRICTOR, JUNIOR?"

OFFSTAGE VOICE TWO

Play some Waylon Jennings.

OFFSTAGE VOICE THREE

Y'all do any boot-scootin' music?

JUNIOR

Look, y'all gotta start playing some good music or these people are gonna give me grief big time. You know any Johnny Cash? Garth Brooks? Toby Keith? Brooks and Dunn? Come on y'all. I'd even settle for something by Larry the Cable Guy.

BEN

A man's gotta do what a man's gotta do.

*Roll away the stone, don't give in to fear
Don't shed a tear for the things you can't change
God's got a grip and he wants to take hold
No matter how shattered the hope in your soul.*

VOICE FROM THE CROWD

You call that MUSIC?

BEN

Where have I heard THAT before?

JUNIOR

That's it. Cut. Get out. I can stand a lot of things in this pet shop—haggin', bringin' back dead gobies for a refund, folks not flushin' the toilet. But I won't have any band preaching to my customers. You got that? Now pack up, get out, and you can forget about gettin' paid—or comin' back. You'll never play this pet shop again.

GENEVIEVE

Huuuuge loss, let me tell you. OK, everyone, let's get packed up.

MAN

Just a minute.

BEN

Look, sir. Can't you see we've endured enough abuse here? But if you hold on, I can fish a dollar out of my pocket, and

you can go over to the jukebox across town and play some Patsy Cline. On me. OK?

MAN

You're right, kid. You did endure too much abuse up there. But you've got to understand. Yesterday was payday for most of these people. They're cutting loose by heckling the band.

BEN

Forgive me if I don't share their pain. They're cutting a little too loose if you ask me.

MAN

Believe it or not, kid, some of these same folks are going to wake up tomorrow and regret treating y'all like jerks. That's why I'd like to invite you to play at my church.

BEN

What?

MAN

We'll take offerings after my 9 and 11 o'clock sermons, and whatever we get, you can keep. It took a lot of guts to stand up here and not act like ... well, animals.

BEN

You're a preacher? What on earth are you doing here?

MAN

Now where do you think Jesus would be if he lived in Carthage? He'd be out with the party people—even if that meant giving the sermon at the pet shop. He'd feel right at home. See you tomorrow.

AS THE BAND GATHERS AROUND BEN, HE SHARES THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT SHARING THE GOOD NEWS SUNDAY.

GRACE

Unbelievable story.

TONY

Cool. How loud can I play my drums in a church?

STEPHANIE

You should be proud of yourself, Ben.

BEN

I couldn't have done it ...

