

# The Last Pepsi

*By Vincent Sargenti*

The morning was long, grey and languid, like a lizard looking longingly for a warm rock, a sunny roost of sweet exposure yet finding only thick viscous goo clinging to his every limb. The morning went on and on and yet I like the lazy, longing lizard, I could not climb through and out of this sticky and relentless molasses of my sequestered soul. I couldn't seem to make anything come together in my mind. I was like some hideous mess of a man, unable to raise myself from the bowels of my own dismay. So I remained, slanted on the couch in my living room, propped on one arm, which precariously clung to the television remote, my last ditch connection to a dying digital age, to the throngs of humanity out there in the world, living, traveling, moving the streets and through the towns across America.

What could I do to bring myself up out of this deep and unshakable lethargy, which haunted me unremittingly? Was there anything I could do? As I rounded channel 471 for the umpteenth time it seemed as if my entire life had taken a sad and pathetic turn for the worse. I was starting to drool. Holy mother of God what would be next?

I could think of nothing, my mind was not only blank but was indeed blanketed by a thick, heavy and palpably viscous fog that held me, mouth open, leaning on my arm on the soft and friendly couch. The couch was like the arms of a saintly mother reaching out to support me and hold me steadfast against all pain and dearth of plentitude. The couch was like a cloud, a sacred loka of divine embrace, for I knew all things good and warm and comfortable were with me, eternally on the couch.

The only problem I could sense was in the form of some deep indefinable longing that surged up to haunt me from time to time, from the depths of my incomprehensible spirit, from the sea of turbulent feelings on which I sometimes floated, from the area immediately adjacent to and below the couch. As I lay there, unable to formulate a thought of any kind, suddenly I was overtaken by a nameless and yet disturbingly familiar sensation, the feeling that the refrigerator was all too far off from the couch.

My eyes alone had shifted in my cold and empty skull. Suddenly, the distance between the living room and the kitchen filled my vaporous perception. I pondered that distance for perhaps an hour, an hour that seemed to last beyond forever. It was an hour, which stood the test of time. Not an hour that flew by but rather an hour in which I seemed to age deeply. It was a profoundly long and desperate hour.

As I rounded that desolate and indescribable remoteness that is cable channel 471 for yet another umpteenth time, I considered the possibility that I might actually be able to traverse that distance and have a look at what might be in the refrigerator, the refrigerator, yes. I had some vague sense of what might be there, glistening on those far off shelves, glowing in their incandescent light but it had been the night before, an eon ago, and everything went black, then suddenly I awoke from a painful, agonizing sleep finding myself positioned here, leaning on my arm on this beautiful, safe and comfortable couch.

So, although I was incapable of meaningful thought, I was bathed in the somehow physical sensations of all the dazzling nuances available to me in the kitchen. The kitchen, yes! I hallucinated a perfectly cohesive and all-inclusive world where dancing appliances, whirling and singing machineries of sumptuousness joined with me in gleeful ecstasy. I could see myself dancing and singing, toasting bread and slicing butter, blending beverages and processing food. A Broadway musical was now alive in my mind and I was the star! Yes, this was the sensation

that could lead me upward and back to the world of the living, this was enough to get me to do it. I felt that I might be ready soon to stand up. So thought about it a little longer and then I did.

I was led to the kitchen by an utterly enthralling enchantment bouncing through my mind. The impulses surged up from motor neurons deep within me and suddenly I found I had enough adrenaline and neurotransmitters accumulated in one area, enough to stand. I was up! I was living! Lumbering listlessly across the vast expanse that had separated me, held me captive, kept me from what I knew was mine. I stumbled. Shaken badly but still moving, I held my course until I reached the counter on the far end of the living room. I could see across the counter, over the stove and through the portal beneath the cupboards. It was there, shining and humming in the morning and fluorescent kitchen light that shone. I knew I didn't have much further to go now. I knew I could make it.

I relied heavily on the wall now to support my crippling weight. Once I saw the smooth linoleum, I lunged forward, reaching out beyond my own center of gravity, taking a huge leap of faith I felt the cool and soothing beauty of the refrigerator door handle. It was smooth and fluid in my hand, the sensation of a frigid temperature was enlivening. It seemed to bring me to my senses. I opened the door. There was a sound. It was a sound that only a refrigerator door could make. It was the sound of the gates of heaven opening and the light began to shine!

There I stood, for perhaps twenty minutes, bathed by the incandescent bulb of my dreams. There was so much to choose from, so much to see! All the colorful packaging and labels! I just wanted to take it all in, to allow it to fill my senses completely. There was not a lot there that was interesting me, however. I saw some salad stuff, a brick of Tillamook cheddar, a holy host of seasonings and jars of sandwich stuff. At once, I succumbed from the effort being too much and fell to my knees. I couldn't bear the agony of indecision any longer. And then I saw it.

It was on the very bottom behind a head of lettuce and some cucumbers. The shiny blue can seemed to strike the eye with a sensation of almost divine purity. It was the last Pepsi, hiding as if someone had meant to keep it from my view, hoarding it for themselves and no other. But I had discovered it and was filled with a sense of complete and utter urgency. It was mine, all mine, mine, I tell you! The look of the can alone imparted such a sense of ultimate fulfillment and deep inner peace, so blue and bright, so perfectly poised. I reached for the can. It was icy cold to the touch and a little bead of moisture traveled down the can reaching my dry and desperate fingers. I fumbled with the tab frantically until I could, at last, bring the sparkling jewel to my lips and taste the dazzling, glittering sensation. It exploded into my mouth, into my body and its effervescence flashed over spilling into the entirety of my being, fulfilling every fiber of my now glistening spirit.

My eyes cleared up at once as if energized by the charge laser beam. I reached for a glass in the cupboard to better enjoy this fine delicacy of refreshment and joy. As I poured the beautiful caramel-colored concoction into the glistening glass I knew. . . I knew that all would be well again very soon. It was as if the world took on dimensions of tranquility and harmony. The sound of carbonated happiness filled the air and with it my spirits were lifted high. Nothing could stop me now. I tipped the glass and let the contents flow into me. The crisp and tantalizing loveliness danced across my tongue and plummeted toward my stomach joining the billions of spinning, whirling molecules that comprise who I am. I was beyond myself with glee. It was as if I were partaking of purest light and energy directly from the sun.

I could feel the sweet sugar entering my bloodstream propelled by the force of the pressurized bubbles inherent in every Cola. It was as if my blood, now carbonated, surged with new life and I was happier than a hound in howling contest. I could feel the life, the humanity and the throngs of shoppers all across America. Now I had the present fortitude to join them, all these wonderfully miserable human beings and to go singing merrily off into traffic and the marketplace. I knew I had to go, every atom of my being was telling me, "Go!" I had to take my place in the universe, my place among the cars, to join the living dance of life with the masses in revolving debt.

I was overtaken by the speed and energy to shower, shave and dress myself. I flew out of the house and to my car, starting it and never waiting for it to warm up first as I myself had just needed to do. I was now on a mission and my mission was clear: Make it to the market fast.

I knew I didn't have much time before the effects of loveliness wore off returning me to my drooling desperation, as if in a bad dream, a vanquished warrior would crumple onto the couch and die quietly whimpering to painful slobber. I had to make it to the market quickly because I knew. . . I had drank the last Pepsi . . .and if I didn't get there soon, continuing the flow of syrupy glistening, nectar to my veins, all would be lost and life itself would fall apart.

But I made it and as I reached for the beautiful, red, white and blue 12-pack, in the great big cooler, the heavens spontaneously burst into song, showering me with rhapsodies, as the entire world seemed to celebrate with me. Everyone looked so friendly and responsive. The world was utterly engaging. I could think of so many things to go and do. I knew I had reached a moment of perfection. I walked to the check out counter as if on air, my connection to the source and supply secure.