

The Smoothie

The girl behind the counter had that slouched persona that only teenagers can manage. She had no interest in my questions as to what fruit was fresh and in season - she pointed to the bins of prepped ingredients saying "its all fresh" - nor was she sympathetic to my struggle with the huge list of choices: Light and Fluffy, Muscle Punch, Immune Booster, Celestial Cherry High, Instant Vigor - you get the picture . . .

Given that soon I would be cheek to jowl with the throngs attending the Lauderdale boat show I decided that a little immune system reinforcement was a good idea. The blender roared to life and soon I was handed my smoothie, its weight noticeable (in an age of air "lite" fast food milkshakes this thing had heft) the Styrofoam tumbler taugth under the load.

Back in the Intermarine Savannah courtesy van I deploy the articulating plastic marvel that Chrysler has installed for holding beverage containers. I imagine the team of engineers, the arsenal of computer aided design tools, the meetings, the proof-of-concept prototyping, the materials specialists - all working in "high performance teams" to produce this fantasim of plastic, hinges, and springs. I buckle up, back out of my parking space and make the right out onto Cordova Boulevard. The convergence of parking lot asphalt to concrete drainage and back to highway asphalt puts the van through a samba of alternating forces just enough to send the smoothie tottering off to the left, then back to the right. The carefully

engineered holder - a mere two inches deep - crushes the side wall of the tall bulging Styrofoam. The light at 17th street just changed so I'm surrounded by the pent up swarm of cars heading north on Cordova, my attention is whipping from right mirror (bright red Ferrari,) ahead (Airborne Express truck,) left mirror (crumpled Camry,) I straighten the smoothie, turning it as I do - a bright ooze becomes visible, the contents extruding itself out through the rupture in the Styrofoam - the Ferrari cuts in front of me - strawberry red it flows like slow lava out, around, and through the intricate plastic parts - the Airborne truck brakes - less like lava now it resembles some cheesy special effect from a Japanese Sci-Fi flick "Its Alive !!" - the Camry honks. Did the engineers do a fluid dynamic study of how goo would pass through the precision molded cracks and crevices? I grab the smoothie tilting it back in a vane effort to realign the pull of gravity on its contents. It's now dropping blobs on the carpet. I finally manage to pull back into the next parking lot entrance - the same one I used on my way in - I coast to a stop right back in front of the Smoothie King. I felt like going in and saying "boost this" but refrained.

A roll of paper towels and a new cup later I try anew to get my day underway - but the courtesy van will carry forever in the inaccessible voids between this plastic and that some mysterious red ectoplasm.

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