

GARAGE WINE

Taylor and Pug moved the paint cans and bucket of rags out of the way so they could reach in behind the scrap lumber that leaned up against the wall. The garage smelled musty and the heat was stifling in the closed-in quarters. The gallon jug they'd hidden behind the pile of junk had a balloon stretched over its neck that now hung limp down its side.

"You think it's done?" asked Taylor as he pulled the wiggly rubber stopper off with a SNAP!

"I think so. The balloon's flat. Try it," said Pug.

Taylor looked down into the plastic milk jug at the purplish liquid that sloshed around inside.

"I don't see anything that looks like it don't belong," he said, and tipped the jug up until its contents flowed into his mouth. It tasted sweet and had a slight tang to it that Taylor took to be the alcohol formed in the liquid. "Oh yeah!" he hissed out then smacked his lips and handed the bottle to Pug. Pug took the jug and drew in a healthy sip.

"Ahhh! Tastes like wine!"

The recipe they used said it would take six weeks to fully ferment, but it had only been four. They couldn't wait any longer because Pug had run into Lorelei Jenner and Shana Datsun uptown at the Tastee

Freeze and had asked the girls if they wanted to help them drink it. Pug always liked the way Lorelei wore her t-shirts tied in a knot that showed her belly, like she was then. When he told her what he and Taylor had done, the girls seemed interested in trying it.

By the time Taylor and Pug reached the Buck Creek train trestle, Shana and Lorelei were already there. They could hear the girls laughing underneath it as they skirted down the short bank to where the train bridge's metal girders came in contact with the land.

"Ladies," Pug said as he held up the plastic jug of wine for the girls to drink. Shana and Lorelei looked at one another, daring each other to be first.

"This ain't gonna make me sick, is it?" asked Shana, skeptical of the contents in the plastic container.

"I'll go," said Lorelei, and grabbed the jug. She had never drunk any alcohol before, except for a sip at her church's communion when they made a mistake and put real wine in the adolescent's decanter. She remembered it tasted bitter and didn't like it but wanted to give it another try. "Hey, I like it! It's sweet," she said surprised after taking a timid sip. She put the jug up to her mouth and chugged down six more gulps.

"No bogarting," said Pug, and eased the jug from Lorelei's hand. Yeah, he wanted the girls to get drunk, but the way she was going at it, she wouldn't have left them any.

They sat at the top of the little slope under the trestle and passed the jug of wine around while Pug talked about a car he was going to get when he turned sixteen in a couple of years. Taylor always admired the way Pug could talk around girls and not clam up like the way he did. He knew other guys his age who had drunk beer before and had ended up making out with a girl. He had hoped by drinking some wine he would do

better than he'd been doing, but he hadn't said much since the girls arrived.

"Dude, this is pretty damn good," Pug said to Taylor after taking a break from his future muscle car talk to pull in another swig. The wine was warm now, not hot like it was earlier when they'd pulled it from its hiding place in the garage.

Taylor took the jug and tossed it up for a hit and a little bit of wine streaked out from the corner of his mouth. He liked that the girls were drinking something they'd made.

"Next time we'll make two batches, his and hers," grinned Taylor, and handed the jug to Shana, to take her turn at the drinking.

She took the bottle then stared at Taylor just as everyone broke out laughing.

"What?" said Taylor as everyone stared at the purple blotch above his upper lip.

"Dude, you look like you been sucking on a red licorice dick," laughed Pug.

"Awww maaaannn," Taylor groaned, embarrassed that his cool factor for being a renegade booze maker was diminished.

"Looks great on you," Shana joked as she watched him rub at the purple smear on his face.

"Here," she said, and took a big, sloppy gulp of the wine then pulled the jug away to show her matching purple 'stache. "How's mine look?"

"Like what I just told Taylor," said Pug, and everyone laughed again at the renewed joke.

"I want one!" shouted Lorelei, eagerly grabbing for the jug to be part of the red licorice dick lickers club.

After a while, Pug said he needed to show Lorelei something and took the jug and headed down to the creek bank. Taylor and Shana watched as the two

passed the wine back and forth like they were afraid it was going to spoil. Now that Pug was obviously making his moves on Lorelei, Taylor gathered that Shana and he were supposed to try and hang out.

“So what do you think? You like it?” Taylor asked when he couldn’t think of anything else to say.

“It’s okay. Pretty sweet for wine though.”

Taylor told her he and Pug might have screwed up on the instructions when they added half a bag of sugar. They didn’t know how much two cups was and figured that was about right.

Lorelei squealed with laughter. Taylor and Shana looked down at the creek bank and saw that Pug had found a plastic bait bucket and had put it on his head. He was walking in circles making BEEP BEEP BOP BOP robot sounds while Lorelei laughed hysterically. Lorelei squealed again when a cluster of dried-up worms fell out of the bucket and onto the front of Pug’s shirt.

Taylor and Shana went back to checking out the graffiti scrawled on the bridge abutment’s ancient stone blocks. Band logos like AC/DC and Foghat littered its surface and Taylor always wanted to bring a can of spray paint and write “Sucks” under the one for Styx. They read where Jess loved Pat in 1966 and wondered, which was the guy and which was the girl?

“Man, that stinks!” said Shana, staring down at the sliver of brown water that passed under the bridge. It looked as though it wasn’t even moving and the smell of dead fish seemed to linger under the train trestle’s iron girder roof. Buck Creek wasn’t much to fish in or anything really. It was so small that old-timers in town would say you could piss in it and raise the water level by two feet.

“You ever get drunk before?” asked Shana, her eyes captivated by the muddy water.

“Oh yeah, all the time,” Taylor lied, wanting to appear more worldly than he knew he was.

“I haven’t,” said Shana, then leaned back on her elbows and blew a strand of hair out of her face. She arched her back as she stretched out and Taylor could see her bra through her t-shirt. He could tell she knew he was looking and kept staring ahead so Taylor could continue to gawk. “Me and Lorelei were gonna try and get drunk tonight.”

“Really? Where wuz you gonna git it?” asked Taylor. He always thought Shana was sort of wild and was surprised to hear she’d never been drunk before. Maybe because her older brother was a metalhead and always in trouble. Taylor just assumed she had the same genetic leaning.

“My dad has all kinds of bottles he keeps in his workroom. We were gonna take a little bit from each one and put it into a jar. If he ever missed any of it he would just blame Eric anyway.” She glanced at Taylor and smiled before staring back down at the muddy water. “But I like this better.”

Hey, Thanks for reading a sample of the story Garage Wine. To read further and enjoy other stories in *1979* short story collection, Please click on the BUY ME tab back at the Welcome page. Thanks, Steve