**Candy**

*Norman Yeung*

Up my block is a newspaper box for The Georgia Straight. It never used to be there. It wasn't there when the building behind it was Buy-Low Foods. It wasn't there when Buy-Low became a Chinese supermarket. It wasn't there when the Chinese supermarket became a Vietnamese supermarket. The box is new, just like the gang of hott young things waiting at the bus stop across the street -- rocking tight black jeans, toques, tattoos, channeling Chrissie Hynde and M.I.A. -- who until recently had never been this far south or east. Only a year ago, you would never find The Straight in my hood, which is, let's say, around Victoria and Kingsway. For years immemorial The Straight's "Best of Vancouver" best neighbourhood has been Kitsilano 'cause everybody in Kitsilano can read -- and therefore vote in -- the rag. But in my hood, if your paper wasn't in Chinese, Portuguese, Italian, Punjabi, or Vietnamese, ain't nobody gonna read you. By the way, my Vancouver crib is in Kensington/Renfrew-Collingwood, but you've never heard of my neighbourhood because no one cares. Or *cared*. Maybe you do now. Now you can pick up a copy of The Straight as you purchase your rice vermicelli and pound of tripe.

There was a joint called Candy Bar on Kingsway that I went to once in 2005. It replaced the ancient E&B Restaurant that was open twenty-four hours and featured the owner clipping his toenails by the front door, leg perched high atop the counter. Across the street is the McDonald's where I spent countless high-school lunch hours watching Joey order Chicken McNuggets and how the hell did this fellow East Van kid afford McNuggets every day, those shits were mad expensive. Look to the corner and there's Pho Bich Nga, which blew up for all the wrong reasons. Half a block down is where I did my first timid tag, in the three-feet-wide space between two buildings for the viewing pleasure of absolutely nobody. Go up the alley and there's Derrick's crib for daily doses of Rap City. Go up a bit more and you're at Brewers Park where rumbles were regular and children got drunk on Labatt Ice every Friday and our classmate mugged an old Chinese lady and I'll tell you more next time. But Candy Bar. It was new. Bands played there. Hot girls with black hair were there. Boys whose jeans were getting progressively tighter were there. You were served wine from a carton there. Finally, a venue that had cheap booze, dope music, hot girls with guitars, all a mere four blocks from my home. I hadn't been so excited about that chunk of Kingsway since getting my wicked undercuts at Cut 'N Blow.

But something felt wrong. Candy Bar was too close to the coffee shop where Nick's dad would join other Portuguese husbands escaping their wives to watch Benfica play in Lisbon. Candy Bar was too close to Midland Liquidators where Cos and I would hoard their new shipments of vintage Krylon. Candy Bar was too close to where W. got shot in the leg and N. almost got shot in the head when the Chinese dudes did a drive-by on our high school at 3.30PM. My neighbourhood wasn't cool. The only thing cool about it was the people who had lived here for decades, quietly building our existence as the anti-Kitsilano. All we wanted to do was raise our local status by adding another lion statue to the gate of our Vancouver Special. We didn't want to be a destination -- our businesses served mostly us and that was enough. And now we were being invaded by Others from Elsewhere because we're cheap and novel.

At Candy Bar, while I was enjoying my boxed merlot (just kidding, it was boxed "red"), my heart welcomed all the young folks while my bitter tongue chided, "This ain't Main Street... You're so far east that you're half-way to Burnaby...". I was proud that these Terry Richardson worshippers were trekking out to my hood. I was disdainful that they wouldn't come here if not for Candy Bar. Mostly, I was disgusted to realise that I too am one of these young folks, that I too prefer drinking in the poorest neighbourhoods in the shittiest bars because they are so uncool. And that is why we are cool.

I wanted to visit Candy Bar again but they closed not long after my only time. Perhaps saying, "Zoe, I'll see you at Kensington/Renfrew-Collingwood!" isn't as cool as saying, "Zoe, I'll see you on Main!" My neighbourhood has continued to change since the end of Candy Bar, and if the Straight newspaper box and American Apparel girls at the bus stop are any indication, there will soon be stacks of Vice in the dozens of pho restaurants around my way. If the young folks truly want to honour my old hood/their new hood, they'd better make sure those copies of Vice are in Vietnamese.