

"Don't look at them," Terry's mother whispered to him.

It couldn't objectively be seen as his fault when he immediately attempted to locate the source of his mother's concern. It really wasn't his mother's fault that he looked either. She hadn't done any extensive studying of the human psyche to know that her comment would provoke an innate response in him to look. Either way, he looked. At first look, he didn't see anything. It wasn't until his second look that he noticed them. There were two of them, one man and one woman. Both were fairly well dressed; jeans, classic rock t-shirts, clean shoes. Their hair was well-groomed and their black, plastic framed glasses made Terry think his mother was warning him about hipsters. Then the man whispered something to the woman. It was when she opened her mouth to laugh that Terry caught on to his mother's warning. Someone who didn't know better might think she had just been chewing tobacco or maybe some black licorice, but Terry had seen it before. She had what was medically called Glucose but was usually referred to as 'Black Mouth'; a condition caused by an over-consumption of sugar. Terry shuddered visibly at the sight. The woman didn't notice, but his mother did. She chose to reserve her lecture until they were well out of sight of the 'Glukes'. Mothers had a way of letting you think you were off the hook until you forgot you were in trouble; then they came at you.

"Tell you not to look and what do you do? You look," she began. "Those Glukes are very immoral people, Terry. They don't care about you or me or anyone else. They just say whatever you want to hear until they can get something out of you to feed their sugar fix. We're lucky they didn't attack us for money!"

Terry made sure she wasn't looking before he rolled his eyes.

"And I know you aren't rolling your eyes right now. Because that would get you into more trouble," she finished, not looking at Terry.

I guess moms just know these things, Terry sighed. *I'll make a mental note not to roll my eyes anymore and see if she still says it*

In terms of Gluke rants, he had heard his fair share, and not all of them by his mother. His father sometimes weighed in on the matter by placing it in between random bits of conversation; such as asking about how school was going and then immediately asking if he was on sugar. Those conversations caught him off guard and almost scared him into admitting he did, although he never had. His guidance counselors were mandated by the state to give a one hour talk to them once a year, starting in fourth grade, on the dangers of sugar. It was usually full of images with people with black teeth or stories of people who had murdered their families to steal their money so they could buy a little more. This year made Terry's third year of being subjected to it and he was quite sure it would last until high school. Terry was almost numb to it already, but the real thing was always enough to draw into his repulsion. Glukes were a crowd not to be associated with and sugar was a substance to stay away from...

The party Terry had gone to was similar to the other parties he had been to in high school; lots of alcohol and no parental supervision. As a junior, Terry was going mostly to socialize with people he knew and maybe to get a girlfriend. He was sure that a girlfriend was the key to being popular at school and while he certainly wasn't unpopular, the more people that knew you, the better. Terry was at the party for about an hour before he noticed some older people he hadn't seen before walking out a back door and crowding around the side of the house. Terry thought they were probably drinking something special and didn't want to share. That was cool with him, he wasn't about to bust in on some random peoples secret meeting. At the same moment, a girl he was kind of interested in grabbed his arm and pulled him toward the back door. "Hey Terry, there's something I want you to try," she whispered to him. He still was pretty unsure about that group of people, but he couldn't just say no. Terry gave in to her pulling and they circled to the side of house.

As he rounded the corner, Terry wasn't quite sure what he was looking at initially. He had a brief thought that maybe these guys were on drugs, but then it hit him: sugar. The tallest of the group was passing around tiny little bag full of the white stuff. Terry made a subconscious move to back away, all of his life's lessons about sugar resounding within his mind. He became aware that something was on his arm, anchoring him there in place. He realized the girl was still holding onto his arm.

"Guess you've never had sugar before, eh Terry?" the girl purred at him. Her tones were mildly alluring and made him question his initial response to the sugar. Maybe it wasn't all that bad?

"Yeah, man, you really gotta try it, like, once and then you can make that decision," the questionable leader handing out the sugar told him. "Don't knock it til you try it or something like that, yeah?" All the group was now focused on Terry and he realized at this moment that he had to make a choice: be cool or follow the advice he had been given his entire life about the dangers of sugar. Only one of the options posed a serious threat to his life, he concluded, and promptly took a bag handed to him. All the others nodded their assent and opened their bags of sugar. Terry watched as some emptied the entire thing upside down into their mouths while others licked their fingers and pulled out lots of small granules surrounding their fingers like a sugar popsicle. Terry looked to his female companion for a suggestions and saw her slowly pouring it into her mouth, not too much but not too little.

He decided to follow her approach. The first bit of sugar hit his tongue and it was like all his life he had never tasted anything. The sensation was beyond imagining, a cool yet sweet sensations that he could not quite associate with anything, but at the same time, he made a connection with everything. It was like trying to tell a man who had never seen light what colors were, no words could ever do it justice. Terry finished his bag in a zen like trance and realized several minutes had passed. The others were either sitting down on the ground or had left to score more sugar. Terry's female interest was no where to be seen, however, he was now a little

more worried about sugar and whether he could fight the urge to try some more...

Terry saved his essay on *Chemical Demonstrations in Secondary Education with a Focus on Inductive Reasoning* in disgust. He had written maybe 2 pages and still had 5 or so to go. He realized he couldn't focus because his sugar high was running out. He needed to grab some more before he would be able to continue and grabbed his jacket as he headed out his dorm. On the way out his door, his RA passed him with a perfunctory "hello". Terry nodded his admission that they had seen each other and quickly left the building. It wouldn't do good for him to speak to the RA, his teeth weren't exactly pristine white anymore and this college had quite strict rules about sugar use. One hint of sugar and the campus police hauled you in for a Blood Sugar Test. If you were over 125, you were expelled. He grabbed his bike and headed on down to his dealer's campus apartment. The bike ride was pleasant and as the wind blew he sucked in through his teeth, getting a brief feeling of sugary satisfaction. He threw his bike in the yard and knocked on the door.

"Come in, I'm in the back," a voice yelled. Terry turned the unlocked door knob and made his way inside. As soon as he entered a familiar smell greeted him, the aroma of cooking sugar. That was some serious stuff, for sure, a lot more intense than what Terry typically used. It was some kind of syrup that was extremely dense sugar; Terry heard it was used for serious addicts in all kinds of recipes. Sugar Glazed Donuts were a favorite of his dealers, he remembered.

"Hey Mike, you got some stuff I could get from you?" Terry inquired as he made his way into Mike's 'lab'.

"Not much at the moment, Terry, we're going through a dry spell on campus, what with exams and all." Mike eyed Terry up, assessing his need. "Two bucks a cube."

Terry was more than a little taken aback. "Are you kidding, that's double what you charged me yesterday!"

"Gotta move with the market, man. You don't have to buy it, you know, I'll probably have some more stock in about a week," Mike said with a shrug. Terry was going to just have to pay the price, he needed those cubes to focus and get his exam week over with.

"All right, give me ten cubes, but I want to see the dimensions come out to three by three by three centimeters."

"Yeah, I know, I'll measure it, give me a sec." A second would be too long, unfortunately. At that moment Terry heard a loud sirens wail.

"Campus Police! Apartment residents, you have one minute to come outside the apartment!"

After that, we will treat all residents as enemy combatants. I repeat, leave the apartment at once!" Terry had a feeling this wouldn't end well, a feeling that was confirmed as he saw Mike quickly open his window and scramble out the back. His escape was cut short by a loud barking noise.

"All right, all right, I'm on the ground! Call this dog off me, man!" Mike's voice pleaded. Terry was running through options in his head and concluded that he could only walk outside and explain that he was merely a bystander here and try to get off the hook. The police would believe him, after all, he wasn't a registered resident. Terry walked outside slowly and sat down on the ground. One of the campus officers came up to him.

"This your apartment?"

"No sir, I just came by to visit my friend," Terry replied tentatively.

"No doubt; how about you let me see your teeth then, bud," the officer asked in a tone that implied it wasn't a request. Terry gave a small smile that showed only the front of his top row of teeth to the officer.

"Wise guy, huh? We'll see how funny you think it is once we get a Blood Sugar Test done. Walk on over to the car, nice and slow," the officer instructed.

"Please, don't do this," Terry pleaded, "I can't get expelled from college." The officer looked at him for just a moment with what might have been pity before his face turned to stone.

"That's the choice you made when you did sugar, son."