

THE AVOCADO MAN

Now. Now. Sit down. Let me tell you a story. The year was 1930. I was 11 years old. My father had gone west to find work. My mother and I lived in a 2-room apartment over a wig shop. That was the first time I really noticed him. Eh? Who? The Avocado Man. The Avocado Man would come twice a week, pushing his cart full of Avocados down the street. I can still hear him call out to this day.

“Avocados! Rib sticky and green! Creamy like a dream! Getcha Avocados...” he’d yell. Kids would come from blocks around and follow him down the street. As he’d go he’d cut slivers off of the avocados and give them to the kids. Those Avocados were so cool on a hot summer day. We kids loved ‘em. And we loved him. The Avocado Man. None of us really cared for The Turnip Jockey or the Radish King that came on alternate Saturdays. There was an immigrant family down the street who were partial to the Cabbage Pal who roamed the streets after dark. But we ignored them ‘cause they were immigrants. I remember the last time I saw him, the Avocado Man.

It was the day of the big produce cart race. Everybody lined the streets to watch those amazing men and their carts full of produce. Hundreds, thousands packed the streets. See we didn’t have television. We were desperate for something to do. We prayed that TV would come around someday. Don’t let anybody tell you different. Before TV there wasn’t fuck-all to do. Anyway, me and all the neighborhood kids sat on the edge of the sidewalk, waiting for him to appear. There was Harvey’s Onion-on-the-Run, The Green Bean Machine and Lettuce Be Friends. Finally we saw him. The Avocado Man. How handsome he looked in the early autumn air. He lined up under the big START banner with the others. Suddenly, out of nowhere came a man we’d never seen. He was a squat, red faced man with a mustache. He went by the name Mr. Tomato. He had a gleam in his eye that scared me. I looked at The Avocado Man. I wanted to tell him not to go. He smiled and winked at me. At me. No one else. Just me. Time stood still as the starting gun fired.

They were off. We cheered until our throats hurt. We clapped until our dirty hands were swollen and red. The Avocado Man was clearly in the lead. We raced behind them. It was then that the unthinkable happened. One of the carts threw a wheel. The world sank in around me and my cheers caught in my throat as I watched the devastation unfold. I ran. I ran as fast as my little legs could carry me. Down the hill and into the dust cloud I flew. Three carts lay there Onion on The Run, Mr. Tomato and The Avocado Man. Smashed. Burning. Their contents scattered and crushed on the ground. The crash must have killed him instantly. He lay there. Not moving.

As people moved silently in around the scene, I shut The Avocado man’s eyes. And that’s how Guacamole was invented.

What?! What?! That’s how it happened!!