

Super Bowl in York County, South Carolina LIII

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I'm in a "private" bar in York County, South Carolina watching the Patriots Super Bowl game.

A private bar means it can bypass certain local or state rules. For example, smokers can smoke. Troublemakers can more easily be thrown out.

To my surprise, a few guys with long white beards are wearing Patriots jerseys.

Choice of beer includes Budweiser, Budweiser lite, and Pabst Blue Ribbon. Tall can (16 ounces) or short can (12 ounces). For years I drank that when living in Los Angeles because it was the cheapest beer available.

"I'll have a Pabst," I tell the female bartender.

"You want a tall PBR, hon?" she asks.

A what?

A neighbor to my left explains it. I need to say "PBR-T."

She introduces herself as the local high school calculus teacher.

A big burly man steps up to the bar next to me and orders an "Apple soda."

What's that?" I ask.

"It's 4.7% alcohol, stronger than beer," he explains.

He takes it and sits way at the end of the bar where it's dark and there's no TV but there is a big bowl of meatballs heating up.

When the first quarter ends at 0-0, a loud cheer goes up among the patrons.

"What's the big deal?" I ask an old timer sitting next to me.

"We all bet there'd be no score in the first quarter," he answers while gently tapping his cigarette over the ashtray. "I just won \$250."

In the second quarter, there's a

routine play, an incomplete pass on second down. But the crowd again lets out a big cheer.

"Did you all just win another bet?" I ask.

"Nah, the Patriot who broke up that play is a local boy," my neighbor says. "We got two local fellas playing for them, Stephon Gilmore and Cordarrelle Patterson, both from Rock Hill right down the road. They don't call Rock Hill "Football City USA" for nothin."

At half-time, most of the audience heads over to the free buffet of meatballs, ham, cheese and roast beef sandwiches, Fritos, Doritos, potato chips, four choices of chicken wings: regular, spicy, very spicy, and very very spicy. The halftime entertainers take the stage and blast rock music. Everybody looks up.

"Who's that?" someone asks.

"Don't know. Never heard of him," someone answers. Apparently, nobody in the room has either, including me. Everybody goes back to filling their plate.

Locals have also brought in food and see that other guy with the Patriots sweatshirt? His mom is from Vietnam and she made all them there egg-rolls.

The game passes with up and down cheers though I can't predict it based on the play. Nobody seems to be rooting for one team over another. Except me.

At the end of the game, I'm shouting the final 10 second countdown. I let out a big cheer when the Patriots win. Otherwise, the room is filled with the usual laughter and conversation you might expect to hear any day of the week.

"You must be a Patriot fan," my neighbor says quietly while gently tapping his cigarette in the ashtray.

"Fuck You," the guy drinking the Apple Soda way down the bar shouts at me.

I look up to see if he's angry or disappointed. Doesn't seem so. He's busy pecking around the bottom of the bowl of meatballs, searching for the last one.

"He's just messin' with yuh," my neighbor says. "Cause you seem to care about the Patriots winnin." END