

Milkshakes and Anchors



I thought it would be apropos to write a dare on tattoos for this issue. Seeing as I wanted to do a dare that didn't involve spending money, I emailed local tattoo shops that sparked my interest, seeking a challenge. Few replied and I even got a few, "Nah, sorry" responses, so I took it upon myself to come up with something clever. What is free and has to do with both Rhode Island *and* tattoos? Bingo. I will get the Rhode Island red tattooed on my face! I mean, in theory, of course.

I gave myself a few hours to drive around the state to find small, hidden tattoo shops where I would try and convince the artist that I wanted a Rhode Island red hen, Rhode Island's official state bird, on my face. I drew a rough sketch with the wings on my cheek bones and the head of the bird and its black beady eyes smack dab in the middle of my forehead. The first tattoo artist was a female and I showed her the picture with innocent enthusiasm. "So," I said, "the anchor will sit on my nose with the hooks coming down forming a mustache." She looked at me with a mixture of pity and shock. I sensed she didn't want to hurt my feelings. "Well, it is a beautiful design. Why don't we put it in your back instead?" I shook my head adamantly. "What about your leg? Or your arm?" I didn't budge. Then my cell phone alarm went off and I pretended it was an important call and walked out surprisingly let down. I have gained a strange skill in the past few months of acting really, really serious about something so ridiculous that I sometimes trick myself into believing my absurdities. I'm sure she was relieved.

I approached the second tattoo shop with the same picture and the same attitude: ecstatic, as if getting a full facial tattoo of a bird was the greatest idea ever. "Your f*#@#ing kidding, right?!" The artist slapped his beer gut and fondled his beard with a heavy sigh as if that was the funniest joke in the

world. "Let me guess, you want a milkshake on your ass too?" He laughed even louder. My job was done here. Onto the next.

The third and final artist didn't take my artistic vision seriously, *at all*. "No," he said simply. I took my emergency bate of one hundred single one dollar bills and flashed them. "No. I don't feel comfortable. I admire the audacity, but it's just *stupid*." He had a point. No arguing there. I thanked him and turned around and walked out. Seconds later I felt a tap on my shoulder and turned around to find a young girl with the sides of her head shaved and dyed bright blue. "I heard about your bird. The one you want on your face. I just got a tattoo gun in the mail and I need someone to practice on. I can't do a bird yet, but what about an anchor?" She was just as excited as I was when I approached the tattoo artists. I didn't have the heart to tell her I really wasn't interested. "Maybe next time," I said with a smile. She smiled back. "Here, take my number. I'll be ready for the bird in a few months." No matter how absurd your dream may be, if you keep pecking, it will come true.