

White Jumbo Ice Cream Trucks

By Kenn Hartmann

I'm off the grid. Power's out & I'm writing by candlelight like Thoreau only not by choice. City dwellers know things can go to hell quickly. All it takes is an errant lightning strike or a gust of wind. But I'm not going to let my readers down even if the power lines are sparking on the pavement. Just trying to make a joke in the darkness. I started reading a comic book from Steel Toe Press called "Blood on the Docks" before the storm hit & now in the flickering grim glow, I wonder if the stories are true.

Did artist Cimek & writer Fletch really prick their thumbs & drip blood onto the pages of Mods vs. Rockers Issue No.1? I'm holding the premier issue in my hands & the black red & yellow ink-stained cover blends into the eerie backdrop. I've written about Ton Up Club in these pages before – Ton Up is a freewheeling wild homage to the Ace Café traditions from the 60's London motorcycle scene – only an American bastardized version – like Midwestern Hollyweird. Imagine this, instead of a Frankie & Annette movie, American International made a film about Harvey Lembeck's Erich von Zipper & his zany band of Triumph riding goof-offs. You almost expect TV Tommy Ivo to show up with some young hot Betty - TV Tommy appeared in hundreds of TV shows & movies then wisely invested into hotrods & dragsters during the apex of Southern California car Kulture.

So what is the Mods vs. Rockers phenomenon all about? Martin Cimek is the artist behind this elaborate façade. He's kind of like the Show of the Flow. Larry Fletcher is the driving force, the Flow of the Show. Let me explain, patience my friends, there must be a draft; the candle is doing some strange gyrations. I sat with Martin at the Five Star Bar on Chicago Ave a couple years ago just tapping my toes to the beat of a funky urban DJ in a beret. Martin revealed his ideas about a comic book with visionary manic joy. Meanwhile Fletch came roaring through the bar on a Triumph, pushing patrons aside & blasting his sickle into the kitchen. Across the room was a well-endowed model wearing little pasties barley covering anything & a pin-up girl on skates rolled up & demanded I arm-wrestle her. Yeah, Martin, great idea, sure man, a comic book why not? Mods vs. Rockers is having their latest incarnation at Delilah's on Lincoln & Bottom Café on Lake. It happens June 19th, 2010.

Sum Sum Summertime parties are cum'n up baby. I'm talking a Frank Sinatra baby not a Humphrey Bogart baby. Ya got that baby? Ya with me? Hey Preacher, tell Lorie I'm using the voice again. I went to a party after high school graduation at Barb Piskule's, the magical twilight summer solstice dark edge of town across from Franzen's slough. Every pretty girl in class was there, a bevy of babes, baby, but as I walked up a crowd of school chums grabbed me. "Hey Kenn, we're tired of your bullshit." What are you talking about? "You're going to tell us the truth." I always do. "You promised you'd come clean." I took a bath today, what? "You're going to tell us which of your stories are true & which ones bullshit." Alright; you got five minutes, lets synchronize our watches -



lets see, 4 minutes & 55 seconds, 54... "Shut up Kenn, just answer our questions, every time you start talking time slips away." Well, fire away; you got 4 minutes & 30 seconds. "Did you bring a 6-pack of beer to Lowery's class?" Yeah, ask Romano. "Did you wear Lederhosen to Hardy's class?" You know I did, I wore them the whole day; Coach Hardy kicked me out last period, he asked, "Is that a new football uniform?" I had gone to Germany, picked those leather duds up in Berchtesgaden which by the way fellas is located in the Bavarian Alps near Austria - a favorite retreat for der Fuhrer. "Stop!" Four minutes. "Just answer true or false." They fired questions & I answered forthright. "Did you bang that cheerleader from Lake Park?" No. "What about that one from Ridgewood?" What about her? "Did you nail her?" No, & you should refrain from using that vulgar language; speaking of the girls, we should probably matriculate over to the lanterns, the shimmering lights, the smell of sweet perfume, the lilt of their voices...

"Don't let him talk!" "Hang on to him, he's a sneaky bastard!"

Why has every summer party I've ever gone to been a replay of that one? But then Dick Deckard showed up, now please Freudian puns aside - it's easy to suck Dick into a story. Even in diminished light I could see determination in his eyes, feel his presence. He asked "What about the Ice Cream trucks?" I asked, what about the girls? "Tell us! The truth." There's a whole pile of white Jumbo Ice Cream trucks on the other side of that road just over the hill & stacked end over end in a ravine - take my word. "Did you drive them into the ravine?" No, they were piled like that when I got there.

Dick's voice trembled. "I don't believe you; I don't believe there are any trucks." Oh yeah there are baby, lets go. I hated to leave that cool party & wind up in a dead end vacant field somewhere near nowhere. Dick - it's too far, it's too dark; there could be snakes. "Onward!" Like Fagin leading the Artful Dodgers through London only it's a dark swamp outside Chicago. Perhaps we should go back Dick, it's muddy & the bugs. Like Montresor leading Fortunato in search of a magical elixir - only it's urban refuse, junk; industrial waste - the machinery of night. So there we stood high school chums in the surreal starlight & Dick Deckard in awe of the strange metal ghosts said, "Holy shit, it is a pile of white Jumbo Ice Cream trucks!"

-Kenn Hartmann

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