

The Oubliette & the Ghetto Gallery

By Kenn Hartmann

It seemed just like a corridor, rock limestone walls, ancient old barroom basement, how many times have I tripped into this scene? She takes me by the hand & leads me deeper into the abyss. The light from a dangling naked bulb glistened on her exposed flesh & I thought, 'hmm, nice tah-tahs.' She wanted to tell me something. I said, 'your punk-ass boyfriend's going to be angry we're down here so you'd better make it good.' She replied, 'you always have to be cruel whether you mean it or not.' I didn't want to divulge the rumor about her mom at the gas station; which the whole story I admit was only funny to the idiot who started it. 'Say, is this about that calumnious bitch who got beer tossed in her face?' She told me to shut-up & stop using big words. She said, 'I want you to help me throw a party down here in the cellar.' I considered the possibility. 'Honestly,' I confided, 'I thought you were luring me to the Oubliette.' She responded angrily, 'oob blee what? You ass.' It's a pit in the dungeon floor where prisoners are precipitated, er tossed headfirst into the hole.' We met her punk-ass boyfriend on the stairs on the way out & he slapped my hand when I offered to shake his. He turned & scurried away, his biker colors reflecting dimly. The idea of the party was moot, however; the bar burned down a week later.

Standing outside the Art Gallery Kafe on the frontage road across from the tracks, my brother Bob shoves a Brazilian Flamenco new age music CD into my face. I mumble something like I'm more in the mood for Rancid, 'black coat, white shoes, black hat Cadillac, yeah the boy's a Time Bomb' or Social Distortion 'sick-boy in his faded blue jeans, sick-boy



"Nick from Eaglerider"

black leather jacket scene, don't you know, oh a oh, rides a big motorbike, stays out all night, etc & etcetera.' Basically anything that I don't have to sit politely nodding like a bobble-head dozing off. Bob's hustling to create a scene. He tries to entice me & reminds me, 'Kenn, you had the Ghetto Gallery up in St. Paul back in 1976.' But Bob didn't see the pimps, gangsters, hustlers, hoodlums, all hiding out under the grim guise of artistic revelry. Even the cops freaked when they busted in, 'my god, there is art!' I invited the cops deeper into the darkness of the gallery but they stood dumbfounded at the entrance. 'Naked art!' a cop gasped. A scene isn't something calculated, it's a place of refuge from all the god awful mundane bullshit of everyday existence. No hype, no artifice. Hey, if you want to skip a light fandango or get groovy with a flamenco playing gypsy no prob, baby. But I'm still f'n buzzed from my straight pipes, my ears deafened by the rush of summer wind, winding down from throttle jitters. As if to legitimize the Brazilian plucker's merit, Bob says he

spends six months a year in Europe. 'What, hiding out at drafty-ass castles & hop-head whorehouses?' There's no humoring him, he retreats into a knee-jerk defensive posture virtually hissing spit; so I split.

Earlier, before the drama, when I left the bike shop, Nikita & Cassie were mounting the 'duke of 290 Frankenbike.' Zonk, one of the service writers was there. Nick Findley from Eaglerider Motorcycle Rentals was on a Harley Street Glide with a bona fide knockout on the pillion. Nick asked, 'hey Kenn you want to go for a ride?' Where you headed? 'To hell if we don't change our ways,' he quipped.

-Kenn Hartmann
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