

TEXT ADVENTURE

*'YOU'VE POSTED
THIS BEFORE'*

by
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Lieber

1

The Chrysler Building. New York. 1990.

January.

“You’ve posted this before.”

“No shit.”

“So why are you posting it again?”

Piro arched an eyebrow. “New Year’s message. It’s tradition.”

“Seriously?”

Piro sat at the keyboard clacking away. Simple, declarative sentences. Topical assertions.

“Nobody cares about this stupid newsletter,” offered Thomas.

Piro remained silent. Typing.

“Nobody’s even going to read it.”

Silence.

“Your spelling sucks.”

Piro flicked on the radio and turned up the volume.

Thomas grimaced. “I hate reading.”

Piro leaned over the mimeograph machine, making small adjustments to various knobs and switches while Thomas fidgeted in the doorway.

“There’s literally no way I’m going to help you fold all of those things.”

“I don’t care.”

“This whole side-project is stupid. You really think the value-added is necessary? This stuff sells itself. No ‘free gift with purchase’ required.”

Piro stopped what he was doing and turned to face his twin brother.

“If you’re not going to contribute to the newsletter, please go into the kitchen and start bagging up rocks.”

Thomas shrugged and wandered out of the room.

2

Ken steered the Actron Team’s 1978 Lincoln Town Car through the streets of Alphabet City. Trash on the sidewalk reflected in the car’s fresh candy paint. Passing some children, Ken boosted the volume on the custom sound system. The children giggled and pointed. He smiled and mashed the gas pedal. Shining.

Destination: The G-Spot.

Ken rounded the final corner and slowly brought the outsized car to a stop. He lowered a tinted window and inspected his immediate surroundings. The parking lot was deserted save for two NYPD cruisers and a 1979 Chevrolet Monte Carlo (sky blue metal flake, white interior, whitewall tires; that would be John). Ken popped the collar on his polo shirt and exited the vehicle.

Inside, the club was all but vacant. Smoke from an abandoned cigarette snaked upward towards a light bulb hanging from the ceiling. The two police officers

were inspecting a briefcase full of cocaine. One of them turned around and smiled dumbly, coke caked in his mustache. John Ratcliff stood nearby, a duffel bag full of money slung over his shoulder. When he saw his partner he frowned and shrugged.

Ken stood in the entryway and surveyed the empty stage. Strobe lights clicked rhythmically, strangely loud in the otherwise silent environs.

“Where the white women at?” he finally asked.

The cop with the coke mustache started to giggle, but never finished his outburst. Ken activated his superspeed and closed the distance between himself and the two officers in a hundred milliseconds flat. He slammed the meat of his open hand into the first officer’s chin, then rolled with the momentum into the second officer’s chest, following him to the ground. Both cops collapsed, unconscious, Ken straightened himself and dusted off his knees.

“Hmph,” he he remarked, unimpressed.

John hoisted both men from the floor and hung them by their jacket collars on coat hooks near the front entrance. Each would see hospital time but neither would suffer permanent injury. John tossed the bag full of money at Ken and made his way over to the bar to pour himself a drink.

“Tired of this grind.”

“So quit.”

“You’re funny.”

Ken sighed.

“Yeah.”

3

Outside, some children had wandered into the parking lot and were peering inside Jon’s Monte Carlo, noses pressed up against the glass.

“Boy, is that white leather?”

“Sure is.”

“My brother’s car is like this, but his doesn’t have leather.”

“Sounds like your brother needs to find himself a better paying job.”

Ken flopped the briefcase full of coke onto the hood of the car.

“Take this to your brother. If he brings it back in a week, filled with money...”

“We have great health insurance,” interrupted John. “Dental and vision. Also, free car detailing. We’ll see what we can do about his vinyl seats.”

“Wow, mister! Thanks!”

John patted the boy on the head and then got into the Monte Carlo and peeled out. Ken smoked a cigarette, wandered back to the Lincoln and rolled over a beer bottle on his way out of the parking lot. There was no damage to the Town Car’s bullet-proof tires.

As soon as the adults were gone the boys pounced on the briefcase, numerous hands scooping out coke and heaving it carelessly over their shoulders. As it happened, directly into the wind. Some of the powder blew back and caught in their

teeth and hair. Undeterred by this minor annoyance, the boys wiped the backs of their hands across their faces and soon discovered the rows of individually wrapped crack rocks that lined the bottom of the briefcase. Immediately, they went to work removing the wrappers.

Tossing the pebbles of crack aside, each paper wrapper was inspected closely, compared carefully with the others. Soon it became apparent that all of the wrappers were identical. Worse, the material was immediately recognizable. Not just predictable, but in fact an exact duplicate of an issue they had all read before.

“It’s a fucking reprint,” said one of the boys.

He flipped over the wrapper, frantically scanning for the publisher information. There, printed in bold Helvetica, was the name of their nemesis:

Massive Fictions. Piotr Bright, Publisher.

The Chrysler Building.

NYC.

One of the boys produced a brick phone from his backpack and put in a call to headquarters.

Calling for backup.

