

The Ballad of Super Chick and Joey  
(A soon to be Graphic not-so-Novel)

It was a beautiful day. Joey was young, good looking, and flat broke. The only thing he had going for him was a vintage 1968 Buick Riviera convertible.

Dad saved it from a junk yard, dropped a new tranny with Cousin Dave who had just scored a used transmission lift, and then gave the car to Joey for his 18th birthday.

Dull black finish from years without wax, beige leather interior intact, and lightly pitted chrome details recalled the fabulous glory of an era long gone.

It was a beautiful late spring day and young, dumb as a plank Joey decided to break his car out of the squalid garage and cruise his former girlfriend's hood, maybe take her for a ride. Just for old times.

The car was not without its foibles. The rag top permanently dropped, and her headlights only half way opened like the eyes on a blonde bombshell named Rooth, Joey's old flame from back in the day, who now sang torch songs at a joint called Da' Crystal Palace down on Coney Island Boulevard.

But Joey kept her engine clean and despite its weather-worn appearance the old boat rode like a dream. She glided down streets, cornered onto avenues and floated up Father Murphy Esplanade on slightly over inflated, retread RW-15's.

It was a beautiful day. Joey pulled his black and beige ride to an early summer halt in front of couple ancient edifices on a lane known as Victory. He set his parking break, checked his smile in the rear view, and hopped out the car. He crossed that street intent on entering a timeworn five floor flop house tenement next to a garment factory to ring Rooth's bell.

But first, a distraction.

The garment factory next door to Rooth's last known permanent mailing address was alive with industrious activity.

There was a construction dumpster at the curb, filled with brick and brack, and at its full corner, nearest the sidewalk, sat a folded stack of fifties banded by a rubber band.

Joey lit on it immediately, reaching for the loot hoping no one would notice.

But someone did. Notice, that is.

"Hey, kid! C'mere." Smooth Sal said adjusting his zoot suit tie, running his hand over thinning greased hair, flicking his butt down the gutter. He sized Joey up, looking him over and down.

"Hmm," Smooth thought. "Simple white Fruit-of-Loom T. Too tight black Levis jeans. Black leather ankle boots with a Cuban heel."

Sal smiled. Revealing a gold filling in his front tooth.

"Hey, kid. You're good looking, ya know. Ya wanna be a model?"

Joey had always fancied himself. No, like really, kid loved his own reflection. He would spend hours upon hours in front of mom's bathroom mirror trying to get his hair just right. Which he never did. The only time he liked it was when he just emerged from the salon where a hot hairdresser named Martha coiffed him up proper.

"Come wit me," Smooth Sal said grabbing Joey by his upper arm. Man led boy through the dusty gut renovation to a small office near the rear.

There sat known accountants from times gone by. Pugnacious Pug they called the one, an ex-boxer who could throw a fight better than a Dwight Gooden fastball. And Nimble Numbers Nick who was slick with an old fashioned adding machine.

Sal showed Joey to the pair. "Whaddaya tink?" Said Sal.

Pug just grunted, and Nick said, "He'll do. Show him to the bunch downstairs," without so much as looking up from his hand-cranked IBM.

It was dark inside the old factory. A scent of history and days past on the waterfront of old Brooklyn seeped from creaky stairs. Joey followed Sal to the bottom. Down a long hall and another stair to a sub cellar where a table stretched from one end of a damp, musty room to the other. There sat about two dozen men and women cutting whole cloth under dim lamps with metal wire bulb protectors. One lady with a red bouffant hairdo looked over her reading glasses at Joey. A Benson and Hedges stuck to her ruby red slicked lips. The room was so full of tobacco smoke, Joey almost choked. His eyes began to water.

"That's it!" He halted. "I can't take it! I don't do cigarettes!" He turned on his Cuban and went back gasping the way he came.

Out at the dumpster that stack of rubber-banded fifties was still there. Joey reached for it. Then, to his alarm, he noticed, across the street! Two huge thugs were in his dream ride driving it away!

It had *been* a beautiful day!

In a dilapidated sports car of many colors, patched together from so many different chop shops, but looking smart, sat a smirking Joe Pisco-posh.

Joey knew him as Joey Russo from the hood but everybody called him Pisco-posh because his striking resemblance to a young Joe Piscopo. However, Posh had a mean streak wider than the Narrows. Instantly Joey knew Posh was behind the thievery of his livery. The modeling thing had been a ruse meant to get his attention so grand theft auto could be perpetrated cleanly and discretely, which it had not. The trio took off laughing away from Victory Lane and down Coney Island Boulevard. His pride and joy in the lead with Pisco-posh trailing behind.

Joey knew just where to find Posh, the owner, manager, and performer of Sinatra standards at Da' Crystal Palace.

He took off as fast as he could in too tight jeans, and starched white T-shirt, striding down Coney Island Boulevard like Travolta in that movie minus the paint can and pizza.

When he finally arrived, his ride was parked outside. He was tempted to steal it back, him having the keys and all. But Joey's mom taught him never to become involved with theft. Pisco-posh's sports car of many colors was nowhere to be seen.

Joey entered the club. He found himself in a glittering arcade made of glass trimmed in gold. A yellow aura enveloped him as he made his way through the arched hall. Pictures of movie stars stenciled on the walls.

That portentous entrance led to a grand, cavernous, sunken lounge. Dark and draped in purple velvet, bright white light seemed to go there only to be absorbed by a solely tragic solitary, angelic figure of a voluptuous woman. She stood alone in a follow spot which radiated in different directions off her silver sequined gown. Her platinum blonde hair swooped low across her forehead, aluminum gloss eye-shadow hi-lit root beer colored eyes. A Marilyn Monroe beauty mark completed her "Happy Birthday, Mr. President" look. Everyone hung on each breathy breath she took.

It was only a rehearsal but to Rooth there was no dress rehearsal for life. She performed for the staff in full costume, make-up, and hair. Everybody there fell crew-cut over Keds for her brand

of the blues, and the way she held the microphone, the way she wore her shoes!

Joey was a sucker for packaging. But he knew Rooth well before all the sequins and pearls, before she was Posh's girl. It was summer by the beach when Rooth was within reach and they were just two crazy kids by the Jersey shore in cut offs and beaters. They saw stars in the sky and in each other's eyes. They were second cousins enough times removed on his mother's side. At points pleasant and heights seaside all the way down to the carousel in parks Asbury, they followed the dukes and Bruce Springsteen. Cutting loose on dance floors and in the sand. She was his Sandy and he was her man. (Even if they were both just 12 years old at the time).

Now Joey looked on the caged bird and knew. Knew why she sang such sad, sad blues. However, he had to be careful. He was in the Boss' lair surrounded by his loyal soldiers. But Joey's heart broke to hear the songstress sing:

"Daddy gonna buy me a diamond ring..."

She looked up and saw him standing there at the top of the aisle stair. Her voice quivered. The crew shivered with emotion. Not a dry eye in the house.

"Hey, worm! What the hell are you doing here?" Joey was jolted from a lovely dream into stark cold gold reality. Posh jerked him back into the arcade.

"I come for my bride!" Joey said looking Posh in the eye. Suddenly realizing his slip of the tongue he quickly corrected: "I mean my ride."

"You aint got no ride here, punk," Posh snidely replied. "And as for your bride...she's wit me now. Got it, Pal?"

Joey felt it was like Tony and Rico at the Copa. He wanted to fly at Posh, and bosh his brains, but thought better of it when he spied Smooth Sal and the Gargantuan Goons who pilfered his Buick.

"I just want my car," Joey said.

"I just want my car," Posh mocked. "Poor wittle Joey wants his big, bad, large automobile." Posh sat at a high top across from the known accountants who were adding up nickels and dimes while also chronicling the times.

Joey turned red in his face. "At least give me some money for it."

Posh set out to lay some lines on the high top lid and slid a titanium AMEX out of his shark skin

jacket. Emptying rocks from a Ziploc packet. Chop, chop, chop..."I aint giving you nuthin' chump," Posh sneered. "Except maybe a little free advice." He whispered at Joey loudly, "go away a-fore ya get hurt!"

Joey thought for a second, then lunged and snatched the credit card from Posh's hand. He was making his stand. Posh snapped and pulled out a nine from his front waistband. This time it was for real. He brandished his weapon and saw fear in Joey's eyes. Which elated Posh immensely.

Posh stood in the center of the glass arcade. "Now you get...NUTHIN punk!" Posh yelled pulling a second nine from his rear waistband. Without further ado, he emptied both clips into the fragile golden ceiling of his own arcade, a shower of gleaming glass shards rained down on his fusillade. Joey was stunned.

The known accountants just shook their heads.

"It woulda been cheaper to give him dough for the car instead!" Said Nick adding up the damage.

"Back in the old days this kid would've been dead."

"Wearin' cement galoshes," said Pug.

"Sleeping wit da fishes," said Nick.

"Or worse," said Pug.

"Or worse," said Nick.

"Now a-days we gotta keep a low profile," said Pug.

"Gotta keep it out of the papers," said Nick.

"Millennial Mobsters," they said in unison.

"Go figure."

Things began to look very bleak indeed for our young Joey as Posh's thugs began cracking their knuckles in anticipation of inconspicuously cracking some of his bones.

Just then, a *flash!* And there appears this chick!

She was clad in a skin tight stainless steel metal-mesh one piece jump suit with matching gloves, and boots, sporting this shining chrome motorcycle helmet with a polarized visor! The only way you could tell she was a chick was the lack of a stick except for the big, Bad Baton she held in her hand.

Another sure indication she was not a man were the two very pronounced breasts sitting high on her chest.

Where she came from nobody knew...it was like she flew into the room.

BOOM! She just touched Smooth Sal with that Bad Baton and... *Whoosh* he was gone. Out like a light without even a fight!

The Gargantuan Goons would also swoon as soon as she touched them. Now it was Pisco-posh's turn to be stunned. He shook out a gray silk hankie that matched his jacket exactly and reloaded his guns.

"Sweet heart, I don't know who you work for, but have I got a proposition!" Posh said scanning his crew in a heap on the floor.

"I work for no man, especially not one like you," said a voice from the helmet.

"Too bad," Posh grinned as he pointed his nines right at her pins. But she just spun that Bad Baton like a drum Majorette at the Thanksgiving Day Parade, and all you could hear was click, click, click. Then she touched it to Posh, right at his crotch and she said: "Oh my, by the way, sorry about the size of your..."

"Who is this chick?" Shouted Nimble Numbers Nick.

I don't care," said Pug, "let's just get the hell outta here quick, before she touches me with that big black stick."

Glass crunched and chinked under their fat shoes as Numbers and Pug beat a ham-fisted retreat.

Now Joey and The Chick were alone.

"Come on," she said. "I'm taking you home."

Joey could hear Smooth Sal moan. And in the distance...he heard Rooth sing on:

"...And if that diamond ring don't shine..."

Her melody echoed in his mind.

Super Chick took Joey by the hand. They went out to the Buick. She drove. *The Summer Wind* flowed out the speakers, and was blowing through Joey's hair. He didn't care. Despite his unexpected rescue from sure painful injury by this surreal super hero chick, all he could think of was Rooth, all alone. Trapped in the bizarre Boom-Bahtz world of Pisco-posh. He looked across the lavish front seat. He beheld his savior.

"Who *are* you?" He asked. He could not yet believe the sight.

Super Chick looked straight ahead.

"I bet you're your mother's favorite," she said.

"How do you know that," Joey asked.

"It's written all over that pretty little puss," she said.

"And also, mama's boys don't know how to fight," she thought.

She pulled up in front of Joey's mother's place.

"Here ya go, Joe," she said softly. "Safe and sound."

"How do you know me?" He asks.

"Everybody knows you Joe. You're the kid who stays out of the gangs, plays by the rules, and keeps trouble away. Ya know. Like DiMaggio."

It was true; Joey kept out of the Boom-Boom Boy business flooded by the likes of Pisco-posh. He didn't want to break his mother's heart. That honor had gone to Dad.

Super Chick hopped out the car.

"Wait!" Joey said, looking at her now and admiring how daylight lit her body. He felt safe with her and didn't want her to go.

"Oh, and one more thing," Super Chick added, "Forget about that torch song singer, kid. It can

only end bad. Like a Lady Ga-Ga romance. You don't need that drama, Joe."

"But I think I might love her!" Joey argued conflicted.

"If it's really, *"think"* and *"might"* then I don't know what it is, kid, but I know what it isn't," she said.

"It ain't love, kid. It's more like addicted."

Joey hung his head. What Super Chick said was true. He didn't know what he wanted to do with his life. Stay single or take a wife. Things were all happening too fast. He wished he could stop time, make everything last. Or better yet, return to the past. Where mom and dad, all his sisters and cousins lived down the shore for the summer.

Super Chick removed a metal gauntlet from her strong, yet delicate, hand. Took the kid by the chin, and beheld the man.

"Stay in school, Joe," Super Chick said. "You're good with your mitts. Maybe you can do something really useful, kid. Study auto mechanical engineering. You'll never be bored or broke again."

Just then, a silver Camaro with dark tinted glass screeched to a stop. Super Chick turned to get in.

"Wait!" Joey said, jumping out his car. "Can I at least see your face?"

Super Chick turned, paused a hard moment, and then she slowly, and sadly said:

"No kid, you can't."

She got in her car, and it sped away fast in a cloud of silver dust as the sun began to set on this beautiful day...at last.

(TO BE CONTINUED)