

Baby's First Bottle of Rock n' Rye: The Road to Perdition

Written by Administrator

Wednesday, 02 January 2013 12:26 - Last Updated Wednesday, 02 January 2013 19:35



Tiny Town, USA – I remember it all quite well and none of the need for making bits up.

Mother knotted her blue kerchief under her chin. It was a bright swirling day in Spring. We exited the sea pebble driveway alongside the Greek lady's elaborate and beautiful garden of soon-to-be.

This was a special trip. Mom had already told me about The Rock. That had been a disaster. The Rock you see, wouldn't be opened until 2040, and Mom and even the Dad-Who-Could-Never-Die, said there was no way for them to attend the party. That made me cry and sulk for seven years. The rock was a time capsule, even if it did not look like the pills Mom took for her nerves. Those were nice capsules in pretty red and blue colors. Dad said they were Barbarians. Why would Mom eat a barbarian?

Douglas, the brother, had spoken of the Fall of Cantstandtoknowpeople, a book that had no pictures. He was so much further out into space than me. He knew a lot of things, that brother did. Always at his Gilbert chemistry set or making model cars or superheroes or battleships and tanks and things. Then he painted them so patiently. Patient and keen and bad-sighted the brother was.

Anyway, there we were tripping down Second Avenue toward the hole at the end of the road where Main Street opened up to the sky. And it was a blue balloon day with quick-quick hurry-up clouds and fast melting faces screaming and rockets leaving trails with booming afterwards.

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The leaves scuttled and skittered and caroueled around and around in whirlygig packages and cellophane things too made noise and the birds twittered from fast-speaking beaks -- so small to make such loud sounds!

Happy to be with Mom. Mom who sucked on tubes called cigarettes. She had trouble striking matches at the corner of the street where the big cars zoomed by. "Oh Hells Bells," she said. It took two traffic lights to light the tube of tobacco and then the wind snatched the smoke fast as she let it go from her mouth: Mom, so pretty in her sun glasses and her coffee colored hair. Coffee before the clouds of milk in it. Mom, taller than me. How could that be? She was a bitty thing. I must have been a very bitty thing.

"Are you ready, Honey" she said, smoke out, wind-snatch -- gone!

I was ready all right!

"Yes, Mommy!"

There was a cure for the horror of The Rock no one would come to see get opened and Mom was going to get it for me!

The cure was not the wind-up car we could get at Friestadt's Pharmacy. That was a great place! Outside it had the purple glass in the cement and the letters above like flags and the thick green-glass doors. Inside, it had a soda fountain and you could get a chocolate malted that made you sing songs and the man behind the counter was a soda jerk! My brother said that. I did not know why the man behind the counter was stupid because my brother called me a jerk when I asked silly things like "does the moon follow me when I am walking?"

"No, don't be a stupid jerk. The moon doesn't move."

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But my brother could be wrong about things. The Bird, my sister, was nicer. She said it looks like the moon is moving but that has to do with my eyes and a big word that sounded like "purse sessions." That was too hard to ask about.

So Mom was done at Friestadt's and had her crinkly white package and only one more stop, not like the long trip when I first went with her to get Husky clothes and Hush Puppy shoes from a man named Thom McCan. How can a Tom be a Mick in a can? Thom McCan can! You got a clicker thing, too, with Mr. Peanut on it. Mr. Peanut was smart and he could dance with a cane. I hoped to meet him on TV.

Then we went into the building I liked so much because it was like the back of the church only it wasn't as hard with the clock never moving as the church. Mom said it was the Licker store. But I saw the red letters and they were cherry colored and I would like to lick a cherry colored letter. But also I was pretty smart and I knew the "Q" and the "U" could be tricky. Some times they made a "Kweh" sound and some times just a "Kay" sound. My brother said it was a French word but Frenchie was the guy who fixed bicycles and that brother of mine, I had better keep an eye on him because he was always up to something Dad called Dee-Link-Went. My brother knew hoodlums! But George and Tommy and Essy were nice, like my brother was nice. Sometimes.

O that store was wonderful! The floor checker-boarded right up to the counter where the Sandman stood smiling. The mahogany shelves were lined with jeweled bottles full of gem colored wonder juices that made Mom and Dad so happy they fell out of chairs and so mad they hated each other with words and then slaps and then the brother and me ... O, not yet with that.

Mom got one of those nice chestnut colored bottles with a gold label and she talked to the Sandman.

"Sandy, I want a little something to help him, what do you think?"

And Sandy came around the counter touching Mom at the elbow of her sailboat overcoat and I did not like the touching.

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"Well, let's see. You like candy, Frankie?" Sandy was a smiling guy with flat black hair and a strip of scalp Dad called "apart."

"Yeh!" I said.

And so it was done. I got my first bottle. It was Rock n' Rye -- six honey golden ounces in a nice little bottle with a picture and good letters. My very first introduction to the thing that could make the scare go away so I wouldn't be a "fraidy cat" no more and I could be like "John Wayne" who the brother was very good at sounding like, although he did Kirk Douglas much better, probably because they had the same name: Douglas.

And I drank half one day and half the next. Both times were very good. Very good indeed.

– Franklin Crawford, *A recovered Alcoholic who doesn't see it exactly the way everybody else does and that's the way it should be*