

Chapter Five

The Puddle

The following recording was provided by the vast databanks of the Radio Station.

unregistered milk tube transmission:

“He goes by the heading Billy Kazoo, sir. Real name Kasofritz, William. Renegade youngster, truant, alleged collector.

Some hubbub upstairs today, nothing clear as to what actually transpired.

Driven underground by CLUB forces, naturally.

Approaching Level 18, and still descending.

Engulfed in Pitch Black for near 10 levels, sir.

No sign of physical dismay. He is in very good shape. Yes sir.

He'll hit bottom in 7 clicks. Shall I intercept him?

Sir?”

Recording cuts out, met by static interference.

Finally deep underground, where all Fuggagers eventually took up residence, Kazoo was feeling a bit safer than he had in his last few months spent on the dodge. He had to admit, though, that he wasn't all that thrilled with the underbelly either. It smelled putrid, and the tunnel down which he crawled was the ultimate in jet-black; it was dark soup even.

Had that been the last time he'd ever see the sky, or, well, the Blanket? He had to believe it wasn't, although--what did it matter? He was suddenly feeling very unsure. The dark was making him feel strange and discouraged.

And then--*a light*. The end of the climb was close.

He began to *hope*, perhaps there was a way to make things right. He felt the dog in his bag rustling about, and he gathered his courage. What would he *do*? He found himself swaying naturally to the idea of Kid America and the Action Figures. He couldn't stop his young mind from believing. *They must be real*.

Was it *their* broadcast that poor ol' Roger had picked up on his utensil receiver? On that dumb old TV, they'd never been able to get any cartoons or anything from beyond the blanket for that matter. Roger had always tried though. Every day. He *tried*.

If he could find the studios of Kid America... maybe, with him and his cohorts, they could find a way to salvage the city. Already the sudden surge of confidence he'd felt was slipping from it's crescendo. Still, it lingered, bading him to forge on. Fantasy could be a very powerful ally in a seemingly hopeless struggle.

He jumped off the last rung of the ladder and fell several feet, landing hard on his buttocks. *Why didn't he just bounce like he had before?* No matter. Not right now.

The dog came tearing out of his backpack, running and barking madly. A name for the animal came into his head and Kazoo, without hesitating, named the dog, saying,

“*Sebastion. Sebastian Woofe.*”

Woofe looked up at him, seeming to smile.

He reached out to the dog,

“Hey Woofe.”

Did he nod? thought Kazoo, shrugging.

The boy looked about the tunnel. He had arrived at a wide area, a tremendous low-ceilinged room in the style of a parking garage. There were beams and pylons all about, and there was nothing much in the way of stuff anywhere. Empty but for several shadowcasting pylons. Lights peeked out of all directions of the distance, but nothing could be clearly seen. Everything was gray. Sebastian Woofe stayed close to Kazoo’s sneakers.

Kazoo bent forward and touched the puppy, petting him. He said to Woofe,

“I suppose we’re far enough away from the Clubs to try a little beam, right?”

The dog barked approval.

He pressed a button on his belt buckle and it lit up, with a strong, bluish lamp light.

He’d been ready to come underneath for more than a year now. Ever since Clarence left he’d proceeded with preparations. He’d stitched all sorts of old electric batteries into most of his outfit: an entire rung of double A’s ran along the underside of his belt, six 9-volts around his wrists, small watch batteries underneath his clothing buttons... Old school electricity was easier to find than it was to steal the new *Milk*. The illegal use of glomilk was far too detectable to Club scanners. They were increasingly happier to smash would be Siphons.

This didn’t mean that Kazoo hadn’t siphoned Milk at times. He often did. He *craved* it. But he hadn’t done it since his Truancy had begun.

Also packed in his bag he had almost a month’s supply of licorace, beef jerky, and sugar packets. That was all he ever ate. For months he had not touched any of the McDonald’s food the Electric Company supplied to Norphidites and Juvenauts alike. The food services was how they kept track of the Electro City minors. They scanned your hands and feet, your face, and your voice. (You had to sing, as well. If you were considered to possess a certain quality in your voice you could be swept up into the Electric Company at a very young age, and trained as one of the multitudinous Plug acts that was presented to the world beyond.)

Kazoo had begun to curb his appetite for McDonald’s as early as when he was 8 years old, mostly because the food was making him sick. It tasted good, but within hours of ingestion, he’d been getting stomach aches and breaking into cold sweats, throwing up, and even getting nosebleeds. He figured the food was used in mind control, and probably more accurately: *body* control--injected lazyness provided to squash fledgling rebellion. All the kids that remorselessly ate McDonald’s seemed *wasted*. So few could deny the almighty cheeseburger, and Kazoo admitted that he always, *always* remembered the taste fondly.

In order to eat, he pulled his mask up just over his mouth and ripped into a piece of red licorace, trying to boost his energy on a quick sugar rush. He broke off a small piece of jerky for Sebastian Woofe. The dog ate ravenously and yelped for more. Kazoo pulled out

some of the comic books he had brought along with him. “*Here Comes... Kid America*” #283-#285. He began thumbing #283. The cover merely pictured a weird looking candy. It was like a piece of hard candy, only it looked really strange. It looked inbetween that of a star and the atomic symbol. This was the beginning of the Kid America Saga that really turned the character into a legend. No reader could deny the appeal of Supercandy.

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Here Comes... Kid America #283 started it all. A tasty little product called Supercandy surfaces on the streets, in candystores all around the world. Fatboy, along with his pet monkey Jumpus (who he’d aquired from an evil peanut vendor in issue #113), happens upon a Candy Machine, sitting outside of a supermarket. Fatboy notices a sign that says Supercandy: Dumbdrops. He rummages for a nickel, and turns the crank. Before he can get the candy, however, Jumpus beats him to it. A close-up of the Dumbdrop shows a round, eyeless head, sort of like Pac-man, but with buckteeth. Jumpus swallows the candy. The monkey’s eyes swirl with color, he grows a few inches and *speaks*, a word bubble from his head reading, “What is this stuff?” Fatboy gets another Dumbdrop and eats it as well. He swells with power and cannot help himself from pulling the candy machines out of the concrete and throwing them into the street. He is superstrong. Fatboy tries another act of brawn, but finds that the effect of th candy has already worn off. Jumpus, however, remains intelligent, and only gets smarter as the story progresses. An, effect, (it is explained later), of the *instability* of the Supercandy. Every piece is different. They go back to Kid America’s apartment to tell him the good news, and the trio set off in search of more candy.

**-Bodey Fluger
Encyclopedia Komica**

synopsis of Here Comes... Kid America #283

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Kazoo nodded at the comic. *Adventure*, he thought. He decided he’d head north. The Radio Station of the Plug, was located *downtown*, in what used to be known as Creditron, the district where deals were made and money ruled the streets, filled with fast-talking and sheisty businesspeople. The area was now deserted but for the goings on within the Mega-structures. To enter the sector, meant risking being brought in by a Club for a made-up offense. The Company wanted no snooping, no rebellion anywhere near to the Radio Station.

Kazoo figured that if this business about Kid America being a real guy was the truth, then his Studios must be as far from the Company as possible. He’d head uptown and allow himself to bend east if ever necessary. He decided this was a good idea because Clarence once told him that the *real* Kid America hailed from the Brobinx sector. Anybody who believed in Kid America, Clarence had said, figured he ran a base of operations out in the Junk borough, probably in it’s southern regions. It was, after all, where he was allegedly last *seen*, nearly twenty threads ago, by a Juvenaut garage band that was friendly with Kazoo.

Still, Kazoo knew that if Kid America and his band of crusaders actually ran any kind of computer machine (which they were legend to) they had to be located in the *Spread*. Or under the Spread, if you will. All the power was in the Spread, where hard Milk was processed and cut, mixed into liquidiak, paste, dust. There was barely any processed Glomo to mooch off in any of the other lost boroughs, except nearer to the Blanket rims

where the Computer Houses were maintained by the DJ's program-thugs. Although the Milk puddled around these areas, System programmers protected the perimeters with subsonic weaponry that could shake the skin off of a person's body. The actual mainframe for the Stereo System spilled out of the Alphastruct and ran in unity with thousands of disk drives along the city's borders. The Blanket generated a field of Static Electricity that knocked out everything electrical outside of it for a hundred miles. Living things could not exist in this area for long without falling paralyzed, their atomic structures mutated into dribble.

* *

From behind him in the tunnel, Kazoo became suddenly startled by a slight sound of movement. Without a thought, he took off into a run. He fled. He was struck suddenly and completely yellow, infused with the idea that it was *Jim* behind him, the ill Neonerdo finally coming after the Juvenaut as he had promised. Kazoo felt paranoid, thinking, *maybe he's brought some of the other Transistors as well. This is it. I've bought it.*

Kazoo ran at top speed, looking behind him, Sebastian Woofe pumping his 4 legs, keeping very close to his sneakers. Kazoo wasn't sure of what it was that he saw.

The entire tunnel to his back was suddenly *white*. And the whiteness seemed to follow him. It was the same as when he descended into the cartoon black, except now, it was white. As if the tunnel were filled up with *Milk*.

Forcing himself not to panic, Kazoo involuntarily stopped for a moment and tried to crouch. He felt it this time, his gravity increased, he picked up Sebastian in his arms, then sprang forth, *bouncing*. He hit the top of the tunnel, then the ground again, and so forth, as he picked up speed towards the Northern light.

Milk trans:

He's quite lively sir.

I'm not sure how he's maintaining this.

Surely, he's been practicing this for years.

Shall I slop out and envelop the corridor to the exit?

Three Beeps.

Kazoo was stopped cold, then, by his body's own limitations. How long could he really expect to keep up something like that?

Again, he fell on his ass, and shook his head, imagining birds flying in circles around his mask.

When his eyes came back into focus, the corridor in front of him was also *completely* white, and glowing at that. The walls were *dripping* and the whiteness seemed to *pull in* from all around them. Some of the ceiling was still dripping as most of the whiteness formed into a puddle before Kazoo.

Kazoo made to touch the glowing puddle. It *is* milk, he thought. Then that which was dripping from the ceiling began to coalesce with the puddle, which had begun to bubble and rise up. Within moments, it was forming into something definite--a creature.

Creditron: in our dimension, Wall Street