

THE COMIC BOOK

It was an exciting fall day as my brother and I raced down the middle of the sidewalk, heading for Mr. Odelli's store. We dodged between two old men and whirled around a surprised mother pushing a stroller. We had fifteen cents to spend, just enough for a comic book of our adventurous hero, Superman. When we reached the door, the aroma of the roasting peanuts stopped us briefly. A sign stapled to the doorframe read ten cents a bag. Old bent staples sticking out of the wooden frame still had corners of older signs stuck to them. It didn't matter since we only had the fifteen cents to spend. We leaned over to warm our hand on the side of the roaster and to inhale the fresh aroma of roasted peanuts. The peanuts rustled together as the drum made another revolution.

We entered the store slamming the thick glass door behind us and headed for the confectionary counter to stare at all the wonderful things Mr. Odelli kept under the glass in the case. Tape covering a crack in the corner of the glass top didn't get in our way as we pressed our faces for a closer look. Not only candy, but dozens of gags filled the case. Cigarette loads, flies encased in plastic ice cubes, rubber snakes and plastic fangs had us staring. Everything in the case was more than fifteen cents, so we hurried over to the comic book rack to decide which one to buy. All of them looked attractive with flashy colors and action scenes on the covers. We looked over every comic book in the revolving rack, not noticing Mr. Odelli behind the counter talking with a few of the older men of the town. The back counter was sort of a meeting place for some of the town's men. Coffee cups were lined up on the edge of the counter and a handful of peanut shells always covered the wooden floor.

My brother, being older and a little taller than me, had the say over which comic book to buy, especially since he held the fifteen cents. We looked until a one-sided decision was made on a magazine depicting Superman racing through the air to save a derailing train locomotive. The engine was falling off

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a bridge and the conductor was halfway out of the window. This was a lot of action. I was not happy with the choice he made. So, I decided to slip the smooth covered comic book of my choice under my jacket.

It was one of those thick leather jackets with a fur collar. It resembled a flight jacket the fliers wore during the war. The jacket would surely disguise my deed. We both walked out from behind the rack and my brother headed to the front counter to pay for the comic book. He paid and was walking toward me, followed by Mr. Odelli. I then realized my dishonest deed didn't go unnoticed. I hesitated on my decision to dash out of the store, more ashamed than frightened, when his hand reached down and grasped me by my shoulder. I froze, staring at the thick fingers of his hand, and a flush of fright rushed through me. Reaching down, he unzipped my jacket and pulled the comic book out. While replacing the comic book on the rack, he explained the seriousness of stealing and threatened to call the police. I pleaded with him, explaining I had never done anything like that before and would never do it again. Staring at me, eye to eye, he made me promise not to steal again and told me I was free to go. My brother and I raced out of the store just as quickly as we entered. When we reached the end of the block, we hesitated for a moment. Left would take us up second street, straight past the Taxi Stand, and right would take us down the street to the alley behind the Anton Theater. If we are lucky the back door to the theater will be unlocked. The matinee is going to start soon.