

I spent the night undercover at the Docks, waiting to meet my contact in a Mohawk gang. Waste of time. They didn't show. I was about to call it a day when a couple of birthday-cake kids come running down the street.

Music blaring out their eyes.

One of these kids has got a reactor chest. And he's quick with it too. A cigarette lighter, typewriter, whatever. Zip, zap, zosh. Produced and discarded, produced and discarded.

"What are your numbers?" I barked.

361 and 477 came the replies. I was about to tell them to bugger off back to Uptown Lumps or the Tech District when suddenly-

Kaboom.

Things went black.

My ears were ringing. I reached for the kids in the dark and pulled them into a side street. Woosh. Must be the mohawks. What have they blown up now? I shielded the kids from the flying debris until - OUCH. A sharp pain in my arse... probably the bloody cigarette lighter.

A whimper from 361... Shit, she was hurt.

"477, shine that funky reactor light over here!" He did. 361 was injured, icing sugar and jam everywhere. "Spit out a cake tin right now! We need to protect her head!!"

Hm. Maybe the reactors were going to come in handy after all.

477 keyed something in and a thin metallic ring was produced. Cheap shit. I tried putting it on 361's head but no use. It was too small.

"Bigger, bigger!" I called.

"Uh... It says other sizes: unavailable... Sorry." Funking thing. Reactors. Useless.

477 looked worried sick. The candles on his head seemed to flicker and, for a second, I could have sworn they blew out completely. 361 was done for. He knew it.

Just then, I took a blow on the head myself. The typewriter. Things started going dark - quick. I don't remember much. For a moment I found myself dreaming - what I thought was dreaming anyway - of flying, high up above the docks. I could see the tide lapping up to the canal bridge. The old burger and chip bars spilling out to where the railway cuts over Lumps Town brewery. I could see it all getting smaller and smaller beneath me. I thought it must have been what these robo kids felt like when they soared around the night sky, playing havoc.

It was strange. I kept hearing that kid's voice, 477. Stay with me, he was saying.

Suddenly I crash landed outside an old shack on the outskirts of town. Another figure lay next to me, maybe 361. Two blue legs ran ahead of us and banged on the door, it was 477, wearing a Jet-pack attachment. Where had he brought me? I didn't last much longer.

All I can recall from the brief descent that followed is a dark figure rushing out towards us, with a glowing amber chest.

When I woke up I was coughing - smoke. But I was indoors now and safe. 361 lay with an iron clad cake tin protecting her head. 477 looked at me, relieved I was awake.

"You owe him your life, you know." It was a booming, harsh voice. Not 477's. Into the room walked a giant of a lump. A big, translucent, pink-skinned hulk, with a cannon in his hat and a fire burning out of his chest. I knew his number straight away. He was the most renowned bronze sculptor in Lumps World.

"This reactor you sold me is faulty, 147," the kid said, sharply. "It didn't have the right size cake tin I needed."

"You sold him!?" I croaked, reflexively. The Smoker looked at me and I regretted my tone. "My apologies," I offered, "I meant nothing by it."

"Alright, kid. Let me see." The legendary Smoker put on a pair of robo-laser lenses and started fixing the kid's reactor chest.

A Smoker selling reactor chests. I'll be damned. If the uptown Baseball Caps heard about this - there'd be hell to pay.

Together they worked on 477's reactor chest, trying to fix the malfunction. After I'd got over my disbelief, I faded in and out of sleep.

A little while later 361 stirred. Thank the Slime Ears.

We ate together. 147 was even kind enough to sculpt a bronze statue to toast my recovery. To see that mastery first hand was some experience. One I'll never forget that's for sure. The kids left before all that, of course. As soon as that damn reactor was fixed they shot off for their next fix.

Eventually, I reached for my coat too. I'd been out of contact too long. The Investigation can't halt 'cause of a stupid knock on the head. Boss would kill me if he knew. It's like he said, the walls are closing in now. Recess is over.

As I opened the door to leave, the Smoker stopped me.

"I wasn't joking, you know. That blue skinned kid with the sunglasses saved your life tonight."

I knew it. That was no dream up there in the clouds.

"He flew me here." I said. The Smoker nodded.

"That bit of bronze in your hand is pretty - and damn difficult to sculpt - but it won't fly you out of the burning dockland very quick, let me tell you."

Suddenly his voice was frank and defensive.

"There's no glory in being left behind, mate."

End of Log