

THE SCOOTER CHRONICLES

A SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
MODYSSEY



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Is this really how I'm going to die?

Tommy asks himself this question, as he runs for his life through a massive grassy field. He hears footsteps getting closer and closer.

Sprinting faster than he ever has before, Tommy enters an area covered with winter creeper plants. His foot gets caught on the plants and he tumbles over. He pulls his foot with all his strength. He'd chew it off if he could. Just as he's about to extricate himself, he looks up. It's too late.

The mad man stands there smiling and pointing his rifle directly at Tommy.

"Too bad. You lose, man."

Tommy stands up. He wants to plead for his life, but no words come out. He closes his eyes. He flashes back to his life as it was two weeks ago: He had a hot girlfriend, less than a month until he started college, and the money to buy the Vespa of his dreams. And now, he faces what are probably his final moments on Earth.

A loud bang. Tommy feels a burning pain in his stomach. He opens his eyes and looks down.

All he sees is red . . .

CHAPTER 1: THE BEST OF TIMES



Soundtrack: The Jam – “When You’re Young”

“RISE AND SHINE, citizens of La Jolla! It’s going to be another beautiful sunny day!”

Tommy Daniels snaps awake and turns off the alarm on his clock radio. He’s not the kind of person who wears his emotions on his sleeve, but on this particular Thursday morning in August, Tommy has a smile etched onto his face.

Why the good mood? Tommy’s life has been building up to this week for nearly eighteen years. He’s days away from having sex for the first time, choosing classes for his first semester of college, and having enough money to afford his dream vehicle: the ultimate symbol of Mod culture, the Vespa.

Filled with positive energy, Tommy reaches over and grabs one of his prized possessions: an old issue of *Melody Maker* from 1980 featuring two generations of Mod musical icons, Pete Townshend and Paul Weller, on the cover. He picked it up at a garage sale a couple years ago for a dollar. He’s read it more times than he can count and it is totally worn out, looking like it’s been chewed up by the garbage disposal. He flips through a few pages to get his brain going.

One glance at Tommy's room and there is no doubt that he is obsessed with Mod culture. The place is a fuckin' shrine to *Quadrophenia*, the Who, the Jam, and—of course—the coolest vehicle in the world, the Vespa. He tries his best to fit the Mod aesthetic: medium-length, shaggy brown hair that falls onto his forehead and a fitted suit that he wears when he goes out on the town. Even his naturally thin, 5-foot-9-inch frame seems ideally Mod.

Still, seeing as this is August 1985, Tommy doesn't exactly fit in with the times. No one around him shares his tastes. La Jolla, the Southern California beach town he lives in, is suburban, upper class, and bland. His family's house is cookie cutter and without color. Mod culture speaks to Tommy because it is so different: urban, edgy, streamlined, cool.

After spending the requisite amount of time affirming the merits of being Mod, Tommy takes thirty minutes to read through a chapter in a film textbook. Tommy tears through multiple books each week and has an uncanny knack of absorbing most everything he reads. He is smart. Really smart. He aced all his AP classes and his scores on the SATs were in the top percentile. He's less than a month away from starting at a great college and, though they aren't rich, his family has managed to put away enough to pay for his first year.

He wants to study film and dreams of becoming a big-time director. He's a huge fan of George Lucas, but not just because of *Star Wars*. Tommy has seen *American Graffiti* ten times and dreams of making a similar coming-of-age movie about a Mod-obsessed teenager living in a dull Southern California town. Come to think of it, the story might be a *tad* autobiographical.

Tommy's attention starts to drift. Being a seventeen-year-old boy, there's one thing that's never far from his mind: girls. And Tommy's got a good one. Stephanie Oshiro is cute, smart, and ready to go all

the way with Tommy, as soon as she turns eighteen this Saturday and before she leaves to become a freshman at USC. No wonder Tommy is in a good mood, right? Stephanie's dad runs the local operations for some Japanese electronics conglomerate, so suffice it to say, the Oshiros are filthy rich. For fuck's sake, their butler has a personal assistant.

Tommy glances over at his bedroom door and sees something unexpected: a box wrapped with expensive-looking paper and a bow. He leaps over and tears it open. Inside, he finds the coolest gift he's ever gotten: a Walkman. Inside it is a tape with the label "Tommy's Mod Mixtape."

It is accompanied by a note: "Dearest Tommy, you've talked about how great these songs are so many times. So, I had the audio guy at my dad's company put this tape together. I even had him put on that song by the Kinks that you played the first time we kissed! There are two copies of the mixtape: one for you and one for me. Maybe we can play it on Saturday night? Love, Stephanie."

On the back of the note is a list of all the bands on the tape. Tommy's mouth drops as he sees the names: the Jam, the Who, Chardon Square, Squire, the Action, the Kinks, Manual Scan, the Rain Parade, the Untouchables, Agent Orange, Small Faces, the Plimsouls, the Chords, the Question, the Three O'Clock, Secret Affair, and General Public. It's like the soundtrack of his entire life!

Tommy puts on his headphones and plays the first song. He dances around as the Jam's "When You're Young" blasts in his ears.

Afterward, he sprints over to the phone and dials with overwhelming teenage (i.e., horny) excitement. Stephanie picks up.

"You're amazing!" Tommy exclaims. "The Walkman is totally cool! And the mixtape is rad beyond words!"

Stephanie giggles.

“My dad brought home a couple Walkmans and I thought you’d like one. I’ve never really listened that much to the music you’re obsessed with, but I promise I will now.”

“Steph, you’re the best! You’re going to love these songs.”

“I hope so. So . . . what are we doing Friday after dinner?” Stephanie asks. “It’s your turn to plan something.”

“Let’s grab some coffee and then walk down to the beach.”

“That sounds incredible,” Stephanie responds, clearly cheerful at the thought of spending time with her boyfriend.

The call goes on for another few minutes, but not much is said. Mainly, they just sigh like some silly, love-struck teenagers . . . which is exactly what they are.

Hanging up the phone, Tommy puts his headphones back on briefly, but then glimpses the time on the clock radio. He’s running late for work! He gets dressed in a hurry and rushes out the door.

Tommy may not come from a wealthy family, but he works hard. He slogs five days a week for Jack’s Drugs as a delivery boy. He drives a truck and delivers pills and contraceptives to the rich and entitled of La Jolla. Some of the people are pretty nice, giving him generous tips and saying things like “thank you” and “have a nice day.” A lot of them are total assholes, grabbing their pills and slamming the door, complaining that he’s late, or yelling at him for messing something up, like he’s the pharmacist.

Tommy drives to his first few deliveries, eagerly anticipating some of the rich forty- and fifty-something housewives on his route. They often come to the door in revealing workout clothes, robes that are half-open, or towels that are seconds away from slipping off. Tommy has gotten more peeks at middle-aged breasts than probably anyone outside of the porn industry. Even better, some of these women gently flirt with him. Nothing serious, but enough to get Tommy to fantasize