

Hot Rod Heaven

by Larry Strattnr

After the brief respite of the “Days of Joey's Lives” summer soap opera, Bobbi's life remained boring until, walking down the street one Tuesday just after her birthday she spotted a ratty, red, medium-sized bicycle for sale in a ratty, medium-sized yard. Using her birthday money she bought it for a song from a surprised owner who looked like he never thought anyone would be stupid enough to pay for it. It was Bobbi Grumman's cheap ticket out of boredom.

So, high performance on two wheels, if one uses the term loosely, came early to Bobbi Grumman. All of her bicycles, from the first one on, were stripped down to bare frame and wheels. She called them “hot rods”. They were ugly, functional and could bash through any obstacle without damage. She rode urban assault routes often. Through the alleys down the railroad tracks, across the trestles and the sand pits, building sites and garbage dumps. Before she knew what motorcycles were she was riding cross country and getting used to speed and tactics. On a bicycle, in the places she rode, you could easily get taken down with a thrown bottle, a rock or a railroad yard bull's baton in your spokes. If you weren't alert, quick, skilled and in good enough shape to fly if you had to, you could be dead meat in an instant.

True, she was rather small in stature, but she got wiry tough and took to cutting her hair short. She easily passed for a boy which was a disadvantage because she was frequently hassled for riding her bike in places where a girl might have been given some benefit of the doubt.

When she was starting out and stupider she let herself get flagged down by some bigger boys on a building site. They bullied and tormented her, making her climb in and out of a hole someone had dug, telling her they were going to bury her alive until she

broke down crying and ran, grabbing up her scruffy bike and pedaling madly hearing them laughing behind her. They didn't even bother to chase. She pulled up by a dirt pile far enough away so she was safe, selected a nice round rock and pegged it after them as they walked down the far hill of the site. She heard the satisfying crack back where she stood. *Take that you creep*, and one of her oppressors went down like he'd been pole axed, writhing on the ground holding his head. Bobbi pedaled away still pissed about being such a coward and baby but satisfied she had at least retaliated. After that day, unless she knew the person, Bobbi never stopped the bike for anyone. Sometimes, even if she knew you she didn't stop.

