

The Dead Stink

By Kenn Hartmann

With dead bodies stacking up daily at Chicago's Rue Morgue and refrigerators failing to keep up with rotting piles and growing stench, the City of Big Shoulders slumps under the weight of corruption and hypocrisy. Summer's coming bro, I say to the bartender, so the bureaucrats better do something other than pad their own pockets with fat raises and pensions bigger than most working people's pay. We've got another governor behind bars and here I am getting hassled by a security cop.

"Well sir, you always find a fascinating way to start the day," says Mike the bartender, as he cleans a glass with a bar towel. "Toasting here is an art-form at our little pub, and we could celebrate the 'dead stink' with a shot of Wild Turkey." He puts the ultra clean glass on the bar and fills it.

Only if you join in, I say. "Here's to the dead stink." The Bird is tasty, not as exquisite as Benny's illicit moonshine, although perhaps exquisite isn't exactly the right word, let's for literary purposes say it doesn't have the same fucking kick in the belly as the Benny Shine. But the Bird does wash away the malingering taste of breakfast beer nuts and it doesn't allow any hesitation when the barkeep suggests another. We clink glasses, momentarily I stare into the caramel color and sniff the fine aroma, savoring the liquid on my lips and allowing it to swirl into my mouth and down my gullet and wonder what sweet inspiration awaits the charred nectar.

So I'm at Huron and the Drive, the sun's rising, the Lake's thawed, the Ferris Wheel at Navy Pier's still frozen and I'm walking past Playboy's offices (formerly 666 N Lakeshore – changed due to New Age superstition) and this female security guard starts yelling at me for parking my Escalade in a No Parking Zone. "This yours? Don't leave it! Get back here! You can't park here!" I mean she's screaming, making a real scene, like I'm a criminal.

"Well, sir, quite interesting really, since if memory serves me, you don't own an Escalade," says Mike, "in fact, as I recall, you don't even own a car."

So I told her, but not before taking a moment to see if the keys were in the ignition, I don't know why, perhaps to be a good Samaritan, a responsible citizen and move it to a proper zone, just for the sheer joy of doing good, the cheap thrill being of service, but alas, the prick had locked his precious doors so I said, "hey lady, I just got off the subway at State and Chicago." She continued her rant, giving me a disgusted look, thinking I'm lying, she'll show me, admonishing, "I'm calling a tow!" by the legendary Lincoln Park pirates no doubt. Go ahead and call, give it your best shot, I said, that's why I drive an Escalade so I can park where I please and not put up with people like you.

"Well sir, you astound me; you take the ordinary and..."

I tap my jigger lightly on the worn bar, like revelers might tink-tink-tink a glass at a wedding reception to make the newlyweds kiss. Mike smiles and fills my glass. I point at his glass and lay a twenty on the bar, flattening and patting it with my palm. He hesitates, knowing his day has just begun, but shrugs and pours. He says, "make it interesting, well sir, let me clarify (he swigs it slowly with experienced practice) you make me dream."

I see him once a month, always early morning and I leave the latest FRP rag, autographed by yours truly, as if I'm a writer for a real paper like Sun Times or Tribune or the Reader, like I'm Mike Royko or Studs Terkel, but he knows I'm not shit, but he'd never say so, he's polite and professional in his bow tie and pin striped white shirt and although he might be humored by a biker nobody long enough to be suckered into world of roadhouse aesthetics and quirky antics, he remains aloof, or at least reserved but still he's thinking maybe I'd write a story about his bar. What? This shithole, I say. "Well sir, it's a pub, fine décor, all the amenities," he tries to impress me, but at three shots in I'm unimpressable. It's a freaking basement, I say, but admit the wood veneer and polished railings may cater to the urban lunch crowd; the fine neons may favor twilight and evening pub-crawls, it's still a basement dude and there's no f'n parking for a motorcycle. But the morning is mine and I offer a tip, "Don't stand in a canoe." He says he's heard that before and I ask, What? My brother Brian was here? I pick up two and a quarter and leave remaining change on bar and trudge up concrete steps to street level to face the day.

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Revive: To restore from a depressed, inactive, or unused state: bring back to life

Scenario 1

After you stopped riding last year, you changed all your fluids, washed your bike, parked it on plywood or with the wheels off the ground, used sea foam or some type of fuel preservative, covered it and hooked up the trickle charger.

Congratulations!!

Your bike is almost ready to ride! Turn the key on and check all your lights. Including the headlamp both high and low beam. Running lights, spots lamps and front and rear turn signals. Also check your brake lights both handlebar and foot brake. Replace any bulb that is not working. Check all your controls. Your throttle should snap back to idle, your clutch should pull easy and your shift lever should return to the center position. One of the most important things to check is your tire pressure. It is not uncommon to lose 10-20lbs of air in your tires. Air them up to specs before your first ride. Make sure your machine is in neutral. On fuel injected bikes, key on, switch in run position and hit the starter. On carb bikes turn the fuel on and remember it may take a few extra squirts with full choke to get her lit. When it starts, let it warm up for a few minutes, and look it over for any leaks. There is one thing you need to be aware of. Sometimes both wet and dry clutch plates will stick together. It can cause your bike to lurch when you try to engage first gear. Make sure you have the front brake on. If it grinds but will not engage, **DO NOT FORCE IT!** Shut the bike off, put it in first gear, pull the clutch in and rock the bike back and forth. This may break them free, and you can feel it when it happens. If it still will not go into gear when running, **STOP**, you will need clutch service but if you force it, you may also need transmission service. When it slides into gear you are ready to ride.

Scenario 2

"I was meaning to do the storage thing, but I got distracted and then forgot about it."

Congratulations!!

Your battery is low or dead; all your fluids are most likely dirty, as is your bike and the gas in your tank is bad. If you left your fuel on, your carb may need to be cleaned. So, before you can ride, find your battery charger. You may need to charge it for as much as 24hrs to bring it back to full charge. Check your gas. It may have collected water in the lowest point and it may be in your float bowl on carb models. If there is, drain the tank and carb before putting in fresh gas. Check all fluid levels including the clutch and transmission. When all of that is done, please refer to scenario 1 for start up.

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