

Defeat From the Jaws of Victory

The members of the Brotherhood of the Wind couldn't believe what had happened to them, and how they had been routed. Just a week ago they had ridden into town full of fortitude and brimming with bravado. The territory was theirs. They had the opposition on the run, and the citizens were singing their praises. It was as if they could do no wrong. The stronghold of this particular part of the country had always been the religious establishment, along with dishonest lawyers and an autocratic political system. All this was propped up by an underground criminal element. The people of the region were at the mercy of the "big-shots" and had been looking for someone to overthrow the establishment for years. This week had seen the beginning of the end for the powers that be. How could it all have been turned upside down in a few moments?

The first salvo had been fired when they rode through the city gates in a show of force, surrounded by cheering townfolk. The parade was something to see, and there was no reason to think that with such an overwhelming crowd they could have torn down the very halls of in-justice. In fact, the Brothers had pulled their Harleys up right in front of the Temple doors, to the irritation of the authorities. No one paid any attention to the "NO PARKING" signs; no, not today. With only a few impromptu weapons, the Brothers slowly made their way through the religious establishment, driving the practitioners before them. On this day, the criminal element was carried away by the common citizens, as it was declared, "My house, which you have made a den of thieves, shall be called a house of prayer for all people." A demonic spell had been broken by a bunch of nondescript bikers.

You figure you are on the right track when you get on the nerves of the rich, powerful, and famous, don't you? During this week of high profile encounters with the authorities, the Brotherhood had pulled off some resounding victories. They had agreed among themselves to confront and condemn, but to try and keep the violence to a minimum. One of their targets was the filthy rich, who were so hypocritical in their practices. One day, as they were standing in the temple, they observed a rich man proudly drop his large wad of bills in the offering box, representing next to nothing out of his fantastic fortune. As he waddled away, an elderly widow dropped two cents into the box, which was the sum total of all she had in the world. Of course the Brothers couldn't let such a show go unchallenged. "This poor widow has actually given far more than the pompous . . . rich man gave," they shouted throughout the hall.

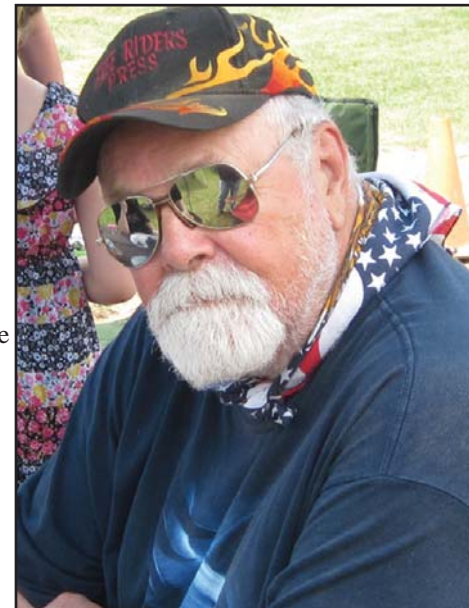
Near the end of the week-long celebrations, the Brotherhood rented a private room and had their annual party. This they did to remember how they had been saved from lives in prison and bondage long ago. They were committed to remembering the past, but also to looking toward the future. More than anything, they were committed to each other - the brotherhood, and their common quest; freedom and liberty for all. This is why they confronted and condemned the system. This is why they used non-violent means - so that they would not become like those they fought against. They celebrated their victories and planned for the conquests of the weekend. As was their custom, they finally took their party outside, to a nearby park, to enjoy the cool night breeze. It was there that defeat came crashing down on their victorious week. When the soldiers came, there was a brief chance that they could pull off another coup, a quick parry with the blade, but the decision was made to capitulate instead of fight. The Brothers fled as their leader was led away in irons.

Over night, the justice system, for once, made quick work of One rebel leader. They thought his swift demise would quell a smoldering fire of discontent among the citizens. They thought that his biker pals would slink away into their dens, never to be heard from again. Their plan was working, and the Brothers were all in hiding. They were licking their wounds, pointing accusing fingers at one another, and trying to figure out what had gone wrong. Right then, the Brotherhood of the Wind was on the back burner. Survival was foremost in their thinking. What do we do now?

Friday morning. The verdict is in. Death . . . by hanging from a tree. How could it have gone so wrong?

A few of them, without colors or fanfare, watched from afar. He died. Their hopes were dashed and left to melt in the cold rain of Friday eve. What now? It's been a long Friday . . . but, Sunday's comin'!

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