

Perhaps sometime in the street lit night, you twist the throttle, not gun it, but just twist it to see how far it goes. There's only so far you can twist it, but twist it nonetheless. The world fades into glorious hyper-vision, but you're just as relaxed and aware as you can be. I've never done that, but heard it could be done. I just putt along, stuff falling off my bike. I've had the battery tied on with string, the muffler with baling wire and once my brother had to bring a hammer to pound out the dent in my front rims. There was a potholed railroad track crossing by the factories, my rims bent so bad they wouldn't fit through the forks. The tires still had air.

It's just a vehicle to me, not a lifestyle. It generally beats hitchhiking and hopping freight trains. Although in any from here to there endeavor, all options are viable. I once hitchhiked with a motorcycle and got a ride across two states. I have no recollection of ever having dumped a bike and hopped a boxcar in one fluid swoop, but am sure it was done in the movies. Just not by me. I've dumped bikes in a fluid swoop and hopped boxcars in a fluid swoop, just not simultaneously.

Well, I guess you can't say it happens simultaneously, unless the bike hits something solid & you fly over the handlebars into an open boxcar. That'd be weird. In the movies, you'd be riding along being chased by either the bad guys or the good guys. Doesn't matter, someone's after your ass. You'd be cruising & a train blocks your path & you ditch the bike, run up the embankment & tumble into a hot dusty bed of straw in some bizarre, gang rape violent romp of a movie script.

But what if you'd been riding for half a lifetime, and the bike was as old and decrepit as the journey itself, & it just ran out of gas, the battery was dead, the tires bald, the pistons blown. On it's way to the basket & it died along a remote embankment about ten miles from nowhere. You weren't going anywhere any way, so just lean back & stare at the twilight planets & on the horizon a headlight gleam. The Express! Heading to the coast. For some people this may be a more plausible reality than crash your bike and fly into an open boxcar.

Or you might start with the piston. It may seem like nowhere, but it's somewhere, & somebody is bound to help, if for no other reason than to get you out of there. No matter how pleasant & cordial you seem under the shade of their apple tree, they just love to help you down the road, at least to the next town or county.

Everyone seems so happy, especially when you leave. But none of this has ever happened to me, I'm just speculating.

-Kenn Hartmann

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