

Off to See the Wizard

By Kenn Hartmann



We rolled west into Union Grove headed to Kansasville when the cyclone twisted up the road & scattered our sickles like a sweeping broom swats aside little toys. Swaahh. Harley Charlie scooted safely by but the tornado swooped me silly sideways. Like the alma mater sideline coach called out, "hey boy, you got knocked ass over tea kettle." What the hell's that mean? "Boy, you don't know whether to sink or wind your watch, shit or go blind!" My sickle & me launched into space over power lines, racetrack & that low dive biker bar where we was headed. We was headed but not no more. Holy mother of all good graciousness, good graces launched with impunity like a slingshot slung at Goliath. I fell to earth in a tiny hamlet inhabited by munchkins & I squashed a f'n wicked witch beneath my sickle, The Murder Machine, Kill Sickle. Out of gas, dammit. Witches blood all over rims & rubber, front forks looked like bright pulsating flames, squished & splattered. And me outta gas can you believe it? No blowing this pop stand in a quick get away. Wonder if Harley Charlie made it clean through? Then some bitch in a bubble shows & damn near runs me down talking on her cell, texting & doing her nails. She accuses me of being a witch & I say "hey bitch." The Munchkins come dancing out of shrubbery; singing like reeds in the wind & I ask this little prick from the Lollypop Gang if he can score some whiskey or weed. Coffee? Gasoline? Ethanol? The bitch in the bubble's got it made, floats with a magic wave of a wand. Hey baby you're kind of cute even if you did almost run over my ass. What's your name? "I'm Glinda. I'm good." Yeah, I bet. She points out ruby slippers. Those funky things? I pull my pliers & break the rubies free & stuff my pockets full. "But you tossed the magic slippers," she admonished. They were gnarly admittedly, but biker boots, steel toed. Hey Glinda; you know where to get a drink in this burg? Feeling thirsty, riding a tornado & all. "Go seek the Wizard of Oz." Now you're talking. Point me in the right direction. "Just follow the yellow brick road." The Munchkins chime in madly & I fire up my sickle to drown their annoying asses out. "Follow the yellow brick road." Shut up. "Follow the yellow brick road." Shut the fuck up.

Went down to the crossroads figuring the devil would come to collect his due. I met the Straw Man, who hung in effigy, lynched as it was, guarding a patch of weed. You supposed to be a scarecrow? A raven on the Straw Man's shoulder, scoffed & scowled in a cackled voice, "he don't scare nobody no how." The raven pecked at the Straw Man's cheap fabric head & buttoned eyes & the Straw Man complained pathetically, bitterly. I focused on the field of hemp, for rope I presume, textiles perhaps. "What? You never met a talking crow?" spoke the raven. Actually I had as a kid sitting at the dining room table listened many mornings at breakfast to Black Baron's vulgar tongue, unmerciful rampage. Black Baron, our baldhead crow, sat on his dirty perch & scolded us with a foul mouth. My father yelled, "godammitahell, who's been teaching this bird to swear?" My brothers & sisters shrugged & scuttled off to school. I helped the Straw Man off his cross, "like strung up on Golgotha" he mused, "Can I go with to see the Wizard?" Not on my sickle brother, stick out the thumb of that glove & hitch a ride. I putt-putted away.

Down the yellow brick road a spell I found this decrepit den of iniquity run by a couple of militant monkeys with wings. They had the Tin Man's head on a shelf. What happened to you? "These creatures said since I didn't have a heart they'd use my body for a still to make moonshine." Is that true? The monkeys giggled & produced a flask, a token of their esteem. Whew! Wicked! Burned my innards. You don't know what your missing Tin Man. Then the Wicked Witch flew in on her broom all sulfur & brimstone. She was Cajun green, supple like a snake, supple & green – a sensual & thrilling combination I might add. "You look enthralled," she said. Enchanted. "You owe me rubies." For what? "The elixer." How much? "All of the rubies." For how much moonshine? "All of it." Well, then, let's get this party started. That witch could party, damn straight, but when drunk she started firing those fireballs off & damn near burned the joint down. "Where you from riding that silly contraption?" she asked. Nowhere near here, but I do admire the way you ride that broomstick. "That so?" That so. "Yeah?" Yeah. "Interested in a demonstration of my skills?" Hoped for exactly that.

Never did make it to the Emerald City. Ended up in Union Grove on the rainy side of the road with Harley Charlie. "Where the hell you been?" he asked. "Thought you weren't going to make it through." Wasn't quite sure myself. "Let's see if we can make it to Kansasville before closing." I'm following you bro; see if we can hit both Hog's Nest & Wildlife Refuge. I checked my pockets, didn't have a single ruby left, that witch took everything.

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A Question We Have ALL Been Asked...

Recently I was asked to explain certain aspects of being a biker to a dear friend. The first response that came to mind was "If I have to explain, you wouldn't understand." But then I decided to give it a shot. Here is someone honestly wanting to understand. Perhaps I can give them a new appreciation in life.

In all honesty I haven't been a biker as long as most would think. But it is something that clicked with me from the get go. It came naturally, felt immediately comfortable and brought me a happiness I hadn't known before.

Once the conversation started, I soon realized there was going to be more to it than I had originally thought. She asked about clothing, different types of bikes, even events. We discussed poker runs, benefits and memorial rides, patches and pins, vests, jackets, do-rags and helmets. I did my best and made sure she understood it was only MY input she was getting here - others may have given different answers. She would stop me and ask me to define a term or simply ask "Why?". In talking about vests, she asks why they are necessary. "Not necessary. Just a way to show who you are, where you have been and who/what you support."

"Kind of like a scout with badges?" she asks. I have to laugh at the analogy, but yes, similiar to that.

I find it funny that all the things that are every day to me, are so foreign to someone else. She shakes her head at some things, laughs and nods at others. We discuss the stereo typing that is associated with bikers. She chooses her words carefully when she asks about MY choices. I assure her I am the same person she has known all these years, just now with a new passion in my life. One that brings me a joy and happiness not known before.

The conversation ends with her asking if I know of anyone who would take her for a ride this summer. Wow! I'm blown away. I tell her I'll check into it and get back to her. One ride and she'll be hooked! Just watch for the gal with the perma-grin on her face.

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