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## Incognito in No Man's Land

by Kenn Hartmann

I travel incognito, run with the rumor. This self-inflicted exile allows me to migrate through the ever strange territory of daily existence trouble free. Shed the excess baggage and preconceived notions. Carry only a tune backed up by the rumble and roar of the open road. Recently, I had a run-in with custom agents and local Gestapo in Amsterdam's Schipol airport. Ah, but that's too fresh and will either piss me off to tell it or infuriate the reader, perhaps instead, let me tell you about the time Canada deported my sorry butt back in the bad old days and beyond the statute of limitations. Writing about recent events might prove incendiary. Although today, while pumping gas, an esteemed member of the Outlaws stopped and said, "I saw that funny patch and had to check it out."

Now by funny he didn't mean 'funny-ha-ha' but funny like George Thorogood's classic lyrics 'one Bourbon, one Scotch and one beer.' In the song, George skips the rent and tries to crash at a friend's pad but the dude says,

'sorry, my wife's kinda funny.' George replies 'everybody funny, now you funny too.' Although my jacket looks like club colors, the hand-crafted patch 'Whack fo' daddy-o' is emblazoned around the Great Get-Down skull logo. It's a line from an ancient Irish folk tune rockafied by Thin Lizzy in 1970 and later hammered out by Metallica. The line actually goes 'whack for my daddy-o, there's whiskey in the jar-o.' Whatever the hell that means. But it sounds cool and only a die-hard head-banger would dig it.

So anyway, crossing from Vermont into Quebec I almost made it, but an astute Canuck border clone asked how much money I had. Ten bucks, I said and he replied, 'pull your bike over and show me the money, hey.' Well, I complied but I only had a buck seventy-three. What's the big deal? No visible means of support, hey and lying to customs. He did his duty and refused admittance. On the American side, the guards looked at my record which now showed a refused entry into Canada. They did their duty and refused admittance. They called me indigent. I said, 'dude, if you mean indigenous like Crazy Horse that's cool, but if you mean indigent like Three Bags Charlie who pissed his pants and hung out by the rail road tracks hording a stack of porno, you're mistaken.' They didn't like my attitude. They asked where I planned to sleep and I said 'out.' Would it have made a difference if I said a haystack or a hotel?

So there I was, trapped in no man's land. Pushed my bike to the grassy knoll between the border shacks. The guards on both sides giggled. I fumed for a few minutes, frustrated, pissed. What could I have done differently? Showed the five bucks I had tucked in the liner of my jacket? But it was wrapped around a tasty bud saved for later. I kicked back against the sissy bar and mulled my predicament. Mainly I was hungry. I opened a can of tuna swiped from a convenience store in Barre and added mustard and mayo out of freebie condiments garnered from roadside quick-stops. Cut a slice of homemade bread baked last night by a lovely college coed at Goddard as a going away present. Perhaps it was a 'please go away' present. I ate and watched the migration of souls to and fro; sedans and station wagons filled with decent citizens who presumably weren't broke and of questionable immigration status. Delved into a tattered copy of 'Papillon' about a con named Henri who escaped the Devil's Island penal colony in French Guiana. Henri was anal about hiding his money. He had it stuffed up an orifice where only a bunk mate named Bubba could find it. My five bucks tucked in my jacket liner would suffice.

When I unfurled my bedroll the American guards quit giggling. Ain't that like always? Get comfortable and get kicked out. I hear even the Vatican reconsidered its stance on Limbo. I fired the sickle and headed south happy to rev and rip it up. Only this wasn't the route I wanted. A month earlier I had taken the Macdonald-Cartier Freeway from Detroit to Montreal. But the return trip was not to be. Man, the 401, all fun. No speed limit, just a flat track to drive fast. Oh yeah, and those luscious young French waitresses who work the small town pit stops anxious to serve a piping hot cuppajo. I imagined a little poetry on a napkin might inspire a free donut on the side, maybe lead to a mid-night rendezvous, 'voulez vous coucher avec moi, yah hey.' Guess the border guards pegged me. Just a fine example of how homeland security protects their virginal daughters from big bad Yankee bikers. Can you blame them?

After a three month sabbatical from writing for FRP, I have to tell you what brought me back. I left the curious Outlaw at the gas station and passed an eighteen wheeler on the Kingery Highway. He blew his horn and waved something from his window. I didn't notice what freight line or even the driver's face. But he clutched a copy of Free Rider's Press fluttering in the breeze.

-Kenn Hartmann

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