

The Coming Attraction

By Kenn Hartmann

I lie upon the hospital gurney while the doctor digs out a foreign object lodged in my finger. The painkiller leaves my hand dangling lifeless as a wet baseball mitt. Hey Doc, how long before I can ride my sickle? 'Oh, a couple of days,' he replies. My bike is outside in the parking lot; I need to bend my fingers now. 'Four to six hours,' he says. Thirty minutes tick by & finally two of my fingers work just enough to throttle & brake. Now to type this story.

I awake on a hillside with a vague notion of local topography. Last night, I could see only shadows beyond the periphery of a quivering headlamp gleam, just a clump of pine in which I bedded down. By dawn's first light an amazing vista unfolds. In the valley campground a circle of people perform a hippie version of a tribal ceremony. They gather around a drummer & a pipe bearer in celebration of sunrise, a ritual I recognized from a Great Plains powwow in my youth. A hundred people camp below, perhaps thirty people assemble to witness the magic of morning. Certainly, my headlights would have been visible on the ridge after midnight. Undoubtedly, my pipes must have resounded across a quiet valley nestled in sleep. But now I rest upon a bedroll, alone on the heights surrounded by pine, contemplating existence in the cool air. There's been many a night I prayed for dawn.

Once, me & Dave the Rave (now a DJ on the morning drive in LA) tripped our brains on a curious concoction of Lysergic sugar cubes dissolved in Gatorade – theoretically a short circuit into the central nervous system. Our reasoning subsequently was because a few minutes had passed without feeling the effects we decided to

increase the dosage. It became like Laurel & Hardy futilely attempting to escape a celluloid cage or like a Firesign Theater comedian skipping endlessly over the same skit. Dave the Rave & I got separated & walking alone, stoned to the bone, I found myself surrounded by angels in a desolate graveyard with silhouettes of crumbling tombstones



painted against the eerie neon glow of a surreal urban horizon. My body felt like a skeleton bound within a shroud & hung upon an ice pick in a meat locker. A young girl appeared to recognize my predicament even before I realized I was in one. She offered me orange juice with a voice as soothing as a nightingale in a midnight breeze. What's this for, I asked, to bring me back to reality? 'No,' she said, 'your salvation.' In her eyes shone the light of a thousand distant galaxies & I silently prayed for dawn's release from the ghosts of darkness.

The sun appears above the pine bluffs & I ride into the valley, past the band shell to the corral where a few leather clad souls lounge about their bikes. I distribute copies of FRP & listen to them bitch about the Orifice of Homeland Insecurity canceling their event. 'Did they surrender to Bin Laden & are now going after American bikers?' Someone counters, 'you must admit, flying is safer since they've confiscated all the water bottles & nail clippers from senile old grannies.' The biggest problem is being stuck at a teen-scene fest. We hit the road in search of a bar. I gravitate to one of the female riders whose fine countenance & a mischievous smirk reminds me of a Da Vinci. We cruise up & down the main streets of little towns, friendly with everyone. We are welcomed into the cafes, the bars & gas stations, or at least our wad of cash is. Locals ask, 'where you from?' & elicit different stories depending on who answers. At night we prowl through a carnival.

Finally, I head alone toward Chicago but get tired & pull into a farm field along a weathered fence where my throttle hand brushes against barbed wire & a piece of metal imbeds into my finger. Back home I try various home remedies, cut it open with a razor blade, pry the wound with tweezers & soak it in peroxide but after a couple days it looks grim. At the hospital, the doctor digs deep & as he pulls it out exclaims, 'oh my, that's big; you want a souvenir?' No Doc, just get me back on the open road.

-Kenn Hartmann

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