

C. Davis Fogg

Me My Motorcycle and a Brick of Coke

My name is Josh, named after Joshua the Israelite spy, and I'm seeking the promised land which happens to be Las Vegas—a mythic destination, the land of cash, milk and female honey, of light and sparkle and a sufficient dark side to make life profitable and maybe too exciting.

To get to the "Big L" as soon as possible, I planned to drive straight through, stopping only to rest, eat and sell a little dope to finance my trip. So I gassed up my Harley Hog and loaded minimal supplies, a tent, change of clothes and my dope hidden in the false bottoms of my saddlebags.

My vintage Hog is mirror black with chrome headers, pipes and cylinder heads. Everything that's not black or portable is chrome. The gold Harley logo neatly swishes both sides of the gas tank and I have huge fiberglass saddlebags on the rear topped by a second comfortable seat. I crank 95 horsepower and can go a bone-busting 95 mph. I like the breathless feeling of power, freedom and excitement, the wind blowing my helmetless hair and a destination in mind riding solo or with my buddies. I've never been in a serious accident....yet.

In "Kit" I'm a pretty formidable piece of work if I do say so myself. My friends agree. I stand about five foot eleven; weigh in at a portly, belt lapping 225 with a full-face straggly gray and black beard splayed maybe six inches below my chin. Of course my hair runs wild except for the small bald spot that's growing on the top of my head which regrettably helps me sense the force of the wind or the chill of the rain.

The "driving gear" that I wear almost all of the time consists, first and foremost, of my tattoos. I started with the U S Marine Corps shield on my right arm punched in during a drunken night as part of my initiation during boot camp. It was the thing that you did. After that, it seemed only right to continue to paint beautiful images on my beautiful, canvas, so my arms are covered with abstract swirling multi-color designs, my pecs each have a Harley Davidson logo and bike design, there's a death's head with the number 13 around my navel. My back is decorated with creepy vine-like patterns, a Celtic cross and various tribal tattoos and the backs of both of my hands are covered with bright red and blue flames.

All things considered, I really convey an "attitude" when I patrol in my sleeveless, studded leather vest, tattoos, silver-trimmed leather chaps, kick-ass boots, and spurs. Not someone at first glance you'd want to mess with.

In reality, however, I'm a pretty nice guy. I'm not out to make trouble, I like things peaceful, I never go looking for trouble, but if it finds me, I'm not going to run away either.

To understand why I'm taking a little "road trip" and adventure and fleeing my circumstances here for a while, you have to know a bit about my hometown Piddle Dee Dee, Tennessee tucked away in Wail Hollow. Those aren't the real names of this God-forsaken place but the locals named it pretty good. We're a town of 300 people, two bars, one barely functioning Baptist Church, a gas station and garage and what might pass for a general store in a grade B 1920's silent western. That's it. We're way up in the lush Smokey Mountains and the big city for us is Pigeon Ford, 30 miles away, which was a nice little city of 2,000 until native Dolly Parton got famous and ruined the place by building the theme park "Dollywood", inundating us with grey-haired and cowboy-hatted tourists, and tacky motels restaurants and souvenir shops. You can go really crazy here or watch your brain deteriorate before your very eyes staying around this place for long, so periodically I need some outside stimulation. Anything.

I live in the standard generations-old Appalachian "shack" with weather-beaten wooden wall planks, tar paper layered here and there, brick fireplace, rusted tin roof, raw dirt yard and an old 1965 Chevy truck rusting in the side yard. No washer or refrigerator on the front porch. I'm upper class.

If you look carefully, however, you might be struck by the number of bright and shiny 4X4 pickup trucks scattered around town, the occasional new snow mobile, and the new bikes, swing sets and toys for the kids. If someone invited you into their shack, a very unlikely event, you'd find new 52-inch satellite TVs, sparkling dishwashers, refrigerators and other appliances and some furniture that wasn't hand-me-down. Now you may wonder where a diddly little town in the middle of one of the most depressed areas in the United States comes by such wealth.

Look no farther than the end of our only street, imaginatively named Main Street. All that largesse is a result of a booming local economy--based on the production of the finest grade of "hillbilly pot" available in the Appalachians. Our fine income is supplemented by our world class "chop shops" They receive stolen cars from New York and New Jersey, chop them into parts and sell the parts to the auto repair industry through a set of "honest brokers", The pot goes back through the same distribution channels—a very efficient arrangement that would be the envy of any Fortune 500 CEO.

We're expert in our businesses and experts in avoiding the law. After all, it was our ancestors who made the finest moonshine and bathtub gin during prohibition and World War II. They, if anyone, knew how handle the Fed's short of a shootout, and sometimes with. So we come from a long line of Captains of Industry.

I have to confess that, being educated, I'm a bit unusual for these parts and my transformation started in the Marines. All the guys I knew were heading back to the family farm, construction, dusty, dirty labor, re-upping and a lot of things I didn't want to do. Didn't think their future was interesting, wouldn't make enough money, and certainly didn't move me up into the world I wanted to be in, not that I knew what that was. I only knew what it wasn't. So I took the GI Bill, got into the University Of Tennessee, I assume, under their affirmative action program. I figured they have to have a few mountain boys to show off with their other minorities. After graduation I misspent several years working in legit enterprises and then returned to Piddle Dee Dee to help my folks with their pot farm. A horticulture degree has to be good for something. So there you are--hillbilly to college kid to hillbilly in a few short years.

All of this is by way of saying that I was taking two bags of top grade “hillbilly” with me to keep me happy along the way, and a 1 kilogram brick of coke to sell to pay for my trip and make some money for gambling and what ever else I had to do to make the big “L” a hot place. I got the coke at deep discount prices through our marijuana distributor. I figured I’d stay “high,” rich and happy. I had no idea how I was going to sell the dope.

I roared out of town on an idyllic spring day, trees in full bloom, daffodils up and yellow and the forest thick and green. I envisaged lines of school children and their parents lining Main Street and waving American Flags and screaming goodbye to their adventurer, hero and explorer, but it was not to be.

First stop, Nashville, 500 miles away. Halfway across the state and another world.

I blasted into Nashville, my illegal muffler cutout wide open, and down Broadway into the honky-tonk and tourist part of town. My destination was “Tootsies Orchid Lounge”, a tawdry, smells-of-beer and sweat, can’t-see-through-the-dirty-windows bar that, half a century ago, was the watering hole of soon-to-be-famous country singers and now the spot of choice of never-going-to-be-famous singers and curious fluorescent lycra-clad tourists. I could just see Johnny Cash, black clad, leaning against a wall in the back strumming “Walk The Line”.

I pressed my belly on the bar and asked for two shots of “Jack. I downed one, saved the second for sippin’ and made nice to Randy, the bartender. It’s my experience that bartenders in places like this know how to get anything from girls to trouble to dope. And I sure wanted to sell some coke to add to my Vegas war chest.

Randy was a tall, slim drink of water, as they say around here. He was about 6 feet 2, encased in skin tight jeans, a gingham cowboy shirt with little smiley eye darted pockets and mother of pearl buttons. He wore a tan leather vest, bolo tie, huge belt with a silver “rodeo” buckle with a relief picture of a bucking bull on it, and a pair of ostrich boots, a status symbol around here, that must have set him back \$2000. His slender unshaven face reminded me of an older Slim Pickens. I slipped him a number A-1 fat joint to get the conversation off to a good start,

I leaned over the counter and quietly whispered in Randy’s ear: “do you know where I can unload some top grade coke at a good price.”

“Maybe. Depends on what’s in it for me.”

“How about \$5,000 pure untraceable cash after the deal is done and I’m back here safely?”

“How do I know that you’ll come back? How do I know you’re not a cop?”

“You have to trust me on both points. Worst case you don’t get your \$5,000 and that’s not going to happen. You’ve got little risk for a good reward. All I want is the name and place of a dealer that you trust. You’re completely out of the transaction.”

It turns out that there were well-connected dealers that hung around vacant riverboat --era brick warehouses along the

riverbank a few blocks away. The trade apparently became pretty active after 10-- particularly the upscale drive-through buyer group that likes top grade blow. He recommended a guy named Percy who seemed to be pretty high up in the hierarchy and might have some purchasing power. Percy, it seems, sells dope but doesn't touch the stuff himself, preferring a few shots and beer at the end of a hard working day. He was, Randy said, a man of his word and could be trusted. A prince of a criminal if there ever was one. I was a little scared since the only contact I had had was with the friendly neighborhood types back in Wail Hollow. I hoped that I didn't end up on the wrong end of a Law and Order episode. Randy arranged a "meet" for me to negotiate a deal with Percy and I took a cab to the designated spot under the Cumberland River Bridge where the homeless camp out and have their shack city. I didn't want to make a deal and give Percy samples around criminals and thieves, and cops pretty much avoid the homeless as long as they behave.

It was two in the morning. I didn't have much trouble finding Percy. He was a squat tough, middle-aged black dude with a pock marked face, cigarette hanging out of his mouth and hungry eyes. I no sooner introduced myself than I was grabbed from behind by two goons, a hand clapped over my mouth, and thrown into the back of a monstrous shiny black Escalade. I normally wouldn't object to posh leather seats, but this was not my idea of a fun ride.

We barreled through the streets of Nashville and its suburbs and into the maw of rural, massive, Warner Park. The park was pitch black, densely wooded with bushes and brambles crawling under the trees. Isolated. Not a person or car in sight. We negotiated miles of the park's back roads, my back seat handler keeping a grip on my arm damn near tight enough cut off my circulation. I had no idea why this idiot was kidnapping me because I didn't have the drugs with me and, aside from them, I was about as valuable as a glass of polluted water. I was trapped and had no idea how I'd get out of this if I did at all. I went around my mental worry beads so fast that they smoked.

Percy, driving too fast, suddenly threw the truck around a tight curve. The truck careened, the henchman loosened his grip. I opened the door, flew onto graveled shoulder of the road, and stumbled into the dense woods. I hit shoulder first and it felt like a turkey leg being ripped from its socket at Thanksgiving, but I didn't think that it was broken or dislocated--just mashed up. Thank God for leather jackets.

There were distant sounds of my pursuers, and flashlight beams swinging through the forest, so I ran faster, I changed course. The undergrowth and briars cut me and tattered my clothes. I splashed through a creek, ran across an exposed meadow to a highway streaming along the side of the park and took off on foot toward the glow of Nashville.

I was lucky, lucky, lucky. About a painful mile down the road there were two "genuine" and friendly bikers gassing up at a big truck stop. They dropped me off at "Tootsies" so I could pick up the Hog, clean up a bit and get out of town.

I hopped on my bike and headed for Interstate 40 and the Southwest. I swear I saw a black Escalade follow me out of town.

I still had a problem--I hadn't sold any drugs and I had to if I were going to take Las Vegas by storm. The trip from Nashville through Tennessee, Arkansas and Texas was uneventful. In New Mexico, I managed to find a Harley Store in the small town of Clovis and stopped in to see if I could connect with a motorcycle club that might be able to broker a drug sale. Sure enough Dave's Harley knew of a rally of "tough guys" taking place about 20 miles down the road. Being a Marine, I figured I could take care of myself with a tough crowd, and I set off to investigate. Stopping a couple of miles

short of the rally, I hid my coke in a hollow tree stump, a safety trick picked up from my hometown pot-dealing days.

A layered blue haze and full moon hung over the pond in a farmer's field. It smelled of exhaust, beer, smoke, sweat and pot--a truly noxious brew, but heavenly, heady and enticing to a dedicated motorcycle man. When I rode up, there were over 200 cycles--mostly black Harleys punctuated by the occasional metallic red, blue and silver-- arrayed around a pond. There was a huge spark-billowing bonfire. Blasts of hard rock split the air, people milled about talking and showing off their fancy and not-so-fancy bikes. They were "outlaw" bikers and, according to their jackets, members of the "Road Killers". Like all outlaws, they would be dedicated to theft, drug trade and wanton violence. Not a crowd that I should mess with.

I didn't have to look far to find their Chief to see if I could move a little coke. I was yanked off my bike by two ugly behemoths and dragged by my armpits, toes down and digging into the ground, to the center of the crowd and tossed into a heap at the feet of the King and his court.

The honcho's tribal name was Blackbeard. Beard for short. Indeed he had a full black beard, droopy handlebar mustache, a large hoop earring, and head capped off by a black bandanna. He was muscular to a fault; hard-time barbed wire tats on his arms, a grizzled hard face and venomous eyes. If eyes could kill, these would, and probably had. He had a cutlass by his side, a symbol of brutal authority.

Straddling the saddle of his bike was his "biker babe", his chattel, his servant, his sex slave. She was young redheaded and beautiful. Her silken flaming hair glistened all the way down her back. She had long shapely legs, wore a black mini-mini skirt hiked up to her crotch, a red blouse tied under her breasts, no bra, and nipple rings. She flaunted her hot, steamy sexuality and, at the same time, told you "look but don't touch". Given her boyfriend's position, I doubt that anyone would try to touch.

"Get him up" Beard said.

The two goons wrenched me up under the armpits and stood my sorry ass up.

"What the fuck you doing here. Don't take lightly to strangers at my meets, or strangers at all."

"I saw you guys from the road and thought I'd have a some beer food and fun", I said.

"Well you came to the wrong place. Last idiot that dropped in on us left without his bike and staggered down the road hoping someone would pick him up. Doubt they did. He was a mess. Surprised he made it out of here at all."

"John, cuff him. We have special bike rides for people we don't like, don't we?"

John clamped my hands to the bar on the back of his bike saddle, my body racked over the back wheel fender face up, heels down. My blood pressure went through the roof. I could see what was coming next—a skin-ripping ride around the field, the end of my life-or, at best, a long stay in a hospital.

The bike motor roared. The exhaust choked me. So much for a beautiful trip to Las Vegas. So much for my judgment on rest stops. So much for me.

Then Beard noticed my Marine Corps tattoo. Remarkably he was a Marine too and now being instant, fast comrades in arms, the case with all proud Marines, the atmosphere changed from hostile to brotherly. Beard nods to John to uncuff me and we do a high five in honor of the occasion.

“Hey dude, Semper Fi buddy. Where’d you serve man?” Beard said. “Trained at Pendleton. Two tours in Iraq with the “Thundering Herd”—3rd Battalion, First Marines. We spent our time killing the goddamn insurgents in Thar Thar. We’d knock off 50 and another 100 would appear from nowhere.”

“What did you do, friend”? I said.

“Two tours as a Sergeant in the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force. Saw action cleaning out Fallujah and Hadith . My platoon lost a lot of men in that cesspool.”

“ You’re lucky to be alive after those blood baths”, I said.

“What’s your name?” Beard said.

“Josh”

“And what can I do for you?”

I broached the subject. “Could you buy half a brick at an absurdly low price? I need money for Las Vegas fun. Could you sell it or use it?”

“Hell yes. We can use it here and now. We go through half a Ki in no time and it’s going to be a long party weekend. I’ll give cash on the spot if the price is right.”

I offered the blow at 5% below the going retail price would be just fine. I was escorted back to the tree stump with an “honor guard” of ten gleaming black, belching Harleys, delivered the coke, pocketed \$25,000 and was back on the road to Las Vegas. Spending change at last.

I figured I was “home free” until Las Vegas. Wrong.

I was whizzing across a moon-drenched barren cactus-populated Arizona desert making a swift 90 miles an hour when, suddenly, car lights pierced the dark several miles behind me. I thought little of it as, even at night, a handful of brave souls travel through this haunted wasteland. Surprisingly the car accelerated and closed on me at over 100 miles an hour, pulled abreast, bubble lights flashing, signaling me to pull over. There were two cops, not a good sign. They don’t like bikers and always suspect drugs.

No way in hell was I going to get caught with a half brick of coke and enough pot to make every biker west of the Mississippi high for a week. I passed a narrow dirt road, hit my brakes, the cops shot past, and I doubled back, turned my lights off and roared up the road, barely in control, toward a low, bouldered hill. I scrunched over the bike, dust washing over my face, eyes watering and half closed, choking, my pulse going through the roof, and sweating even in the bone-chilling desert night. I hid the Hog and me behind a boulder and watched the show from there. There was no obvious place to go.

The cops did a fishtailing U turn and sped up the road after me. A narrow dirt road is less kind to a car than a motorcycle. Their car, moving too fast, hit the edge of the road, skittered off into the desert, and hopelessly bogged down in a small arroyo.

The two cops took off on foot after me, guns drawn, stumbling toward my lair. There was no road down the other side of the hill only rough, sandy, rock-strewn dangerous downhill terrain. So I had only two choices—end my trip in jail or try a John Wayne escape. I choose John Wayne, careening down the opposite side of the hill, slipping and sliding, horsing the bike around cactus and dragging my precious boots to keep my balance. By some miracle, I reached the road again and took off at 90 leaving the sputtering cops in my dust.

Me, my dirty bike and half a brick of coke were on the way to Las Vegas again.

I slowly wheeled down the “strip” and was struck with a psychedelic-LSD-like blast of light--all of the neon and LCD colors of the rainbow swirling around my head, bathing the pavement with mobile abstract patterns, and bouncing off my shiny gas tank and chrome. The colors danced, swirled, moved, crosscut, formed images and figures, blinked and put on the greatest light show on earth.

Of course there was the Bellagio’s famous water waves- an acre of water spouting, splashing and receding to music and changing color to the moods of the tune. Then came Treasure Island with pirates swinging from the rigging of a fake galleon, rescuing damsels in distress, and blasting more cannons than the average revolutionary war frigate.

Not wanting to blow, pun intended, my cache of cash, and wanting to transact a little business on the side, I found a cheap motel in back of the Cowboy Casino, a third-rate buffet palace for the poor and foolish.

It was a two story worn cinderblock affair with maybe forty units and a small parking lot with old weathered cars, the occasional bottle here and there and a pair of old tires propped against a curb. One couple was sitting in front of a room on cheap plastic lawn chairs drinking Southern Comfort and 7-up. No other residents were in sight as it was prime gambling, wandering and eating time, or maybe no one was foolish enough stay there except me and the Southern Comfort people.

I went to the locked office door. Behind the office desk was a man in a dirty singlet, blue worn slacks, flip flops, and a gray, bored, stubbled, I’ve-seen-it-all cynical face. Beside him was a German Shepard with a chain choker collar who looked like he had a sour outlook on life—and on strangers. I was begrudgingly let in.

After a perfunctory conversation about the weather, “singlet” rented me a single room, bottom floor, for \$75 a night three nights up front, cash. I took the key figuring that this guy might be a source for my last drug transaction.

My room made the shacks in Appalachia look like the Ritz. It had the obligatory circular bed on a raised circular platform and a brown dirty matted shag carpet. So far so bad. The cinderblock walls were painted a pale purple, sprinkled with sparkles and stained with what looked like food or barf. There was an askew brass chandelier with one dim 40-watt bulb, a bed cover that looked like it had been rejected by the Salvation Army. I couldn’t tell what the probably awful bathroom looked like because it was lit with a 20-watt bulb. At least it didn’t smell.

I immediately checked out, got my money back and, not wanting to ruin my only vacation in years, decided to check into the Metropolitan—a brand new skyscraper-like casino with the most expensive rooms in town. After all I could afford it, and nothing like having a room in a casino where you can fall out of bed onto a poker table. The Metropolitan has the reputation of being a hot party spot for the younger generation, which fit my needs very well. Party, gamble, and maybe find a companion for the night to impress with my high-flying room and high-stakes gambling. I may be a country boy from Tennessee, but I sure can enjoy some of the big city thrills. I think that it was my Marine Corps experience that introduced me to the finer, so to speak, things in life.

I pulled up in front of the Metropolitan, or Metro as they call it, dressed to impress in my Sunday best—clean jeans, full-sleeved motorcycle jacket with “Hillbilly Motorcycle Club” embroidered on the back and my best black western boots with silver spurs. I tipped the valet \$50 to park my bike and strode in through the forest of two-story lit, psychedelic stained glass trees that lined the entrance. This is not to mention the giant neon robotic cowboy who was strumming some undecipherable tune.

On the way to check in I passed under a three-story chandelier made of crystal beads and swooping down to the lobby within feet of entering guests. It had a huge bar suspended in the middle of it and I made note that this was an early destination of choice. Given the low to no necklines that pass through the lobby, the view should be spectacular.

I bought the best room in the house that I could afford—a \$5,000 a night, top-floor “nostalgia” suite with a spectacular view of “The Strip”. Yes, a bed on a platform shaped like a heart, red plush figured walls, comfy red leather furniture in the most expensive middle class taste, hyper-plush rugs and mirrors on the ceiling. There was a Jacuzzi for four (I wondered who I could fill this with) and a bathroom the size of a small house. A far cry from barf-haven, my last “down-and-out” motel. But I didn’t expect a retro-room in a new casino. Forty years ago yes, now, no.

Vinnie showed me to my room, as is the procedure, carrying my one change of clothes. I had what remained of my “brick” in a money belt arrangement inside my pants so I felt my livelihood was relatively safe. The room had cold champagne and a cheese and fruit plate. I hate the bubbly, too weak and little girl stuff. Definitely yuppie and Gen X goodies.

In traditional Las Vegas fashion, trolling for tips and business on the side, Vinnie ask “if there was anything else he could get for me, *anything*”. Translated into English from the Italian, this means booze, food, dope, girls and any other kind of fun that you want.

You have to realize that the Mafia permeates Las Vegas from commanding the casinos, unions, running the girls and dope to their traditional occupation of trash collection. So the chances that Vinnie, Vinnie Vito it turns out, can help me with my little problem of getting rid of the rest of my coke were good. I didn't think that Vinnie had any friends in the DEA so I asked him point blank. "I have half a brick of coke to get rid of. If you help me sell it, there's a 5 percent commission on the price maybe \$1500. Vinnie almost fell over in enthusiasm, said no sweat (yeah, right) and we agreed to meet at three in the morning, six hours down the pike and after his shift was over.

That left me free for a few hours to explore. First stop was the gaming floor, a place awash with green tables and slot machines. Everything under the sun was in action--poker, 21, roulette, craps, and the ker-ching of the slots was deafening. I played an hour of high stakes poker, got bored, lost \$5,000 and decided to take in the Metro Club billed as the best and most exciting club in Las Vegas.

The Club is the damndest thing I've ever seen. Well not *the* damndest, but damn close. There were some choice single females in there, and my heart went thumpety thump, not counting the interest generated in the southern part of my body.

The room was huge: 62,000 square feet said the sign at the door. On the back wall over the high-tech DJ, there were dozens of dancers, almost strippers, writhing, bumping, and grinding in black, lacy garter belts and mesh stockings, skimpy g-string outfits and garish hot pants with ample boobs barely left to your imagination.

There were hundreds of bodies on the dance floor--men and women, many unattached, others with their girl and boyfriends, writhing, undulating, and waving arms to Buckcherry's "Crazy Bitch". They were bathed in alternating green, red, yellow, white, and blue floods and from the ceiling hung dozens of spacecraft-like fixtures that flashed like the UFOs in a dozen "close encounter" movies.

The female dress code seemed to be skin--the shortest skirts legal, and hang out of the top as far as gravity would take you without tipping out of your bra--if you were wearing one. The predominant color of these "trolling" dresses was black with lots of sparkly jewelry platformed on flashy spiked heels or some other exotic footwear. The men were deadly dull.

I decided to move onto the dance floor, if forcing my way through this mass of squiggling lemmings could be called moving. I crunched my way to the middle of the floor and, wiggling around, got a butt slam from a beautiful girl in an uncharacteristically red dress. She turned and laughed, I laughed and we faced each other and danced. Imagine this scene--a black-leather clad biker dancing with a woman in a sophisticated filmy swirling almost-dress. How un-Tennessee.

Peggy was her name and we took an immediate liking to each other. So I did the cave man thing and pulled her into a small, intimate, closeted booth to get to know her better. When she slid into the booth, her skirt rode up her shapely thighs and a luscious set of boobs and peeking nipples damn near fell out when she bent over to tell me something over the din. I was in heat. I ordered some champagne, and put down two lines of blow to loosen things up a bit.

"My name's Josh. What's yours?"

"Peggy. And never call me Peg, I hate it. I'm from Des Moines, the dullest, prudiest, corn-husking city you can imagine."

“Nice name”, I said, really meaning it. “ I’m between jobs and I don’t want to spend time in Piddle Dee Dee Tennessee--home of boredom, downscale living, pot fields, booze, nothing under the age of 50 with teeth to party with. So I’m here to boogie. I used to be a Marine but gave it up for growing pot with my folks.”

“Well, I’m a hair stylist to the kings and queens of corn, not porn which would probably be steadier work at a much higher price. I’m here to raise hell—dance, drink, do some drugs, and have sex. Simple as that. It has to be the right guy for sex, someone like you--handsome, sexy, funny and lots of drugs.”

“I’m your man”, I said.

We had a rollicking time and did everything that you might imagine and more. Of course there were the obligatory drinks though we were pretty much at the “walk-a-straight-line” limits when we got to my room. We smoked some of my top grade “hillbilly pot” for an extra kick. A round of to-die-for sex followed, as did a few lines of coke. After the second line, I didn’t remember a thing until about two in the afternoon the next day. I didn’t remember that I’d missed my meeting with Vinnie either.

I woke with an awful drug-alcohol hangover to find a sleeping woman, who I didn’t remember, naked in the bed beside me. We both had wedding rings on. I don’t recall ever having been married, but I finally recalled that the girl’s name was Peggy and that we’d had a sweaty and animated anatomical fling last night.

I scanned the room for my stuff and the coke belt, which were there. What was there that was unexpected was a photo album of Peggy and Josh’s wedding. Pure and Simple. Right there in the Las Vegas Elvis Wedding Chapel, the McDonald’s of matrimony.

There we were, in front of an altar-podium with a black-clad, long-necked, Adam’s apple decorated preacher that looked like he lived in a gold rush town in 1849 and had a Grant Wood American Gothic face. The background was a huge fake gold record with “Hound Dog” written on it. Next to us as best man, guitar, and ring bearer was Elvis. At least a good imitation of “The King”. I vaguely recall now his playing “here comes the bride” at the beginning of the ceremony and “Love Me Tender” on the way out.

And here was my dilemma. What now?

Well, if in doubt, hit the road. After sobering up, Peggy and I, having taken a liking to each other, decided to take the trip...she on my back seat with her arms around me, face into the wind, hair streaming behind her.

We headed toward California to see if we could find a nice place to settle somewhere. We agreed if it worked, fine, if not, fine too. After all, we had plenty of money, a great black bike and each other--for better or for worse. Sober or high.