

## The Kid Sails toward Home

Branches twist in the storm and scrape the roof. Wind tears wet leaves from trees and slaps them against the house past midnight. Rain increases. In the freight yard across the street, someone pulls a diesel engine up to a fast idle, an even-pitched tone in changing tones of the storm.

Again, I thought I heard someone at the front door. I walked through the living room, opened the front door, and looked out into the storm. Cold rain blew through the screen and chilled my nakedness. I saw the dark night outside my front door. Nobody was there. Smells of night, rain, plants growing blew through the screen.

The diesel engine revved. The truck pulled out of the yard, roared down to the highway, and up the highway out of hearing into the storm. I walked back to my bed and got in and pulled the covers up.

Early in the morning, my landlady pushed her wheelbarrow across the street, bent over, and raked leaves in blue sunlight shining through the bottom of grey clouds. She picked up broken limbs and dropped them clattering into the metal wheelbarrow. She asked, "Who you got working in your garage?"

Then I heard sounds and walked over to the garage, where a skinny kid with big hands, blonde hair ragged to his eyes, laid boards across a sawhorse and marked them.

I said, "This is my garage." The kid pulled a two-by-four out of a stack, marked it, and sawed it off. Smell of cut wood, hot from the work of the saw, blew across the garage. "My landlady wanted to know who was working in here. You didn't ask me about it."

"I come to your door and knocked a couple of times, but I couldn't get nobody to answer. Hand me that board there, will you?"

I reached into the shadow and pushed the end of the board over to him. I asked, "What're you building?"

The kid put the board down, pushed his hair back from his face, blew air from his mouth, and sat on the edge of the car frame. "You

a cop?”

“No. I’m not a cop.”

The blonde-haired kid picked up the board and nailed it into place. “Cops, they ask a lot of questions, so I wondered if you was a cop.”

“I’m not. But I am curious about what you’re building. Questions bother you if I’m not a cop?”

“What I’m building here is a sailboat.”

“Out of that?”

“It’s what I got.”

“But that thing couldn’t float.”

“It ain’t a boat to float. See the wheels on it? And this part goes up through here so I can sit on top and steer it.”

“Where are you going with it?”

“Home. Going to sit up on top and steer this thing to Missouri. Once I get away from these California freeways, I can stop and get me some rabbits or shoot me a deer, get some meat to take along.”

“They won’t let you on the highway with that thing. They’ll make you take it off the road.”

“They’ll have to catch me first. I’ll flat outrun em. Hand me that plank by your feet.”

I picked up the plank, handed it over the frame and watched the kid nail it into place. “What if the wind isn’t blowing right?”

“I’ll catch me one that is. I didn’t plan on goin’ this way. I come to California to make me a stake, but all I ever got was farm work, and you don’t make much stake on that. I made what I could, and I went to buy me a car. Salesman told me it was in good shape, all the problems worked out of it.

“It did sound good when I heard it run, but I got this far, and that smooth runnin’ V-8 motor busted a piston. Metal pieces scored the cylinder wall and the crankshaft, and I ain’t got the money to fix it. But I used to sail boats. I can build this thing up to get me home, sell the parts I don’t need for scrap metal. I got to keep workin’ on it.” He turned away from me, into the deeper shadow of the garage, and pounded another nail into the board. I turned and walked back toward the front of my house.

I told my landlady the kid would finish his project the next day or two and be on his way. Mrs. Sterocopticus threw leaves and limbs into the wheelbarrow and didn't say anything.

Living in town didn't do me any good. Cindy wouldn't let me see Ian and Heather. Frank didn't do anything about it. He wouldn't release records so I could get another lawyer unless I paid him, and I didn't have the money to pay him. I made a lousy choice when I picked a lawyer.

I packed my carryall, loaded my motorcycle on the trailer and headed for Oregon. I'd try to get a job with the Forest Service. I had to have more money, and nothing came my way in California.

Icy spring dawn, getting close to Hungry Wolf, Oregon, I pushed the carryall to sixty miles an hour. Engine noise filled the cab around me. Hot oil smell leaked through the floorboards.

In my rear-view mirror, I saw the kid, sitting high above the traffic on top of his machine. A plastic shield slanted up in front of him and deflected the wind. The tiller came up under the shield. Goggles reflected the morning light, and I couldn't see the kid's face.

I honked my horn as the kid passed, looked up at him where he sat wrapped in a sleeping bag, arms out through the top of the zipper, rifle laid across his knees. The kid didn't look around.

The triangle of grey sail blew out of sight behind frosted trees above the curving embankment blasted out of the mountain's grey rock.

In Oregon, people put me off for jobs. Come back next week. Come back after the first of the month.

Early spring showed in the cold mountains of eastern Oregon. I bid for timber survey and got two contracts. I headed into higher mountains before snow melted from shaded north slope. I set up camp. When I finished my first contract, I'd ride east for a brief visit with friends before I started my second contract. I counted and measured trees, described ground cover, and marked maps. After dark, I sat near my campfire and listened to the night, smelled cold spring on the mountain.

I heard sound beyond firelight. I lay down on the log, rolled into darkness behind it, and crawled out of the light of the fire while my

eyes adjusted to darkness beyond the circle of orange light. Then I saw him leaning on his rifle, like a shadow where the light flickered against the trees. The kid spoke as soft as moonlight. “Go easy. I ain’t meaning you no harm.”

“I’m jumpy about people walking up on me.”

“I see you are.” He walked into firelight, leaned his rifle against a tree, and warmed his hands over the fire.

I asked him, “You had anything to eat?”

“Yesterday. I hitched a ride with a trucker. He wasn’t feelin’ good. His wife run him off and wouldn’t let him see his little girl, told the judge he was a violent man and would bring them harm. He give me his lunch, and I ate it after he dropped me off.”

I laid more wood on the fire and boiled water, added dried meat and vegetables. “I saw you going north outside of Hungry Wolf, Oregon. I thought you were headed home.”

“I was. I run out of wind in northeastern Oregon, broke ice for my water, a tiny fire ‘cause it’s hard to find dry wood in the snow. I broke dead branches off trees for dry wood. I got frostbite this cheek a little, watched winter stars behind thin, ice-crystal clouds before dawn.”

I gave him food, and he ate, talked between bites, was silent and just ate part of the time, thin face in firelight, moving shadows. Fire smells drifted in cold darkness.

“Four days, I couldn’t get enough wind in the sails to even start, so I ditched the rig in willows along a frozen stream. Hitched back down to highway 395 ‘cause it sounded like a bargain price for something. Up 395 to Pendleton. I worked in a gas station in Pendleton until spring broke, and started out again, mostly on foot.”

The fire died down. The kid said, “Boy, I tell you, that good food fillin’ me up, I can’t keep my eyes open. I got to sleep.”

The kid lay by the log, his head nearly covered in his sleeping bag. Tiredness dragged at me. I fed small pieces of wood into the fire and kept a watch on the night.

Sometimes it seemed like everything changed, and I lay there sleeping, hair sticking out of the top of the sleeping bag, while a man older than me sat by the fire, tired, but watching the night, his consciousness touching my sleeping consciousness.

The kid woke at daylight and built up the fire. I lay down on my sleeping bag and slept until the kid brought water from the stream and put it down near the fire.

After we ate, the kid said, "My brother come out here seven years ago. He wrote me and said come on out but finish school first, because everybody in California wants you to have a high school diploma before they'd hire you. He made more in a day than he'd made back home in a week. Nine dollars and ninety-six cents an hour for sitting on a machine, running big sections of pipe by and grinding down rough spots in the welded seams.

"He bought him a new car and got married. He said he was doing real good. Missouri seemed like a hell of a place to be. I could make a few bucks after school and weekends, but I could see I wouldn't never get a chance to buy me a good car or have anything but hard work and hard times, so I thought a lot about California, read a lot about it and talked a lot about it. I figured I'd go.

"Three weeks before graduation, Lucille passed me a note in class, askin' me if she should have them put her maiden name on her diploma or go ahead and have them put my name. She was pregnant and didn't want to wait any longer than it took to get things arranged. I was scared, but I wanted to get married.

"Lucille, she's a tall girl, taller than me and long blonde hair, pretty and built real fine. One eye don't look quite where the other one does, so it was hard to tell if she was looking at me or maybe just a little past me. Sometimes I thought she might be laughing at me when she was looking somewhere behind me, but I never knew what she would be laughing at if she was.

"We got married two weeks before school was out, and we went up side by side for graduation.

"I could see things was going different from what I'd figured. I'd have to get some money put by before we took off for California. I'd have to find a good place to rent and have money for doctor bills for the baby.

"I got a job in town, but my dad, he had a heart attack before he got the seed down. Somebody had to run things, so I quit that job, and I went to farming. Lucille and me, we fixed up the old house.

Nobody'd lived there for ten years. We fixed the plumbing, and we painted and cleaned and bought used furniture. I'd come in off the tractor after sunset and Lucille, she'd come out the back door, her blouse tied up around her belly that was starting to get big.

"She'd have green paint on her from the living room and yellow from the kitchen, and I'd wish I wasn't covered with grease and field dirt, cause I wanted to hold her right then, touch her belly to feel the baby growing there and pull her down into the grass with me.

"We'd work halfway into the night, and I'd head out and farm the fields again before sunrise while she slept in. Seemed like there at first, she was sleepy all the time."

Wind blew grey ash across the rocks. Ash smelled dry and dusty, still hot from fire. The kid walked around the fire and stacked more rocks behind it.

"Two trains a day went by that place, the other side of the river. One went down early afternoon, while I ate my lunch. The other went up the river at three in the morning. I'd wake up before I heard the train, lie awake until I felt it rumblin' and shakin', blowin' the whistle at the crossing. Then I couldn't hear the engine anymore, but I'd hear it blowin' at the last crossing up at the top of the valley, a long ways up there, and I'd lie against Lucille.

"She'd curl up to me in her sleep, and I'd go back to sleep.

"As long as the old man was sick enough all he thought about was if he was going to live or die, everything went okay. My mom brought him home from the hospital and took care of him at home, at the new place they built when I was a kid.

"We'd go up there once a week, eat dinner with them, visit a little. I usually told the old man what work I was doin', how things was comin' along, but he never said much, just sat there grey in his face.

"For a long time, I thought he was gonna die, but he started gettin' better.

"He walked around by the house some, and he sat out every morning in the sun. Then he walked with a cane and come out where I worked. When I started cuttin' alfalfa, he come out and walked around. He still didn't work, and he still didn't say much.

Before, when I worked, everything was relaxed, but when he started comin' out, I'd get nervous.

"I brought in the first cutting, and he stood there and watched me all morning long. I cut all the way down the field, and he watched me come down. I turned up the field and I felt him watchin' me all the way up.

"Lunchtime, I said, 'Ain't you got nothin to do but watch me run tractor?' He just said, 'Not much,' and he headed up to the house.

"I said, 'Hey. You could sit down with me here and eat lunch,' but he just kept going without sayin' nothin'. That was still the most talking we'd done for a while.

"The doctor told him to still take it easy, but I guess takin' it easy got worse than workin', so he come out and started workin'. That was okay, because there was plenty to do. He'd do one thing, and I'd do somethin' else.

"But then one evenin' after dinner, him and my mom, they come down to our place, first time they'd been there since we moved in. Lucille brought em coffee and some cake she'd made and she chatted with my mother like they do.

"After a while, the old man pops up and says, 'Gonna put you on a wage here on out.' I looked at him and said, 'What?' and he just said the same thing again, like he'd been practicin' it. 'Gonna put you on a wage here on out.'

"I said, 'I don't work on no wage for you. I come down here when you was sick and got the crops in. I fixed broken machinery, got that Willys engine pumps out of the river runnin' and brought in the first hay and brought out more chickens and got the chicken house straightened up.

"I been livin here for food off the place, and I been workin' all the daylight and half the dark most days. I never asked you for nothin', and then you come along and don't ask me nothin' about what I want; you just say you're gonna put me on a wage. If I keep on workin' here, it's for a share of the profit, if there is any from this farmed-out, run-down place.'

"He's sittin' there lookin' at me all the time I'm talkin'. He's not sayi' anything, but his face gets redder and redder.

"Was a time his face'd get red like that, and he'd be up out of his

chair and I'd be knocked down on the floor, but he's an old man now, and when he's sittin' there turnin' red in the face, he knows that. My mother flutters around, goin' all pale and she says, 'George, you got to keep your blood pressure down,' and they got up to leave.

"Last thing he said as they left was, 'Gonna put you on a wage here on out.'

"I shouted at his back, 'Look for yourself a new farm hand. I'll be goin' down the road.'

"He lit up the night with a three cell flashlight and kept walking, said nothin'.

"He wasn't in shape to carry the whole thing hisself yet, so I stayed a while."

Sun shone down through tops of pine trees. The fire died down, and we didn't put on any more wood. The kid walked to the stream, lay down on the bank, washed his face, then briefly submerged his head. He rose to his knees, brushed his hair back with his hands, dried his face on his shirt tail, stood, and walked back up and sat on the log.

"Lucille and me, we started havin' the first argument we ever had, and it went on ever' day. The day after my folks come down and the old man made his announcement, I come in late and greasy, and she asked me, 'What's the matter with workin' for wages? Your mother told me he's going to give you a good wage.'

I said, 'There's nothin' the matter with workin' for wages, but it would mean workin' for him, takin' orders from him, and I finished with that when I was sixteen.'

She wouldn't let it go and kept at me about it. First I tried to explain, but then I just stayed out in the shop most nights, workin' on things til she was in bed and the bedroom lights was off.

"Things come apart in a hurry. I could see havin' enough money to go on and get out, go to California, but when I'd talk about it, Lucille would say, 'Why go to California? I never been there, and I don't want to go. I like it here. I don't understand why you can't stay and work for your dad here. We'd do okay. And we got this house all fixed up.'"

He sat for a long time on the log. I rolled and tied my sleeping



bag and put my pack together. I put food aside for the kid to take with him.

He said, "I got a daughter almost a year and a half old, and I never seen her." He moved from the log to the soft white dust the other side of the fireplace and sat in the dust. "When I got ready to come to California, Lucille wouldn't come, so I give her most of the money I had and the car, and I set out hitch-hikin'. I rode one day and one night with a skinny old man in a 1960 Buick Roadmaster with the radio tuned to a man who screamed and shouted and hollered and moaned in a gravelly, singin voice about God and Christ and sin and damnation and salvation, a lot more about sin and damnation than about Christ and salvation. Hear him tell it, God got all his fun castin' poor sinning souls into everlastin' fire.

"Sometimes, I drove. I'd look over at that old man, and I'd think he was sleepin', so I'd reach over to shut the radio off. Before I touched the knob, he'd open one eye and say, 'Leave it on.'

"That soaked into my head until I had to get out and try for another ride even if he was going all the way to California. I went into a place for coffee to try to back off that preachin' still twistin' up in my head.

"All the people in that cafe looked strange to me, like they hid mysteries I couldn't begin to understand, like they believed mysteries about me I'd never even heard of. For a while, I felt like somebody was watchin' me all the time. It took me a couple days before I felt like I was by myself any time I was alone.

"When I got to California, it wasn't like it was when my brother got there. More people than jobs. I got little jobs here and there. Enough to get by on a while, send a little money to Lucille, tell her I'm going to hit it right, soon, and then she'll come out.

"My brother lost his job. They laid off half the crew. Bought a million dollar machine to do my brother's job.

"Took me a while to figure out I'd done better in Missouri. I'm headed back, but the world can't be only Missouri and California and one highway runnin' between."

The kid gathered everything together. "I got to hike down and pick up my rig. Spring on the land, wind blows. I can sail again." He walked into the forest.

I sat in the morning a while, then started work. I finished my first contract two days later, then headed east to visit several people before I started my second contract.

The highway runs straight out of Oregon into Idaho. Then it curves and twists up a steep ridge and down the other side, and over a second ridge and a third and a fourth. Wind blew dust across the highway. Everything smelled dusty and dry already, this dry country, two mountain ranges from the ocean.

I rode the deserted highway past curving, dry embankments. I kept the motorcycle in third gear and rode smoothly. The engine rumbled almost beneath hearing, through curves at forty miles an hour.

At the top of the fourth ridge, a rough track branched east from the highway. I turned onto it. The track ran across broken stone, across stone eroded to gravel, stone eroded to dirt. The track smoothed out at the top and ended at a monument of stacked rocks, six feet tall.

I drove into the narrow shade, lifted the bike onto its center stand, took off my helmet and jacket, walked around to loosen up, then ran a wide circle along the flat top of the ridge. I looked north into the haze fifty miles, and into the desert south. I saw several miles east and west along the top of the ridge.

South, rounded ridges stood up from the earth, a series of young mountain ranges, all of them lower than the high point where I stood. The haze thinned to the south, a grey-blue shroud along the horizon, and blended to the blue sky high above the horizon. Even in this place far from anyone, I smelled oil, exhaust gasses faintly in the breeze, dust of dry ground.

I untied my load, spread out my tarp, and unrolled my sleeping bag on it, untied my canteen, drank water, and looked toward the horizons.

The sun set diffused red. Red light spread a thousand miles across the west. The moon rose orange until it cleared the smog, turned yellow and smaller and then white, like a pearl. Long after darkness settled, I slept.

I woke, dressed, and ate. The sun rose in blue and red light. Sunlight warmed stone and earth. Hard wind scoured the ridges,

blew dust into my food, and hammered me.

I gathered everything together, packed and then sat on a large rock and watched the day, in no hurry to be anywhere.

Sound blew in the wind, and I couldn't identify it, a far-off, nearly faded, sudden sound, repeated, and again. Before I knew what it was, it oppressed the day. I scanned north, south, east, and west, and started over again, until far south, two ridges away, where the highway cut the top of the ridge and then dropped out of sight into the next sloping valley, I saw something moving fast, up over the top, and down out of sight again, followed quickly by other fast-moving vehicles.

I heard the sound again and knew it was gunfire.

I worked frantically, tied everything in place and then felt caught in impotence. I couldn't think of anything to do. I waited and watched.

Sound muffled in the low hollows. Sound blew away in the wind. It seemed like a long time. I thought they must have stopped.

They rolled suddenly into sight over the next closer ridge, grey triangle of sail augmented now by a square, wide sail stretched tight with wind. The kid crouched on top of his rig. He had tied down both booms. Cars topped the ridge behind him.

I heard gunfire again, but the kid sailed downslope and pulled far ahead of his pursuers. Engines screamed at their highest speeds. Red lights flashed on car tops. The kid sailed out of sight again, and three cars followed him down. I placed them by sound as they approached, sporadic gunfire, gear whine, and roar of engines. I started my motorcycle, rode closer to the road, and stopped. I straddled the machine, shaking and agitated. My leg bounced with tension when I put my foot on the peg.

I shut off the engine, leaned the bike on the side stand, and walked closer to the road, to the top of a rise of dirt and rock where I could see farther down the road.

Sails snapped into view. The kid's vehicle rolled fast up through the long curve, close to the white metal railing that separated the curve of pavement from the sharp, rock-jumbled drop down the side of the mountain. Rapid gunfire echoed in deep swales.

The kid turned, lay down, and fired down the hill behind him,

gathered himself into a tight crouch again, and corrected sails as the vehicle started to veer across the road, but the brief change in course slowed him. Three police cars shortened his lead.

The kid leaned forward, yanked the ropes free, and pulled the boom toward him. Gunfire. He jerked upright and let go of the boom, which snapped out away from him, reversed direction in the wind, slammed him with brutal force, and knocked him clear of the rig, out through empty air above the railing and down onto jumbled rocks far below the highway, while the sails snapped tight, twisted, and broke the mast free.

The kid's vehicle hit the railing, bounced away, and slammed back into it harder. Pieces of broken wood flew. The rig tipped, smashed down on its side, spun, tumbled, and shattered, scattered itself over hundreds of yards of asphalt roadway.

If the bullets hadn't killed him, there was still no doubt he was dead. His body broke on the rocks. I saw his blue shirt and dark blood. Wind eased and then died.

Despair and pain flooded through temporary numbness. When I could move again, I pushed my bike off its stand, let it roll down the hill, and held it slow with the front brake until I was well down in the sharp-sided swale, out of sight of the road. I parked the machine and walked back up to the top.

Uniformed men walked about the roadway and climbed down the hillside. Red lights flashed on car tops, flick, flick, flick.

It took them a long time. Before they finished, I couldn't stay longer, started the bike, spun the rear wheel going up, and wondered if they heard, if they would know I had seen what happened. I rode up through the ditch onto the pavement and down through two long curves. The engine rumbled beneath me, until shattered pieces of wood and automobile parts scattered over the pavement.

I slowed, dropped my left foot to the pavement, and looked down the sharp slope to where three men carried the kid up the ridge on a covered stretcher. I heard the shouting voice, looked up at the officer, face mottled red from the fast pace toward me. Sunlight reflected from badge, buckle, pointed to his pistol in its holster.

The policeman motioned and shouted, "Move on. Come on.

Drive on through. We don't need spectators at highway accidents.”

I dropped the motorcycle into first gear, released the clutch, and rode by the uniformed man making sweeping motions with his arm.

Out of the mountains, I opened it to ninety and held it there. My motorcycle roared through sunlight, and miles fell away, until I ran out of gas in northern Nevada on a flat, desolate stretch of highway. I switched the gas tank onto reserve, rode off the highway on a road of sand, and rode two miles away from the highway. I parked the machine and knelt in the sand, vomited, and vomited again and again, until I heaved mechanical, dry heaves. Deep bitterness rooted in my tongue and throat. Smell of vomit swirled in wind.

Darkness spread across the desert and engulfed the sand road, the asphalt highway. I rode to the highway and down the highway to a wide place where I would be in good view. I stopped and waited. The first three cars, which took two hours to come by, would not stop. There wasn't another until nearly midnight. When headlights appeared way down the highway in moonlight, I walked out to the center of the road, stood and waited.

The headlights came closer and closer. I thought the pickup was not going to stop, but it stopped right in front of me.

The driver climbed down from the cab in anger and said, “What the hell are you standing in the middle of the road for? Trying to get killed?”

“I'm out of gas.”

“What's that to me?”

“God damn. God damn.” I walked toward the man standing behind the open door of the pickup. “God damn. Would it hurt you to help somebody? I've been here since before dark, and you're the first person I could stop. What the hell is the matter with you or anybody else?”

The man said, “Stop there.” His words drove sharply through cool midnight air. I realized he held a pistol leveled through the open window of the door he stood behind.

I stepped again and again and then stopped. And listened to the pickup engine running against the night. Something changed. I had wanted to walk into greeting bullets, but I turned away and walked

back to the bike.

The man drove off the road and parked in front of my motorcycle, shut off the engine and lights, got out of the truck, and shut the door. I saw nothing in the black shadow of the pickup and camper. I leaned against my bike and looked at the moon. From the dark shadow, the man said, "I have a five-gallon can of gas."

I walked toward him. He said, "You'll have to pay me for it." He walked around the back of the truck, into the moonlight. The pistol was not in his hand.

"How much?"

"Fifteen dollars."

"It only holds four gallons."

"You're using up my time as well as my gas. I'll have to unlock it and open it up to fill it up again. It's worth it."

"Sure. It's worth that not to be stuck out here. Okay."

The driver of the pickup held a flashlight while I poured the gasoline. I gave him fifteen dollars, and he fastened the can onto the back of the truck and drove away.

I didn't want to see anyone anymore. I dropped all my plans to visit friends. I rode to Reno and got a room in a motel and sat in a chair in the room, just staring into nothingness, until I couldn't sit there any longer. I walked downtown and wandered, seeing nothing, thinking nothing. I saw a thin woman with short dark hair, a dark skirt, and blue sweater when I came out of Harold's club. I thought she looked at me. I noticed her again when I came out of Harrah's. The third time I saw her, I waited until she walked over and looked up at me.

I'll always remember her high-cheekbones, pronounced forehead, tanned, weathered face and her dark brown eyes. She might have been Indian. She was much older than I was. Then she turned her face so the light fell from a different angle, and I thought she was very young. She said, "Do you live here?"

"No. I'm staying at a motel for the night and looking at the town."

"Could I go to your motel with you?"

"Sure." We walked under the archway over the railroad tracks and out where the night slowed down.

I sat on the bed. The woman sat in a chair near the foot of the

bed. I felt like reaching out to touch her, like bringing her to the bed, but I was constrained by exhaustion and by lack of certainty of who she was and why she had come with me.

I took off my boots and shirt. I lay down on the bed and immediately slept, but I snapped awake with awareness of the woman. She said, "Sleep. It's okay."

During the night, she lay down beside me. Our combined warmth, the mixture of our odors, our light contact, became the tone of my sleep.

When I woke, her presence was heavy in the air and in my mind, though she had left while I slept. I packed my possessions on my motorcycle. I sat astride the motorcycle in early sunshine, absorbing the beginning of the day.

I needed to live. I wanted to live. I had a camp in the Sierras to return to and a timber survey contract to finish. I focused my mind on that. I tried to stop all other thought for a while. I started the engine, put the machine in gear, and left Reno.

Sunshine soaked my back and warmed me. I shifted up through all the gears. My shadow sped ahead of me on black pavement.