

DROP OUT, IN REVERSE

On a rather pleasant midmorning in Southern California, I was sitting in the living room of a lady friend, sipping an enhanced glass of ice cold orange juice, when two members of an outlaw motorcycle club rolled their pickup truck into the hedge surrounded backyard and unloaded a massive coil of sheathed cable they had purloined from a local telephone company yard and began stripping away the sheathing from the cable.

As the motorcycle club's semi-official counselor, I wandered out to speak to the feverishly working pair.

"What the hell is this?" I asked, pointing to the accumulating mess.

Speed ruffled his hand through his full beard and shoulder length hair to dislodge the stray bits of plastic emitted by his scraping of the cable with a five inch buck knife and looked up.

"They won't buy the frigging copper unless it's clean." he informed me, "So, we've got to take all of this plastic crap off."

Not wishing to interfere or volunteer, I merely shrugged and went back into the house to continue my visit with Lynn.

Approximately a half an hour later as I prepared to leave, I glanced out the window. Both Speed and Gypsy still were diligently engaged in their self appointed chore, having managed to shred away less than ten feet of sheathing from their ill gotten load. I left and returned several hours later to find that the pair finally had neared the end of their task.

As I settled to the sofa in the living room, Speed entered

and announced that they were now off to sell the copper cable they had managed to strip, promising Lynn they would return to clean the mess of plastic stripping they were leaving in her backyard. And, faithful to that promise, the pair returned within the hour and removed the waste product, spending another two hours picking the plastic slivers from the Bermuda grass which made up Lynn's lawn.

Upon returning from disposing of the waste, Speed entered the living room and sagged, dejected, upon the sofa next to me. He sat silent for several moments before turning to look up at me.

"You know what, Ace?" he began, pausing for prompt to continue.

"Haven't the foggiest." I replied, "What?"

His brow furrowed in a determined frown. "I've been figuring it out." he said, "It doesn't pay."

Confused, but not really interested, I responded, "What doesn't pay?"

"Crime." he announced.

"What the hell brought you to that conclusion?" I asked.

He chuckled his thumb toward Lynn's backyard. "I made less than a buck and a half an hour ripping off that shit. I'd do a helluva lot better working for Jack-in-the-Box."

Before I could respond, Speed arose and walked to the door and, without another word, exited.

The next day, while I sat in the living room of the outlaw club's president, I heard a familiar motorcycle roll into the driveway and walked to the window expecting to find Speed on board. Instead, a young man, clean shaven and sporting a crew cut and a conservative business suit, dismounted and walked up to the door.

"Speed?" asked Walt, staring at the young visitor.

The man nodded. "Yeah, would you keep my scooter?" he asked Walt, announcing, "I'm going out to look for a job."

Mildly confused but agreeable, Walt nodded. "Sure," he responded, asking, "For how long?"

"Sell it." muttered Speed, tossing Walt the key.

Without another word, Speed wheeled about and walked out the door, never to attend another club party or meeting. When last heard, Speed had become a diligent yuppie, working for a greater Los Angeles corporation and totally immersed within the nine to five middle class world. I guess he had rebelled against rebellion, becoming a sort of drop out, in reverse.

Leroy Dumont

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