

## Chapter Twenty Three

### Gravel In Ya' Guts

The rain began falling shortly before reaching Winter Park, CO. Our trip from Denver to Steamboat Springs along US 40 had a chance of being a wet one, considering in the last week Northern Colorado had seen some of the worst rain and flooding in 25 years. We set out with the sun shining under cloudless skies, sweating under leather jackets at 80 degrees.

Soon after we turned from Interstate 70 onto US 40, the clouds began to gather above. We pushed through the rain, even when the horrendous winds began to blow. The wind was sailing American flags flatly horizontal and the raindrops on my helmet and windshield were blowing up (quite unusual, as they usually blow backwards) from the bottom to the top of my helmet, even though I was riding at 60 mph.

"Holy Hell!" I shouted.

At 46 degrees and rather wet, determination pushed me to keep riding, even though I considered pulling over about 20 times. I reminded myself that riding isn't about comfort, but a way of life and every ride isn't going to be rainbows, puppies and grassy meadows. When the rain let up in Granby, I took a deep sigh, hoping that was the end and I had met up to the challenge.

With blue skies ahead, we stopped briefly in Hot Sulfur Springs for a cup of tea and a restroom break at the gas station. I hopped back on rather excited to complete our jaunt. The scenery was fantastic and the temps were rising, along with my spirits. I felt that I had accomplished so much today, even though we had only ridden 100 miles.

Forgetting that Steve told me he wanted to stop in Kremmling for gas, I was surprised

when I saw him make a quick turn into the Kum n Go. The turn came as we were headed downhill, just as the rain began to fall again. Halfway through my turn, I was met with four stopped cars in the little side street as well as Steve coming to a stop. Hitting the brakes, I knew I was in trouble when my right boot hit the wet gravel.

That sickening feeling hit me as I felt myself going down. The only thing I remember was the thud of my helmet hitting the asphalt.

Before I knew it strangers were picking me up in the street. Steve was getting help picking up my V Star Gracie, and I was getting a hug from a sweet young woman.



Outside Kremmling, CO, cold, wet, miserable, and cranky

"Are you OK? It's OK! I've done it myself. Don't worry! You're fine!" she kept repeating. She checked me from head to toe and assured me I wasn't hurt. Helping me walk to the

corner, I knew she was right.

The realization that I had just dropped my new motorcycle hit me.

"Fuck."

***"You never disappoint me, Baby Girl. I'm always so proud of you. . . " my Daddy whispered in my ear.***

After some time recovering, I told Steve we could finish the last 50 miles. Weepy and cranky, I straddled Gracie and headed back out. My hips, wrists and shoulders began to ache badly. The rain picked up again just as we left Kremmling, much to my dismay. With a lightning storm on the horizon, I wondered what would happen next. It seemed being struck by lightning would finish this day off nicely. But the beauty of the ride soothed my aches and pains, reminding me of why I love to ride.

As we were cruising down Rabbit Ears Pass, my back tire skipping from side to side along the rain-soaked highway, I spotted hail on the road, rolling through a huge patch. Grateful to be heading down the hill in the storm instead of going up to higher elevations, I reasoned that warmth and comfort lie ahead.

"Why don't I just quit? Why don't I just pull the chick routine and lie down and cry? I have all the ammo I need to just feel sorry for myself and weep myself into a soft bed and a night of pity from my husband. Yet here I am, riding in driving rain, facing a lightning storm, freezing my ass off, with another 40 miles to go. Why not just quit?"

While riding in South Dakota a month later, I realized the answer. The day couldn't be more beautiful, coming over rolling hills with long stretches in between little towns. The fields of sunflowers waved in the wind as we rolled by, cheerful just to drink in the sunshine.

Johnny Cash's "A Boy Named Sue" played in my headphones as I sang along.

*I tell ya, I've fought tougher men  
But I really can't remember when,  
He kicked like a mule and he bit like a crocodile.  
I heard him laugh and then I heard him cuss,  
He went for his gun and I pulled mine first,  
He stood there lookin' at me and I saw him smile.*

The song always reminds me of my Mom because she loved this song. I thought about her tenderly, feeling the warmth of love spread over me. The tender feeling suddenly surprised me, and then Johnny sang:

*He said: "Now you just fought one hell of a fight  
And I know you hate me, and you got the right  
To kill me now, and I wouldn't blame you if you do.  
But ya ought to thank me, before I die,  
For the gravel in ya guts and the spit in ya eye  
Cause I'm the son-of-a-bitch that named you Sue."*

Like a bolt of lightening, I realized that he was right. These same words applied to my own mother, who had also done me quite wrong. Even though she had abused me, neglected me and been so selfish, she had also instilled in me a great determination. Determination is what brought me out of my abusive marriage, my miserable childhood and my lifelong battle with depression. If she had not pushed me so hard, I could have never pushed myself so far, around the country, through the Hell of rain, hail, cagers who tried to kill me, long days, painful fights, sickness and exhaustion.

If had not been for her spitting in my eye, I wouldn't have the gravel in my guts to have

had this extraordinary experience.

***“Who are you to judge, even your own mother? Even I didn’t do that to her, and she broke my heart.” my Daddy whispered in my ear.***