

ELVIS PRESLEY VISITS HIS RED HARLEY

By Sean Lovelace

Eleven minutes later I'm sitting on the diving board waiting for somebody to come out and try to calm me down and Priscilla comes out of the house, walks a full circle around the pool and slaps me in the face.

I just sit there, confused.

She goes inside and I go into the garage and crank up my red Harley. People are always asking about my favorite kind of Harley, talking about pistons and cams and cylinder heads, and I always say, "The red ones."

I don't like when people try to misunderstand me. People used to call me Elvis the Pelvis. They like to talk about the Jungle Room. That's not me. They say I got angry when the Army cut my hair. I didn't. Hell, hair grows back.

I don't like being slapped and I sit in the garage, gunning the engine, filling it with smoke and noise and anger. The slap keeps hitting my face and I try to feel it, inside, our bodies reflected off the shimmering pool, her arm, hand, flying out, not the outside pain, the inside, the thoughts behind the actions, the motives, the blame, the sighs and glances and mumbled phone calls that lead to that—a slap.

I take the Harley down highway 78, past the cotton fields and the mud fields and the farmhouses and the shacks. The wind whips cold and the clouds take on a runoff edge, brown and silty, eddying, gathering. I shiver and curse and wish for my leathers.

One hundred miles I take the Harley, at one hundred ten miles per hour.

Tupelo.

My father built the house with \$180 of boards and nails he got on credit. Sure, it's a shack, but still standing tall and sound. Somebody poured a foundation, paved a drive, but really it just sat on top a jumble of rocks, to let the spring floods run beneath. We never had a curtain or a rug. I stand a moment, filling my lungs, watching the house. Turning back to Memphis, I speed away even faster, taking pleasure in the juices flowing, asphalt purring by in a white-striped blur, escape in the best way, flying, strong and alone and in control, feeling myself, myself, what it's like to go full out, no fear, shooting through life with nothing but the thrill of the humming tires and the wind screaming and the heart inches away, bursting away, pulling up a dark drive, a muffled roar, silence, ticking engine, crickets in the azaleas by the pool.

Priscilla sits on the diving board, a slender leg dangling. Chlorine fills the air like a secret, and those crickets, a sawing. She's been waiting. She's hugging herself, gooseflesh; her skin looks like pebbled gold in the pool lights. I don't know what to say. I finger my key chain, a Harley Davidson eagle, rubies for eyes. It cost two thousand dollars. We were thrown out our Tupelo house; Dad couldn't make the payments on the loan. Priscilla gave me the red Harley; it's true. I finger the key chain and toss it into the pool, the deep end. It twists in the water. It sparkles as it falls. I don't know why. Lots of times I don't know why.