

WHAT KIND OF TATTOO WOULD JESUS WANT

It was right after we tried to bury Colby Barlow that the Miracle at the Mausoleum happened, as my Nadine calls it, which wasn't really a miracle just nobody could figure how to get Colby's box of ashes into the Wall of Memories, so then we thought Colby, that old joker, comeback to play his tricks on us some more. But then the Reverend Brother Leroy got them ashes all tightened up and torqued down in the wall.

Despite the Reverend Brother Leroy's checkered board past and his tale of, as the good people of Dog Hollow call it, Jail-house Jesus appearing to him in his cell to set him on the straight and narrow when he was a guest at the Governor's Hotel, everyone in the hollow began to believe. Even Earl who's got a strong resemblance to Doubtin' Thomas in the New Testament, started to believe more and more after Brother Leroy's Sermon at the New Alexander Demo Derby or that's what Brother Leroy named it when people told him he sure was riled up with fire and brimstone after he stopped the Crashin' for Colby & Cancer Feature Race.

Well, anyway, you ever hear of a church sponsorin' a Crash What You Brung Demo Derby? Reverend Brother Leroy claimed all of this activity was takin' faith to the flock, the real flock—the sheep who needed the Shepherd. We all always knew better than to argue with Reverend on matters of faith just like the Pope and that beautiful night under the lights when he grabbed the microphone up in the booth and gave all them drivers

What-For for crashin', if you want to call it that, like Punch & Judy puppets, (which I never heard about, but the reverend knew more about scripture than most, anyway).

I digress. He just stopped the feature race cold, and participants was leaning out of their old rusty junkers with crash helmets on except for George Hayduke, who was Earl's third cousin and somewhat of a ringer since he found or stole a '75 Oldsmobile station wagon, considered the gold unicorn in demo-car lore because of a solid steel frame.

But let me get on with the best part. Over the loud speakers Rev told those drivers, "I know all them cars got three pedals and the pedal on your right, that's the one you deee-press when you get the other's guy's junk in your sights. Now, all you, ahem, drivers, just for practice push down hard on that right pedal, a-one, and a-two, and a-three, so you know what to do when I give you the "green" so you can try to be the last man standing like a gladiator or a driver if that's the case and win the prize money.

Speakin' of men and this is the really good part where, I swear, LeRoy interjects about Women's Lib. "I cant take yall's wives, girlfriends and even Monroe's little daughter, Rae who got her first deer during this past Holy Season of Deer" (Everyone cheered, I was so proud! Let me confess, I really can't hit a bull's ass with a spade -- genetics on Nadine's side, that's real science I believe in.) "and they will give all 'yalls' your money's worth." Brother Leroy was sweatin', red-faced and his reverend's collar popped out of his shirt like a piston ring when using one of them low-buck ring compressors they used to sell at N.A.P.A. To a man, the demo drivers was inspired—need I say more?

That night, everyone agreed that they got their money-worth of crashin' and bein' crashed into especially when Earl's third cousin punctured his radiator, third car from the

prize money and sat there in a cloud of steam like a devil watin' to vanish back to Hell or somethin'.

My point is this, after the night of the demo derby, the Rev shifted into high gear, *The Lord has anointed me to be an Influencer for Eternity* and *Jesus has Branded me as part of his product line* and, of course, clamin' his bout with Prison Jesus helped him decide to open a tattoo parlor for the faithful. There, according to him, is where sinners was most likely to congregate. *You can get saved and a tattoo.* Then he started in on statistics. "You know, Monroe, 30 percent of people have at least one tat (way more in prison, I was thinkin' under my breath, and I was impressed he called them "tats" like a prison old head) an increase of 20 percent over the previous generation," and, he kept on about the age group from 19 to 35. "We can bible study three nights a week while people are getting inked."

How can you argue with facts like that! I told him, "You mean like a one-stop Walmart for the soul!"

He replied, "With none of that chop suey China crap."

Anybody with the brains of a shit-house mouse could see his vision had possibilities "Where?" I says.

"Down at the Golden Shovel".

"Doc's pool hall's all boarded up since he died."

"Wrong," says he, "Bob Cat came back and started watin' at the door like Doc was still there, alive. We decided that feline knew something about old Doc like Colby we don't, so we unboarded the windows and Bob just lays there and sleeps all day while he's watin'."

I allowed as how that was probably a true holy sign, and, in addition, Bob misses the whiskey and sardine salad whipped up to celebrate after Doc beat that Hells Angel biker in Eight Ball for his Hog or some other rube.

“Could very well be,” Leroy nodded.

But, well, that’s whole ‘nother story about Doc and LeRoy that I ain’t getting’ into right now, I mean to tell you.