

Reversal

by Sean Ferrell

For reasons he couldn't fathom, his motorcycle only moved in reverse. He engaged the engine and lurched backward hard. He called a friend, a gear-head with perpetually dirty nails, asked him to look it over.

His friend looked. "Nothing's wrong. Works fine." His friend climbed aboard and ran it around the barren yard, kicked up pebbles. He left a circle of raw earth behind. "See."

But for him it ran backward. He motored the wrong way, off the yard, into the street.

His friend watched. "God damn."

He trucked it to a repair shop. Two days later they called. "Nothing's wrong with it." He picked it up. In the parking lot he ran it in a lazy circle, backward, watching for cars in his mirrors. He was able to lift his feet and complete the circle.

He practiced riding at night, after his shift, even tired as he was and knew he always would be. At first he stayed in the neighborhood. Dogs barked and filthy kids chased him, laughing. After a week dogs barked but kids didn't chase, or look. He found himself on the highway out of town, the engine's roar in his bones and the wind at his back. He steered by second nature, his eyes on both the horizon and mirrors. He smiled in the dark as the town he had come from faded to a glow outshone by the lights of his machine, its noise the only warning to those behind him that he approached.

