

We Made Peace

by Seth Brookes



Chapter 1

Harley was watching TV when he had gotten the call.

“Your dad died, Harley. We need you to come home.”

Home.

He hadn't been there in twenty years. The small town had been dying when he was a boy and he'd left as soon as he graduated. His father had been angry.

“You can't go anywhere! We need your help here with the store! How could you just leave everything behind with what's going on? What do you know about living in the city anyway?” Harley just stood there, appalled that his own father could say these things to him.

He looked at his mother, whose face disagreed with his father, but she remained silent. Harley just walked outside and started loading up on his old shovelhead.

His father came flying out of the house in a rage. “You ain't taking that bike nowhere, boy, I don't care if you do move!” his dad bellowed.

Harley set his bags down and faced his father nose to nose. His heart rate soared and fear rose in him, but he held firm and didn't let it show. “I'll take MY bike anywhere I want. If your brother would have wanted you to have it, he would have given it to you. But he

didn't. It's mine and I'm leaving now.” He spun around on his heels and loaded back up on the bike. It started effortlessly as he put on his backpack and buckled his helmet.

Just before he took off, he looked back at the house. His mom was standing on the porch, tears streaming down her face, but wearing a very broad smile. His father was still standing in the same spot, his face beet red and his face filled with anger.

Harley waved to them both, kicked the old shovel in gear and took off down the dirt road.

Chapter 2

Harley thought more about that day as he loaded up that same old shovelhead to make the trip home. He figured it would be about a two day ride from Dallas back to Pima, Arizona. His family had helped found the town and the small store his cousin now ran had been open for over one hundred years.

As he pulled onto the interstate, he started to think about what his life would have been like if he had never moved to Phoenix. He would probably be married to one of the snotty bitches he had gone to school with and be working at the family store.

He would have never met Mike, who took a chance on him and had given him his first job in a bike shop. He learned a lot from him. Everything he knew about bikes, Mike had at least given him the materials to learn

with.

He probably would have never built a motorcycle from the ground up. He could see his first build clearly in his mind. Mike had given him the basis for the build, an old junked out KZ900 that had been wrecked in the back. He had spent every night after work and all day on his days off for six months building it. The feeling of accomplishment he got when it was finished was one he had never felt before. It was a beautiful blue with a handmade rigid rear end, over a thousand hours of hand polishing, eleven hundred cc big-bore kit, and a stage one cam.

It had been a good thing that he had been riding his uncle's Harley for five years previous. The power of that old KZ surprised him the first time out and had continued to thrill him until he sold it four years later.

He had met Nikki while riding that bike. It was at a party about six months after that first ride. Harley had never been much for crowds and he was hanging out in the garage with a few friends, enjoying some good smoke and working on a custom panhead. She came around the side of the garage and they met eyes. He was struck by her beauty, one he had not seen before or since.

She was a tiny girl, only four eleven and ninety pounds, half-Mexican, half-white, with coal black hair down to her ass and caramel skin. Harley couldn't believe that this beautiful girl walking across the garage directly at him.

“Can I bum a cigarette?” Her voice was as beautiful as her face and he just stared for a minute. The quizzical look on her face faded and turned to confusion.

“Oh, yeah,” Harley said quickly. “Here you go. How old are you anyway? Old enough to be smoking?”

“I'm nineteen,” she replied and smiled again. Harley smiled back at her as he lit her cigarette. He sat down on the KZ, moved his helmet, and motioned for her to take a seat.

“What's your name?” he asked as she made herself comfortable.

“Nikki. What's yours?”

“Harley. Nice to meet you.”

“Is this your bike Harley?” she inquired with a sexy grin.

“Yeah, I just finished building it a few months ago. I have an old Harley too. My uncle left it to me when he passed a few years back.”

“Oh, I'm sorry,” she said sadly. She quickly smiled, though, and replied sweetly, “Well, you did a great job on this bike. It's very nice.”

“Thanks,” Harley blushed. “Man this chick digs me and my bike. Sweet!” he thought as he looked into her beautiful eyes. “Wanna go for a ride?”

“I'd love too,” she said.

Harley handed her his spare helmet and backed the bike out of the garage. She was staring at him dreamily and he decided to impress her by kick starting the bike.

He found the right spot and kicked with all his might. The huge four cylinder roared to life. He put the kick starting lever back and pulled down the passenger pegs for her. "Hop on," Harley said with a smile.

Nikki slowly climbed onto the small backseat and wrapped her arms tightly around his waist. "OK, I'm ready," she cooed softly in his ear.

Harley looked in the garage at his buddies. They were all smiling at him and shaking their heads in disbelief. He smiled back at them and with a nod of his head, they roared off down the street together.

Chapter 3

The love they made that night had been nothing like Harley had ever experienced. He felt differently with Nikki, and he knew they had a special connection. They stayed up until early morning talking. As the sun crept in the shaded windows, Harley's stomach let out a loud growl.

"Wanna go get some breakfast?" he asked, hoping she did.

"Yeah, I could go for some IHOP."

"Perfect," he thought as they got out of bed and got dressed.

They continued to see each other for a few months

until a rainy day when Harley got a call at work. At first he was frustrated about someone calling him while he was working. It was a police officer, asking if he knew Nikki. She had been in a car accident and they needed him to come identify her. He quietly agreed and hung up the phone.

Mike closed the office door to allow Harley to cry in private. Never so much had he loved a woman and never had he felt so much pain.

He was still thinking about Nikki when the engine started to sputter. Reaching down for the petcock he switched the valve to reserve and started to look for a gas station.

Abilene City Limits, 1 mile, the sign read. "Sweet," Harley thought. "I can get something to eat, too." He pulled off at the next exit and drove up to the pumps just as the bike ran out of gas.

Harley rolled back onto the interstate to continue his pilgrimage. He thought more about Nikki and what his life would be like if she were still here. "Maybe we'd have kids," he wondered and started to cry under his helmet. He made a stop in Big Springs and headed off on Highway 176 for the last leg of the day, deciding to stay outside Carlsbad, NM, because it was the closest thing to a halfway point. It was dark before he got to a motel and settled in for some much needed slumber.

Chapter 4

That night, Harley had a dream about his father. They were sitting in the back room of the family store talking. All he could remember when he awoke was his father telling him, "I'm glad you made your own path, son, and I've always been proud of you."

Those words stuck in his mind for most of the day. His mind wandered all over the place and he starting to feel depressed. As he made the turn in Alamogordo onto US-70, he was beginning to think that he should have stayed in Pima and ran the store.

Looking the the desert at the blowing sand on White Sands Missile Range, it suddenly hit him. If he had never left, he'd have never made anything of himself. He would have never loved and lost. He would have never built a motorcycle or started his own business.

"I've always been proud of you." He heard the words again and his spirit lifted. A smile drew across Harley's face and he punched the throttle. For the first time in twenty years, he was in a hurry to get home.

As he pulled in for food and gas in Las Cruces, he began to think about how lucky he was. The fact that he had gone from a flunkie at a bike shop to general manager in less than six years was more than he could have imagined. Turning a one car bike building hobby into a \$300,000 a year income was something Mike

didn't even think he could do.

Harley pulled the old shovel back onto the highway for the last two hundred miles. His entire attitude had changed. He felt accomplished and was proud of his life. He was almost forty and with the exception of Mike, was more successful than anyone else he knew. Not a lot of people could say that where he was from.

Darkness was falling as he crossed the Pima city limit sign. He saw his old house and slowed down to make the turn into the drive.

Harley felt as if he and his dad had made peace on the trip through the desert. Sadness filled him as he thought about having to say goodbye one last time at the funeral tomorrow. "I'm gonna be okay," he thought to himself. He got off the bike to go see the one woman he loved more than Nikki – his mom.