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Ride Without a Destination – Drip Release

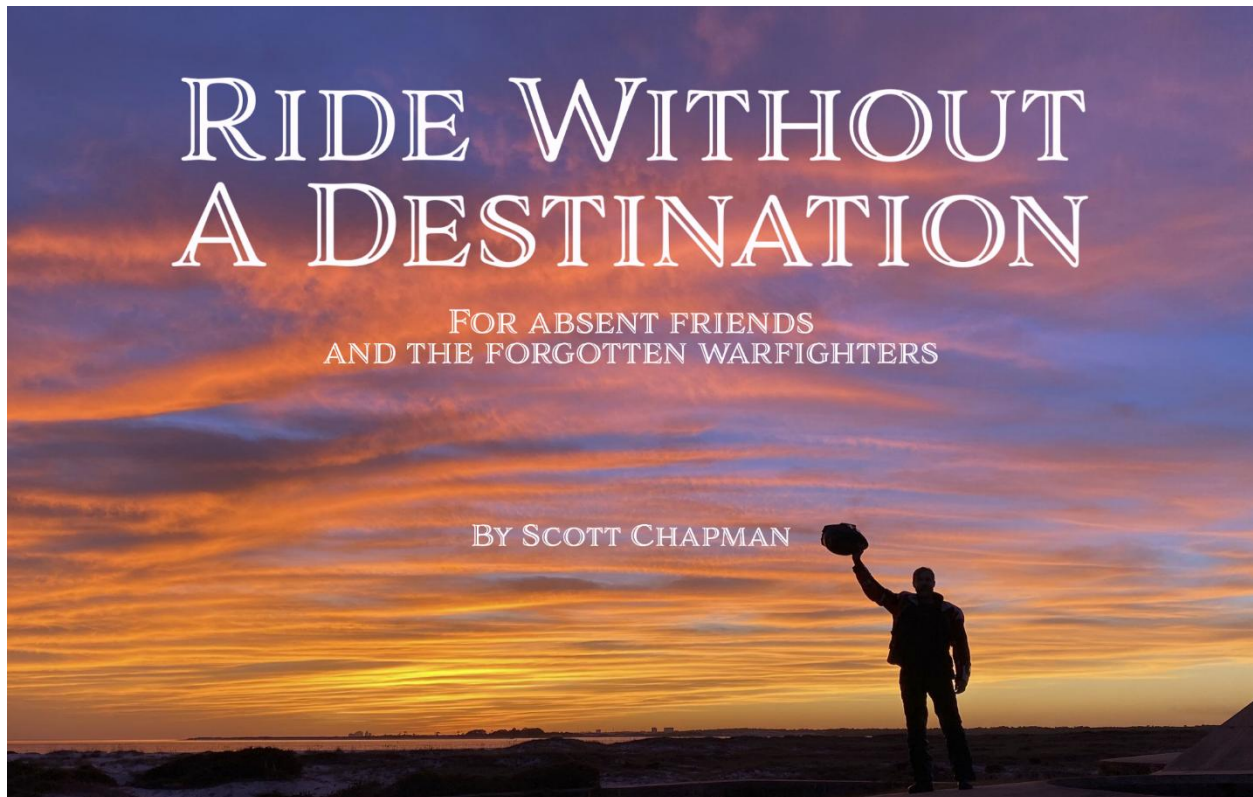
“Ride Without A Destination”

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CHAPTER 4 of ∞





For our elders.

I view words & individual characters as music notes. Quanta packets of frequency. I rearrange these music notes to find the 'in-tune symphony.' Walking 3D edits through wavy waters during a dynamic writing project. Life is a living document. Together, let's find the frequency of a blue-sky sonnet on this paradise planet.



--- 2 Days Later ---

02 Oct 2019

I worked at my manual-labor warehouse job all day then I took a 20-minute nap on my bedroom floor. I oozed down in all directions while wearing my foul work fatigues in that sun-hot 2nd story bedroom. I melted down and touched all four walls. I saturated into the soft new carpet of my now vacant sleep room. My mind throbbed and twisted to keep on fightin' forward. Startled awake with carpet stain on my face; somber slobber circles, circled that place. Next, a quick dip in the pool to wake from this solemn slumber rage parade. The Fall-weather-water is a welcome shock to force-circulate battered blood through my fatigued frame.

I scrambled to arrive at a destination on time. I broke all the posted speed limit signs and arrived at BMW Eurocycles of Daytona Beach moments before they locked the door before me; *a welcome common theme; still till this day*. My old friend anxiety took the wheel, and together we arrived, bursting with zeal.

Last week I ordered a new Klim ADV moto helmet that's scheduled to arrive at the moto shop today. Even after the frigid dip in the pool coupled with the soaring anxiety to arrive on-time, I still struggled to keep my eyes open during the drive. I'm on fumes and need an emotional win today, however tiny it is. This welcomed new moto dome will feel like a Crusader crown.

All day at my stifling work situation, I fantasized over sliding my helmet down to cover my ears and muffle the irrelevant outside noise that clogged my crowded senses. Despite a mountain of high-stress priorities with no room for error, my shiny new helmet monopolized my terror. While at work, I daydreamed of wearing my new helmet while I packed for my trip and



typed the night away. I walked through the showroom floor with pride in my stride. I'm moments from my new helmet! Oh, what a day; what do they have to say?!!

I arrived at the moto-shop to learn a mix-up put my helmet still in transit. I drove 30 minutes for nothing. I scrambled here for nothing. I wasted all that precious energy for nothing. Or did I?

The familiar fog of stoic disappointment soon settled in. It took all my power to curl my toes in my soggy sweaty shoes to focus on something other than my anger, over this non-existent danger. I scraped together all forms of my Ranger discipline; to clamp it, and hold it all in. I'm so short on time with that boom fast approaching; these 60 wasted minutes can't be wasted; all for nothing.

The shop took sweet ownership of their innocent irrelevant blunder. They then offered an apology with pure intention, wrapped with wonder over my coming adventure. An exercise in self-control soon ensued. A paragraph not yet written, during my real-time writing invention.

A few days before this lost helmet event, I explained to a warfighter friend how I wished to go "one single day" without yelling at someone or succumbing to the rage that's far loose from his cage. I hate it this way. I'm angry all the time and I know it's not a healthy habit to harbor.

In the spirit of this journal where I'm "*trying something new to achieve different results,*" a new path is taken. Distant neurons in my brain inched a bit closer. Instead of my familiar knee-jerk anxiety reaction, I showered him with kindness, then forced a flaccid smile.



I staggered to say, *“It’s ok man. No big deal. Let’s sort it out.”* My baby deer legs felt a wobble. A weight lifted. Something shifted. We talked about motorcycles and my upcoming ADV event; while I censored the dark parts of my real-time social experiment.

I searched for peace, while I kept this faux-smile stapled to my face. My anger must be obvious, even to the potted plants. We must first learn to crawl before we can walk. After a few minutes of forced pleasantries that devoured the energy in my shrinking time, I told the shop manager, *“No worries. Just mail it to my house. It’ll get there on time.”*

15 days till wheels-up and I *choose* not to sweat this minor speed bump. *This is a valuable first lesson of timeline supplication.*

To force a pause and flex my new-born baby patience, I malingered in the shop and made involuntary small talk to patrons, potted plants, and whatnot. I grasped in my clammy hand irrelevant items to buy while my inner monologue bellowed to *“leave me alone!”* I fought this unwelcomed energy, then took a slow stroll down by the sea.

I despise the attention and cookie-dough conversation. Yet, I control my actions and I control my behavior. I will not let my anxiety control this quiet danger. I continued to deploy my covert emergency measures to uplift others; and give this uncomfortable writing experiment a thorough endeavor.

One of my next tasks is to finalize my motorcycle tool kit / tool roll. Every tool needed for my bike will be marked with a piece of blue tape. Soon, I’ll put a screwdriver, socket, or wrench to every nut, bolt, and screw to ensure all tools are on-hand for my coming escape.

Tape serves two purposes. First, it identifies the tools necessary for my bike while I sort and separate my life into this new compartment. Next, I’ll be able to identify my tools if I find



myself helping another rider fix their broken bike. Despite my desire to isolate, preparing to help others embeds in all I type. *Every action has a dual purpose.*

Selected Replies:

ADV Rider X-wing Fighter: *“I’ll be following, commenting, and trying not to distract from your journey. I think we’re on the same mission. Ride to clear our heads and pave the way for brothers and sisters to find peace.”*

My reply: *“It sounds like our goals are similar. I wonder how many other combat vets are saturated with thoughts of isolation and recalibration. Coupled with the struggle to find peace, I need to rebalance my mind. There’s so much swirling around my head that I need to digest on paper, I just popped in to give a few departure updates.*

Right now, multiple high-stake life events occupy my mind. I’ll write about it when the noise is drowned down by the stillness of open the open road. These rare islands in my day must be utilized with efficiency. Until there’s time, here’s something interesting I’ve observed while I prepare for my escape.

On a typical day, I have limited interactions with human beings. I drift around town unnoticed and blurred from their vision, though desperate to seek attention. Since I’ve started to prepare for my trip, I found forced conversations become more



common. I'm never ready for these surprise conversations and they often catch me off guard. It's odd to feign interest in 'single-serving people' who disappear when I close my eyes. Yet, these conversations are the energy reservoir required to fuel this reactor core. This public journal, for example, is another example of a 'forced conversation.' Writing these thoughts and sharing my pain is uncomfortable, yet a necessity tool for growth. I often wonder if anyone else can see their own thoughts mixed-up in my twisted-up tale.

I recognize I'm not comfortable with attention. I feel that character trait is exaggerated after my time serving the country. As I weave my way through my to-do list around town, strangers will ask what I'm up to or what's going down. I try to keep my responses generic and dry, but my excitement soon rises and the mention of a 'round-the-world' motorcycle trip slips out. I see their face twist when comprehension staggers in. People can't seem to fathom I'm days from an endless motorcycle adventure. Because I'm an objective observer in my own reality, I notice a pattern in their reactions when I feed their curiosity.

First, they're struck with disbelief. Next, a glimpse of envy creeps in from the sides. Then they begin to tell me about a generic, "love of travel" and sights they wish to see.

I know it's not proper manners to feel this way, but their envy fuels my motivation to type today. I'm used to living an adventure-filled life from door to door, instead of sliding boxes to painted squares marked on the floor. I feel safer in my own skin when I embark on something outrageous.



I force a smile to see the seconds tick. The same cookie-cutter monologue pours from people who want more, "Oh, what an amazing experience to see the sights and explore..." I soon see sadness settle in; of their tired life that coulda' been.

If the conversation lasts more than an instant, they funnel the words back to themselves and further describe their desire to be free and travel. Sorrow for their circumstance soon fills my thrill while I listen to them continue to spill.

It never registers, to any onlooker, this trip as a defense mechanism. It's an extreme event to put myself together and pull the emergency brake on an out-of-control life. It's a master reset. I need to get off the rollercoaster or I won't live another year.

I'm always a bit sheepish or play coy when people press for more information about my fast-approaching trip. Sharing this kind of personal information with strangers is difficult to do, especially face to face. One of my goals is to expose readers to the challenges we warfighters face when we integrate back from a lifetime at sea.

I'm usually tight-lipped about my service to the country. My service is seldom something I talk about with strangers. There's a polite white-haired gentleman who I work with at Lowes; who knows I served with 2nd Rangers. I'm not certain how he found me out. He thinks he knows what it takes to be an Army Ranger and always seeks me out for friendly banter.

His interest is genuine, polite, and true. He's intrigued about my service with the Rangers. He's a curious patriot with, no doubt, a bookshelf full of dog-eared



Tom Clancy novels at home. I always answer his questions because I'm a polite man who respects his elders. I keep my answers to his queries generic, clean, and devoid of gore. There's no need for misery in this company of friends.

I often find a polite reason to scurry back to my chaotic work section after an aloof answer satisfies his query. I don't elaborate much. My vague answers to his questions about Ranger history, my time overseas, or my knowledge of Islamic culture always satisfies his innocent curiosity.

Last week he approached me from my side-head while I moved heavy boxes overhead. He asked me an unexpected question, a single sole question to catch my drifting attention. This isn't the kind of query to unleash while under the spotlight of the fluorescent lights in the appliance department of Lowe's.

"Have you ever killed anybody?"

He sipped his morning cold coffee.

*My mind elsewhere and half mute, soon became hyper-vigilant of my surroundings. **"Have you ever killed anybody?"** I stood on a specialty forklift called an "order picker" machine. **"Have you ever killed anybody?"** I stood on a platform where the operator can raise and lower himself while standing on a square. **"Have you ever killed anybody?"** I stood on the square, 3' feet in the air, while tethered to the machine that bound me to the question, **"Have you ever killed anybody?"***

I stammered for a way out of the spotlight but my safety harness tethered me to my fright. I felt the harness tighten around my torso then tie up thighs. My eyes shifted to escape the spotlight. My wire tight mask must've slipped to the side because he soon saw the wild in my eyes.



I became unnerved when I saw the sad look on his face from the forbidden question asked on that uncomfortable date. I felt naked. I felt shame to expose our elder innocence to the monsters writhing within this fractured frame. I recognized my discomfort made my elder friend feel uncomfortable. Subtle and only for an instant, my mask slipped. I tried to hide it so well, but my unspoken actions became my overt tell.

This is a valuable first lesson how unspoken energy can reverberate between two entangled humans. While I drove the standing platform back to the charging station, I found it curious how energy can reverberate between two humans; without a single word spoken.

I struggle to show emotion, especially the uncomfortable ones. That's why this difficult journal is so much fun. These unspoken and uncomfortable emotions soon began to leak through the cracks my armor. I began to spill out, and for the first time, someone saw it. I broke character, if only for an instant.

Most don't don't recognize there's a forbidden boundary when talking with servicemembers about their actions overseas or in the line of duty. Ending someone's life is the most intimate event a pair of humans can experience together. It's as intimate as making love with your partner because the energy, and emotion, will stay with you forever. Energy can neither be created nor destroyed; only transformed.

I've heard that question more times than I can remember. It's not a casual ice-breaker conversation. It's intimate. It can never be undone. Once the propaganda of patriotism wears off, the stranger standing in my bathroom mirror



becomes clear. Lives taken remain as bloody stains scratched in horror across that stained glass bathroom mirror. Even among seasoned warfighters who bled together on the battlefield, this is a taboo topic seldom discussed.

There's no right answer to the forbidden question. Is body-count the measure of a soldier's good deeds? Is there a difference between one or one-hundred lives silenced? Do you wonder if those men have mothers who still cry for the loss of their sons? What's the negative number measure to define a calamity? I see it as all one big tragedy.

If I ended 10,000 lives with a cold smirk grin, would my elder friend see me as a monster standing atop that wide open machine? Does a soldier have no worth if he's never ended a life? The goal should always be not to fight, instead of stacking bodies for your master through the night.

*Why, then, do we let 'leaders' lead us to die while
arming an enemy with an eye for an eye?*

*These are questions warfighters face alone tonight; while healing from the horrors
of the wars we're duped to fight.*

*These are the questions warfighters face alone in the dark; while politicians stand
crowded on the stacked tombs of our dear departed.*

*These are the questions warfighters face alone once more; while the trumpets of a
new war call our men to die, evermore.*

Never more. No more war.



After the sudden uncomfortable event in the appliance department, my elder friend learned this is my last week of work. The next time I saw my elder friend, he gave me a send-off gift for the road ahead.

Before I explain the gift given to me, it's important to understand I loathe when I'm thanked for my service. I try to fly under the radar, but my visible tattoos and heightened awareness tend to lend there's a mysterious sheepdog wandering among us.

I never know what to say when I'm thanked for my service. I also know it's an empty gesture akin to, "how are you?" No one wants an answer to that generic question, just like no one cares about a service member's sacrifice to a country. It's a naive platitude that annoys me to no end. A platitude to open a door to a conversation of the horrors of war.

If you want to thank me for my service, then be a well-mannered human being and show respect for one another or take your empty gesture and pitch it. I see value in patience; not indifference. I see value in kindness; not rudeness. I see value in manners; not empty gestures.

I think 'loathe' isn't the proper word to describe my disdain of that nonsense patriotic platitude. I feel more irritated than anger because most won't comprehend the propaganda designed to hoodwink our warriors to squander their most sacred sacrifice. I see grown adults who still believe Santa Clause will swoop in to save the day.

I'm disgusted how this country treats its war fighters. Sometimes, the only restraint that holds this rage-filled dormant volcano from exploding is a thin veil of



damp tissue paper. This Army Ranger is far too disciplined to let people see it though. Instead, I keep to myself, reciprocate a flaccid smile around town, and let the children continue to set milk and cookies out for jolly 'ol Saint Nick. Calvin Coolidge once said, "The nation which forgets its defenders will be itself forgotten."

At 0615 this morning, I meandered over to the front desk to fill my dusty styrofoam cup with free cold coffee. Unbeknownst to me, this is my last encounter with my patriotic elder co-worker. With sleep still in my eyes, I focused on the coffee in front of me. I pressed the plunger down to squirt coffee in my dusty cup. I saw my elder friend approaching from my side, one more time.

I pretended not to see him while he advanced towards me. I focused and pressed the plunger to squirt more cold coffee on me. From my side-eye I saw something shiny concealed in his clenched right hand. As a door prize learned from 22 trips overseas, I've found myself in a constant state of heightened alert. I sipped my stale coffee with a casual stance while I scanned his hands for malicious intentions. Not for suspicion. Only for omission.

Instead of a detonator or sharp pointy poker, I saw a shiny challenge coin cupped in his closed right hand. I turned to face him as he approached my morning slumber routine. I faced my elder friend to show my armor is intact, again.

I took a sip of the day-old coffee and thought it's way too early to answer military questions, my friend. I wore my stapled-on smile and sipped my coffee, then listened to what he said to me. I wanted to be left alone to simmer with mental tasks and squalor. My mind is groggy and already solving the unseen challenges before me.



Instead of the typical military banter, he greeted me with 'the usual' then handed me a colorful heavy coin. My eyes looked down past the coin in my hand to view my worn-out shoes. I pretended to look at my hand to humor an elder old man. My eyes wouldn't focus on my hand or the coin resting in my face-up palm.

I said, "Sure, I'll take a look at it." Without reading one word on it, I said, "Yeah man, that's a cool coin." I tried to give it back to him and exit the conversation, one again; I didn't realize this gift is for me, confusion set in.

I became bewildered when my elder friend said this heavy little coin is for me. My mind couldn't process the gentle gesture because my pressure blinded me. My covert anger dissolved once I realized this coin is a gift.

I focused my eyes on the surprise resting before my eyes. I paused to study this gift. I flipped it over and read the words, "Thank you for your service." Chills ran down my spine and I lost my breath. This is not an empty gesture. This is not a platitude. This is gratitude. This is my first "thank you."

I'm not a fanboy for military coins and thrown more away than I'd like to say. I became shook. It wasn't the physical coin that moved me, it's just a hunk of metal, ya see. The selflessness act with sincerity is what moved me. This gesture following our uncomfortable conversation left me speechless at the service desk. In that moment, I felt he could see my pain. I felt transparent, once again.

I paused to take a breath before I looked up from the coin in my hand. Gravity pulled me back to the present moment while the clutter in my mind grew quiet. With direct eye contact, I gave my patriotic friend a firm handshake. I became focused, sharp, and deliberate with my appreciation. My posture changed. Color returned to



my vision. I felt an awareness of my surroundings while a lump began to build in my throat. With all the sincerity I could muster, I whispered, “thank you,” and meant it. My eyes began to water while I walked away. I still clutch that coin, till this day. My elder friend may never realize the significance of this heartfelt gesture while I spiraled alone in the dark.





Back to motorcycle stuff. My packing list is almost complete. My suspenders arrived yesterday. I don't know why all ADV pants aren't sold with suspenders. They make bulky ADV motorcycle pants tolerable and comfortable. I decided to bring a neck brace on this trip. It, too, arrived yesterday. My tardy Klim helmet should arrive tomorrow. I plan to do a final gear layout this weekend.

More exciting news, I'm invited to spend the weekend at the [Colin Edward's Texas Tornado Motorcycle Bootcamp](#) at the end of this month. Last minute slots in this coveted motocross school are rare. I managed to sneak a slot because, in 2012, I helped to launch a veteran non-profit called ["Race for the Wounded."](#)

Race for the Wounded (RFTW) is a non-profit centered on helping disabled vets compete in off-road sporting events. Brett, the principal founder of RFTW, is one of my closest friends. Colin Edwards is a retired MotoGP legend who's passionate about helping the veteran community. Colin aligns with RFTW's mission statement and offered me a slot to sharpen my moto skills to kick off my escape. More later. Thanks for reading!

Author's note: *I'm amazed how many people are willing to open their homes to a stranger from the internet. I lived my adult life insulated from people or unable to talk about my chosen professions. It's a lonely industry of protection.*

I'm isolated on a remote island while I watch cruise ships and pleasure boats sail past my chaotic, sacrificial life. I can see smiling passengers having fun,



*laughing, and enjoying themselves while they are oblivious to the starving stranger
who's stranded off their starboard bow.*

*I wonder if they can see me jumping up and down while I seethed strings of
sentences from my keyboard. Maybe if I started a fire on this remote little island
they'd shift their gaze for a moment and engage me in genuine heartfelt human-to-
human interaction.*

*I'm shocked over the outpouring of people who saw the smoke from my
smoldering fire and offered me a place to stay. Maybe there is something to this
journal; so I keep on writing.*

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