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### What I've Seen on the Road

Mystery writer, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle wrote, "When spirits are low, when the day appears dark, when work becomes monotonous, when hope hardly seems worth having, just mount a bicycle and go out for a spin down the road, without thought on anything but the ride you are taking." His words ring true for me. When I bike, I feel that I am one with the machine – free to pass softly through the countryside or to tear down a hill at breakneck speed. Often my sad thoughts are replaced with my subtle contemplation on the sights that surround me, interrupted only by the unexpected challenges that lay on the road before me.

One day last summer that road lead me to an obstruction that threatened to rob me of the joy I often find while I ride my bike. As I was concentrating on fighting the wind and grinding the gears up and down searching for the proper setting, I saw the most imposing thing I have ever seen on the road...a dog. Dogs aren't a big deal when a biker rides past farmhouses. It is normal to be chased regularly. But, this dog was no ordinary dog. It was a **D\*O\*G!** If there had been a bright sun that day, its mass would have blotted it out. The dog stood...fifty yards ahead of me...a St. Bernard... the biggest mutt I have ever seen! It saw me about the same time that I saw it. So, I stopped in the road, and we gazed at one another. (Actually, I glazed at it. That dog was scary times ten.)

It just stood there on all four legs (or were they tree trunks?) with knees locked and head up. It bulged with a mountain of hidden muscle covered by thick brown and white fur. I guessed that it weighed at least 250 pounds, and all of this dog stood braced in that road daring me to pass by.

The dog leered at me, and the wet black lips of a mouth that stretched from one floppy ear to the other rippled as it breathed its only word. "W0000FF," it said. Now, I'm no dog expert, but I knew what that monster had said. "Try to get past me little man, and you'll be my afternoon snack." Always being a person who cooperates with nature, I swung my bike around and retreated as quickly as my legs would take me.

After moving off a bit, I looked back to see if the canine would follow. Knowing that it had won

the day, I saw that it was lazily shuffling to the side of the road and into its yard, where it finally plopped down under a tree. (It may have been my imagination, but I think I felt the earth shake at exactly that

moment.)

Not to be manhandled by a mere mongrel, I turned my bike around, clanked the high gear into place, and began to peddle at top speed toward that prone poundacious poodle. As I zoomed past that beast, leaving wisps of leaves and dust behind me, the dog spotted me, fought to its feet, and charged. It bounded after me for nearly an half mile, seeming to pick up speed along the way. I continued to pedal in panic, not sure how long this race would last or how it would end. Then, without warning, the dog gave up, and as it did so, I began to coast, my shoulders hunched over the handlebars as I huffed and puffed with burning lungs

After I caught my breath and controlled my flow of adrenaline, I continued on my way, but my thoughts stayed with the dog. The creature knew that that territory belonged to it and that it was determined to keep that land. I threatened the dog's security, and it felt like it had to take a stand, not unlike the actions of many people. Mankind is not the only species claiming its place in this world. I guessed that the St. Bernard's and all the other creatures of the world want their places, too. Who was I to get in the way of that?

John F. Kennedy said that "nothing compares to the simple pleasure of a bike ride." Excluding my near fatal encounter with the massive beast, on this day, I must wholly agree.

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