

# Maddog Unleashed

## An Emotional Weather Report: High Tonight, Low Tomorrow. And Precipitation Is Expected

*And the hawk had his whole family out  
there in the wind and he's got a message  
for you to beware cause he be kickin' your  
ass in, in a cold blooded fashion  
dishin' out more than a good man can bear.*

—Tom Waits, Spare Parts I (A Nocturnal Emission)



**BY PATRICK O'GRADY**

A colleague and I have a long-running gag that kicks in about this time of year. We'll be exchanging professional horror stories on the phone, wondering why we chose to waste our lives doing journalism and whether we're too old to acquire any marketable skills, when suddenly one of us will announce, dolefully: "And then—winter." It's basically shorthand for, "If you think things suck now, just wait."

Neither he nor I relish the onset of winter, in large part because we rarely get the picture-postcard kind of season that sells Texans on ski vacations in Aspen. What we get is cold to no particular purpose. You can't ski cold, or even sell it to Texans, unless you devise a means of storing it and then shipping it to Houston in August.

Winter around here means spending too much time indoors, listening to the furnace clicking on and off. Neither of us heats with wood anymore, because that means spending too much time outdoors, where the wood is, operating deadly implements designed to turn trees into bits that fit neatly in the stove.

By the time you're ready to light your fire, you're pouring sweat and hardly need one. Plus you may be missing a toe, a finger or some other useful bit of yourself. This does not improve one's mood as the days grow shorter and the walls close in.

**Ice, Ice, Baby.** We got a hint of what's to come last Saturday, a weekend's worth of subfreezing temperatures and black ice that caused at least two multi-vehicle pileups briefly closing Interstate 25 in both directions.

Cycling didn't even enter my mind that first day, not after our large and ferocious cat Turkish declined to take his morning constitutional. After the usual post-breakfast yowling for liberty he splayed briefly on the glazed sidewalk like Spider-Man on a wall, then raced straight back indoors to sleep off the horror... the horror...

But an 1,100-square-foot house gets mighty small mighty fast with disgruntled humans and felines stalking about and hissing at each other, so on Sunday I ventured out for a short walk. After nearly hitting the deck thrice on the ice, I surrendered to the inevitable and pussyfooted gingerly home.

**I Was Robbed.** Nobody who has lived in Colorado for more than a few years expects much in the way of spring, and torrential rains had flushed away our summer. Now I was being robbed of fall, my favorite cycling season. Three seasons down and one to go, the worst by far for two-wheeled adventures. I could feel myself inflating like Monsieur Creosote in Monty Python's "The Meaning of Life."

Time was short, and I had to act fast if I hoped to retain some semblance of human form. First I ordered up a Giant Tempo. The only way to sell the wife on indoor exercise gear in an already-cramped DogHaus is to make sure there's something in it for her. I'm a foot taller than her; thus, the adjustable stationary bike.

Next I scored some fenders and fat road rubber for my battered Voodoo Wazoo, presently tricked out as a seven-speed, single-chainring, flat-pedal contraption. I'll ride indoors if and when I have to, but with fenders I have no excuse for hiding indoors on mildly sucky days.

You know what happened next, right? The ice melted, the sun returned, and we're enjoying a beautiful autumn weekend. The Tempo remains unclaimed at the shop, the fenders uninstalled in the garage. All's right with the world. For now.

And then—winter.