

## Goodbye Yellow Brick Road

"When are you going to land?" The young man looked out the plane window impatiently.

The woman in the seat next to his looked at him curiously. "You said your name was Reg, right? What is a boy from Kansas like you going to do in the big city?"

Reg turned to her. "Oh, I've finally decided my future lies..." he started explaining, before being cut off by an announcement from the flight attendant.

"Ladies and gentlemen, we will soon be arriving at our final destination..."

Safely landed and determined to get where he had decided his future lied, Reg got off the cab that had taken him from the airport to the edge of the city. He wanted to discover this bustling metropolis on foot. He had only made it a few blocks before a sound coming from right above him caught his attention. Looking up, he spotted a furry ball with big blue eyes in a sea of leaves and branches. Judging by its collar, this cat had an owner, and that owner would probably be quite worried to see their pet stuck in a tree. Reg decided he'd better try to save the helpless animal.

After a few minutes, however, Reg had to come to terms with the fact that having lived on a farm his entire life would not help him with convincing the cat to come to him.

"When are you gonna come down?" he exclaimed in frustration.

Suddenly, someone cried out from behind him. "Mittens, what are you doing up there?!"

Mittens' owner then tried to lure her pet down just as Reg had done before her.

The young man, who knew it to be an impossible endeavour, could only sigh, "maybe you'll get a replacement." He simply walked off, having better things to do.

Once he had arrived downtown, Reg stopped in front of a window filled with dozens of TV. The news was currently showing a segment about a war in some Middle Eastern country. The camera panned over to a US military aircraft flying over enemy territory, then cut to terrorists firing rocket launchers.

"Maybe they'll shoot down the plane," commented Reg in a matter-of-fact way.

The viewers next to him scoffed at his lack of patriotism. Suddenly, the contents of the news having been deemed too shocking for the crowd, the displays switched to a nature documentary.

“Back to the howling old owl in the woods, hunting the horny-back toad,” muttered Reg before walking off, disappointed.

As it was starting to get dark, Reg stopped before a bar with a neon sign.

“Beyond the yellow brick road,” the young man read out.

He stepped in. In the middle of the otherwise dark and cramped room, a stand with a microphone was illuminated by an orange spotlight. This establishment was by no means fancy and one could barely hear his own thoughts over the drunken arguments, yet somehow, at that moment, it seemed nice enough for Reg to want to shoot his shot. He got up on the stage, wiping his sweaty hands on his jeans while waiting for his eyes to adjust to the spotlight.

He started to sing.

“Ah, ah-ah, ah-ah...”

His voice trailed off as it got drowned by the other customers. Though he could not be entirely sure, he was persuaded nobody bothered to watch him. Suddenly wanting to disappear from the surface of the Earth, Reg stopped singing. Although he had done nothing wrong, he still felt the need to justify his mediocre performance to his nonexistent audience.

“This boy’s too young to be singing the blues,” he said apologetically.

He then quickly put down the microphone and tried to leave the bar unnoticed, but a man with obnoxious jewelry stopped him.

“Hey man, I heard you sing,” he said. “Pretty good stuff... I want you to come sing at my party Sunday.”

Still ashamed of his failed performance, Reg was convinced this was a sick joke. “I didn’t sign up with you,” he answered dryly.

“I know, but I’m not poor, I can pay you! A lot of my friends will show up, I can’t disappoint them!”

Tired of this spoiled brat’s antics, the young farmer snapped, “I’m not a present for your friends to open!”

By now, Reg was seriously regretting ever having set foot in this place. Seeing that the other man did not step out of his way, he added, “You can’t plant me in your penthouse, I’m going back to my plough.”

“You don’t get it. I want YOU to sing, not someone else.”

Reg rolled his eyes, “There’s plenty like me to be found — mongrels who ain’t got a penny, sniffing for tidbits like you on the ground.”

“Listen buddy, you clearly don’t know who you’re talking to. I don’t take no for an answer.”

Reg stared at him with a defiant gaze. "What do you think you'll do then?"

Furious, the man swung at him, but the Kansan, having since long abandoned the peaceful way out, crashed a chair on his head. His opponent fell to the ground. Before anyone else could join in on the fight, he exited the bar. Outside, he looked back on the neon sign.

"So goodbye yellow brick road, where the dogs of society howl."

But when he turned around to go on his merry way, he was met with an unpleasant surprise. A police car was stopping in front of him, sirens howling. Two policemen stepped out and immediately put him in handcuffs.

"You're coming with us to the station, young man."

Reg tried to break free. "You know you can't hold me forever!" he cried out.

But the policemen only threw him in their car.

As they drove off, Reg looked longingly at the outside world through the barred windows and reflected on his misadventures.

"I should have stayed on the farm, I should have listened to my old man."

Afterword: I am a big fan of Elton John, one of my favourite songs being "Goodbye Yellow Brick Road ", which is why I decided to centre this short story around it. The attentive reader will notice that the main character, Reg, only speaks in verses from the song. In fact, over the span of the text, he recites it in its entirety, except, of course, for the parts that are repeated, such as the chorus.