

John lifted his arm upward to shield his eyes with the palm of his hand. The sun on his skin felt hot. He thought it was too late in the season for the temperature to climb to the numbers it had reached over the past week.

“I’m full as hell.” A man said, coughing in between words as he walked out of the bar behind John.

“Those pancakes will get you.”

“They can lull you to sleep. Especially with some beer.”

“I had my share last night. I’m feeling it today.”

“Beer can help that too.” The man laughed as he stood underneath the awning. He looked away from John toward the traffic light and the entrance to the thruway just beyond.

“I can’t tell you how many times I hung my head on a Sunday morning wondering what the hell the sun was doing up in the sky already without asking me if I were ready. You want a smoke?”

John nodded his head. He quit smoking a few years ago, which gave him the idea he could pick one up every now and again. The habit was gone, but the fun never died. That is all John thought it all was—just plain stupid fun.

“You need a light?”

“I have one.” John did not want to appear helpless. He went through his pockets twice before the man stopped him from looking further.

“Thanks.” John took the matches from the man.

“You oughta keep some fire with you.”

“What?”

“It’s good to have some fire. My name is Bill.”

“John.” He lit the cigarette with the third match. “What brings you out here this morning?”

“I thought something died.” Bill nodded his head across the street. “It’s just aluminum foil though.”

“Yeah. The plastic bags that get caught in the trees are kind of funny. They’re strange looking birds.”

The two laughed as though they had known each other for a long time. Bill made another joke, which John found to be funny. Then they fell silent and tried once or twice to start a

conversation. Both of the men were out of practice having not had the opportunity for one reason or another to speak with anyone that they did not already know.

“If you want breakfast why don’t you go somewhere that does breakfast?”

“What do you call pancakes?”

“Fluff.”

John laughed. “About fifteen years ago, some friends of mine used to go out all night then come here. First thing or last thing or whatever you want to call it. Only one of us had a car. It was junk. We would have to tie the passenger door with a seatbelt to make sure it did not swing open.”

“That’s damn funny.” Bill watched John throw his cigarette into the street. The cigarette was smoked halfway down to the filter.

“You know Ellen inside? She’s a good lady. She lets me go behind the counter to grab my own beer.”

John nodded his head. He was thinking about the day ahead. He had plans to get lunch in a couple hours with an old friend before they needed to go to work. Tonight, he would meet with another who said they could step away from their family for a couple hours. John thought when he woke up today that he would go for a run, but after the meal he felt he could just sleep.

“We went out a couple times. We didn’t go anywhere special, but we went out. I wonder sometimes. Now that I’m older, I do that a lot. I guess when I was younger, I wondered too. Looking at all the choices, I mean, I read about all the heroes, and things, and whatever, but—I don’t know. Ellen tells me I’m hard on myself, but I really just don’t know. Hell, we had some fun. ”

“That’s what you got to tell yourself.” John looked toward Bill. He could see Bill’s face had momentarily lost some light and he wished the comment he made was different. He thought maybe he took it the wrong way. That is what John told himself. That it was all for fun.

“I’m going back in,” Bill said, walking away from John. “It’s getting too hot for me.”

“Yeah,” John said, “I was going to do some shopping for my mother and spend some time with her.”

“That’s good they are still here. They are only around once.”

“Yeah.” John lowered his head. He then looked back up and toward the door to the bar that Bill was about to open. “Thanks for the light