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Interview Guaranteed

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Abstract

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"Interview Guaranteed. It's not a very accommodating phrase. The colorful sign in the Denny's window projects. Interview Guaranteed."

Cover Page Footnote

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PHIL LORIGO

INTERVIEW GUARANTEED

Interview Guaranteed

It's not a very accommodating phrase. The colorful sign in the Denny's window projects.

Interview Guaranteed

It reminds me of our country's justice system. "A speedy and fair trial..." bla bla bla. The staff at Denny's would like to inform you that if you want to apply for a position there, the interview is *guaranteed*. What a sweet deal. If there's one thing everyone needs, it's judgment before predetermined failure. At least when the interview is a plateau you aspire to reach, you know you've failed if you haven't gotten a call from Chet or Tom, nicely asking you to come in "for a chat," or whatever the corporate euphemism is for interview these days. But Denny's is an equal opportunity discriminating force. Kudos to them.

I was That Guy tonight. I entered the restaurant alone, book in hand. I ordered my decaf coffee and water. I opened the book and paged to the dedication. Or whatever it's called. I felt pretty small. I didn't even put dent in the book before I sat down at the table. In fact, I didn't even read the back of the book to see what it was about. I hate ruining things before I get into them. I never understand why people do that. Y'know, having to read the back of a movie you're going to rent anyway. Spoil the plot. Spoil the surprise. What's the point? I like surprises.

There were two occupied tables other than mine. One housed a group of middle-aged people, the other contained four drunken twenty-somethings. I'm sure the kids would have at least talked underneath their breath about me, but they were too drunk. I gauged this by the abundance of profanity and laughter projected by their circle. I continued to read.

Seventy-five pages in I decided it was a good time to leave. My server had already left, and I felt it was my cue to get back in my car and go home. I lit a cigarette as if to celebrate something. It was good. Not as good as an I-just-had-sex smoke, or a drag from a well-earned nicotine fix. But it felt warm. Whole. Like me. I pulled out of the parking lot and aimed home.

The music complimented the moment as perfectly as a score hand selected for a dramatic scene in some Hollywood film. The tapping of my foot and thumb syncopated nicely.

I went too far.

The surrounding terrain looked a little *too* unfamiliar. This is my second home. This is my *other* town. What am I doing getting lost coming home from The Other Denny's? But I know where I am. I'm sure of it.

The levels of the second track of the disc I was listening to didn't match up with the first. I turned up the volume to match that of the last song. These are the risks you take when making a mix CD. Despite my personal habits and opinions, this never bothered me. It should, though. When I saw the 490E sign, I knew where I was going. Not where I was, but where I was going. The moist ground made every lane look like it was a left-turn-only. I shrugged internally and proceeded home.

The volume of the third track startled me slightly, but the sound was therapeutic, expressing what I was thinking. My throat was dry, but it shouldn't have been. I "quit" smoking not too long ago. I just drank plenty of liquids. Thoughts of catching Mono from one of the guys I live with surfaced, but they were unfounded. I already had Mono a few years ago. I already paid my dues. That's what I keep telling myself.

Pulling into the parking lot of my apartment, I smiled. My parking spot was still open. In a place where they ticket cars of people they *think* don't live there, in a place where there's a major parking shortage, in a place where you're more likely to find a leprechaun with a pot of gold, I find my parking spot. I kept smiling.

There's a certain dignity to being alone. Not having to worry about what your companion is thinking. Not being concerned with what the group will determine the next destination to be. Just you. Doing "your thing." Finding my key, I didn't really worry about whether This Girl called or if That One stopped over. I just checked to make sure the fragment of a sugar packet I was using as a bookmark was still in place. It was. Right at Chapter 6, page 75. I'm still not sure why I even marked it. I knew the page. I knew the chapter. I knew I'd remember the page. When it comes to things like this, I don't really like surprises.