

Wilderness House Literary Review 21/3

Joseph Carrabis

The Shackled Man

Saturday mornings. That was our time.

Dad tiptoed into my room and knelt beside my bed. I could smell him before my eyes opened. A good smell, a night's sweat just washed away.

I kept my eyes shut until I felt the bristles of his mustache when he kissed my cheek. I'd open my eyes and see the twinkle in his.

"Want to go for a ride?"

There were four places we'd go. South, Logan Airport. West, French King Bridge. North, Queechee Gorge. East, L.L. Bean.

We always stopped at a Dunkin Donuts. If we started a little late it'd be a Dunkin Donuts half way there, about an hour out, half hour at the least. Or sometimes it'd be at the edge of town, right before we hit the highway.

Dad knew where all the Dunkins were. Nobody had breakfast sandwiches or drivethroughs back then. You had to go inside. He'd get a medium coffee, two sugars, two creams, and I'd get a chocolate milk and a bavarian creme, the first bite and the creme oozed out and into your mouth.

And then off we'd go, listening to the radio or singing songs. Didn't matter the weather, every Saturday morning we'd go, always sure to be out of the house by seven, no later.

West and north we'd get to the bridges. There were parking areas and we'd get out and walk around. Dad would stay close to the rails, look over. "How far down do you think that is, son?"

I was too small, I couldn't see.

"Be a long drop from here."

East we'd get to L.L. Bean. It was totally different back then. Only locals and hunters knew of it. How my dad knew I'll never know.

You could talk to guides, men who knew the lakes and rivers and mountains. Dad listened to their stories, about going so far out in the woods it seemed there was no coming back, then he'd check his watch.

"Come on, son. Time to be getting back."

South we'd go to Logan Airport. It was closer than every place else. West and north took two hours up, two hours back. East maybe an hour and a half and Dad would talk with the guides. Logan took only an hour, but Dad would find a door that got us to the terminal roof. Nobody worried about security back then.

We'd stand there and watch the planes take off and land. "Where's that one going, son? Where's that one been, son?" He'd put his hand on my shoulder and hold me close and we'd watch a few more planes and then he'd check his watch.

"Come on, son. Time to head home."

Dad drove slower coming home. Took the same amount of time, I know, but it felt slower. I remember he slowed right down when we got to our street. Some-

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times there were cars parked in front of our house. Dad didn't stop, just kept on driving like he remembered an errand and had to get it done before he got back.

My parents didn't talk much. I never knew why.