Sister (pt. 1)

by Joe Sullivan

Slept on a chair last night in the Springfield, Mass., bus terminal. It was March, and a dude in shorts asked: "Yo, you smoke trees?" I said, "Sure. Who doesn't?" He said, "You buyin'?" I said, "Nope, I'm going out of the country." He smiled and said, "Alright." He started to walk away and I said, "Here," and handed him thirty dollars. He grinned and a new spring sprung up in his step.

Hours later my bus was there. I was heading to Boston, then getting picked up by my people and driven to Newark. I was backtracking to move forward. From Newark, I was flying to Mexico City. From there, I didn't know where I'd be next. All I knew was, I was intensely allergic to the airport in Mexico City. I'd had a sneezing fit each of the past two times they'd sent me. Years before, in my twenties, I wasn't allergic at all. I don't know what had changed in the decade and a half since.

On the bus to Boston, there was no one. Just me, the driver, and a small smattering of passengers I couldn't see in the seats behind me. It was 3 a.m. Not much reason for anyone to be on that bus at that time.

My people picked me up at South Station in Boston at 5 a.m. as they said they would. My people was just this guy Joel in a black town car. I knew him from before, and I knew he wouldn't say too much on the drive to Newark. He worked for my uncle, who I included in my people.

Joel said, "Hello again," and took my bag, then inspected it, then threw it in the trunk. "Hi, thanks," I said, before he did that.

Joel was dressed casually today in blue slacks and a white polo shirt. Before, he was in a suit.

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I was in jeans and sandals, and a white button down, if you must know. Neither of us were dressed for March. Both of us would wind up in Mexico City eventually.

On the drive to Newark, I slept. Joel drove in silence with no radio. That was his fashion.

We reached the Newark airport at 9:30 a.m. I was to travel on a freight flight. We drove down a side road that led to where FedEx and UPS cargo was loaded. Joel stopped just outside one of the loading areas. He got out of the car. Then I got out.

"You fucked my sister," he said, as he pulled my bag from his trunk. "So what?" I answered. He smiled and handed me my bag. "She misses you," he answered, smiling, still. I shook my head.