**Iowa**

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 The gently rolling farms of Iowa went by. The man frequently turned the knob on the radio. Burger wrappers littered the floor, blowing around in the heater’s blast of hot dry air. He counted the exits as he had been doing for the past 5 hours, and watched Iowa go by.

 Hours ago, in a diner, a waitress greeted him with what seemed to him like genuine warmth and recognition, and he had to wonder if he knew her from somewhere, but he didn’t. This is the Midwest he reminded himself, people are friendlier here. He was embarrassed by how shy she made him feel. It made him wonder if he was really up to doing the job he had been assigned to do.

 She was about thirty, considerably younger, attractive with an open, unguarded look that was so different from the women he knew. Every time she returned to his table, she made eye contact with him and smiled in a way that was warm and kind. He began to wonder if she thought he was somebody else. But he didn’t resemble anyone in particular..

 He imagined a life with her, a life together, imagining her smiling as she said his name, her eyes showing delight in his company. He thought for a moment how a life like that would be lived, and through his mind a million mundane tasks flew by in a blur, but they were tasks made bearable by her. He imagined a life where he would only require little things, and she would be the focus around which it all revolved, all the simple things, all the days and nights of easy and uncomplicated things to do. It would be nothing like his life right now.

 He tipped her extravagantly and left without saying goodbye. He didn’t want these feelings to complicate the job that was ahead of him, but as he drove on, he realized they had, and the task at hand now seemed even more difficult.