

## Fuck up at the Denny's

By Rey A. Gonzalez

"What are we doing here, Jess?"

"Waiting," said Jesse. "I want some pancakes."

"You sure it's safe?"

"Sure I'm sure. Why wouldn't it?"

"It's a Denny's. There's probably cops around here."

"There's probably old people here, Chris. And unemployed folks. It's past midnight, and besides, all we're doing is getting pancakes. They don't arrest no one for getting pancakes."

They sat in the Mustang, listening to Skynyrd's "Curtis Lowe". Jesse was a big man with legs like trunks and a body like a barrel of black powder. He had on a leather biker vest with nothing underneath but a lawn of red chest hair and a gold chain. Chris sat with his blonde pimply head pressed against the side window, eyes fixed on the big Denny's sign.

"You're scared, aren't you?" Jess said, shutting off the Skynyrd.

"What?"

"You're scared. You're fucking scared."

"No I'm not."

"Yes. You. Are. You're scared shitless. And don't think I can't hear you shaking, because your fatso knees are bumping the steering wheel. You're shaking like a girl on prom night. You're scared."

"Well..."

"Well nothing."

"Stop it, Jess. It's just hard for me to get used to, you know?"

"No. I don't know. I let you in because you were broke as shit and you needed money and I thought I could trust you."

"You can still trust me. Nothing's changed."

"But you're scared. Scared bitches do some loco shit. Like go running to the cops. Like talking to people they ain't supposed to."

"I won't."

They sat there for a minute, watching the semis go by on the interstate.

Jesse took out a Zippo, clicked it open and shut, and said, "You won't."

"I won't."

"I'm not asking, Chris. I'm telling. You ain't gonna do shit." Jesse looked up and down the empty parking lot. "You hungry?"

"I could eat."

"Now that's the spirit. Put that jar away. It's creeping me out. Let's go get us some pancakes."

"I want the Moons Over My Hammy."

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Jesse and Chris stepped through the swinging doors to the Denny's and were immediately greeted by the fat hostess behind the counter. She grabbed two menus and said, "Welcome to Denny's! Table for two?"

"Make it a booth," said Jesse. Then he said, "We're not fags, we're just here for some pancakes."

The fat little hostess laughed and snorted. Jesse didn't laugh. It wasn't a joke.

Chris tapped Jesse on the shoulder. "And some Moons Over My Hammy. Tell her, Jesse."

Jesse threw a thumb over his shoulder at Chris. "You hear that, sweet cheeks?"

The hostess nodded, uneasy. "The waitress will take your order."

Jesse nodded. "Make it happen."

The fat little hostess walked them over to a booth beside a window that looked out on the parking lot. The streetlights were on. From there they saw the Mustang parked in the shadows, away from the glow of the Denny's sign. Jesse and Chris squeezed their asses into the booth. Jesse put his boot up on the bench and rested his back against the window.

Jesse pulled a Kool from his pocket and stuck it in his lip. The waitress walked up with a bright grin and said, "I'm sorry, you can't smoke in here."

Jesse didn't take the cig from his lip when he said, "I'm not smoking it."

"Uh..."

"Never mind that. That man over there wants some Moons over his Hammy. Scrambled. Lots of Hammy. I gotta have me some pancakes. Pronto."

The waitress scribbled furiously. "How many pancakes, sir?"

"A lot. Stack 'em to Heaven. Five. And coffee. And uh..." He snapped his fingers as he tried to remember. "Chris, what's that shit you like to drink?"

"Orange juice," said Chris.

"Orange juice. Get that man some orange juice. Got it, honey?"

The waitress smiled a meth-toothed grin. "Got it."

The waitress left, and the only ones in the dining room were a tired looking black man, a group of migrant workers, and a pair of college students that looked like they'd just come from a club. A clock on the wall struck 1 o'clock in the a.m..

Chris grabbed a green and blue crayon and went to work on a puzzle on the back of the placemat. He had to double back a few times. Chris sighed and said, "What are we gonna do?"

Jesse chewed on the cigarette butt and said, "What do you mean what are we gonna do? Everything went sweet back at the broad's place, and we told the fucker to meet us at Denny's, so now we're gonna wait for the fucker. Have some of that food they got here, and wait. Are you gonna start this again?"

The waitress brought a glass of orange juice and a coffee for the boys. She said, "You two doing okay?"

Jesse pointed at Chris. Chris smiled and nodded. Jesse threw a thumbs-up. Then they were alone again.

Chris stopped coloring the little dog on the placemat. "I just wanna get this over with. I'm tired."

“Get a grip bud.” Jesse emptied four bags of sugar into his coffee and drank it with no cream. “You’re fine. I’m fine. Everything’s fine. Dude will be here any minute. Just get a fucking grip.”

“It’s not that. I just...I don’t know. It’s just doing this shit that’s really getting to me.” He paused for a moment, and held up a red crayon, studied it in the fluorescent light. The crayon matched the color of the blood beneath his fingernails. “Burnt Rose. Don’t they ever make red anymore? Shit.”

“Burnt sienna, pumpkin orange, navy blue. What’s the difference?”

Jesse stayed quiet for a long time. He looked at the college girl across the way. She looked back uneasily. She whispered something to her skinny blond boyfriend and he looked at Jesse. Jesse smiled. His teeth were as yellow as runny yolk.

“Chris, what exactly is it that bothers you about it? Is it the fact that you could spend the rest of your days locked up with the niggers if you get caught, or the fact that you make three times as much doing this than you do at the track?”

Jesse had a point. Chris knew it, Jesse knew it, and it was a damned good point, too. The money he made directing traffic down at the racetrack and the little extra he made selling pain pills on the side did not amount to what he made with Jesse. Not by a long shot.

“What’s paying your alimony, bub?” Jesse asked, pointing the cig at Chris.

“This.”

“Yeah. And what bought you that double barrel Holly carburetor for that Mustang out there? And the 37-inch plasma?”

“This.”

“That plasma really makes porn look fan-fuckin-tastic, don’t it? Makes them big fake titties look like they’re bouncing right in the room. I know. That’s the way they look in mine.”

Jesse swigged his coffee cup til it was empty and licked his lips at the girl in the booth across the way. She whispered something at her boyfriend. He looked pissed, but the girl begged him not to get up. Jesse smiled his yellow smile again and tugged at his crotch.

When Jesse looked back at Chris, Chris had a mayonnaise jar with two eyeballs in it. A little pool of blood sat at the bottom. Jesse licked his gums, unfazed.

“Chris, why did you bring those in here?”

“I don’t know.” Chris held the jar up and shook the eyeballs inside. One looked at Chris, the other at Jesse. They were blue. “I guess I just forgot I had ‘em in my pocket.”

“You forgot you had ‘em in your pocket?”

“Yeah.”

“How do you forget you have a thing like that in your pocket? It’s not like it’s a dollar bill you leave in the wash. Put them away.”

Chris did. The waitress brought their meals, refilled their drinks, then left in a hurry. They were alone again.

Jesse grabbed the syrup and began drowning the pancakes in Aunt Jemima. “She may have been a nigger,” he said, “but that bitch knew how to top a breakfast.” He dug in and shoveled large, colon-clogging, pieces of pancake down his throat.

Chris brought out the jar again.

“Oh shit, are you gonna quit with those already? Christ, I’m eating!”

Chris unscrewed the lid and stuck his nose inside. “I can’t help it. It’s weird!” He held out his hand and dropped them in his palm, but they bounced off, one on his plate, the other on the floor. He reached down and picked up the one off the floor. There were crumbs and dirt on it. He tried to blow it off, but the junk stuck. He looked down at the other eyeball on his plate, but before he could grab it, he noticed something else. This wasn’t his Moons Over My Hammy.

“I’m so sorry!” The waitress said as she ran up to the table, as if on cue. “I’ll get your food. This belongs to the gentleman at the other table.” And she dropped Chris’s plate off at the college boy.

“Shit,” hissed Jesse.

“Aw, damn,” sighed Chris.

The college boy and his girlfriend noticed it at the same time. Their screams were identical, shrill and crazy. He tossed the plate aside and the eyeball went flying.

Chris dove for it, smashing over tables and chairs as it went rolling across the floor.

Jesse stood up, spat a mouthful of pancake on the floor, and reached for the revolver stuck down the back of his jeans.

The waitress screamed because she saw it too. The Mexicans at the other table scrambled for the door like cockroaches when the lights went on. The black man hid underneath the table.

“I got it!” Chris yelled from underneath a table, his ass crack popping out the top of his jeans.

Then the bullets flew. Two went into the college boy, three in the girlfriend, one in the waitress. Then Jesse reloaded, went to the kitchen, and went to work.

When he came back, Chris was sitting on a table, looking at the jar of dirty eyeballs. There was a piece of hash brown in the jar as well.

The old black man was dead, but not from a gunshot. Jesse kicked him with his ostrich skin boot. The old man didn’t move.

“Heart attack?”

Jesse stole cash out of the man’s pocket. He stole a pack of smokes, too. “Fuck it. Fuck the Mexicans, too. They won’t be going to the cops. They’d get shipped back to Mexico. Fuck it.”

“I’m sorry, Jess.”

Jesse waved his hands as he looked at what he’d done. “Fuck it.”

A pair of headlights shined in the window. A car parked and out came their man, a short balding guy with the kind of suit people got buried in.

Jesse and Chris met the guy at the door, Jesse with the gun in one hand, Chris with the eyeballs.

“Those them?” the man asked, pointing at the jar. The dude was sweating bad and his voice shook. He looked like he hadn’t slept in days.

“Yup,” said Chris. “They’re a bit dirty but they’re them. Here.” Chris handed the jar over.

“I didn’t think you’d pull through.”

“Never doubt a professional,” said Jesse. “Where’s the money?”

The dude pulled an envelope and handed it to Chris. “What did you do to her?”

“I asked your wife if I could borrow her eyeballs,” said Jesse. “Then we fucked for a few hours. Me in one socket, him in the other. Don’t ask questions you don’t want answers to.”

Then Jesse and Chris left. They never saw the man again.

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Jesse and Chris stood on the beams of the McCormick Bridge at dawn. They pissed long yellow streams into the river below. And while they pissed, they talked.

“You still feel funny about what we do, Chris?”

“Naw. But I want out. I’m done.”

“You sure?” said Jesse, arching his back to pump out the last few drops.

“Yeah. I’m sure.”

“Even after that five grand in your glove box, you’re sure?”

Chris thought for a second. “Yeah.”

Jesse shook his dick in the breeze and zipped up. “Well alright. But I gotta tell you I’m a little upset.”

“Aw, no, Jess. It ain’t nothing against you.”

“I know. But let me do this for you. I’ll give you another grand outta my share to think it over for a day. Day goes by, you don’t wanna stick around, you keep the money and you’ll never have to hold another jar of eyeballs again. Deal?”

Jesse stuck his hand out. Chris looked at Jesse’s hand, then at Jesse’s eyes. Jesse had the eyes of a friendly lion. Seemed fair enough. They shook on it.

“Atta boy,” said Jess. “Now let’s go home.”

Jesse climbed over the railing first. When Chris put one foot over the railing, Jesse took a running shove and knocked him back. Chris fell back and away from the railing. He didn’t even scream.

Jesse looked over the railing and watched Chris hit. Chris didn’t move when he came up. Jesse started towards the Mustang and immediately realized that the keys were in Chris’s pocket. He looked down over the railing and saw Chris, face down, not moving.

“Fuck.”

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With a Wal-Mart bag full of money, Jesse went walking down the road with his thumb out. Lights slowed down and a Pontiac pulled over for him. The driver was an old man wearing a cowboy hat.

“Need a lift?”

“Yup.”

“That your car back there?”

“Nope.”

“Where you headed?”

“I hear there’s a diner down the road. I could kill for some pancakes.”

*Rey came from the streets of Fresno, CA and has walked all over these United States trying to get away from trouble just to get into more. He currently resides in the American South and should not be approached by anyone unless it's to give him money or pussy. And it better be damn good pussy.*

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