

To my credit, I didn't spend the rest of the night moping after disconnecting the call with 4 Stroke. It would have been really easy to do exactly that, to fall into the pattern of locking up, shutting down, then spending the rest of the night feeling sorry for myself. It was a pretty common occurrence around Casa del Adams, far more frequent than I'd like to admit.

"Yeah. Yeah. ... I will. Thanks, doc."

My shrink had given me his personal number to use, I suppose in case I was feeling lonesome outside of office hours. It was a monumental effort to dial the numbers, and it was probably the first time sober Tank had ever taken him up on the offer; but sober Tank was getting just as annoyed by the vague, existential dread and moping as anyone else.

After hanging up with Dr. Meyer, I stepped out onto the patio with a beer and my cigar to hopefully let the night air clear my head. 'Patio' is a really generous term for what the complex granted us, but crumbling plaster and stubborn patches of grass growing through cracks in the concrete didn't bother me a whole lot. I had a lawn chair, and the border ledge was low enough that I could kick my feet up on it, and that's really all you need.

Leaning the lawn chair back to that sweet spot between flat on the ground and falling flat on my head, I kicked my boots up on the ledge and tried to ignore the chill of a quick breeze through my short fur.

"Wouldn't kill ya to put a shirt on, dumbass..." I mumbled to myself; the sun had just disappeared behind the factories that were the dominating feature of the Breaks, and only a couple of warehouse and restaurant lights still illuminated the evening sky. It was a bleak, drab place, and while I wasn't yet a bleak, drab man, I reckon I could feel it starting to pull at me.



It was no surprise to me that 4 Stroke was still on my mind, though. The raccoon was the exact opposite of everything that my life had been for the past couple of years, and silly as it might sound after two or three conversations, I was starting to feel like maybe the doc had been right. If someone like that could be so interested in befriending me, maybe I had a little more to offer than I thought I did.

Maybe you really can teach an old dog new tricks.

“Not like yer getting’ married...” I chided myself, though with a chuckle, and swigged my bottle of beer between puffs on the cigar. I was definitely getting ahead of myself, but maybe that was alright. Sometimes it’s okay to let yourself look forward to something, even if it’s bit you on the ass in the past.

Where the hell was I going to meet him, though?

I gave it some thought as I watched cars pass sluggishly through the intersection down a ways, and most of them trundled into the parking lot of the bar I frequented. It was easy to recognize a couple of the regulars by their vehicles, and even as I was glad to not be joining them that night, my heart ached in sympathy. Nothing good about going to a bar alone on a Tuesday night.

Something about inviting the raccoon to the Breaks didn’t feel right. I wasn’t concerned about being seen with him; there wasn’t anyone in town who knew me well enough to worry about it. But it seemed like an injustice to subject him to the dustier, bleaker part of town that had been my home for too long already.

“It’s just for one damn dinner, Romeo.” My internal monologue has never been kind, or even necessarily internal, but it had a point this time. There was no reason for me to make it any more complicated than just a simple meet-up between two—what?

Between two grown ass men that wear diapers, apparently.

The thought made me grin stupidly to myself, and I felt my cheeks get a little redder, even with no one else to see. It was a god damn weird situation I'd managed to get myself in, but I couldn't say that I wasn't excited.

With my beer empty, my cigar safely snubbed, and the evening chill starting to make me uncomfortable, I carefully navigated my lawn chair back to the ground and got back to a shaky stand before slipping back inside. The warmth made me relax a little, and I squinted in thought at the computer monitor on the other side of the room.

There was a little diner attached to a truck stop that marked the beginning of the Breaks, before the erosion and tumbleweeds of the main section of town. I figured that was as good an answer for the raccoon as any, and I nearly tipped my ass right out of my rolling chair in my hurry to sit down and let him know the address.

When I opened the window again, I could see that he was still connected to the chat service, so, not allowing myself to second-guess the situation, I opened up our chat window and quickly typed out a message.

Hey. Sorry about earlier, somethin came up. We still on for Saturday??

Maybe I was a little overzealous with my question marks this time. It didn't take him long to answer back, though.

yo of course. u got a place u wanna go???

There's a place on 10 as you leave the city limits. Lil diner called the Classy Cactus, big neon sign. 7pm sound good?

i gotta go to the breaks???:'(

A crying face after his message had me reading it in an endearing whine that made me grin stupidly again. Before I could answer, though, he was typing again.

how bout u pick me up somethin off my wishlist for me to make the trip 🐻

His brazenness wasn't a shock, by this point, but I surprised myself by at least being willing to take a look at the list. I knew that his profile had a link to it, under the... extravagant section of kinks. It started to occur to me that maybe this raccoon was wrapping me around his finger, but I suppose I didn't care all that much. It felt nice to be wanted.

I'll think about it. 7pm at the Cactus sound good?

yeh sure... you want me to wear a diaper big guy??

My throat nearly seized up again, but I managed to keep myself from going into god damn shock at the computer desk.

I'd like that.

Understatement of the century.