

Nothing At All

The flash is like a cartoon. Humorous at first, amusing even, increasingly grotesque as it goes along. It's the flash when a twenty-five year old pizza delivery man preparing to press the doorbell for a delivery - pepperoni pizza piping hot in its warming sleeve, baseball hat with company logo cocked off to one side - sees his finger moving to the button.

A light has been left burning beside the door: a faux 18th century suburban lantern light with electric bulb aglow. His 1987 Ford Mustang is idling sporadically in the driveway, sputtering, wanting to die. His girlfriend dumped him the night before - said he was boring - a strange family left a light burning so he could bring them their dinner, he's almost out of pot and it seems like his friends are trying to hurt him inside. This is his last delivery of the evening.

A REALITY FISSURE develops. Poised with finger four millimeters from the doorbell, tip shaking gently in the cool night breeze, staring straight ahead at the ground tile textures of the green front door - the man freezes. Ideologies of younger years collide with those developed over time. He remembers making fun of a pizza man, hanging loosely out his parents' front door when he was only thirteen years old. It was very funny at the time: he had laughed, believing it all.

He sees himself as an old man doing something stupid... sitting in a chair... raking leaves... picking at a corn... trying pitifully to look up young girls' skirts, or worse, trying to pinch their fine young haunches as they squeal away in horror and disgust. Maybe he'd take his teeth out at them... wave them around chomping and chattering. The girls are, of course, wearing cheerleader uniforms at the time.

This was not how he pictured his life developing. There is panic. A fear of the future. A future even two seconds away when the man will be staring the family in the face, making change and trying to remember how to act. He wants to drop the pizza on the ground, turn tail and run. Leave the car, the hat, the tip, the everything. Get the hell out of there and try again somewhere else. Another town, another job, another girl. He has lost respect in himself and all that he does, thinks and says. He is a silly, stupid man doing mindless, pointless labor for jangling chunks of change on a rainy Thursday evening in November. The man stands beside himself, scrutinizing, measuring disgust.

As the fissure seals itself the situation becomes less and less desperate. The man is zipped snugly back into his skin, feet first, head last, and replaced to the front step, pie and all. Time resumes, the rain is cold, he needs to put gas in the Mustang before going out tonight. When his finger reaches the bell the flash is over. The pizza is delivered and the man goes about his business as if nothing has happened. Nothing at all.

