

THIRD-PERSON SINGULAR: CINDY, RANDY, AND TOM

Randy Zasman was out driving a beat-up Fiat toward a job in Green Bay that he didn't like, when he spotted a guy with a sign that read "G-Bay," and skidded to a halt. A sense of obligation overcame him from all the times he'd been in the same situation. He brushed the empty beer cans off the passenger seat and got out to open the door that simply wouldn't work any other way.

"I gotta stop and fill out a job application on the way into town," Randy said. "That OK?"

"That's fine with me. I've got nowhere I've got to be."

Randy watched as the hitchhiker picked out a couple of bottle caps he had sat down on. Randy almost said something but then decided not to. He couldn't remember anybody apologizing to him when he had been on the road.

"Where you getting a job at?"

"There's this bar down the road, place called the Maple Inn," Randy said.

That was all he said.

"What kind of work will you be doing there?"

"I don't even know if I got the job, yet."

"Well, if you get it what kind of work will you be doing?"

Guy had a lot of questions, Randy thought.

"Bartending; I tend bar. That's what I'm doing now, too."

"No kidding, I've always wanted to be a bartender."

"It's lousy work, it just seems good to people."

"Oh yeah? That's what it used to be like for me working on the beer truck. All my friends thought I had it made—drink all the beer I wanted and all. But that just wasn't the way it was. Worked my ass off is all I did."

"That's the same way with bartending. That's the exact same thing."

Randy usually spent too much of his time trying to explain to people that life on the other side of the bar was a whole different world. It was good that this guy understood that right off.

"You ever hitch?"

"Hell, yeah, used to do it all the time," Randy replied.

"You like it?"

"It was pretty good most of the time. Sometimes it wasn't though. Sometimes it really stunk bad."

"It hasn't been too bad for me. I've been at it for about two months now and I've only gotten one bad ride."

"Yeah? That's pretty good."

"I'm just lucky, I guess."

"Where is it you're going in Green Bay?"

"Nowhere really. It's just along the way."

"To where?"

"Wherever."

"That's how I used to do it too," Randy said, "just whatever and wherever the fuck."

"Yeah, whatever and wherever the fuck. I guess that's all there is to it."

Randy laughed and felt good. It'd been a long time since he had talked that way.