

THERE WAS A HANDWRITTEN SIGN ON
THE FRONT DOOR OF THE McDONALD'S,
"HELP WANTED"

DONE UP IN A HASTY SCRAWL THAT
BELIED AN ARTISTIC TALENT MEETS NO
FOCKS LEFT TO GIVE. FRANCHISE PITS
LIKE THIS WERE AN EASY MARK, ALWAYS
GOOD FOR A LITTLE REST PERIOD. I NEEDED
A REST.

BACK IN COLUMBUS, I HAD GOTTEN INTO
A BIT OF A SCRAPE WITH LOCAL LAW ENFORCE-
MENT, A MISUNDERSTANDING ABOUT THE
TRANSIENT NATURE OF POSSESSION IN REGARDS
TO UNLAWFUL OWNERSHIP. IT ALL WORKED OUT IN
THE END BECAUSE I STILL HAD THE SCAN, BUT IT
WOULD TAKE A FEW WEEKS TO RECOMBIBULATE.
FORTUNATELY THERE WAS A LIBRARY JUST DOWN THE
STREET.

I STRODE UP TO THE COUNTER AND ASKED
WHO TO TALK TO ABOUT THE SIGN. THE WOMAN
THAT CAME FROM THE BACK TO SEE ME SWEEP EACH
FOOT IN FRONT OF HER IN AN ARC AS IF CLEARING
A METAPHYSICAL PATH IN FRONT OF HER. SHE CARRIED

HER WEIGHT IN FRONT OF HER HIPS AS IF
PORETAUALLY IN THE THIRD TRIMESTER, THOUGH!
SHE WAS WHISPY AS A REED AND COULDN'T
HAVE WEIGHED MORE THAN A BICYCLE. SHE
WORE A KIND FACADE THAT BARELY MASKED HER
DESIRE TO GET HER CROCHETED AFGHAN PERFECTED
BACK ONTO HER SHOULDERS.

WHEN SHE SPOKE, HER VOICE DISTRACTED ME,
IT TOOK ME TO A FAR OFF PLACE OF WILD
FRONTS AND EASY BREEZES. HER LILT SANG
TO ME.

"YOU ASKED ABOUT MY SIGN? PAY IS
\$100 AN HOUR, TRANSFERRED EVERY PENT, I PAY THE
LABOR TAX, YOU TAKE EVERY BIT YOU EARN IN
THE PREVIOUS FIVE DAYS. YOU ONLY EARN WHEN YOU ARE
IN THE KITCHEN."

AFTER A BUNK'S RECONSIDERATION OF THIS
WOMAN, I LAUNCHED INTO MY INTRODUCTION,

"HI MA'AM, I'M A VOLUNTEER DOWN
AT THE LIBRARY, JUST IN TOWN A SHORT WHILE.
I WAS ACTUALLY JUST HOPING TO FIND A WAY TO
HELP EACH OTHER, WITHOUT ALL THE FUSSY RED TAPE.
I'LL BE HERE FOR THE MORNING RUSH, STAY THROUGH LUNCH
TO HELP YOU GET NIGHT UP AND CLEANED UP. I'LL EAT

ONCE IN BETWEEN RUSHES, YOUR TREAT, AND WHENEVER YOU APPRECIATE THE HELP I PROVIDE YOU, YOU GIVE ME TIP IF YOU LIKE."

"OH YOU'RE ONE OF THOSE FREELADING BOOK WORM LAYABOUTS I READ ABOUT IN MY FEED. HOW'S THIS SCAM WORK EXACTLY?"

"WELL, IN THE SCAM I JUST LAID OUT FOR YOU, YOU'D BE THE FREELADER. I'M NOT EXPECTING TO BE PAID, NOT EVEN ASKING FOR TWO HOTS AND A COT, JUST A MEAL, WHICH WOULD PROBABLY BE DESTINED FOR COMPOST ANYWAY. I WON'T BLOW SMOKE UP YOUR ASS, I DON'T CARE ABOUT YOU OR YOUR BUSINESS, JUST MY MISSION AS A READER, AND PRIDE IN NOT LETTING MYSELF BE IN A POSITION WHERE ANYONE CAN TALK SHIT TO ME, SO YOU WILL UNLIKELY BE HAPPY TO SEE ME GO. BUT YES, I DO SPEND WHAT TIME I AM NOT WORKING WITH YOU, EXERCISING, OR TEACHING AT THE LIBRARY JUST LAYING AROUND READING. AND WHILE WE LOVE BEING BOOKWORMS, WE PREFER VAGABOND TO LAYABOUT... AND I KEEP MY NEEDS SIMPLE. DON'T WANT OR NEED ANY DRAMA."

SHE LOOKED MORE AMUSED THAN IMPRESSED, BUT SHE SHRUGGED IN AGREEMENT. "LUNCH RUSH JUST ENDED, SO MAKE YOURSELF A PLATE, THEN I'LL SEE YOU IN AM."