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Writing and Inquiry

12 November 2021

“The Things I Carry”

We all seem to carry more things within us than on the outside. Some of us carry a purse with us, others a backpack or satchel. Or some of us use only what our pants have given us for their items, shoving their belongings deep into their pockets. My boyfriend does this, and doesn't seem to like to carry much. Maybe it is because the weight of carrying what is inside is already crushing him enough.

The things he always has: the smell of cologne, his wallet, keys, a barely charged phone, a pocket knife and cigarettes. I always see glimpses of that wallet even on the days I choose to pay, when he orders his signature double shot of Jack Daniels. Looking at his ID is funny to me, as he has grown into his facial features more since I've met him. His keys are clipped to the outside of his pants, adorned on a loop and overflowing with different shapes, sizes and shades of metal. I could never tell you where each of them open to. His phone he is never on, which I appreciate when we are together but not when we are apart, seems to give him hell every time he is on it. It's a bit old and slow for his liking. The pocket knife is my least favorite part, but I always get swayed by his defense for why he has it: “to protect you from these crazies in Cleveland” he says, and who am I to blame him? A cigarette seems to forever be glued to the corner of his mouth, as he flicks the end of it with his teeth to get rid of the ash. The smell of L&M's and his whiskey cologne mix together into a concoction of sweetness and musk,

something that is permanently engrained in my own mind. When I smell cigarettes or good cologne my mind automatically goes to him.

He lives in a home by Chippewa Lake, where he carries the daily responsibilities of being a big brother and a family man. He carries worry for his sister, who struggles to find food to eat on a daily basis. He carries his own hunger, but never wants to let anyone know. He would rather feed his sister than himself. He carries anger towards his father, who hurt his mother at a young age and left them to fend for themselves. He carries the responsibility of paying for his own father's house, a house that is falling apart as we speak. He carries an unbelievable amount of stress and worry, as everyone in his family look to him in order to feel safe and stable. He carries loneliness and guilt from his past. He specifically carries trauma from the past, as he almost died from his choices. But he will never show you how crushing these things are to carry.

He carries strength, physically and emotionally. At work, he legitimately carries huge loads and hauls them around all day. His strength surprises me for his thin but muscular build. He holds dreams for his future, he wants to succeed. He wants to make his mother proud and his sister financially stable for the rest of their lives. He carries an unbelievable amount of knowledge, random facts to subjects he has been studying for years. There are things he'd like to invent and introduce to our world which would impact the future. He carries the want to be a better person every day. He reminds himself of sayings that keep him going or influence him to be kinder, more responsible, etc.

Lastly, he carries all my love. I want to be a good influence. I want to be a soft spot for him; someone that he can let his walls down with. Someone that calms him and lets him know that even for this one moment, everything is okay. He needs to be able to carry light within the darkness that surrounds him. I know he carries love for me, and with his go-getter attitude, he

carries a future that he would like to share with me. He carries an almost childlike curiosity about me, wanting to unlock each level within me at a steady pace. He enjoys learning more about me when I'm ready, he has unbelievable patience. He carries grace and kindness in a rugged and tired body, sometimes his kindness surprises even me. He will always go above and beyond for everyone he cares for. He will work to get what he wants, fair and square. He might be a bit of a "mans man", but underneath the facade he is a power to behold.