



Location: Jasper, Indiana

“If the sky was flavors of ice cream, which flavor would today be?”

The head chef said as her fingers held onto the last cigarette for the night. The tips of her fingers wedged the tobacco filled cylinder so strongly it was like she needed something in her life to hold onto.

The red lights outside *PJ's Lucky Strike* beamed into the Indiana night sky like lipstick on a chalkboard.

PJ's Lucky Strike is the only place in Jasper that has any lights on past 2AM.

I could never tell if that means it's an inviting place or a place that just forgot to turn its lights off. Either way, I feel like it's a good metaphor for Indiana. The people are inviting, but I can't help but get the feeling that most of them think it might be nice to live somewhere else. When you leave the lights on though, you can never leave, because you always have an excuse for why you need to go back home to turn them off.

PJ's is a place where unlucky people come to test their luck by throwing heavy round circles into pins. A place where a pitcher of Miller Lite on a Tuesday night in Indiana does more magic than the rest of their lives have ever done so far.

Mike, the barkeep in the car, said nothing, but his smile filled up the passenger side window so bright that the reflection of the moon looked like it had teeth.

It would be chicken tender flavored ice cream, because you make some damn good chicken tenders Susie. You have been for thirty years, ain't no one better!

He said as his car got swallowed up by the Indiana night like a bowling ball hitting the last pin and vanishing off to wherever bowling balls go when their work is done.



Location: Bandera, Texas

“Italy was nice, but I really missed Olive Garden and Taco Bell.”

I overheard a college aged woman say as my airpods died. I was listening to *People* by Barbara Streisand and trying to remember how I ended up in Texas.

It’s not my favorite album, but I love the cover. Barbara is wearing a pink top and New England suburban mom white pants.

The sky in Bandera looks like an orange sorbet. It gives me peace everytime I look at it.

Bandera feels like the opposite of an igloo. Like a town full of concrete, clay and so few people that I can't tell if everyone is at work or if no one lives here.

I like Bandera, because you're not nobody and you're not somebody here. No one is anything.

Bandera has one highway. A highway that if you run across it your feet turn to scrambled eggs.

There is a table in the back of *Hen's Nest Cafe* that looks like a checkers board that no one plays.

Because in Bandera the sky is too hot to declare anyone a winner or loser.

I wonder to myself what Bandera is like on a Friday night when high school football pads turn into umbrellas of tradition and joy, shielding people from the storms of loneliness and heat.

I want to ask the college aged woman, but she picks up her textbooks and disappears into the sorbet sky.



Location: Waynesville, Ohio

“Baseball isn't what it used to be.”

I hear a Dad tell his college aged son on the front porch.

That's true, but it's not necessarily a bad thing,

He doesn't seem mad at his Dad as he enters the house. Just like he needs some time to himself.

It feels so quiet underneath those two lights.

One yellow. One purple.

Like a Broadway show trying to impress a sky so dark that it would make the bottom of the ocean jealous.

Waynesville is so quiet that the inhale of air through your nose sounds like a Nascar engine.

I feel like people from here aren't jealous of people from New York City.

They'll never know what it's like to grow up in a place so quiet that you can taste your own thoughts.

A place where you can cut the air with a fork and knife and let whatever is marinating in your brain out into the buckeye trees of the Ohio air.

I love Ohio at night, because you can't tell if it's quiet because no one lives here or because everyone is telling secrets behind their kitchen curtains.

I think I've learned that it doesn't matter either way, because sometimes we just need space to ourselves.