Iowa Man

Rachel Francis*
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Iowa men drink Busch Light like water. They can get a 24-pack for under twenty bucks and the cans fit snugly in a koozie to keep the liquid cool and the mountains blue.

They aren’t ones to sip. The beer doesn’t remain in the can for long.

Coors is never considered.

Those recently of age ingest it as quickly as possible. They use a key to punch a hole in the bottom of the can. It hisses as the tab is cracked, creating an even flow of liquid which disappears from sight in seconds. These acts fuel their rebelliousness, giving them liquid courage to make memories in shades of gray and black.

The men sit around a campfire, anytime from mid-evening to the early hours of the morning. An Iowa sun coats the fields and disappears behind the stalks. Country music on the radio fills the open air between lawn chairs, while stubble coats the chins of the men in the circle. Pickup trucks form one side of the perimeter.

The men talk business, sports, and politics. They wear plaid shirts and shabby jeans. They eat juicy burgers and reminisce about the good old days and swallow every last bite of the grilled patty.

As the campfire becomes a warm air blanket and the cooler only holds a few floating cans, they talk about their high school days, how much Principal Jones hated them, how they never really got away from each other. They shift glances from the fire to each other, then to their phones, looking for a message from their wives. They find comfort in flames warming their bellies and brisk fresh air cooling their backs in the exposed wilderness, in the grove they used to play in as kids, where they now come to share their collection of shaded memories.