

His initials were D.J. He wasn't the formal kind; he didn't expect me to call him Mr or Sir. I met him at a hospital. He was the occupant, and I was the employee. He said in his past life, on the outside, that he was a wild man; but today, through my eyes, he was just one thing: he was *yellow*.

“Yea man I'll take an ice water. Fill this thang up for me, will ya? Hey Momma, you want anything, too?”

The bed was a twin size, generic hospital bed. This was the medicine floor - 6<sup>th</sup>, for generic medicine. D.J. wasn't old, but he wasn't young. You couldn't tell how old he was, since his eyes had the life of a young man, but his body had the tread of an old one. Both his eyes and his body, however, were *yellow*. He looked like a cigarette smoked nearly down to the butt - he had one more drag left before exhaustion. He was Wiley-coyote incarnate, except his roadrunner, his game, his chase, his purpose, was alcohol.

“How am I doing? In this place? Hahaha, shit, man - I could be better.”

Although the bed was made for one body, today it had two: D.J. and his abdomen, his ascites. He took his two middle fingers, started at his belly button, and circumscribed around his rotund-ness, showing himself off. D.J. was a head, a torso, and four sticks for limbs connected to this globe. The ascites seemed powerful. It seemed as if it were consuming D.J., sucking out his spirit and life force from all his emaciated periphery. The varices flowed and forked along his golden belly like the powerful Tigris and Euphrates. Alcohol and ammonia flowed in these rivers.

“Hey, Cooper, right? Let me tell you something. Once a year, do something totally out of your fucking nature. Climb a big ass mountain, go somewhere you have never been, anything! Also, have lots of kinky sex while you can. Learn how to eat pussy too. Plus, if you can make a girl laugh, her panties will drop. I'm fucking telling you man, listen to me now.”

He had many tattoos. They were all black and white, most of them classic in style. One beautiful naked woman here, a baby bird there. They were all tinted *yellow*. They say tattoos are stories, and so I wondered about his stories. Were they, too, tinted *yellow*?

“I've partied a lot. I've partied very hard. I lived hard. It took a toll, and I paid my price. Shit, I mean that's why I'm in this goddamn place right now. I did what I wanted to do, and man, I had fun doing it.”

His eyes broke from mine as he peered downwards. A squint, and then one, maybe two blinks. The shortest pause took place. The corners of his mouth rose slightly to a smirk, or a smile. His expression was *yellow*. He finished,

“And I'm fine with that,  
I'm fine with that.”

a b o u t • a u t h o r

## SWANN

Before medical school, Cooper Swann attended Cape Fear Community College and The University of North Carolina Wilmington, graduating in 2019. His career interests include internal medicine and pathology. When he is not studying for medical school, he is probably playing chess.

---

© 2024 *Iris: The art and literary journal*, UNC School of Medicine