

"The Moonlighter"

Inside Johnny's jean pocket was a pack of Marlboro Reds, a piece of spearmint gum and a gold-plated money clip with fifty, twenty's wedged inside. They weren't crisp bills like most folks liked. They were worn. Faded. Easy to pass off as real, even though they weren't. Few question worn bills. Especially twenties. Even fewer question anything when passed by a man in uniform. Johnny's printing was good. The best in New York City. He planned to give the gig another year or two then retire. He'd keep his day job though. He likes the respect being a cop brings.

Usually, when one passes counterfeit, they make the smallest purchase possible and collect the change. It's an easy way to make a living. Children could do it. And often, they did. But not in Johnny's crew. This was a job for men. Johnny's men.

Unlike the other times when Johnny had that much money stuffed in his pocket, this night was different. Johnny wasn't out to make a buck. He was out to bond with his son. After he and his wife split four years ago, Johnny didn't see Adam much. He wanted to. But for one lame reason or another, it just never seemed to happen. Adam used to be into playing simple games with his dad, like: tag-your-it, keep-away, or hoops. But as he got older, Adam found an affinity for things that cost money. A lot of money. Who could blame him, all of his ex's boyfriends spoiled Adam rotten. But this year, Johnny vowed, was going to be different.

Johnny had promised his son all week that he'd take him to dinner at the steak house across town. Adam had just turned twelve and was really into red meat. Johnny was pleased with his waitress, so he tipped her twenty. Not percent, but bucks. He figured, what the hell. She was sweet. Pretty. And had a nice set of knockers. The twenty didn't mean anything to him. It wasn't even worth the paper it was printed on. But she didn't know that. And neither would the after-hours bar she'd probably pass the bill on to later that night.

Johnny grabbed his coat, corralled his son, and thanked the waitress for her excellent service. Johnny and Adam left the restaurant, hailed a cab and headed towards the toy store. Once there, Johnny told Adam he could pick out anything he wanted. Deal was – Adam had to keep his new toy at his dad's house. And he couldn't tell his mom what he got. Adam agreed. Johnny purchased. They both smiled. It was a good night.