

One Star

By Austin Huibers



Chapter 1 - The Order in the Woods

Braydon stretched his legs, cracked a beer, and surveyed the cabin. Damp leaves clung to the porch boards, the kind of forest smell that felt like it would stick to your socks for days. He hadn't wanted to cook tonight-why bother, really, when there were apps for this exact thing?

He tapped his phone, brows furrowed as he scrolled through the delivery options. Fried chicken, burger, fries, soda-the usual nonsense-but that was the point. Laziness wasn't a flaw when you had technology.

"Coming right up," he muttered, grinning at the screen. The GPS icon blinked like a tiny, blinking promise somewhere out there in the Tennessee woods. Somewhere miles away.

Braydon leaned back in his chair, took a swig, and imagined himself reclining with the steaming bag of food in hand, a blanket around his shoulders, and a show queued up on his streaming account. Easy. Perfect.

He didn't notice the road disappearing into gravel, or how the trees pressed closer the further the app's little blue dot moved. All he knew was that someone-some faceless, probably underpaid person-was out there, bringing him dinner.

The evening cooled quickly, and the forest darkened in a way that made everything beyond the porch fade into shadow. Braydon checked the GPS again. The icon had moved, sort of. Maybe. He shrugged. Technology rarely lied.

Minutes passed. An hour. Then another. He tapped the phone again. "Hurry up, please," he muttered, as if the device itself could summon the food faster.

The idea that whoever was delivering might be struggling, lost, or, God forbid, human, didn't cross his mind. He didn't care. He wanted food. That was the entire point.

Somewhere, deep in the forest, a driver with no passion for this job was reading the same order on his own cracked phone screen. Luis would have preferred any other work, but this paid. He would get the food there, no matter what. And Braydon's expectations, high and absurd, would be met.

Chapter 2 - The Reluctant Courier

Luis the driver, stared at the order on his phone like it was a small, unavoidable headache. Another delivery. Another dollar. Nothing about this job excited him. He didn't care about food, or fries, or hot wings. All he cared about was getting paid, because options were slim when you had a criminal record like his.

At the job fair in prison, he had circled the few booths that would even consider him. Banks? Nope. Retail? Forget it. Food delivery? Sure. They didn't ask too many questions. They didn't care about his past. They just cared that someone could move the food from point A to point B.

He had reported on the app that he was delivering by bike, the only way to get through the background check with a suspended license. But Luis had a car, and the woods didn't care if you rode a bike or drove a beat-up jeep through mud and over roots. He had his own workaround, and it worked.

The bag of food sat on the passenger seat, steaming faintly through the plastic. He had double-checked the order: fries, burger, soda. Everything intact. The app demanded perfection, but Luis didn't care about ratings, stars, or complaints. He cared about one thing: the bag had to reach the cabin intact. That was his job. That was his goal. Everything else-his comfort, his fatigue, even his safety-was secondary. He needed this job.

The GPS led him deeper into the woods, roads narrowing, gravel giving way to mud, mud giving way to dirt trails. He cursed softly when a fallen log blocked the road, then muttered something in Spanish under his breath, tugged the bag onto his shoulder, and set off on foot to finish the delivery.

Night was coming, faster than he expected. He stepped over roots and pushed through brush, careful not to spill anything. The fries could not get soggy. The burger could not be flattened. The soda could not tip. Not because he loved food-he didn't-but because the paycheck, the order, the system, demanded it.

Somewhere out there, a man named Braydon expected this food. Warm, intact, ready to eat. Luis didn't care about Braydon. He didn't care about anyone. He just carried the bag, moving through the dark woods, following a blinking dot on a screen and an instruction set written in someone else's language.

And he would get it there. Somehow.

Chapter 3 - Trails and Choices

Luis trudged through the forest, bag of food clutched tightly against his chest. Every step sank into mud, every branch snagged his jacket, every root threatened to trip him. He didn't care. The food mattered. That was the only rule.

The road had ended awhile back, leaving him with nothing but trails that split and forked in every direction. One path looked easy, mostly clear of trees, but ended in a tangle of roots and a stream too wide to cross. Another trail disappeared under overgrown brush. Luis picked one at random, reasoning that eventually, all roads led somewhere. Or maybe they didn't. It didn't matter. The bag stayed warm. The fries stayed crisp. He had to find this cabin and complete the order.

Night was closing in. Shadows stretched like hands across the dirt trails. Owls called somewhere above, and every crack of a branch sounded like it could be someone-or something-coming for him. He ignored the forest. He ignored the fear. He ignored everything but the bag.

A sudden snap of a branch made him jump. His stomach twisted. Not because he was hungry. Not because he cared. He barely noticed hunger anymore. He muttered another word in Spanish under his breath, adjusted the bag, and kept moving.

Streams, mud, fallen trees, brambles-it all slowed him down. Hours passed. Maybe he had gone in circles. Maybe not. GPS signal wavered, giving him no real guidance. But he kept going. Forward. Always forward. Fries still golden, burger still upright, soda still fizzing faintly.

Luis didn't have a plan. There was no clever route or strategy. Only survival long enough to reach the cabin and deliver the food. Whether he survived the forest or not was irrelevant. The bag would survive. Although he didn't plan on this being his last delivery, what driver does?

Somewhere behind the trees, Braydon was probably staring at his phone, expecting the little blue dot to magically appear at the cabin. Luis would get there first, in his own way, whether the customer understood or cared. This was a service paid for it to come directly to the door, not for him to go find the driver. If that was the case he would have just went and picked it up himself.

By the time the first stars appeared through the canopy, Luis was already wet, exhausted, and muddy. But the food remained untouched. He looked down at his phone to check the time, now he was starting to get concerned.

Chapter 4 - Lost in Translation

Braydon tapped his phone for the tenth time in twenty minutes. The little dot on the GPS hadn't moved much. He grumbled, tossed his beer can onto the porch, and muttered something about customer service being useless.

"Where the hell is this guy?" he asked no one in particular. He didn't care about the driver-he cared about the food. Warm, intact, fries not soggy, burger not flattened. That was all that mattered.

Somewhere deep in the woods, Luis ducked under a low-hanging branch, sweat and rain streaking his face, mud caked to his boots. He glanced at his phone, saw the messages from Braydon, and frowned. He didn't speak English well. Not badly-just poorly enough that every attempt to communicate was an exercise in frustration.

He typed something back in Spanish, short and functional: *Estoy en camino, no te preocupes*. "I'm on my way, don't worry" the translation app sputtered back to Braydon.

Braydon squinted at the screen. Don't worry? What kind of reassurance was that? He tapped a new message: "WHERE ARE YOU?"

Luis shrugged at his own phone, muttered another word under his breath, and kept moving. Every branch snagged his jacket. Every step sank him deeper into mud. His legs ached. His back ached. But the fries were still golden. The burger still held its shape. The soda still fizzed faintly.

Braydon threw his hands up. This was ridiculous. The app said delivery in twenty minutes. It had been over an hour, and he even paid extra for priority delivery. He wasn't interested in how the driver felt, how far he had to walk, or whether he even owned a map. He wanted the food. That was the only concern.

Luis, meanwhile, ignored the GPS's occasional blip, the confusion of the trails, the wetness seeping into his socks. None of it mattered. The food mattered. He wasn't going to spoil it. Not for mud, not for rain, not for a restless, impatient customer pacing a cabin somewhere in the dark.

And so, the messages went back and forth, a conversation of frustration and misunderstanding. One side translating, one side impatient, both missing the point entirely. One thing remained clear: Luis had the food, and Braydon wanted it.

Chapter 5 - Impatience in Motion

Braydon slammed the screen shut, shoved his phone in his pocket, and muttered a curse. Enough waiting. He was tired of staring at a blue dot that refused to move. The food existed somewhere out there, and he was going to get it. It seemed yet again, he would have to go get the food he paid to be delivered to the door.

Boots crunching on gravel, he marched toward where the GPS indicated the car had been. He didn't care about the driver, didn't care about obstacles, didn't even care that it was getting dark. He wanted food. That was all.

The car sat abandoned in a small clearing, mud splattered across the tires, doors slightly ajar. The driver nowhere to be found.

"What the fuck? Like, where is this guy?" he muttered to himself frustrated

He didn't pause to think about why the car had been left, why there was no one behind the wheel, or what the driver might be doing in the woods. That was irrelevant. All that mattered was retrieving his dinner.

Braydon hefted the bag in one hand, glanced at the shadowed forest ahead, and plunged in. He assumed the driver had gone on foot because of the downed tree and figured he'd find him on the way.

Branches scratched his arms, roots tripped him, and mud pulled at his boots. He cursed with every step but kept moving. The glow of his cabin seemed impossibly far, and the GPS offered little help. Trails split in every direction, none clearly marked, and he had no idea which path led to the driver-or to the cabin at the end. He was now getting a little lost and nervous.

Hours passed. His legs ached. His stomach growled. Sweat mixed with rain, and the night pressed in, cold and indifferent. Still, he kept moving. Forward, always forward. He wanted the food and at this point the absurdity of it all made him determined to find the delivery man.

"I swear to god, once I find this guy I'm getting a refund" he said again out loud, anger hanging on every word.

Somewhere deeper in the forest, Luis was still moving too. Lost, tired, muddy, and drenched, but carrying the same bag, every step taken with obsessive care. Survival was secondary; the order had to arrive intact.

Braydon didn't know it yet, but his fries were on a collision course with fate. The forest didn't care about customer impatience, or the app, or ratings. Only one thing was guaranteed: the food would survive.

Chapter 6 - Two Days of Survival

Luis's body ached in ways he hadn't thought possible. Every muscle burned, every joint protested, and mud clung to him like a second skin. His socks were soaked, shoes heavy with water and dirt, and the rain had soaked through every layer of his jacket. But the bag of food stayed immaculate.

For two days he wandered, wrong trails after wrong trails, each promising a shortcut that never led anywhere. Streams blocked his path, fallen trees forced detours, and steep banks made progress slow and treacherous. Each misstep risked toppling the bag, flattening the burger, turning the fries soggy. He couldn't let that happen.

He looked down to his phone, he hadn't had service in days and it looked like he was officially lost. The day went quick and eventually night arrived.

At night, he built small fires with soaked sticks, crouched under trees, and guarded the bag like it was the only thing keeping him alive. He ate nothing, drank rainwater sparingly, shivered in wet clothes, and cursed under his breath at the absurdity of it all.

Every step brought him closer to Braydon's cabin, but also further from safety. He didn't care. He had no love for this job, no passion for food, no loyalty to anyone. All that mattered was that when the bag reached its destination, it would be perfect. Fries crisp, burger intact, soda fizzing. Finding the cabin seemed like his only way out of the forest now.

Sometimes he imagined Braydon, sitting in his cabin, beer in hand, tapping his foot, impatient. Luis didn't care about the impatience.

By the end of the second day, his clothes were shredded, his hands raw from dragging the bag over roots and rocks, and his body trembled from exhaustion. But the bag remained perfect. Every fry stayed golden, every drop of soda intact, every bite of burger untouched.

Luis could barely keep moving, but he kept going. For the food. Always for the food.

And somewhere, not far, Braydon's impatience was about to collide with Luis's obsession.

Chapter 7 - The Glow Between Trees

Braydon squinted through the darkness, trying to make out shapes in the forest. His stomach growled, impatience gnawing at him. Somewhere ahead, a faint glow flickered between the trees. Firelight? Lantern? He didn't know. But maybe, just maybe it was his order.

Branches whipped his arms, roots tangled around his boots, but he pushed forward, ignoring the scratches and mud. Every step was guided by hunger and impatience. He didn't care about the person who had carried it this far, didn't care about trails or wrong turns or danger lurking in the shadows. All that mattered was getting the food into his hands.

Meanwhile, Luis trudged through the mud, carrying the bag of food like a sacred relic. He saw the same glow ahead-the faint flicker of a fire that could only be Braydon's cabin. Relief washed over him, but exhaustion weighed him down. Two days in the woods had left him battered, drenched, and starving. Still, the bag was perfect. He adjusted it carefully, shielded it from wind and rain, and kept moving.

Each of them was focused on the same goal: the food. Yet neither knew the other's state, the absurd irony mounting with every step. Braydon imagined the bag steaming in his hands, fries golden, burger intact, soda fizzing. Luis imagined the same outcome, though he wouldn't live to enjoy it.

The glow grew brighter as they drew closer. The forest seemed endless, the paths twisting and turning in cruel mockery. Sweat dripped down Braydon's face. Mud squelched under Luis's boots. And still, the bag of food stayed pristine, a symbol of obsession, absurdity, and survival.

It was almost close enough to touch. Almost close enough to end the madness.

Almost.

Chapter 8 - Customer Support is Useless

Braydon crouched behind a fallen log, mud sucking at his boots, phone in hand. The app had failed him again. Automated messages, canned apologies, estimated delivery times that made no sense. Every ping felt like a cruel joke. Although, he had to admire this man for not cancelling the order and just eating the food like every other driver. Or maybe he just didn't have a connection to do that? Either way he stayed the course.

He cursed softly, wiped rain from his screen, and tried calling again. Straight to voicemail. He tapped the screen until his fingers hurt. Nothing. The food was somewhere out there, and technology had betrayed him. Typical. He thought about leaving a one-star review already.

Meanwhile, Luis was staggering through the undergrowth, every muscle screaming, every step a battle against exhaustion. Rain slicked mud covered him, branches tore at his jacket, but he didn't falter. Not for a second. The bag stayed safe.

He ignored hunger, pain, cold, and fatigue. He didn't care about praise, ratings, or whether Braydon appreciated the effort.

The forest pressed in from every side. Darkness swallowed him. The glow he had seen earlier flickered again, teasing, frustrating, promising reward. He kept moving.

Somewhere, not far away, Luis did the same. Shuffling, exhausted, wet, and muddy. Bag in hand. Survival secondary. Delivery primary.

The absurdity was total. Two men, one forest, one order, each completely obsessed with the food for their own reasons, oblivious to everything else.

And still, the fries stayed golden.

Chapter 9 - The Hand-Off

Braydon stumbled through the forest, every step was a gamble, every root a trap, but he didn't care. He didn't care about trails, or trees, or the person who had dragged this food across the forest for two days. He only cared about the bag in front of him.

"It's been fucking 48 hours, and still my order isn't here." He said again out loud to himself. Just hearing the ridiculous statement coming out of his mouth infuriated him.

The glow of a small fire appeared through the trees as he got closer. He squinted, breath fogging in the cold air. Steam curled from a plastic bag nearby. Fries. Burger. Soda. All perfectly intact. His stomach growled louder than his patience. Finally.

Luis lay near the fire, wet, muddy, and utterly exhausted. It seems a tree had fallen, pinning him partially to the ground, but the bag had survived unscathed. Luis on the other hand, not so much. The tree that fell on him had cracked his ribs, leading to severe internal bleeding that he could not stop or bandage. But hey, the fries stayed golden, the burger upright and the soda still fizzing faintly. Luis's body didn't matter anymore. The food did.

Braydon's eyes went to the bag first, then to the man. He hesitated for a fraction of a second, a blink of conscience. He checked the pulse; Luis didn't have one. Then I shrugged. A small shrug. His stomach rumbled again. He grabbed the bag, not gently, but with the satisfaction of victory. The human sacrifice behind it? Irrelevant.

He adjusted the bag under one arm and started back through the forest. Branches scratched him, roots tripped him, mud sucked at his boot-but the food stayed perfect.

Luis lay there, motionless, the fire's heat rising around him. The bag now with the customer, but Luis no longer alive. He would never know the satisfaction of completing that order.

Braydon didn't look back. Why would he? The food was in his hands. Mission accomplished. Golden fries, intact burger, fizzing soda. Survival was irrelevant. Luis's effort seeming invisible.

And the forest was silent, except for the crackle of the fire Luis had built, warming his now deceased body, pinned under that tree.

Chapter 10 - One Star

Braydon burst through the cabin door, mud caked on his boots, sweat and rain dripping from his hair. He set the bag of food on the table like a trophy. Steam rose from the fries, the burger was perfect, soda still fizzing. Warmth. Perfection. Victory.

He didn't look back at the forest, didn't think about the man who had spent two days carrying it through mud, rain, and wrong trails. A flicker of doubt might have existed in another person, but Braydon didn't care.

He hit play on his streaming show, the familiar opening music filling the cabin. Fries in one hand, burger in the other, soda balanced precariously, he sank into the chair. Bite after bite, sip after sip. Warm, perfect, exactly what he had wanted.

The phone buzzed. A review prompt. His thumb hovered for a moment. One star. That felt right. Negative comment? Of course. Something about late delivery and the fact he had to walk to get it irked him.

Outside, the fire smoldered. The forest was quiet. Luis lay beneath a fallen tree, lifeless, mud and rain soaking him to the bone. Yet the bag of food remained untouched and intact until the very end.

And as he ate the last fry, he smiled, satisfied, oblivious to everything else, and tapped "submit" on the one-star review.

"Your own fault Luis, deliver it correctly next time" he laughed and uttered to himself.

Author's Thoughts

We all want things fast, easy, and convenient-blame corporate America for that. This story is a dark, ridiculous look at impatience, obsession, and how the “quick and easy” culture we crave often ignores the effort, struggle, and human cost behind the scenes.