

Michael Campagnoli

The Ledges

Novitsky I knew from the Royal. He was the one that got me the job at Tall Pines when Lily was pregnant with Ben. So I owed him. The others I didn't know. I knew of them, but didn't know them, if you get what I mean. They'd been drinking all morning and needed someone to drive. Novitsky tossed me the keys.

"This is Dickie Longpants," he said.

In the car was Jack Bowman and David Coombs.

Jack nodded. Maybe he smiled. He had very black hair and blue eyes. Coombs ignored me. He was sitting in back, fishing a stubby finger in an empty pack of Marlboros. Looked like a hedgehog.

"Where to?" I asked.

"Does he know?" Coombs asked Novitsky.

"Yeah, yeah," Novitsky said, "I told 'em."

"Drive to Randall's," Coombs grunted.

Randall was Randall Lynn. He was one of them. They all knew each other since they were kids. When we got there, Jack and David went in.

"What's up?" I asked Novitsky.

"Nothing," he answered.

Novitsky was big, maybe six-four, but bovine. He filled the back seat, slouched down, took a swig off an empty beer bottle. "Don't worry about it. They're just letting off steam."

Ten minutes later, the door to Randall's trailer opened and the three came out.

I didn't recognize Randall at first. Standing between Jack and David, he looked like a little boy. All white and hollow, shivering in the cold. A face coiled between snarl and wince. He opened and closed his hands. He wore a torn grey sweatshirt and hood with a blaze-orange vest. When he got in the car, you could see he was sweating. I realized then that I spent a weekend with him in the drunk tank up in Waldo County. He was always bumming cigarettes. I wondered if he remembered. They put him in back with Novitsky and Coombs.

"Where we going?" Randall asked.

"Where you wanna go?" David answered.

"How bout Fahy's?"

"Hear that, Jack, he wants to go to Fahy's."

"Smart," Jack said. He was sitting in front.

"Yeah, a regular genius," David added. "Genius," he repeated and elbowed Randall hard. "You really wanna go to Fahy's, genius?"

"Uh—I don't know."

"Jesus," Jack said and grinned.

Jack had an extra tooth on top. On the side. When he smiled, it looked crazy like a fang. He leaned his head against the window and looked out. It was around three-thirty. Already getting dark. A thin layer of snow covered the ground. The clouds were low. The air warm and damp. The road was empty.

"Yeah, a regular *genius*," David said, looking out at the dingy snow. "I guess you got all the angles figured, don't you, *genius*?"

Genius looked away.
“Memory D’ll worry if I’m gone,” he said.
David smirked.
“Drive down by the water,” he told me.
So I drove.

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