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Crossing Lines

“I have writer’s block,” I announced while slipping down into the passenger’s seat of Joe’s red Camaro.

“That sucks,” Colin laughed, and pulled the rumbling sports car out of my driveway. “What do you have so far?”

“I’ve got the two of us in a car.” I paused, having nothing more to say.

“Very original.” Colin teased. He was speeding recklessly.

“Do you have any funny ideas?” I rolled down the window and let the cool night air toss my hair around. Colin opened his mouth, about to speak. “I mean, regarding the story. Not, like, ‘a bear in a tutu.’”

Colin chuckled. “Damn, I was trying to think of something like that.” His red hair was immobile, gelled into submission.

“So why are we in the car?” I asked. Colin waited for me to answer my own question, as I frequently did. “How about we’re trying to stash a body we’ve got hidden in the trunk?” I proposed.

“I thought this was supposed to be fiction.” Colin turned onto a main road, glancing nervously from side to side as we passed parking lots and intersections, where cops generally lie in wait for teens in cars like this one. A light ahead turned yellow. Colin slammed down the accelerator and straightened against the seat, as though bracing

for impact. The glint of blue plastic caught his eye and he pressed down hard on the brakes, just short of screeching the tires. A loud thump resonated from the trunk. The police cruiser was idling under a yellow street lamp on a perpendicular street. “Look innocent,” he joked.

I whispered, as though the officer would somehow hear us from across the street, “What was that sound?”

“You mean the body in the trunk?” he whispered back.

“Yeah.”

“That’s a body,” Colin eyed the cruiser, “in the trunk.”

“Whose body is it?” I asked at a normal volume as we pulled away from the intersection.

“How about Eric?” Colin suggested.

“You mean you don’t know?”

“It’s your story! How should I know?”

“I wasn’t talking about the story,” I rolled up the window.

Colin began driving even faster, confident the police wouldn’t have another speed trap for a while. “I just think it would be funny for you to kill him.”

“You’re driving like a psycho,” I informed him. He was beginning to drift over the double-yellow lines of the main road that divided the town into two halves.

“You know what they say about a man who drives like a psycho.” Colin cued me.

“That he’s probably got a body in his trunk and a gun in the glove compartment?”

I opened the glove compartment out of curiosity. Sure enough, Colin had his weapon tucked under a map of Connecticut. “Are you hungry?” I suggested.

“Well, sure, but we should probably take care of this body-in-the-trunk problem first,” Colin said, incredulous.

“What’s the problem? Not enough bodies in the trunk?” This was the banter on which our friendship subsisted. “But seriously, who’s in the trunk?”

“Fuck,” he declared.

“Who’s that?” I turned to Colin and saw the red and blue lights reflecting off the rear-view mirror onto his pale face. “Why is he pulling us over?”

“Well,” Colin began, “Joe’s license plate is COPKILA. Plus there’s his bumper sticker. And then there’s the body, but I doubt that’s the reason. We were probably just speeding.”

I laughed through my nose at the thought of the “Keep Honking, I’m Reloading” sticker emblazoned on the rear bumper. I wondered if the officer, who was still in his car, shuffling through some papers in preparation for giving us a ticket, would get the joke. “In the story, wanna get pulled over?” I asked Colin as the cop stepped out of the cruiser and began walking toward us.

“Yeah!” Colin answered with a smile and rolled down the window, “The conversation would be really funny.”

“License and registration please,” the officer leaned down to peer into the car, bending at the waist robotically.

Colin looked to me for direction. I knew what he was thinking and shook my head. Colin looked disappointed but took the registration from the divider between our seats and the license from his pocket and handed them both to the officer.

“What’s the hurry, gentlemen?” the officer seemed amused by himself. He looked over the documents we had given him.

“Relativity experiments,” I answered, leading Colin.

We had joked about this a hundred times before, and Colin picked up the thread. “See, if we travel at relativistic speeds, there should be a Doppler shift with the traffic lights.”

“The red lights should turn green,” I explained.

“Do you think this is funny, young man?” he deepened his voice.

“Look, officer, sir, we’re really sorry. It’s just late and we’ve still got some things we need to take care of tonight. We only want to get home. We’ll slow down, we promise.” I wasn’t too proud to beg. “Please?”

Colin couldn’t resist: “It will really stink if we don’t take care of this soon, but we’ll slow down. We’re sorry.”

I stifled a laugh. The cop seemed satisfied, oblivious to the undertones of our conversation, and let us off with a written warning. We drove away. Once the cop was out of sight, Colin exhaled deeply and began accelerating.

“In my story,” Colin finally broke the silence, “I would have shot the cop in the head and stuck him in the trunk. I mean, if you’re trying to entertain yourself and blow off some steam by writing these insane little pieces of fiction, why not shoot the cop in the head instead of apologizing? I’m not sorry I was speeding.”

“You think you could fit another body in the trunk?” I asked, ignoring his complaints. “What’s the BPT on this baby?”

BPT was our abbreviation for Bodies Per Trunk, a fictitious trunk-space measurement. “Are you kidding? I’m guessing around 7. We should ask Joe.”

“Yeah,” I agreed, “it’s his car.”

“No, I mean about getting rid of the body.” He turned down a side street.

“Yeah, Joe’s got experience with this kind of thing.”

“You mean he’s been killed, stuck in a plastic bag, and stashed in a trunk?”

We pulled into Joe’s driveway, and he strolled out the front door like he was expecting us. We got out of the car.

“Hypothetically,” I gestured in a way that implored Joe to suspend his incredulity, “if we came to you with a body in the trunk and asked you what we should do with it, what would you say?”

“What’s the time pressure on this? Are the cops, like, hot on your trail?” He waved his hands to mock his own use of the cliché.

“I’m gonna go with ‘yes.’”

He spoke quickly. “We move the body to the Tiburon, which I’ll drive, Colin stays in the Camaro, and you hop in my mom’s car. We’ll all drive individual cars until no more than two cruisers are chasing us, then you two will each do something grossly illegal but short of murder. This will throw the cruisers while I go on ahead and dump the body in the woods. Why do you ask?”

“Because we’ve got a body in the trunk,” I sighed.

“Oh,” he said. “Who is it?”

“I… don’t know,” I realized. “Hey Colin, who’s in the trunk?”