

The Bleeding Edge

By

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EXT. ANIMAL HOSPITAL - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

NEIL CORRIGAN, 40, scurries toward a Toyota Camry through a heavy downpour, struggling with a tangled key chain.

He tugs the passenger door open for STACY CORRIGAN, 6, who lags behind clinging onto BUDDY, a blanket-wrapped puppy.

NEIL

Hurry up, Stace. Come on, come on.

Stacy pauses before climbing into the car.

STACY

Can we get Buddy an ice cream?

NEIL

Yes, now hop in before we're swimming home.

Stacy slides into the front seat with her precious cargo. Neil shuts her door and runs for his.

INT. NEIL'S CAR - NIGHT

Windshield wipers swat sheets of rain. Buddy whimpers.

STACY

I think Buddy got wet.

NEIL

He'll be all right. He's a tough little bugger.

Neil pulls the last cigarette from a pack, shoves it to his lips, pushes the dashboard lighter. Stacy takes note.

STACY

Mom said you shouldn't be doing that.

NEIL

Your father shouldn't be doing a lot of things, kiddo.

Neil cracks his window a touch.

STACY

But you promised.

NEIL

It's my last one.

Stacy's eyes don't waiver from Neil.

NEIL
I swear. For real this time. Girl
Scout's honor?

Neil extends a pinkie. Stacy offers a smile then hugs Buddy.

EXT. DAHL'S SUPERETTE - NIGHT

Neil's Camry rolls to a stop across the street from a neighborhood corner store. The rain has not let up.

NEIL
Think you can be a big girl and
stay here with your pal? I'll just
be a minute.

STACY
He's shivering, dad.

NEIL
Then I'll leave the heat on, OK? Be
back in a sec.

Neil pops his door open.

STACY
Buddy wants vanilla.

NEIL
And chocolate for you, I know.

STACY
And coffee for mom.

The door shuts as Neil darts across the slick street.

INT. DAHL'S SUPERETTE - NIGHT

Neil shakes off the wet and grabs a hand basket.

Chocolate and vanilla pints are tossed into the basket.

Neil studies the snacks. He grabs Combos, Slim-Jims and then finds himself in the liquor aisle. His browsing turns covetous when his eyes spot the rows of bourbons, whiskeys, single malts, and finally a flask of Cutty Sark.

At the counter the CLERK rings up Neil's items.

CLERK
Comin' down out there, eh?

NEIL
There's no stoppin' it.

CLERK
Total's gonna be fourteen--

NEIL
And, uh... pack of Lucky's.

The Clerk reaches for a pack, but finds the slot empty.

CLERK
Hold on. Gotta get a case.

He shuffles to the side room.

Neil picks up an issue of "BUSTY BABES" from the magazine display, thumbs through a few pages.

The Clerk returns with a case of Lucky Strikes.

CLERK
And the girls, too?

NEIL
I wish.

Neil sets the magazine back on the rack.

CLERK
Don't we all.

EXT. - DAHL'S SUPERETTE - NIGHT

Neil exits the store, moves in the opposite direction of his car, and ducks under an awning.

Within earshot, a ubiquitous car alarm squawks.

He unscrews the Cutty Sark, tips it back for a swig, then slides the flask inside his right coat pocket. He unwraps the smokes, taps one out, then decides against it, pushes it back in and tucks the Lucky's into his other coat pocket.

He walks toward the car, rounds the corner and finds that the squawking car alarm belongs to his Camry, the head and tail lights flashing.

Neil sprints across the street, fumbling the grocery bag.

NEIL
Oh my god. Stacy? Stacy!?

The passenger door is angled open, its window shattered, glass covers the sidewalk. There is no sign of Stacy.

NEIL

Stacy!!

Neil scans up and down the sidewalk. Nobody. Nothing but the pelting, merciless rain.

His knees buckle, sending him to the pavement, staring at the open car door, hand over his mouth, almost nauseous.

Between the shrill notes of the car alarm, he hears a yip and a bark from the back seat.

Neil opens the back door. Buddy pokes out from under the seat, tail between his legs, shaking from the commotion.

Neil lifts Buddy, squeezing him tight.

NEIL

We'll find her, Buddy. Don't you worry. We'll find her.

FADE OUT