Where the Cold Wind Blows by Taylor Gianfrancisco

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After the intense make-out session, I tell my date, Stewart, I have to go. He offers me a ride, but I decline. “You should stay,” he says then, his smile warm like the glass of red wine. “It’s gonna rain hard tonight.” Stewart’s strawberry blonde hair burns fervently like a halo in the fluorescent light. I tell him though that I have an early class. He kisses my knuckles until I blush.

“No really, I have to go.” I kiss him on the cheek and walk to the car in a daze. I don’t even notice the rain until it spatters against the window in a sudden gust.

The car hydroplanes into a ditch. The airbags don’t deflate; I feel a cut on my forehead and my heart beats like a stampede of bulls. A gust of wind sends a branch against my window and shatters it. The rain turns into mud as I rev the engine. Nothing.

The door doesn’t budge because of the branch’s largess. I honk the horn in spastic Morse code. Only the purpose is lost. The rain masks everything on me as the mud mixes with it. There’s a sudden chill in my bones, like they are being sucked up and into my skin.

The rain then stops. There’s a dead silence from the storm. When a twig breaks nearby, it’s the loudest thing I’ve heard in the past hour. Blasting the horn, I scream for help. But then the twigs break in the opposite direction.

Damn deer.

Only then they break more youthfully towards me. The bush trembles but the rain’s darkness prevents me from seeing clearly.

“Hello?”

Something steps out of the bush. As it draws closer, I realize it’s a child. I smile, gracious for its appearance.
“Is your family nearby? Do you think you can get them?” I ask. The mud is caked to her skin as though she doesn’t know how to shower. Her eyes are too opaque and wild; I can’t hold the stare. I can’t speak as my tongue is swollen.

“I’m hungry,” she says as her stomach growls like a wolf. Her canines glitter in the rain’s afterglow.

My only recollection before waking up in the emergency room was her leaping through the window. Her biting my arm with vigor. But when I come to, they aren’t there.

“Don’t speak, hun,” she says, her fingers relaxing on my wrist. “You’re okay now. He won’t hurt you anymore.”

“It was a she, not a he,” I say, my voice scratching against my wind pipes.

“Oh, hun.” She pats my hand sympathetically. She smiles weakly. “It was a guy named Stewart. He admitted to the assault.”

“No, it was a little girl, she attacked me! She tried eating me!” I start to hyperventilate. The EKG goes crazy.

“No, hun, that never happened,” she says. Now she’s too sympathetic.

“That is what you want to think what happened.”