

Night Fishing

fiction by

Dan Morey

Rob was on the couch, eating a bag of Funyuns, when he heard a knock at the door. He waited, hoping whoever it was would go away.

"I know you're in there!"

It sounded like Dave. Rob turned down the TV and ate a Funyun.

Thrap, thrap, thrap. "C'mon, dude!"

Rob got up and opened the door.

"What's up?" said Dave.

"Nothing," said Rob.

"Good. We're going fishing."

"Game's on."

Dave stomped into the living room and turned off the TV.

"Game over," he said.

"It's the Pens," said Rob.

Dave sat down on the couch and set a fifth of Jim Beam on the coffee table.

"Get that off there," said Rob. "You know my mom."

"I'm supposed to be on a date right now," said Dave, kicking his boots up on the table. "You remember Emily Weiss? Well, I was talking to Keith's sister the other day and she tells me I should call her. Says she broke up with her boyfriend or something. So I say fine, I'll call her on Friday night. Tonight."

Rob grabbed the bottle and took a drink. Keith's sister had told him the same thing. He'd taken Emily Weiss out to dinner less than two hours ago.

Dave said, "So I call this Emily up at eight o'clock and it goes straight to voicemail. I try texting her, but that's no good either. Finally I call her house and a girl picks up and says hello. I say, 'Emily?' She hesitates for a second and goes, 'No this is Erica. Emily's sister. Emily's not here.' Then she says, 'Bye,' and hangs up."

"Guess you had the wrong night," said Rob. "Or she did."

"Wrong night my ass. Emily Weiss doesn't even have a sister. That was *her* on the phone. The bitch just didn't want to go out with me."

"Oh," said Rob.

"Oh is right. Why the hell did she tell Keith's sister to have me call her if she didn't want to go out?"

Dave looked at Rob like he was waiting for an explanation.

"I don't know," said Rob. "Geez."

"I hate girls," said Dave. "That's why we're going fishing. Fishing is the last place we'll see any girls."

It was a crisp fall night. Rob rolled down the window of the truck and sucked some cold air into his lungs.

"Where we going?" he said.

"You'll see," said Dave.

Rob reached behind the seat and got a bottle of Rolling Rock out of the cooler.

"Open me up one of those bad boys," said Dave.

They drove past some barns and silos and cornfields. An oak leaf hit the windshield, caught the wiper in front of Rob, and stuck there, fluttering.

"Tell me where we're going," said Rob, handing Dave a beer.

"You know that new golf course?"

"No."

"It's out by the pallet bridge. Decent course. Anyway, I heard they stocked the pond with bass."

"No shit."

"Yeah. But you're not allowed to fish there. That's why we're going at night."

There was a slab of moon in the sky and some stars. Dave put in a Led Zeppelin CD and cranked it up.

"This album is all the rock-n-roll you'll ever need," he said.

The pond was on the eighteenth hole right by the clubhouse. It was big and newly dug with no reeds around the edges. Bullfrogs croaked and jumped in the water. Dave rooted through his tackle box while Rob set up the lantern and readied his pole. There was a crusty worm on the hook from the last time he was out.

"Shit," said Rob. "We forgot to get bait."

"Screw bait," said Dave. "We're casting."

Rob didn't want to cast. He wanted to sit in a lawn chair and drink beer and watch a bobber.

"It's too cold for lures," he said. "The fish won't chase."

"We'll see about that," said Dave.

They tied on a couple big spinners.

"Hey," said Dave. "Did you hear something?"

"What?"

"The fish. They're jumping."

Rob got the lantern and held it out over the inky water.

"I don't see anything," he said.

"They're out there," said Dave. "And they're hungry."

Rob stepped up to the bank and cast out his spinner. He let it sink and then started reeling in slowly. The blade throbbed through the water and stopped abruptly about ten feet from shore. His pole dipped.

"Give him the steel!" said Dave.

Rob pulled back hard and set the hook. He cranked a small bass up onto the bank. Dave cast out and immediately got a hit.

"Nailed the bastard!" he said.

Dave's was a nicer fish, a couple pounds at least. He dropped it in the bucket, and Rob threw his dink back.

"What did I tell you?" said Dave.

"First cast."

They wiped their hands on the grass and chucked the lures back out as fast as they could. Rob got a keeper on his third try. He wanted to release it, but Dave wouldn't let him.

"Since when do you eat bass?" said Rob.

"Since tonight," said Dave.

They split up and worked their way around the pond. When they met on the other side, they each had a bucketful.

"I've never seen anything like it," said Dave. "We've only been out here an hour."

"Let's get going before the cops show up," said Rob.

Back in the truck, Dave packed a bowl to celebrate. They smoked it with the heat on and when they were warm and stoned they opened some beers and got back on the road.

"What a night," said Dave. "Just think, man, I could've been sitting around watching some shitty movie with Emily Weiss."

The road inclined steeply and Dave shifted gears.

"You know what I'm thinking?" he said. "I'm thinking we're on a roll. Why don't we hit up that late-night skate?"

Rob chugged the rest of his beer and threw the bottle out the window.

"Hell yeah," he said.

When they pulled into the lot at the ice rink Rob said, "I don't have my skates."

"That's what you think," said Dave, reaching behind the seat and pulling out a pair of Rob's old goalie skates.

"No way," said Rob. "I'm not wearing those."

"Why not?"

"They're crusty, they're goalie skates, and they're *white*."

"Quit bitching," said Dave, getting out.

Rob stuffed some Rolling Rocks in his coat and checked his hair in the side-view

mirror. Dave took off his hat and did the same.

Inside, Rob smelled the frosty, familiar scent. He felt like he was back in high school, about to play a big game. They sat down in the old wooden bleachers and laced up their skates.

"Damn," said Dave. "Look at all these chicks."

It was a couples skate. Fat Joe was in the DJ booth spinning "It Ain't Over Till It's Over." They could see him up there in his Steelers jersey pretending to slow dance.

When the song changed to AC/DC Dave hit the ice. Rob hesitated at the gate, staring down at his clunky goalie skates. The ice hadn't been Zambonied in a while, and there were a lot of deep grooves. Rob eased out, stumbled on the dull blades, and then started picking up speed. He liked late-night skates because there were no junior hockey punks showing off. There were usually a lot of girls, too—bungling around in rented skates, not knowing what they were doing. As he rounded a corner, one of them fell down right in front of him. He jumped over her and power-slid to a stop. The girl was prone on the ice, so he skated back against the grain.

"You okay?" he said.

She smiled, and he pulled her up.

Rob didn't know what to say next.

She was younger than him, but not too young. She had blonde hair and blue eyes and a nice set of dimples. The music stopped in the middle of a song and Fat Joe's voice came booming over the speakers:

"Well, look who's here, gang. It's Big Bobbo. Our legendary goalie. Where you been, Bobbo?"

Rob flipped off the DJ booth, hoping it would shut Fat Joe up, but it didn't.

"And who says chivalry is dead, gang? Big Bobbo just rescued a young lady from an onslaught of razor sharp blades. Three cheers for Bobbo!"

Fat Joe played some chords on the organ and the crowd groaned. Rob's face was bright red.

"You know how you can tell Bobbo's a good guy?" said Fat Joe. "Just look at his skates. Good guys always wear white! A-haw-haw-haw!"

He hit a particularly obnoxious organ note and someone yelled, "Blow me, fatass!"

"Okay, then," said Fat Joe. "Let's get back to the myoosic! This one's for you, Bobbo!"

He played "Knights in White Satin," and everyone laughed. The more Rob tried not to blush the more he blushed. The blonde girl took off, and people started bumping into him and slapping his back. Some jerk in a Red Wings jersey blew by and said, "Nice skates, fag!"

Rob got his number and waited in a corner. When he came around again Rob skated up beside him and checked him hard into the boards. Dave glided over.

"Beauty hit," he said. "I'd say you earned yourself a brew."

Rob followed him off the ice into the bathroom.

"Any prospects?" said Dave, opening a beer.

"One," said Rob. "You?"

"Naw. Same old trash out there."

They drank for a while.

"Fatass was pretty rough on you," said Dave.

"Shit. It's just Fatass."

"Yeah. Good old Fatass."

They went out to the snack bar and got in line.

"Holy shit," said Dave.

Emily Weiss and a guy with a mustache were buying nachos. The guy was wearing a brown leather jacket and matching gloves. Emily's hair looked a lot better than it had when Rob took her out to dinner. The guy scooped a glob of cheese onto a nacho and held it up to Emily's mouth. She took a bite.

"Jesus Christ," said Dave.

Emily went outside with the guy. Rob and Dave watched them get into her Civic

and fire up a joint. Dave put on his boots and stalked off.

"Where you going?" said Rob.

"Come out to the truck in half an hour," said Dave.

Rob opened his last Rolling Rock and chugged it in the bleachers.

"Screw Emily Weiss," he said.

While he was sitting there, he noticed the blonde girl two rows in front of him giggling with a redhead. His heartbeat sped up and he wished he had another beer. Before he could work out a game plan, she turned around and said, "How's it going?"

"Uh, good," said Rob.

She looked at her girlfriend and giggled. Rob went down and sat next to them.

"I'm Rob," he said.

"I thought you were Big Bobbo," said the blonde girl.

"Oh. That's just a nickname from high school. They used to call me that when I played goalie."

"Ah."

Rob stuck his hands in his pockets and grinned. He felt a blush coming on.

"I'm Kerrie," she said.

"Oh," said Rob. "Cool. Where you from?"

"West Mifflin."

"Nice. We should get together or something some time."

The redhead let out a snort.

Kerrie giggled and said, "Yeah. Sure. I'll write down my number."

"I have a phone," said Rob.

"I'd rather write it down."

Kerrie dug a pen and a napkin out of her purse. She wrote something on the napkin and folded it up good.

"Don't open it till you get home," she said.

"Cool," said Rob. "Later."

He found Dave outside, cleaning fish behind the truck. Emily Weiss and the guy were still in her Civic, making out. Ten minutes later they put on sunglasses and went back in the rink.

"Let's go," said Dave, grabbing the gutbucket.

"What are you doing?" said Rob.

"C'mon!"

When they got to the Civic, Dave told Rob to open the driver side door. Rob hoped it was locked, but it wasn't.

"I don't know about this," said Rob.

The moon was big in the sky and the parking lot was all lit up. Dave heaved the whole bucket of fish guts into the car.

"Jesus," said Rob. "You're crazy."

They kicked the door shut and ran back to the truck.

On the way home, Rob burst out laughing.

"Felt good, didn't it?" said Dave. "We owed her that."

"We?" said Rob.

"Yeah. I know you took her out."

They drove a couple miles without saying anything. Then Rob remembered Kerrie and said, "Hey."

"What's up?" said Dave.

"At least one of us got lucky tonight."

He held up the napkin.

"Digits?" said Dave

Rob put the napkin on his lap, but didn't unfold it. He thought about Kerrie and her friend and all the giggling that had gone on. After a while he rolled down the window, held the napkin out, and let it go.

Since 1936
SERVING BEST TEXAS HOTS
IN THE WORLD

Johnny's Lunch

966 FAIRMOUNT AVE. WE
JAMESTOWN, NEW YORK 14701

CALAMUNCI MANAGEMENT LLC
OWNERS & MANAGEMENT

PHONE
(716) 664-2881
(419) 376-1776