

LEGACY

By Sandra Dempsey

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CAST: one female

(SIOBHAN - pronounced "shi-VON" - is 15 years old. SHE has long hair, a pale complexion, and slightly darkened circles under her eyes. Her natural inclination is to speak with her head down, eyes averted, but throughout she tries to force herself to look up.)

SIOBHAN

My old man gets his beer delivered - every Saturday - this huge truck pulls up outside our house, and the guy drops off cases of the stuff. The *Suds-Truck* we all call it. Naturally, we're the only house on the block with delivery - only one in the neighborhood, probably.

He works nights, always. Sleeps during the day, so we have to be quiet. And when he wakes up and we hear his shoes stomping down the front stairs, we scatter like cockroaches, just to keep out of his way. And if you're quick enough, you can almost outrun his belt.

So then it's dinner time - not much talking - certainly no fooling around or joking or anything. And then afterward, everyone clears the table and does the dishes and generally helps my mom while he catches the baseball scores on TV and has a cigarette or two. I wasn't even in kindergarten when he called me in to join him and he actually gave me a cigarette.

Once the table is cleared, it's time for him to break into suds - non-stop beers and big fat, stinky stogies - La Palina Cigars - it wasn't 'til years later I realized the name was La Palina, instead of LAPalina I thought they were called. Sounded like a horse to me - you know, like an Appaloosa/Palomino cross: a *Lapalina*. And so long as no one disturbs him or makes a noise or generally causes him aggravation, by eleven o'clock he shaves and leaves for work, packing a mickey in his coat pocket.

So everyone breathes a little easier for the rest of the night, which is pretty useless 'cause by then we're all supposed to be sleeping. And then it's seven in the morning and he comes staggering in the door, pie-

eyed drunk but loaded for bear and looking for a fight, and it's everything we can do to stay out of his way, 'til he finally crawls back upstairs to sleep off another day. Whatever he does at work, he apparently supervises some blue-collar cleaning work for dirty pay - and since he can't stand anybody who isn't lily-white in complexion, let alone speak English as a *first* language, he gets away with arriving already liquored-up, drinking on the job, and punching out already punched-out.

And I guess it kind of stems from the strange sense of power he thinks he holds over these lowly workers - well, that and the booze of course - that every so often he has to "*do the town*", somehow, and he drags Mom off to some over-priced club for the night - doesn't matter where, just as long as it's *big-time*. Sometimes it's kind of penance, like for slapping her around, and he pretty much gets a load on *big-time*, and if Mom is lucky, they'll make it out of there without him laying into her and getting them thrown out. But I guess even if she wins there, he'll just start in on her once they get home. Funny, 'cause even when he was at a club where the booze was flowing like crazy, he'd still top off his glass with his own flask - like there just wasn't ever enough liquor anywhere for him, so he had to help bring up the level himself.

One time, I was just little, he hauled her and me off to New York City for a few days. I don't know where he got the money, but he booked us into this swanky hotel, and we tried to do the tourist thing. We took the train, and of course he was good and lubricated before we even got to the station - and boy was he in his element, treating the lowly porters and such like something worse than dirt - and when our train had to join up onto the end of another train, he staggered out onto the platform, and went all the way up to the engine at the front and started screaming at the engineer to let his daughter, *me*, have a ride up there. Like I even *wanted* to do that.

So of course, they got into a major screaming match, and the train was practically pulling out of the station before he finally backed off and crawled back into the coach. My mom got the worst of it - even in that cramped little state-room sleeper, he could still find enough elbow room to get a good swing going.

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