

Feral

by Joe Kapitan

When the sun was above the treeline, and the hunter returned to the cabin, they were ready for him.

The bear swung the cast iron fireplace poker, knocked him to his knees, then lunged forward and pinned the hunter to the pine floorboards, with the same force she remembered feeling from him, setting her teeth to his jugular. Stunned, incapacitated, the hunter managed only a whimper as the snake joined the attack, bit a hole in him, entered him, slithering in, feeling her way, the same way she remembered him doing.

When he stopped convulsing, the bear dragged his body to the old mattress in the corner. There, the hunter continued to bleed for a while, his new red stains covering the older browned ones of theirs.

The bear then took a razor blade to her fur, cutting anything that still held the scent of him, cutting until the brunette beneath was visible. The snake did the same, shedding her scaled skin back to blonde.

They doused everything with diesel from the generator outside — the pine floorboards, the fur, the scales, the mattress, their father — and set them afire.

The girls, lighter now, began to feather, and by the time they watched the flames reach the height of the treeline, they left the ground and caught the thermals rising from the blaze, spiraling upward, until they were sure they were beyond the radius of any animal's memory.

