

Birthday Boy

by Kitty Boots

Bruce sits on the dock, his gnarled hand, a result of too many fucked up surgeries, rests on Bella's head. She watches him, tense, ready to retrieve a stick thrown in the muddy Chickahominy River, but all he does is lift the bottle of Budweiser to his mouth, grunt and sigh. Bella's tail thumps with his every movement.

He's brought out the cast net. Spread before his feet he looks at it and tries to remember what he's supposed to do with it. He really wants to go fishing. Navigating the collection of rods, reels and lures is too difficult. Loading the truck is out of the question, Cindy took his keys away from him months ago. She changed the combination on his gun safe, too, after he shot a hole in the bathtub. She sold his boat. Had to. It was sitting in the front yard rotting.

He took a sledgehammer to the front porch, back porch, too. Locked the day nurse out of the house. Shoplifted ice cream and helicopter drones at the 7-11. Wrecked the bicycle in the ditch.

Bruce tried to kill me after our mother died. He threw a table saw at me, rushed up with fists balled, the anger was mind-blowing. I called him a fucking loser and left.

I look at the calendar and realize Bruce's birthday is in June. I'll send him a card.

