A Clean Tent

by Matt DeVirgiliis

Stanley presses his pointed nose against their tent's screen. He hears a cardinal singing its morning chorus. He knows the bird without seeing it. He's proud. “Cardinal,” he says.

“You didn't say goodnight,” says Gwen. “Are you seeing someone?”

“No,” he says. A simple lie. “I -” He pushes the sleeping bag off of his legs. Their getaway reset was a mistake. “Finish your damn thought,” she says. “I'm going for a walk,” says Stanley.

He unzips the tent and pokes his head outside, and he grabs his worn Leatherman and water bottle. “I'll be back.”

Gwen unpacks camping gear from her CRV. Her neighbor waves from his porch. “Where's Stan?” he asks.

“Went for a walk.” She closes her trunk and walks inside.

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