

# The Tamarack Swamps

*by* Michael Seidel

We're way, way up north, with logging roads and retired train tracks mowed through empty lands both public and private. We've come up here for a while from the life we have in the gut of the state.

Last night, in a tavern called Wits End, we dropped quarters into a console, sized and shaped like an old TV. The beers were so cold the roof of your mouth felt like a cave.

Jon won, then I won, then Jon, then me.

The bartender brought his towel over, moved his eyes to us. Said: "Gentlemen, you've been over-served." We'd only had two each, didn't take the hint and plugged in several more wins.

Like in unison, the entire bar lifted off their stools. Wits' people put shammy leather over our eyes, shaped our arms with winch rope, and locked us into crates for Labs in a pick-up bed.

The roads here are lost places, absolute secrets. They pulled off, threw us in the marsh, wetting our clothes. Then they drove away.

Jon and I inspected each other under the x-ray moon as the open miles got sucked into the truck's exhaust pipe and muted it.

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