

## The Allnighter- Story #2 from the Album cover series of short stories

The cabbies voice sounded like Alfred Hitchcock got rear-ended in a Boston Southie bar. He was talking *really* loudly. The snow was coming down in thick, wet blankets so the cab was moving cautiously at a snails pace, slopping and sliding perilously close to the edge of Lake Shore Drive. Lake Michigan was only a menacing cold skid away-completely unseeable due to the white out. It's frozen jaws ready to catch anything that could get close enough to its icy lips...

When I heard the weather forecast yesterday on Chicago news my plan had been to just get a hotel by the office so I'd be on time for the international conference call via Skype tomorrow morning...5 a.m. sharp. We had to look good- if my company was to make this acquisition it would mean a whole new professional life for me and I could finally get out from under that *fuckin dick* Giancastro who was oppressing the life out of my every waking moment. Then as the hour hand whacked 7 o'clock on the bosses Thomas Tompion 17th century museum quality desk clock- a lump like cottony clot stuck in my throat...I realized I had forgotten my best suit back at the condo, *Goddamit!* I looked down at my coffee stained lapel and tightened my fist... seriously bad error.

That was three grueling hours ago. This cabbie, who would NOT shut the hell up was now getting his ass stuck from not moving this reeking road hazard of junk he called a cab. The bars on my phone were down to nothing, so I plugged it into my lap top...but that did little good, it was sponging it's power off a dying computer carcass.

I had one earbud plugged into my laptop but could still hear "Hitchcock's" blathering... indecipherable whine while reorganizing my notes and sending them to Jayhawk, my right hand at the firm. I figured if I didn't make it tomorrow I didn't want that ass lick Giancastro getting all the credit for my hard work.

I toyed with the idea of making a run for it but the snow was so deep, wet and heavy the door literally wouldn't open.

"Try it," Hitch seemed to say almost challenging me.

Nodding at the smart ass, I replied, "...was a former collegiate wrestler at Missouri Valley College, buddy." Hitch grunted and I attempted to kick the door open...all I could feel was a slight draft which was letting what little was left of the warm stale cab air out. The stink was odd...not your usual nasty fake floral air freshener from the gas station...this was...quite frankly, putrid. *Didn't this pig ever bathe...jesus!*

The car was literally being pelted by sheet after sheet of of snow to the point the vehicle was now rocking as if we were in the hull of a dark ship. The windshield wipers had frozen over long ago, and the grate of the engine signaled it's slow demise into a frozen corpse.

I tapped the last of my notes and hit **send** just as the power died on my laptop. Phew! Saved!

When I tapped my phone the new alert said cops were coming to check the cars but they had to turn back...it was too treacherous! What the fuck, this was Chicago...not some country, fuckin road...LSD, one of the greatest drives in the world and I was a prisoner in this tin can with some

smelly apeman...god, the stench...my eyes were beginning to water, and bile was starting to rise. I finally put my lap top in it's case and took a good look at the beast in the drivers seat.

The fucker was eating, here we are...human ice cubes, can't even feel my feet and he's stuffing his fat, unshaved face with handfuls of some foul foreign meat from his little Playmate Igloo cooler...

He stopped, mid chew...it looked like a bloody mess all over his mouth. Something stirred in my gut, and fear rose up in my chest...he began to laugh and talk, almost choking on handful after handful of meat...my God, was it raw.

I tried to look away...tried to check my phone. It was a cold, black hunk of brick. Dead.

The cab began rocking, harder and harder...and now Hitchcock was starring at me...he was going to offer me some of wet, sticking meat...oh, my God! His hand, huge and vile like a wet baseball glove, coming at me...then I realized what he was eating...it was internal organs...it was goddammed human, human, I screamed and the cab lurched as a crash bashed through my side window, it was a cop with a pick axe, I screamed and I screamed...

When I awoke, I was in an over heated school gymnasium, laying on a cot and a nurse was handing me a little bottle of water.

"There was a cabdriver...he was crazy," I explained, between sips. I knew I didn't want to say eating people...or she'd just think I was delirious, but I saw a fucking finger, it had a class ring on it!

"You are ok now," the older African American woman explained soothingly, "and the cabdriver was alright, he cut himself up pretty bad when the car rolled over, car went right into the lake... we think he's ok, they did fish him out...you can thank him. I think he went to Northwestern?"

"Thank him! Are you crazy..." then as I looked into her big, matronly eyes, her frizzy hair pulled into a tight black bun and the large cross dangling from her neck...someone's sweet grandmother...I realized she wouldn't understand. She couldn't believe me.

I laid back down.

"Here's your laptop and phone," she said patting my brown leather attache case.

I nodded and thanked her...checking my watch. Maybe I could make the meeting I still had time...business as usual.