

THE TALLY STONE

Fiction Serial
by Gilbert Bouchard

Part Six

The volunteer fire brigade hosed down the charred remains of the Blackburn farmstead. All that was left was the granite fireplace and a few timbers poking up like blackened ribs.

The fire broke out that morning with John Blackburn, his wife and younger son probably not even waking up.

Tracy arrived at nine, just in time to see the firemen rolling up their muddied hoses.

The enormity of the situation didn't get to her right off the bat, all she could think of at first was that the rest of her grandfather's diary - the reason she was here after all - had just gone up in smoke. Now she'd never find out what her grandfather did in the latter part of the winter of '22.

Eventually it dawned on her that three people had died, burned to death just hours before. (The police had just finished putting the three plastic body bags in the ambulance and were preparing to escort them back to town.) After this realization finally sunk in, a few pages of old mumblings by her grandfather didn't seem to matter all that much.

"Who's that guy over there?" Tracy quizzed the last fireman rolling up the firehose. "Oh, him. That's Spencer Blackburn, John's oldest. Was out at a bush party last night. He came back at eight this morning to find his house nearly burnt to the ground. He called us up and all we could do was cool down the ashes. I'll say one thing, that was one lifesaving drunk he was on."

Tracy had seen this lanky seventeen year old around town, a tall slim kid with delicate features and a mop of fly-away brown hair framing almost transparent green eyes.

Yes indeed, this boy did things to Tracy, not to mention that he was the only male she'd seen in this burg that ruffled her feathers. To be blunt, Tracy lusted after his body.

"Is there anything, ahh, I can do for you?"

Tracy stammered. The boy was surprised, he'd seen her pull up in the yard ten or fifteen minutes before, but hadn't seen her cross the driveway to his car. "I'm Tracy, from down the road, I was supposed to see your father this morning..."

Tracy knotted up her scarf, for lack of anything better to do.

"Do you have a smoke? I can't find mine." the boy asked.

"Sure, you don't mind Players, I hope."

"No, I'll smoke anything."

They lit up silently, the cigarettes excusing them from continuing the conversation.

He blinked rapidly and fresh tears streamed down his face already traversed by previous trickles.

He turned away from Tracy, as if ashamed, then mumbled a string of incomprehensible words, spun back around and grabbed Tracy by the shoulders and shook her hard several times, all the while gibbering incomprehensibly.

Tracy freaked out momentarily, and kneed him a bit harder than she'd wanted to. Spencer crumpled on the gravel driveway.

It is amusing how often a person will do something then immediately feel like shit after. That's how Tracy felt.

Here was this kid, who'd lost his whole fucking family that she'd just kneed in the groin. Just fucking compassionate.

She cursed herself under her breath and bent down to scoop the limp teenager into her arms and tried to subdue his whimperings.

She pushed his hair back from his eyes and then wiped the tears from his chin. Then she kissed him, and he even kissed back. She hadn't expected that, but it was definitely pleasant.

Spencer was sprawled diagonally across her bed, with little beads of perspiration glistening along his buttocks and the small of his back.

He propped his head on his fists and stared at Tracy while she fumbled for her robe. "Well, I'd better fuck off soon, the old man'll have my hide if I miss lunch after having been out all night. Shit that takes the cake."

Great, Tracy thought, as she knotted the sash of her robe. Great. The kid's in shock. I mean here she was seducing a teenage minor when his parent had just been pulled out of the rubble of his family's house.

Mind you, he was a doll, at that stage in a boy's development when the man's angular form is compromised by the softer feminine curves of childhood.

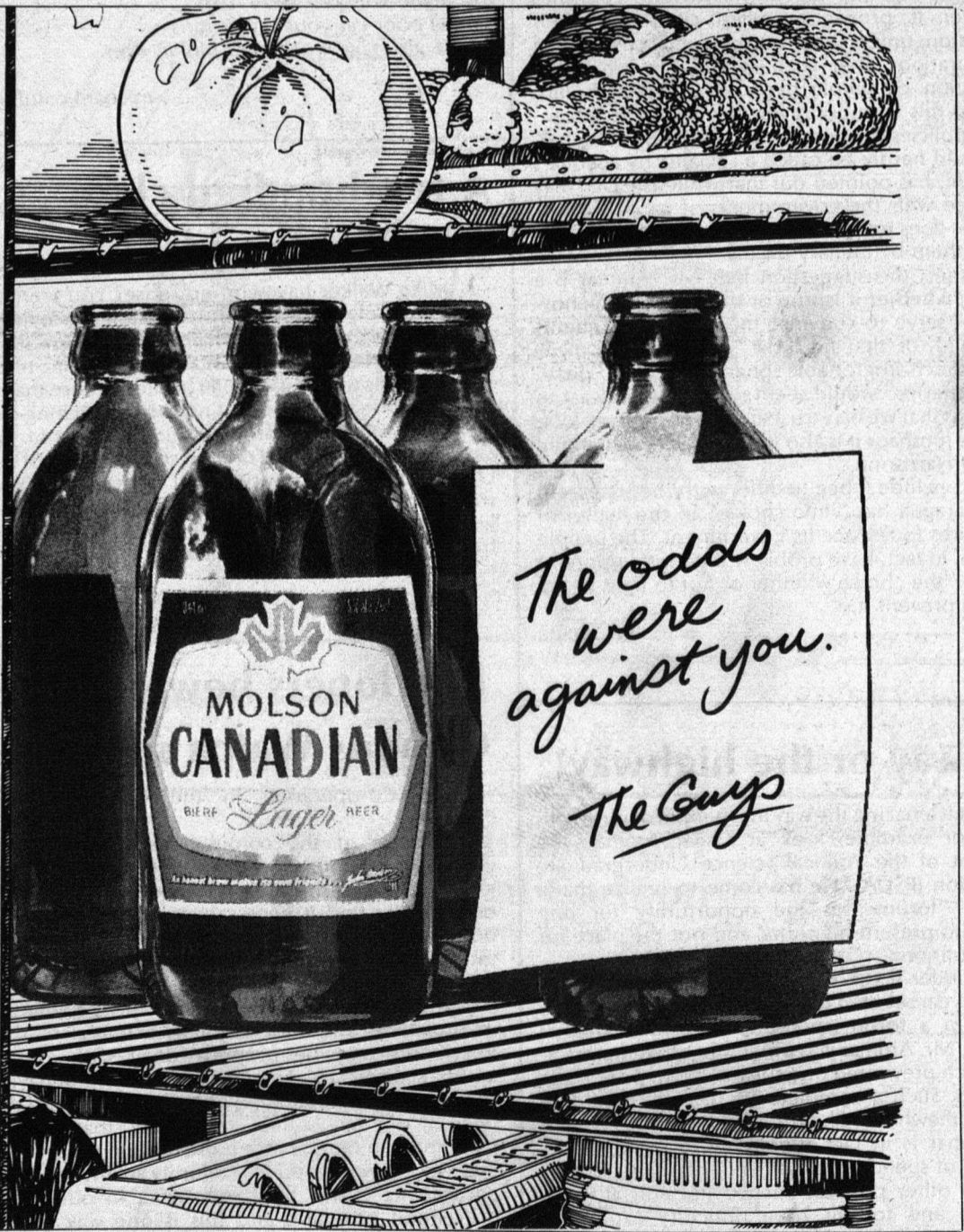
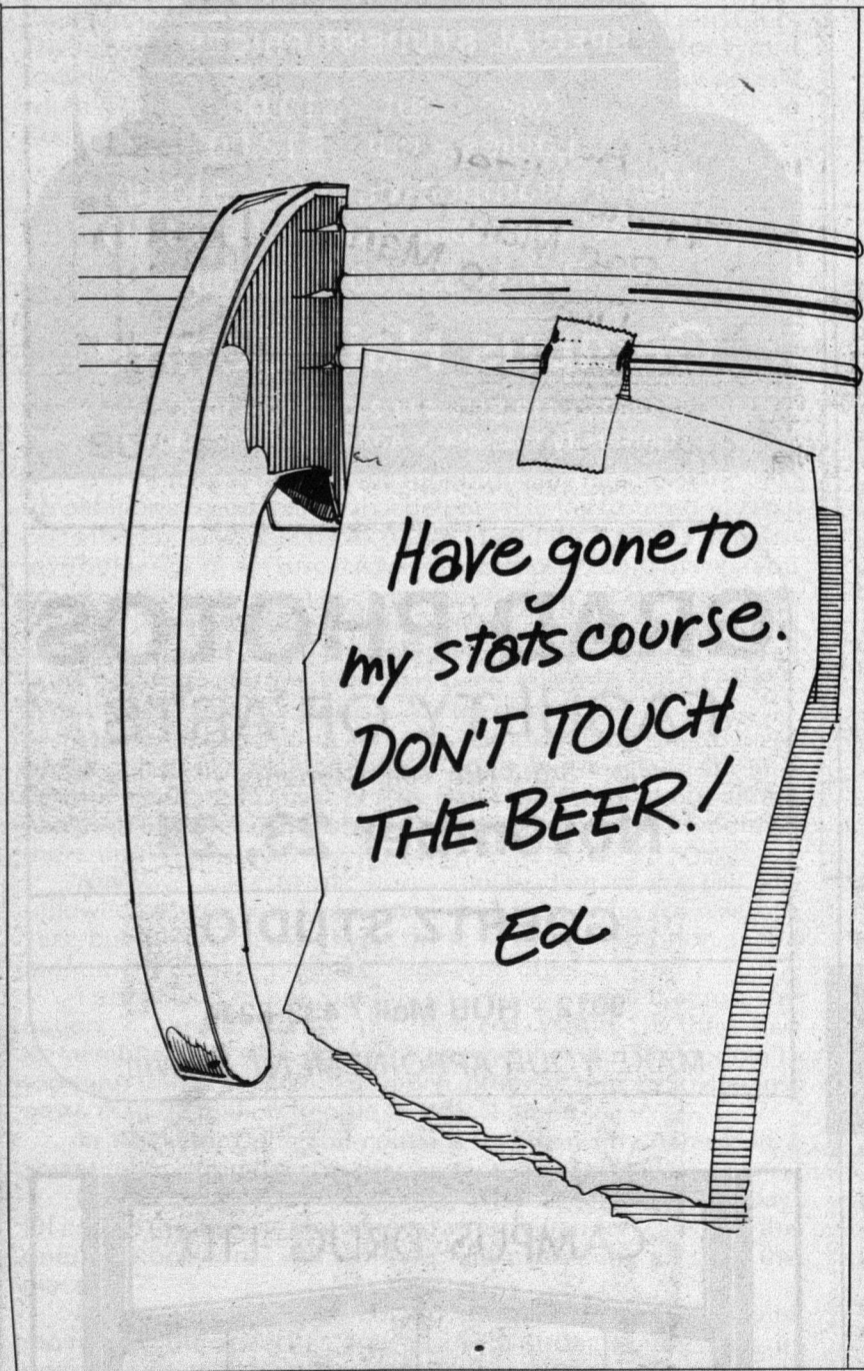
None of this changed the fact that she had a naked unbalanced minor perched on her bed. Sometimes she wished she wouldn't rush into sticky situations like this so mindlessly.

Now she was really screwed.

She mused all this as she scraped her arm under her couch, searching for some cigarettes. Then she heard a car pull into the yard.

She wasn't certain at first (or rather she hoped she wasn't certain), but then how many people drive a silver Lincoln Continental. It was Arnold, and he was halfway to the front door.

to be continued



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