

Donna

They were at The Poles apartment in Willowdale. Pigs, Trucks, Brech, were The Boys. The Pole was always just on the fringe.

The Poles apartment building was a two-storey red brick walk-up at the corner of Bayview & Shepherd in Willowdale. The Pole & The Princess had one of the places on the main floor. The Pole's mother-- who owned the building---lived upstairs.

Through the drab brown front door, down a small hall-- painted dull green-- The Poles place first on the left. Rubber boot mat just inside The Poles' door-- for boots & last-minute conversations.

Cramped corridor leading directly into the living room, couple of couches, coffee table & a TV. The Poles green leather lazy boy chair the most prominent piece. The Princess & The Poles bedroom door the other side of the room-- beside the bathroom. Small utilitarian kitchen drifting off the living room.

Picture window looking out across the yard. Right into another red brick two storey apartment building. A struggling maple starved for light, the poor sparse leaves trying to turn red, distracting the scene.

The Pole & Princess had been together over 10 years-- since high school-- neither had been with anyone else. The Pole didn't know how to be with anyone else. Recently they decided to get married.

The Princess felt it would be good for her career. More in line with her ambitions. More socially acceptable. If she was going to succeed, she would need to be married. At least that's what she thought.

When they were all hanging out, The Princess would go on & on about her day at work. While The Boys politely sipped beer & pretended to listen. The Boys knew she was just a stuck-up bitch whose ambitions far outdistanced her disposition.

The recent marriage resulted in the mandatory gifts. A new TV--- to watch the Leafs. A mix master. The Boys were skeptical about that. The Pole never did use it.

The Pole drank Vodka with ice. He would have a beer---if he was out of Vodka-- but that rarely happened.

The Princess enjoyed the mixer. She always loved a fancy drink. Sometimes she'd have quite a few. Margaritas & Daiquiris her drinks of choice---put her in a good mood. The Princess used to party-- but not so much recently.

She'd want to dance— the only time The Pole danced was at his wedding (& that was just once). The Princess would whine & get mad at him for not doing what she wanted. Then turn on The Boys for being such a bore. The Boys would ignore her—maybe that was the problem—all soon silently leaving, like they were sneaking out.

Trucks-- off to see Carmella, his bride to be-- in his new red Granada. Wanting to drink more, knowing he can't. Making sure he had a joint for the ride. Brech back to his computer in his high-rise apartment. Pigs off in search of more beer & another party, maybe even back to work. The Boys fit each other like a well-worn glove.

The Pole did have a cat---Auschwitz--- stub for a tail. The Pole ran over it with his car on his way to get ice. But he couldn't remember. Quite a fight that night. The Princess calling The Pole a drunken polish pig. Insisting The Pole take Auschwitz over to the all-night vets. The Pole knowing he's too drunk to drive & dreading a bill he couldn't afford. The Boys stayed out of that one--each leaving discretely. Except Trucks, who got stuck with driving Auschwitz over to the vet.

Auschwitz never came around when The Boys were around. It would just stay in the bedroom on The Princess' pillow. If it deigned to grace The Boys presence it would come out & rub itself against The Pole. Who'd get up & give it some milk. The Pole & the cat seemed to have made up for what had happened.

The Pole & his mother had lived a life of hard work & austerity. They were their only family. His mother was a pretty little blue-eyed thing with bright blonde hair always cut short. A refugee from the war. Always pleasant to The Boys. You never saw her sit. She had a wisdom, a sense for survival which burned in her belaboured blue eyes. Sometimes when she was around doing The Pole's laundry--watching them all hanging out-- a far away look would pass through her. She didn't like thinking about the past. She was proud of her boy.

The Pole had a nice comfortable armchair, hard green leather back, switch on the side, kick up the feet. When the Leafs were on, he'd watch the screen with the enthusiasm of a college professor addressing his class. Gulping a beer mug full of Vodka & ice. Cigarette smouldering in his fingertips, or balanced awkwardly in the ashtray on the side table-- with a shaded lamp—within easy reach.

The Princess liked nice things. Jewelry, clothes, fancy shoes, fancy car. The Princess wanted it all. Her need for things filled their relationship—leaving nothing left for love.

It was a matter of endless derision between The Pole & The Princess. The Princess stretching the bank account like blowing up a balloon. The Pole always under pressure.

The Princess hated Pigs. He was the Antichrist. Pigs had nothing & really wasn't after much. He followed the ways of that old gospel lyric,

“ If you ain't got nothing, ya got nothing to lose.” Pigs rule--- if you need more then a suitcase you got too much.

Pigs life clashed with The Princess, like two bulls in a ring.

Brech scared The Princess. She thought he was crazy & wasn't shy about telling him so. She was always after The Pole to tell Brech to go. In her defense Brech was a whole lot of weird when it came to women.

Trucks was always polite to The Princess, though he was the first to call her fuck'd up-- when she wasn't around. But Carmella & The Princess were getting along. Much to everyone's surprise.

This day was no different then any other. Nice sunny autumn afternoon. The Boys at The Poles apartment hanging out.

Pigs, -- whose family had fled religious persecution in Europe looking for a place to practice their new beliefs, after Martin Luther pinned up his decree on the Catholic church door--had his cab parked in the driveway. He was playing chess with The Pole.

Trucks--whose family had fought the Bolsheviks when a White Russian meant more than a drink-- had a couple days off from scraping dead animal carcasses off the city streets. He was at his usual spot playing Lynyrd Skynyrd & keeping tabs on what's going on.

Brech--whose family was traditional Scots who'd come over to make money a long time ago-- was calling colour commentary on the chess match. Much to the irritation of all.

The Pole--whose mother had worked on a nazi labour farm during her formative years-- had been told horrible stories which haunted him. He had his usual beer mug of Vodka & ice by his side. The ever-present cigarette balanced between his fingertips.

There was a heated discussion carrying on between Pigs & The Pole. Pigs didn't believe that there was a fish called a Golden Wall Eye. That name was just too made up. The Pole—who fished for a religion-- was always trying to lead you on so you would look stupid. You see, The Pole—always—was smugly right.

It was finally agreed, that if The Pole could show Pigs—who was stubborn like an ox-- the word in the dictionary, Pigs would concede to The Pole. Of course, there wasn't a dictionary right at hand. It didn't matter much. They soon figured it wasn't worth the effort. Pigs reluctantly accepting the Poles expertise.

A solemn autumn sun was setting. All outside was winding down. Yellow weeping willow trees lining sober Willowdale streets. Fathers getting home from work. Mothers cooking dinner. Kids playing in the front yard. Living in a Canadian paradise.

The Pole got up & refreshed his drink. Pigs got another beer & Trucks lit up a joint.

Brech---whose parents couldn't believe the space cadet they had raised--- was now looking out the picture window. Commenting on a particular star's position that wasn't out--yet.

Brech was the only guy ever to move out to Vancouver-- ski all winter, take a 1,000-mile bike ride-- & come back to Toronto 120 pounds heavier than when he left. He came back with a big fat belly. Brech was always talking about things to

come. Computers, home shopping, phones you could carry in your pocket. The Boys would just let him ramble on never listening.

Brech had taken a lot of acid at a Jethro Tull concert in 72. He was really never the same after that. Always tolerated, never taken seriously.

The Princess-- was late getting home from work. The Boys were grateful. They knew their time was limited before she made her entrance.

As soon as someone commented on that particular point, they heard The Princess' car pull up.

Within seconds the room changed. It was never known what type of mood The Princess would be in. They could hear the front door open & close. The Princess was walking down the dull green hall. The apartment door opened. She stopped to take off her knee-high leather boots. Her long brown hair streaked in silver, waterfalling over her knees, parting like a red sea she stood back up exposing a homely face which could be pretty with enough makeup, applied in the proper places. Nice stern dark brown eyes, cheek bones prominent stretching her skin. Nose neat & clean, long & mean. Thin lips which needed lipstick to be seen. The Princess had some features which could be considered attractive if she just let herself relax a bit. Unfortunately, the one distinct accretion to the facial list was The Princess had no chin. Her face fell off like over a cliff below the mouth.

'I'm, home,' The Princess yelled pleasantly into the room.

Met with complete silence. The Princess walked into the living room in her nylon stocking feet-- holding her shoes in her hand. Curiously the black seams on the back of her stockings were all askew, as if they were put on in a hurry.

'Hey,' said Pigs, trying to be polite-- he was starting to put on weight, sitting in a cab was not conducive to maintaining an athletic frame-- not daring to call her Princess. He wasn't that drunk yet.

The Princess stopped & looked around. Trucks, whose name was as much a physical description as a nickname, was changing discs & didn't appear to look

back. Brech, whose big fat belly stuck him to his chair, absent mindedly turning around like a distracted child, the flabs of skin on his neck flapping like a walrus, grunted into his chest. The Princess' mascara blackened eyes burning holes in the back of Pigs head. The Pole-- who was built square on a small wrestlers' frame-- would nod, his eyes never leaving the chess board.

'What the hell,' The Princess-- whose rear end was starting to spread-- yelled in utter contempt.

No one was paying her any attention. Not because The Boys were assholes. The Boys just didn't know what to say.

Sometimes The Princess could be a real buzz-kill.

'What in the Christ is going on,' she focused in on The Pole.

'Have you done anything at all today,' it was always her go to.

She was about to erupt like an out of patience volcano. The Boys now sat back & waited.

'Jesus Christ do you think I enjoy coming home from work finding you here with your drunken friends!'

'What the hell,' The Princess repeated.

The Boys all thought The Princess wasn't too bright. So, it didn't surprise them when she repeated the same phrase over.

The Pole nodded his head. He took a quick look up & a sip from his drink.

It was a rerun movie. The Boys were regular attendees. It seemed to get worse-- for some reason-- once The Pole & Princess got married.

'Jesus Christ,' she sprayed.

Now she's praying Pigs whispered & they all laughed.

The Princess stormed off slamming the bedroom door. The Boys were always tempted to clap. But out of respect for The Pole they always held back.

Pigs—nonchalantly-- had noticed a shirt flap sticking out the back of The Princess' stretched tight tan skirt, as she had headed towards the bedroom door.

Trucks had seen the corrupted seam snaking up into her thigh & immediately knew.

Fuck I'm working all day & come home to this-- fuckkkk. The Princess screaming into her bedroom mirror.

All The Boy's eyes went to The Pole.

'Should we go?' Pigs asked.

Brech was shaking in fear like a fucking puppet. He was scared of women & what they can do to him.

'No, no problem,' The Pole replied.

The Pole was handling it as a minor irritation. A pesky mosquito buzzing in his ear.

'Your move.' The Pole said to Pigs.

Pigs really had nothing against The Princess. The Princess was choosing her own path. She had a right. She didn't have to make it into a fight. It must've been hard for the Pole. The Pole was anything but naïve. He was astute like a priest. It was just something which was never discussed.

Trucks turned up the tunes—he found it hard to keep it inside. He loved The Pole.

That night The Boys all left together. The Princess never came out of the bedroom. The Pole in the kitchen started fixing a sandwich. The Boys said goodbye. While The Boys were putting on their boots Truck's whispered, obviously mad,

'She's fucking around,' he hissed to the air.

'Ya think,' replied Pigs sarcastically.

Brech-- who thought the world was already mad—had no opinion.

About a year later The Pole & The Princess had a child ---Donna--- The Boys were suspicious. A beautiful little girl.

The Pole found out it wasn't his. But not before he fell in love with Donna. Donna was too darn cute. Donna had melted all their hearts. They all wanted to raise Donna.

The Princess had been banging her boss. She subsequently left--her & The Pole couldn't work it out-- taking Donna with her. She moved into her boss' big house in the country.

Auschwitz decided to stay behind with The Pole. Her & The Princess never got along once Donna came around anyway.

The Pole took Donna leaving hard. The Boys really held back the I told you so's, The Boys weren't like that. It was really bad. Every one felt sad for The Pole. Mad at The Princess. Missing Donna.

Six months after The Princess left they all took a drive -- one sunny spring afternoon—in, a recently married, Trucks' red Granada.

After awhile they found themselves driving by The Princess' new place. Out in the country. They weren't impressed.

Brech in the backseat smoking a joint through a wide-open window. Talking about some foreign thing that only he could understand. Pigs beside him half out the other back window. Throwing a beer can at The Princess's mailbox. Which was perched temptingly on a pole. Missing it by a mile. Trucks--beer can between his thighs-- driving & singing along to the Kinks 'Come Dancing' pointing a finger at The Pole beside him in the front seat.

The Pole, his beer mug half full of Vodka & ice-- not noticing-- watching the flourishing fields fly by. Flashes of his mother's stories racing through his head. Stories so outrageous to have ever happened to your mother.

Scarecrow battles of sword & fire terrorizing his mind. Flocks of sparrows exploding in a strikingly blue sky. Harboursing secrets that would make you cry. A polish countryside in ruins, a bald bombed tree watches in horror. Luscious fields of grain now cratered, catering to insane.

Generations of a family laid out in a row—on their backs in front of their farmhouse -- dead. One pretty -- blonde haired blue eyed-- Aryan child left alive. Fuck it, The Pole thought, but he still missed Donna.

The Pole, lives in the same apartment to this day. He moved upstairs when his Mother died. Playing chess, smoking cigarettes. Vodka turned into Mike's Hard Liquor. He blew his liver out. Now he drinks water & swears a lot.

He hasn't talked to The Princess, ever. Hasn't seen Donna—except once—she was walking through the mall at Christmas time. He didn't even bother calling out.