

Leaning into the gale, The Driver plows through knee-deep snow toward the back of his truck. When a blast of icy wind cuts into his face, his eyes clamp shut. *Good.* If he can't see beyond two feet, no one can see him.

He leans against the liftgate and allows the storm to pummel him. Lowering his head, he wonders why he's being subjected to this obstacle. His other hauls had gone off without a hitch – each late-night drive, each boat ride through freezing waters, each delivery to that mass of unforgiving stone.

To soothe The Driver's grief and agony, God came to his bed one night and whispered details of a MasterPlan into his ear. Since then, the plan has been unfolding perfectly. *But this fucking storm could ruin everything!*

His anger with the elements raging, The Driver feels the urge to smash his head against the truck!

*Make it stop!*

He knows he's losing his mind. No matter. He's committed to the plan. If it takes his life to complete it, he'll gladly give it.

*Son of a bitch!* The Driver screams. Then he unlocks the padlock on the steel bar, yanks the icy handle and pushes the heavy door upward till he hears the clank of the safety latch.

Hoisting himself into the truck's empty cargo box, he has a strange feeling. He pushes his hood back, eyes adjusting to the dark. Satisfied nothing has changed, he pulls the door down with a clang.

Outside, the wind screams back at him.

His flashlight beam pierces the darkness. There's a box at the base of each side-wall, the size of a freezer chest. To the untrained eye, the two boxes look like the truck's wheel wells. The Driver did the carpentry himself, adding the extra length, doubling the space inside. Installing heating ducts to feed warm air into the custom wheel wells had been critical. January in Maine, the mercury can drop below zero.

The Driver goes to the right wheel well, takes a small, cordless screwdriver from his parka, kneels and begins removing screws. The whine of the cordless tool in the empty space strikes a nerve in his psyche. He stops. Listens.

Only the howl of the storm.

Gloves off, hands freezing, he switches the tool from one hand to the other. When the last screw falls, he lifts the sheet metal and is immediately knocked back by the smell.

Taking a deep breath, he bends forward and plays the flashlight's beam into the space. His heart pounds as he pulls a woolen blanket out and throws it to the floor. The heat-duct-system worked well on his previous runs, but those nights weren't viciously cold like this. The Driver has been out of his heated cab only a few minutes, yet already he's shivering. What if it's just too cold?

After pulling a second blanket out of the well, he sees the bright orange of the *Minus-Thirty* sleeping bag. Grabbing the big tab at the corner, he slides the zipper open and moves the flashlight closer. Twin orbs bounce the light back at him like little mirrors.

Inside the coffin-like space, lifeless eyes stare at him. The Driver jerks back. Stark, grey, frozen, the eyes hold him. As he watches, a drop of liquid forms in the corner of one eye. With agonizing slowness, the drop leaks out, then slides down the frozen cheek.

The Driver holds his breath. He waits.

The eye closes.

When the eye opens, The Driver lets his breath go. *It isn't dead.*

He takes a leather case from his parka, unzips it and removes a long syringe. With his teeth, he pulls the cap off the needle and, once again, leans forward into the well