

Glacial Relations

By

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EXT. FOREST PATH TO THE BIG LAKE - DAY

GUS and AMOS are walking through the woods, Amos trailing behind Gus.

GUS

The *problem* is that Bill, Tom C, and Joe are all out without me! I could be pie-eyed and happy right now, and instead I'm stuck here with Amos and the birds, as always! Some luck I've got.

AMOS

(under his breath)

I never asked you to come.

GUS

What was that?

AMOS

Nothin', Gus, nothin'.

Gus regards him with suspicion but quickly drops it in favor of continuing to lament his current problem.

GUS

There's only so many hours you can spend with the same guy before you snap on 'em. If it weren't for Dad's stupid hunting club, I could be out on the town with people who are actually interesting. But 'course, here I am.

They reach the lake and stop for a second. Amos pauses to watch the birds circling over head. Gus hunts around, eventually breaking a small branch off a large tree.

GUS

This should work.

Gus plunges the stick into the ice covering the water, gauging its thickness. Satisfied, he tosses the stick behind him.

GUS

Let's go.

AMOS

(with hesitation)

Are you sure, Gus? It looks a bit thin

in the middle.

GUS

Chicken, are we now? You think you know better than me? Your head is entirely too big, Amos.

Gus sets off across the ice and Amos, after taking a second of pause to sigh, follows after hesitantly. Amos sees birds circling overhead, and watches them as he walks.

GUS

(as they walk)

You know, you've been real snotty as of late. What happened to meek little Amos, who couldn't do anything himself, and followed me around like a shadow? It seems like all you care about these days are those dumb birds. Don't know why I still go around with you, all sullen and spineless and-

There is a sudden crash as the ice beneath Gus shatters and he is plunged into the Big Lake. Amos is left shock-still, gazing at Gus floundering the water with wide eyes.

GUS

(with a panicked yell)

Amos! Amos! Help me!

Gus continues to struggle in the water. Amos continues to watch in silence, conflicted. Gus grasps at Amos' ankle, and wets the bottom of his pants. Amos looks down at his best friend struggling desperately. This is the first time Gus has needed him. All at once, Amos comes to a revelation. His eyes harden, and his mouth sets in a grim line. He takes a step back, and then another. Gus' mouth opens in a silent scream as his grip releases and he dips beneath the water. A bird swoops down to sit on Amos' shoulder, and watches Gus as his eyes close underwater. As the bird flies away, a red feather is left on the ice. Amos stands still, now deep inside his head. He turns and walks back unsteadily the way he came, the wet spot still visible on his pant leg.

EXT. THE BIG LAKE - NIGHT

There is a flurry of activity as constables and detectives work around a crime scene. We see TWO DETECTIVES, one clearly older and of higher standing than the other, look down as they watch Gus' body float in the water.

DETECTIVE 1
Cryin' shame, isn't it?

DETECTIVE 2
Young guy, too. Probably felt real
indestructable to be going out on ice
as thin as this.

Detective 1 reaches out of frame and picks up a red feather
from off the ground. He contemplates it as he speaks.

DETECTIVE 1
(fiddling with the feather)
Let's get this kid to the morgue. Have
our guy down there get a look at him.

DETECTIVE 2
Sure thing boss.

Detective 2 turns and starts walking in the direction of the
hubbub. We hear him yell to a colleague to get the coroner on
the phone. Detective 1 stays in place, still fiddling with
the feather. He hears birds chirping over head, and looks up
and watches them as they circle.

EXT. AMOS' PORCH - NIGHT

Amos is sitting on the porch, hunched over on the steps and
regarding his own hands, as one might a stranger. His eyes
are wide and ignores the sound of birds in the distance. BILL
runs up to Amos, his breathing heavy and his eyes panicked.

BILL
Have you seen Gus today? They said the
police found some kind of body in the
Big Lake, and no one's got a sight of
'em all day.

Amos continues to watch his hands, not showing any sign of
hearing what Bill had just said. Bill watches Amos
hesitantly, disconcerted by his vacant eyes and lack of
response.

BILL
Amos? Have you seen Gus?

AMOS
(looking up slowly)
What?

BILL
(confused)
I asked if you had seen Gus...

AMOS
Oh, Gus... No, I've not seen him.

Bill believes Amos completely and sighs with panic. He moves to sit beside Amos on the steps. Amos returns to watching his hands.

BILL
God, I'm so worried about him. Usually can't get the little guy of my tail, so not hearing from him all day, coupled with a body down at the Big Lake... well, it's not looking real good right now.

Bill looks to Amos for a response. Amos remains watching his hands.

BILL
Are you alright Amos? You're freakin' me out, man.

AMOS
(after a extended pause)
You know anythin' about molting season?

BILL
Molting? As in birds?

AMOS
(nodding)
Ice is meltin'. Birds are droppin' their old winter plumage, getting ready for spring.

BILL
(lost and uncertain)
Sounds real cool, Amos... What does this have anything to do with anything?

AMOS
(looking up into the distance)
If the birds had kept their old winter coats, certainly things would have been easier. No uncertainty, wondering

if the predators are around the corner, waiting to eat you. But they molt regardless. Why do you think that is, Bill?

Bill is, at this point, thoroughly freaked out, but still morbidly curious. Amos looks back to his hands.

BILL

I don't know Amos. Why do you suppose?

AMOS

Gus used to say this is a dog-eat-dog world, and the only way to get ahead is to know who number one is. I figure the birds know the only way to live as they need to is to let go of the burden attached to them.

Bill is beginning to catch on. He sits up straighter, as the porch lights begin to glow. Night is falling rapidly. Amos looks up and straight into Bill's eyes.

AMOS

We have a past to bury, Bill. Mine, just so happened to bury itself in the Big Lake.

Bill stands up and starts stumbling backwards.

BILL

You mean...?

Amos stands and turns to the door. He looks back to Bill with a certain, but melancholy expression.

AMOS

'Reckon they'll come knocking soon. I'll see 'ya, Bill.

Amos walks inside the house, looking back for one last, long moment. He looks up at the birds, and steels his expression. He is ready for what will come. He is guilty, but not regretful. What had to be done was done, and the birds have begun molting.

THE END