

# Wild turkey chase

by Mathew Paust

Walking back to the SUV Jamie stepped more lightly and with more energy than I'd ever noticed with her, on the verge of dancing, although her face was unreadable when she turned to me and spoke, in that same girlish voice I'd heard moments before. "Everyone up here calls me Gertie, except Uncle M. He's always so formal." I started to respond but she cut me off. "Don't ever call me that name, formal or informal, okay? Forget you heard it." After a heartbeat she added, "Please."

She ignored the shiny copper Nissan parked on a side street within sight of the SUV. I assumed she knew it contained our guardian shadow, else I'd have seen her swipe a finger over her smartphone screen a couple of times to make sure. Shiny copper was the year's new color. I'd seen a glistening F-150 pickup hued the same in the driveway of a bungalow near her uncle's. Been noticing its siblings here and there more and more in recent months. Cheaper presumably than the tradition of redesigning three-dimensional illusions for cutting-edge cachet—*beautiful swept-wing mastery!*--guaranteed to irritate jonesy neighbors or double your money back.

The SUV's interior lights welcomed us when Jamie unlocked her door with the remote transmitter. Mine clicked a second later. Seated inside, she turned to me, grinning. "Let's take Donnie on a turkey chase. He's new at this." She kept her eyes straight ahead as we cruised past the side street where the copper car was parked. The cervical collar kept me from craning my neck to see if "Donnie" had joined us on our way. We were headed back to the main road beyond the town, where presumably we'd commence the final leg of our journey to where Jamie's father lay low in anticipation of becoming the prime "person of interest" in a capital murder investigation.

"Turkey chase same as wild goose chase?"

“Sure is, Boo Boo, but up here things are more real. Ever go turkey hunting?”

“Only at Food Lion for holidays. Unless you mean Wild Turkey, and Dad and I stopped drinking the hard stuff after Mom died.”

“Supposed to be the other way around, innit?”

“What they say. I guess we decided to accept that things had gotten real enough down there.” I rolled my eyes her way but detected no response. “Losing her sudden like that put us both a tad too close to the deep end, and we knew it. I don't miss it anymore, getting buzzed.”

