



**The Light
on Pigeon Hill**

Robert Allen Pringle

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Chapter Three

Billy's mom looked across the table at her son, getting handsome now at fourteen. She glanced back down at the note from the school office, cleared her throat and said, "I hope this wasn't premeditated on your part."

"Oh no Mom, one second I was standing by my locker, the next I got shoved hard into them. Here, feel the bump on the back of my head." He inclined his noggin so she could touch it. She then made him take off his shirt, and examined his torso.

"You're going to have bruises on your shoulder blades," she murmured. "Do you feel any pain, aches?"

"Some, but I'll be okay, I can handle it." Rusty was lying on the floor, his head up as if he were following the conversation.

"This other boy, Thompson, tell me about him."

"He's mean mom, looks like a big angry pig. Nobody likes him, and he's always causing trouble."

"I see," she arose and turned towards the stove. "I'm going to cook dinner now. Your father will probably call around seven like he always does. We'll see what he has to say. Go get changed, and take that bag of papers out back and burn them. I'll call you when it's ready."

Francis Bovard, Frank, was a truck driver. He owned his own rig and was contracting with Mayflower. He was a strong, athletic man. He hauled households as they paid the most, and most likely involved a tip at the end of the move. He was usually gone for months at a time. Amy, his wife and the proud mother of young Billy coped with this, and took care of all things domestic.

Their home was situated on forty acres at the top of Pigeon Hill. They had about five acres of basically flat ground where the house, garage, and shed were located. The rest went down the hill, and was forested. Pigeon Hill Road went on past their house to Little Hickory Road, which

is how the bus came. There was a turnaround across the road from their driveway. No buses up or down that hill.

Billy of course had explored and played in those woods. He had a special place where a large flat stone had settled on top of three other large rocks, creating a sheltered place. He called it his cave man house. There was a ring of rocks there when he first saw it, and he liked to look at it and think about the Indians he imagined cooking deer or bear meat there. That Indians had quite possibly used the place in the past was evidenced by a weathered carving on one of the three base rocks, a crescent and three horizontal lines. He and Rusty spent a lot of time there.

He was thinking about Presley as he watched the garbage burn. She wasn't in any of his classes but they shared a study hall. They had never really spoken. Not one on one like they had this afternoon, why hadn't he noticed that she was so pretty before? Rusty came up to him and sat down. There was a stick in his mouth, and he had his paw up to shake. Rusty wanted to play fetch. Billy obliged.

Presley at that moment was in her room at home, texting with one of her girlfriends. "It was crazy when Tootie pushed him. That look in Billy's eyes...I got warm inside."

"Wow!! He's cute and nice. TOOTIE SUCKS."

"I grabbed his book and gave it back when we went out to the buses."

"He say anything?"

"Something idk but he smiled at me."

"Then what?"

"I smiled back and took off. Lol"

"Good luck!!"

"Riiiiiiight LOL!! gg"

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Presley lived in Tionesta with her mom, and little sister Amanda. Her mom had never been married, and Presley never knew her dad. He had left before she was born. She had it kinda tough growing up, but they got by. Her mom worked at the Farm Fresh supermarket as a cashier. She had gotten Presley a smart phone for her birthday. Presley earned enough to keep the service on by cleaning at the fire hall after bingo and events. Her mom dated one of the volunteers.

She had dark brown hair past her shoulders, and blue eyes. She was athletic, and generally had a good perspective on things. She laughed a lot. Like most teenage girls she worried that her breasts were too small, her neck too thin, and a pimple was a disaster. She didn't care much for make-up, or wearing flirty clothes. She didn't care about much she supposed, maybe One Direction, they were hotties!

"Presley, come and eat," her mother Sherry called.

Amanda was already at the table, forking tater tots on her plate. Sherry pulled a hot, flat pan of fish sticks out of the oven and doled them out. "There's ketchup and I made some tartar sauce too," she said as she sat down. Sherry thanked God for feeding them one more time.

Amanda, who was eight years old looked at her sister and asked, "What happened at the school today, Jennie told me her sister said you were in a fight?"

"No Dork, I was *at* a fight."

"What fight?" Sherry had to ask.

"That ignorant Tootie Thompson pushed Billy Bovard into the lockers. Billy got mad, and fought him." Presley replied, after swallowing a tater tot and ketchup. "I just happened to be there."

"Was there lotsa blood?" Amanda chipped in.

"No, no blood. Just some punches and rolling around on the floor. Mr. Daubenspeck broke it up. I was soooo hoping Billy would knock him out, everybody hates Tootie."

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“Look Mom, Presley likes Billy Bovard! You gonna kiss him, have his babies?” Amanda giggled.

Presley glared at her, “Hey, how come Bruce Jenner doesn’t sit when he pees? Because he’s ah man duh.”

“Girls, please.” Sherry smiled to herself. “It’s bingo night tonight, they’ll be getting ready to open the doors in an hour. You’re staying with Jenny tonight Amanda?”

“Yeah, her mom rented some Disney movie,” Amanda rolled her eyes.

“Okay, I have to get a shower and get ready. Presley, you come over to the fire hall at nine like usual, right?”

“Yes Mother,” her turn to roll her eyes.

After dinner Presley went back to her room and checked her phone, two messages. One from her girlfriend and the other was from William Bovard. She caught her breath. She touched the icon.

“Hi, I just wanted to thank you again for saving my book.”

She read it about six times, and sat on her bed. She stared at her phone. Finally she touched the write a reply space.

“No prob, wish you would have knocked him out.” She hesitated, and then pushed send. She waited... no reply.

Billy had taken about half an hour to work up the courage to send one text. She didn’t reply right away, and the house phone rang. It was his dad.

As his mother read the note to her husband, Billy stood there quietly. He got along great with his dad, and would go trucking with him in the summer. Not just to joy ride either, he worked. Moving furniture and boxes filled with God knows what, it was hard physical labor but it paid well too. His new Polaris four wheeler he bought with his own money was testament to that.

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His father was a kind, thoughtful man, just the right temperament for the guy you wanted to handle your twenty thousand dollar baby grand or the carton containing the family bible and cherished pictures. His mom said, "... they may not have changed that, I'll read the rules. Yes, okay... yep, he's right here." She handed him the phone.

"Hi Dad, where you at today?"

"It appears I'm in Perplexed, Texas, getting ready to go to Pissed Off, Pennsylvania. Tell me what happened." Frankie said in an even, firm voice.

Billy explained the event, and gave a good description of Tootie Thompson.

"So," his father sighed, "You have a bully to contend with. Tell me, do they still give whacks with a paddle these days?"

"Geez Dad, I don't know. Never heard of that being done before. That would hurt though wouldn't it?"

"Well yeah, but only for a little while, remember how it was when you got spanked?"

"Yeah, that hurt too."

"Right, but you got over it, and you learned a lesson. Keep in mind that your friend Turtle would get hurt too."

"Tootie, Dad. His name is Tootie. But then he would kill me."

"Hmmm, maybe, usually bullies like to dish out pain but are never willing to take it. Put your Mom back on please, love ya." They soon had a plan.

On Monday morning, Billy walked into the office to find his mom waiting, along with Tootie and his mother, who was an older, wider, female version of her son. Mr. Daubenspeck was there and two other students that Billy vaguely remembered as being there at the fight. They all got called into the conference room.

Over the weekend Amy had googled the school rule book on her computer and read all the details. She discovered that corporal punishment was still approved, but hadn't been rendered since the 1980's; the rule stated that the students could opt for that instead of detention due to hardship, but it had to be unanimous. She had explained all that to her son, and gave him some quick pointers on bully psychiatry.

The opposing parties sat at the long table facing each other. The Principal, Mr. Meulbauer read the infraction and called on Mr. Daubenspeck for testimony. It was soon established that, yes indeed, a fistfight had occurred. He called in the other two witnesses one at a time, and both gave similar accounts. The thrown book had not been mentioned.

Principal Meulbauer pronounced both boys guilty, and was about to dole out the punishment when Mrs. Bovard asked a question. "As it would be a hardship for me, and I'm sure for Mrs. Thompson as well, to drive to the school every day to pick the boys up after detention, isn't there another option?"

Tootie's mom picked up on this and nodded, thinking about the cost of the extra gas she would have to spend. Her boyfriend wouldn't like that.

"Option?" Meulbauer appeared to be taken aback.

"To be prepared, as my son has never had a rule infraction before, I looked into the school rules and guidelines. Page eight, paragraph three states, that an option for corporal punishment as a quick solution to any hardship could be incurred if both parties agreed."

This was Meulbauer's first year of being the principal, and to give him credit, he went to the rule book and read the passage. He placed the booklet on the table. "You are correct Mrs. Bovard. However, I can't seem to recall that form of punishment being used recently." He looked at both parties. "Very well, William Bovard, do you wish to choose corporal punishment?"

"Yes, Mr. Meulbauer."

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“Kevin Thompson, what about you?”

Tootie, not being the sharpest light bulb in the cookie jar, and having no idea what corporal punishment meant said, “Sure, why not?” Meulbauer smiled for the first time.

“Mr. Daubenspeck, as the teacher involved you have the option to mete out the punishment or you may defer it to me.”

Daubenspeck, a six foot two, two hundred and fifty pound ex-marine who had once sat on a tack that Tootie was strongly suspected of placing on the seat of his chair, thought it was a fine idea. One problem, where was the paddle?

After a brief search it was located in the bottom drawer of the last file cabinet. It was two feet long, an inch thick, and six inches wide. There was six half inch holes drilled in it, it was made of white oak. Just the sight of it had struck terror in the hearts of many a past student.

Meulbauer returned with it and handed it to Daubenspeck. Tootie sat up when he saw it for the first time, and began to say something. Principal Meulbauer interrupted him, and thanked the mothers for attending and ushered them out of the room. Telling them they would see their sons at the usual time that evening.

He turned to the two boys. “If you don’t know, the Commonwealth recommends two whacks as sufficient punishment. Mr. Daubenspeck, you may proceed.”

Tootie spoke up, “You mean you’re going to hit us with that board?” he was starting to sweat, and his upper lip was quivering.

Daubenspeck who took a practice swing that made a whistling noise said, “Yep, the board of education, twice on your posterior. Who wants to go first?” Neither boy moved. “Very well, eenie, meenie, minie, moe. You first Mr. Thompson, place your hands flat on the table and lean forward.”

Tootie started to whimper, but did what he was told. Billy stood there wide eyed, not taking a breath. Daubenspeck reached clear back as far as he could and let fly. KERWHACK!!! Tootie grunted as he rose up on his toes. He managed to sob once, before the next one lifted his feet off

the ground. He was bawling out tears as Meulbauer signed his hall pass before telling him to be quiet as he returned to class, and pointed to the door.

Billy swallowed and approached the table, placing his hands on it without being told. Daubenspeck waited a couple minutes before tapping him lightly on the butt. "Two whacks, how hard, is not stated in the rules. You're a good student Billy, you and your mother made my day. You're all done here."

As the principal handed him his pass he said, "What happened in this room, stays in this room. Are we clear on that?"

"Yes sir," Billy walked out into the hall with a look of wonder on his face.

Meulbauer turned to his fellow teacher and said, "I noticed a bottle of whiskey in the file cabinet, care for a shot?" Daubenspeck would fondly remember this day for the rest of his life.