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Artist Linden Frederick — Night Stories: Cozy to Creepy

by Christine Parrish

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Night Stories, a show of 15 oil-on-linen paintings by Linden Frederick and the 15 short stories by literary luminaries like Lily King, Ann Patchett, Louise Erdrich, Andre Dubus III, Luanne Rice, Tess Gerritson and Richard Russo in the companion book of the same name, garnered a lot of national media attention when the show opened at the Forum Gallery in New York early this summer.

"Liquor" by Linden Frederick, 2017. Oil on linen. (Photos courtesy of Forum Gallery)

Night Stories opens next week at the Center for Maine Contemporary Art in Rockland. The show will run through November 5.

To me, Linden Frederick's paintings of a solitary store and a deserted highway at twilight, a single light in a large dark house, a tarnished car from an earlier era and an ice machine in winter depict a faded version of small-town America that is drained of nostalgia; this isn't the way life used to be, it's the way life really is.

Each short story in the companion book is inspired by one of the paintings in the Night Stories collection.

Critics of Frederick's work say his paintings are too much like a stage set; Frederick says that is the whole point. It's up to him to set the mood and provide the spark. It's up to you, the observer, to people the paintings.

In my conversation with Frederick, I kept returning to his motivation to paint pictures with an implied observer and implied participant, even while we talked about painting technique and what writers like Elizabeth Strout, who won a Pulitzer for "Olive Kitteridge"; Anthony Doerr, the author of "All the Light We Cannot See"; and Dennis Lehane, author of "Mystic River" and "Shutter Island," brought to their interpretation of Frederick's paintings.

CP: *I'm not a painter, so I can't talk about technique with any authority. What I want to explore is your motivation. What you paint and why. What attracts you to the subject matter?*

LF: *It's a feeling that attracts me first. I'm attracted to real situations that real people face. There is a certain feeling I?get when I see a scene. I?know that when I'm done with the picture, it will convey a certain mood.*

CP: *What is the mood?*

LF: *It's thoughtful, ... pensive, but it's also about human beings.... You know when you hear a piece of music and it goes right through you? It's like that. You wouldn't say it reminds you of a girlfriend you had in high school — although it may — or it reminds you of sadness or human happiness or a dance or a snappy tune. You don't make those conscious decisions, but it does (remind you), none the less. That's what these scenes do to me when I see them and then it's my job to convey that feeling.*

Look at (the painting) "Liquor" ... What's going on here? There is a bicycle right there. What is it about? Who owns that car? I am kind of setting a stage set for a story. That's not new for Night Stories. I've always felt that way.

CP: *But you aren't writing the story.*

LF: *I'm not writing the story. I'm just seeing the potential of a story. The viewer brings their own story.*

CP: *How did you choose the scene in "Liquor"?*

LF: *I was visiting my brother in Florida. I drove by this sign in orange and I said: I have to do a painting. So, I just made a note of where it was. A few days later I went back at dusk, set up a camera and took some snapshots because the time of day is so fleeting, so I took some snapshots before the optimal moment (when the light is right), then I took some photos of the moment.*

I am not trying to recreate exactly what is there in the scene; if I was, I would take a photograph and be done, because what is the point of painting it? The photographs are about getting information: the shape of the car, the size of the bricks.

CP: *So it's not realism you're after?*

LF: *It's a mood. What I like about the time of day I paint is that a camera cannot capture it the same way a human eye can. It's either overexposed in some areas or underexposed, so I filter (the scene) through my own experience and my intention and I come up with a finished painting ... the liquor sign just gave me a feeling:?the word 'liquor,' the color of it, the size of it, all those things and the surroundings, all those things add up for me.*

CP: *The pop of orange, the color first, then the content and surroundings.*

LF: *The color is a note in the field of everything else surrounding it. If that same sign was in a shopping mall with a lot of cars and people, like a Kentucky Fried Chicken, I wouldn't do it.*

This is isolated.

I often do this kind of flat front, square approach to something. It's a design. I'm designing that square; where the building is placed, where the color is in that square, all of those things add up to the total. I can't really describe what that total is, but I get a certain feeling when I see it.

CP: *So, it was a very conscious decision about placement in "Liquor." Some of it is off center, but the horizontal plane of the painting is centered and there is a lot of foreground.*

LF: *It was very conscious. A lot of foreground creates distance from the viewer and that road is kind of like a barrier; you are an observer. If you were on a side lot, it would be different, but here you are an observer, almost a stalker.*

CP: *Yes, I think your paintings are both intimate and remote. There is this watchers-observers stance in a lot of them. They feel very personal and also open to interpretation, like you say. But I have heard people say: "Where are the people? It's kind of creepy."*

LF: *I did a picture years ago called "Alley," probably in the mid-80s, and I started to get into that mood. I?thought, hmm, I really have something here. Some people — and this is kind of the whole point of it all — some people would say, "Ah, I?just love that picture. I am just so drawn to it," and other people would say, "Oh, man, that is so creepy."*

CP: *Because there are no people in it.*

LF: *Yes. If there were people in it, then it becomes about the people and that's what I always say: This is about you, the viewer. Not about somebody you are looking at. The people are implied. The car is a surrogate. There is an implied person there. And from every lighted window.*

My pictures generally follow this little tightrope where one person's experience could push them over to the creepy side and another person would feel warm and fuzzy and attracted to something cozy in the painting, so it goes from cozy to creepy depending on your own experience.

Frederick is often described as a realist painter, but many of his pictures contain elements from different scenes.

CP: *Is it often you do a composite?*

LF: *Yeah, because I add and subtract. These pictures are not really about places. One standard answer I give when people ask where it is, I say, "Where do you want it to be?" because that is really the impression I want to give.*

CP: *This is not documentation. This is an internal landscape?*

LF: *Yes.*

CP: *Do you always work at that light between day and night?*

LF: *Pretty much.*

CP: *Is part of the reason because it is the time of change between the day as a more extroverted time and the more intimate and introverted night?*

LF: *Yes ... and there is a certain urgency at this time of night to seek shelter. ...Perhaps (I have) a subconscious motivation to (capture that).*

CP: *This painting, "Ice," has a lot more going on in it ... if I am thinking about "Liquor," I'm thinking: 'Who's in the liquor store?' It's so deserted around it. In "Ice," even though there is nobody in the picture, it has a lot more pieces; the lights in different buildings ...*

LF: *I think "Ice" has all the stuff I?do. It's got interior lights and questions and rooms. It really screams human beings.... There is sort of a mom-and-pop business with an attic room, and people in different houses.*

Maybe I like it for technical reasons, not emotional or psychological ones. The challenges here, the different types of lights I had to replicate; the street light, the interior light, and it's a winter scene.... The actual color and graphics, the execution: I?think I?nailed it.

CP: *How long does it take you to do a painting like "Liquor" or "Ice"? I am not so much interested in the actual time it took to paint them, but the thought process that you went through to paint them. How long did that take?*

LF: *Forty years.*

At this point, much of it is intuitive. I mix colors and I don't even think about it. I know it is going to work. I know what's right.

I could explain the process to a new painter, but they don't have the forty years to know how to do it. Take my friend Jonathan (Portland violin maker Jonathan Cooper, who Frederick is apprenticed to as a beginning violin maker). He has made 425 violins. He does things naturally. He feels it. He takes a top and can feel (what it can be). I don't have that yet.

It's the same with painting. I feel the potential in it and then use my experience to tie it all together into a picture.

CP: *What about the actual painting process? How does that work?*

LF: *For all of these pictures in Night Stories, I did a five-inch study. That's what the authors saw, so I polished these up. Most of them never saw a big picture.*

At that point, for the study, I work out the mistakes. I figured it out early on (in my career). I would make a big picture and make a mistake and ooh, ah, I would have to start over.

At some point, I decided this had to be more of a process; do a study, make sure that works, and then do a bigger picture. So, I started doing studies. Sometimes in color. Sometimes in black and white. Sometimes both.

CP: *You do a study every time?*

LF: *Every time. These are 36-inch paintings (in Night Stories). I would definitely do a study for a painting this size because I've learned it is a process.*

CP: *How do the studies differ from the bigger paintings?*

LF: *Very little. Size and amount of detail. Once you get bigger, then you have to give the viewer a little more information. I always do my pictures this way; the larger ones I do monochromatic.*

There is a myth that artists go into the studio every day and just do what they want, paint this creative glow. To me, it's work. It's not this organic flow where ten minutes before lunch you come up with something.

I say I like having the idea and I like seeing the picture on a gallery wall.

Everything else is really hard work.

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When Frederick had the idea to ask authors to write short stories based on his paintings, he approached friend Richard Russo, prize-winning author of "Nobody's Fool" and "Empire Falls," and asked what he thought of the idea.

LF: *I already had about five or six authors who are collectors (of my work). Rick said he thought it was a great idea and said he would be glad to introduce me to more writers. He really brought the project together because of that.*

CP: *Were there any surprises for you in the stories they wrote, in terms of how they interpreted your paintings?*

LF: *I wouldn't say surprises. I would say it was really kind of interesting to see what people came up with.*

Some of the writers wrote outside their genre a little bit and tried experimentation, which I really liked. Rick Russo usually uses a certain straight-man humor in his books. His story wasn't humorous. He said he had always wanted to write this story and thought this was a really great vehicle to do that.

Russo wrote the story "Downstairs" to go with a painting of the same name. A single light in a basement window of a brick two-story house in an urban residential neighborhood at dusk indicates someone is inside.

LF: *His story "Downstairs" is cool, it's creepy, but it doesn't have the humor that he normally writes with; which is fine. I love this story.*

CP: *Did you get to know all the writers?*

LF: *A little. I knew some and got to know others during the process.... There was a bit of back and forth with the writers: word count, what do you think of this or that.*

Anthony Doerr, for instance, was at an event in Portland and I met him.

CP: *That was a fabulous book he wrote: "All the Light We Cannot See" ... What was he like to work with?*

LF: *Tony ... is the nicest guy you can imagine. He was cooperative, responsive, engaging, (and) ... enthusiastic about the project. You would think at his level, it would be a bother. It wasn't like that. He was excited about it. All the writers were excited about the project.*

Richard Russo — Excerpt from "Downstairs"

Except for a light in the basement the house is dark when he pulls in. Feeling the old familiar surge of panic, he wonders if his sister has heard his tires on the loose gravel. Her bedroom is on the second floor at the back of the house, so maybe not. In which case he could just back out and return to the city. But no, he'd lay odds on her being in the front room, standing at one of the dark windows, peering out from between the drawn blinds. She's probably been standing there since the sun went down, waiting for him, though he's told her that he might not make the trip, that he's weary to the point of exhaustion of this ghoulish charade. She's not a gifted thinker, his sister. All her life she's arrived at bizarre conclusions based on dubious logic. Unnervingly, though, she's seldom wrong about him, a fact that's always made him just a little crazy.

She opens the door before he can knock. "Roger."

"Maggie," he says, his voice sounding funny after so many hours alone in the car.

Stepping back into the hall, she teeters and he instinctively reaches out, remembering too late that this is what she always does. And that he always falls for it.

God, he hates her. This is what he always thinks, laying eyes on his sister again.

Richard Russo, formerly of Camden and now based in Portland, received the 2002 Pulitzer Prize for his novel "Empire Falls." He has written several other novels, a collection of short stories, a memoir, and television and film scripts.

Doerr wrote a story titled "Save-a-Lot" to a painting of the same name. The view is of a narrow side

yard between a functional turn-of-the-century two-story and a one-story with cheap siding and a side porch. A bright streetlight casts shadows of leaves on the porch, with its uneven brick walkway, simple steps, and plastic lawn chairs. A discarded lawn rake leans against the unpainted wooden rail.

Dark rooftops and silhouettes of neighborhood trees partially obscure a bright-blue and orange neon Save-A-Lot discount store sign in the distance. The colors match the more muted colors in an autumn sky fading towards night.

LF: *That's based on a place in Portland. There is a hardware store at the bottom of the hill and this is a couple of streets up.*

Doerr puts Bunny, a young mother doing fine until she injures herself at her nursing care job and starts filching pain meds, her young daughter from a hook-up, and 70-year-old Alfred, the recently widowed and now-overwhelmed landlord, into the scene.

And then Doerr does the job journalism strives to do: give grief and addiction emotional weight.

Interestingly, as in "All the Light We Cannot See," the young girl becomes the one capable of leading the others out of darkness.

Anthony Doerr — Excerpt from "Save-A-Lot"

On the one hand there's Bunny. She flees Texas at seventeen, winds up in Maine, swears she'll never go back. Doesn't drink, doesn't party, always on time. She earns a nursing degree, moves to Bangor, gets hired at Woodlands Assisted, administers laxatives, helps old women into showers.

"Know the best thing about getting old, Mrs. Lar- kin? Being old doesn't seem so old anymore!"

Residents adore her. Jude the janitor nicknames her The Prius: small, sensible, and a million miles to the gallon.

The year Bunny turns twenty-two, she takes home $49,500. Then Mike Ramirez, a dishwasher at Sea Dog Sushi, gets her drunk on sake, knocks her up, and bolts for Tampa. More than once during her pregnancy Bunny wakes in the night and stands in front of the mirror and sees Momma's dark kitchen, hears Momma's drunken voice: *You're sucking hind teat, Bunny, you're dumb as a box of hair, you're not worth spit....*

On the other hand there's Alfred. Seventy and still operational. He and Agnes own six rental properties in the Bangor-Brewer area, plus the up-down duplex at 129 Brimmer and the little red-doored colonial next door—home.

Agnes records rents on the laptop, pays the mort- gages, processes leases. Alfred patches drywall, shovels snow, pots the occasional begonia. A&A Rentals, a true partnership, "Wife got the brains and I got the snowblower," he tells tenants, har-har. His parents died with nothing but Agnes and Alfred have a time-share in Myrtle Beach. They have a thousand-dollar Yorkipoo named Carl.

Landlord and landlady, Alfred always liked the sound. Lords of the land. In daydreams he and Agnes stroll beneath moss-hung oaks, Carl trotting out front. All this gets smashed one Valentine's Day, when Agnes, returning from quilting club, Carl in her lap, falls asleep behind the wheel outside Bucksport and launches her Taurus over the guardrail into the Penobscot....

Bunny's disaster is slower. One day when Hanako is six, Bunny ruptures something in her neck loading Mr. Crowley into his Aquajoy bath lift. For a full minute she stays on all fours, lanyard swinging, send-ing prayers through the ceiling.

Don't be serious.

But it is....

Anthony Doerr, who lives in Idaho, won the 2015 Pulitzer Prize for his novel "All the Light We Cannot See." He has written five books, including "The Shell Collector" and "Memory Wall."

Frederick's painting "50 Percent" was picked up as a subject by writer Lois Lowry, author of "The Giver."

The picture shows a shop showroom lit up at night like a stage set at the front of a white ranch house with black shutters. The front lawn is neatly mowed, but not landscaped, giving the scene a pared-down look typical of Linden Frederick's paintings — and one that critics tend to compare to Edward Hopper's 20th-century American realism, though their styles are very different.

Several dress mannequins, one without a head, another nude, but most in prom gowns, stand in various poses behind the glass, which is marked with a small "50 percent" sign. A large display sign in the yard, lit up like an old-fashioned marquee for a drive-in, is blank.

CP: *Where is this?*

LF: *Where would you like it to be?*

CP: *This is one I go back to over and over. I feel like I've seen that.*

LF: *This is a couple miles from where I grew up in upstate New York. My sister actually bought her wedding dress there some 30 years ago.*

Lowry's matching story, "Vital Signs," captures familiarity and camaraderie that eases towards vigilantism among four old friends of retirement age and questionable health in a small town where, more often than not, change is beyond their control.

Lois Lowry — excerpt from "Vital Signs," based on the painting "50 Percent"

...But the monstrosity they spoke of now, over their Thursday beer, was the display sign, rimmed with lights, outside the home of Grafton Larrabee, whose wife Janelle had died either a year ago, or last fall, or sometime between, or maybe a little earlier....

"Ovaries. She had bad ovaries," Ralph Dubois said.

"Yeah. Well, before she had that, she got Martinelli to put up the sign. She was going to have a store."

"Whoever heard of a store in a house?" Ralph stood and lifted his weathered jacket from the hook at the end of the booth.

"She was pretty good at sewing. My wife, when she went to Weight Watchers, she got Janelle to take in a lot of clothes."

"Yeah, but that's one thing. It's something else to have a whole store."

"She had an idea to make prom dresses. They got a zoning variance," Hal Bingham said. He reached for his own jacket, took a crushed cap from its pocket and squinted through the tavern window to see if the sky still threatened rain.

"Is that variance still good, once she's dead? Wouldn't something like that expire?"

"Yeah, after she expires, the store license expires, seems like." Ralph took his car keys from the pockets of his jacket and examined them, clinking them along the metal ring until he came to the one for the Camry. "Should, anyways."

"Tell you what: somebody oughta expire that damn sign. Makes the whole town look cheap." Pete Parnell was a past president of Rotary; he cared about the town—well, they all cared about the town—but Pete, at this moment, was the one who first voiced the idea, the vague thought that there might be a way for the town to rid itself of the odd, lightbulb-rimmed display that was a blot on Grafton Larrabee's lawn at the far end of Ocean Road.

After that—well, after that, the idea was there, unformed, just a vague thing like a sort of a tooth- ache, something you poked at now and then and tried to forget.

Lois Lowry has written forty-five books, several of which have been adapted for film and stage, including her best known title, "The Giver," starringJeff Bridges and Meryl Streep.

Frederick turns to "Police," a painting showing the parking lot and side of a neighborhood convenience store lit up on the outside to give the store a feeling of something to gather around in the dark, or something to watch, like a campfire.

LF: *Let's go from creepy to cozy. You have a potentially volatile scenario, then you've got this late night convenience store and a police car and there is also a donut shop.*

So, is the cop at the donut shop or is he coming to do something at the convenience store with its beer signs? That's a bit of a Rick Russoism; he would throw in the cop and the donut shop because it is potentially humorous.

CP: *But the humor is off to the side, subtle and almost off the picture. Almost sly.*

LF: *Right.*

Joshua Ferris' accompanying story, "Maniacs," tells the story of two Florida boys from the point of view of one of them. They are from different family circumstances and on the brink of making hasty decisions that could determine their futures.

I didn't find coziness in any of the short stories in the companion book.

I found people shaped by lack of money, by accident, by age, by mostly bad choices and a bit of good luck thrown in with a heaping lot of bad, and by resilience. Maybe, just sometimes, the characters moved towards redemption. These are the recurring themes in the companion book, "Night Stories."

Joshua Ferris — excerpt from "Maniacs," based on the painting "Police"

We had shoplifted before but that was the first time we broke into someone's home. It was easy-peasy-lemon-squeezy. They'd left a sliding-glass door unlocked. "Come on!" he said.

"I don't know," I said. "What if we get caught?"

"We won't."

We mostly just walked around. All the rooms were quiet. In the dining room we took seats at the table and pretended to cut into a couple of steak dinners. "How was your day, sweetheart?"

"Oh, thank you for asking, darling. And yours?"

"Oh, enchante," I said.

Shane's mom had a lot of jewelry. Necklaces and rings, stuff like that. We said it was treasure worth millions. We ran our fingers through it and held it up to the light. We didn't take any of it, though. We took only nylons, half a pack of cigarettes, all the pocket change we could find, a package of Oreos, and a canister of just-add-water lemonade. We also took the cat.

Joshua Ferris's first novel, "Then We Came to the End" (2007), won the PEN/Hemingway Award and his third novel, "To Rise Again at a Decent Hour," won the Dylan Thomas Prize. His most recent work, "Dinner Party," is a short story collection.

Dennis Lehane's story, "Offramp," based on a painting by the same name, has all of them. It features a divorced, middle-aged, about-to-retire U.S. Marshal driving a rural Ohio highway at night on his way to find a "white-trash, half-ass fugitive" addict who had failed to show up in court for shoplifting.

LF: *I love the title of this picture, the sentiment, the placement of the car, the time of day, the potential for narrative. I just saw this potential for the mood.*

One car has turned onto the highway offramp, headlights on. The top half of the picture is all sky, the foreground is taken up by the north and southbound lanes of Route 1, and the on and off ramps. It's a mini-tangle of highway intersections carved into an early winter landscape where bare trees and the approaching night are not yet softened by snow.

CP: *You cut this view right across the middle, too, just what I was warned not to do when framing a photograph.*

LF: *I did cut this right in half, compositionally.*

CP: *There's a lot of movement in this, with the highway lanes drawing you forward.*

LF: *And you have the three pools of light: the streetlights, a false sunlight and dusk. There is some similarity to Rene Magritte, the French surrealist.*

Frederick's reference to Magritte was said in passing. Only later did it seem important in a way the Hopper comparisons did not.

Magritte, who was actually Belgian, painted from the '20s to the 1960s. Design mattered to Magritte, and it drove many of his choices, including the paintings he is most widely known for: suited faceless men in bowler hats, sometimes with an apple where the face should be or standing next to a fish as large as a man. He was a precise painter who painted ordinary things, but often with odd twists: a pancake on a plate with an eye in the center, looking out, for instance, or a dark house with a single streetlight in front dominated by a pale, light sky so that the sky becomes the subject more than the house does.

Critics claim Magritte's paintings have a tension between what is on the canvas and what is implied off-canvas, out of sight.

Like Magritte's, Frederick's work is composed and executed with the intention of leaving the viewer with questions, not answers.

Dennis Lehane — Excerpt from "Offramp"

Henry couldn't feel anything but the ghosts of his choices as he drifted along the empty offramp, of a life lived, if not poorly, certainly not richly either. He had dedicated his existence to being a consequence — if you failed to show up to court, then a warrant was issued, and Henry came to get you. And remanded you back to the same court. Sometimes, the fugitives he tracked and apprehended were authentic dangers to the world, and on those days, he felt good about his calling. But most times he was a consequence for lives lived carelessly or forgetfully or under the haze of Oxycon or Fentanyl, heroin or crystal meth, or just good old-fashioned vodka. They lived and sometimes wondered what they were living for and suspected the answer, if given, would be a con no matter what, so they didn't pay bills, and they skipped out on rent and credit card payments; they shoplifted and drove drunk or high and lived stupid and hoped to get away with it or hoped to get caught or hoped to just float away down a fairy-tale river to a fairy-tale ending that they couldn't quite articulate or envision.

At the end of the offramp, Henry took a left and immediately pulled over to the shoulder.

He flipped open his laptop and pulled up the file on Lisa Ann McManus and was immediately struck by how interchangeable her face and her history were with so many fugitives of the court he'd apprehended over the years....

Henry Dale looked out at the dark trees and the dark hills and the sky as it lightened, and he could see the whole region spread out before him in his mind's eye, a collection of hamlets whose inhabitants and their forebears had taken all there was to be taken out of the earth and now had to figure out what to do next because the earth was done giving.

Dennis Lehane is the author of 13 novels; "Mystic River", "Gone, Baby, Gone", and "Shutter Island" have been made into films. Raised in Dorchester, Massachusetts, and now in Los Angeles, Lehane has written for HBO's "The Wire" and "Boardwalk Empire" and consulted for Netflix on "Bloodline."

Lawrence Kasdan — excerpt from "American Rye Whiskey," based on the painting "Liquor"

He tightened the last screw and settled back on his ass. His knee throbbed exactly the way he knew it would. He'd put off fixing the drawer just to avoid this.

In autumn the rough gravel out back became encased in ice. Crossing the lot was like skating on marbles. One morning he'd gone down hard, tearing the ligaments in his right knee, the ones referred to only by their initials on Patriots games.

Alvin couldn't remember exactly when that happened—sometime after Melody took off, but before his father died and left him alone in the house.

Sitting on the floor behind the counter, with the runner secured, he opened and closed the drawer that held the gun three times. It traveled smoothly. He heard the girl giggling in the second aisle, then the sound of a bottle breaking. More laughter as he struggled up.

"Hey!" he said, coming around, almost colliding with them as they emerged from the aisle. The girl, the pretty one he thought was called Ginger or Ginny, was carrying two bottles of red. The guy, the one that looked like a football player, but was really just big, stepped up beside her.

"Sorry about that," the girl said, but she didn't sound sorry. "Catch you for these tomorrow."

Alvin reached for the bottles, but the guy moved between them and said, "Tomorrow," then followed the girl out.

Alvin looked down the aisle. Red wine blossomed over the flecked linoleum, puddling among the green shards.

"Shit."

He pushed open the front door and stepped outside. A scarred Acura idled directly in front of the door. The big guy bent himself almost double to squeeze into the backseat. Ginger or Ginny was still laughing as she went around and got in the passenger side. Alvin had never seen the driver before. He looked to be from India or Pakistan, dark and handsome.

"Next time I'm calling the cops."

"Unlikely," the driver said.

The girl wedged the bottles into the seat, leaned across the driver, and called to Alvin.

"Don't be that way. We'll see you tomorrow."

She kissed the driver on the lips and her hand dropped out of sight. The driver flashed white teeth at Alvin and stepped on the gas....

Lawrence Kasdan is a screenwriter, director and producer who wrote scripts for "The Big Chill" and "The Accidental Tourist." He is best known as co-writer of the films "The Empire Strikes Back," "Raiders of the Lost Ark," "Return of the Jedi," and the trilogy "Star Wars: The Force Awakens."

Night Stories, the gallery show, will be on exhibit August 18 to November 5 at Center for Maine Contemporary Art (CMCA), 21 Winter Street in Rockland, with an opening celebration and Summer Gala fund-raiser the night of August 18. The companion book, "Night Stories: Fifteen Paintings and the Stories They Inspired" (Glitterati, Inc., 2017, $45), will be available for sale at the Summer Gala. Several authors and the artist will be available to sign the book during the evening. Tickets for the gala are available from CMCA.