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Hitchhiking through the Night

- The Roamer-Chronicles I -

Her clothes were anything but suitable for this time of year. It would have completed the spring collection rather than covering a female body at that time. The day before yesterday it had snowed for the first time this year. The road glittered with thousands and thousands of frozen snow crystals. Yet Maggie had decided to wear something provocative, something showy this evening. Her black top lay tight and followed the shape of her breasts perfectly. She also wore a narrow, knee-length red skirt. Both offered no protection from the icy cold. Only the boots and her waisted leather jacket gave her a hint of hope to survive this night without major frost damage.

But in this lonely moment on the street, such thoughts were her smallest problem. She wanted to find a ride as soon as possible that would take her home - and maybe give her some entertainment. Whether she would find both that night on the deserted road in the woods somewhere behind Oak Springs was another matter. She said in her mind, she should not act so impulsively in the future. Fun or not.

Fun was something Maggie could use right now. The past few months have been anything but easy. She had to put up with one or two questionable actions to get anything into her stomach at all. In addition there was this miserably long dry spell without real men!

Some would say she was a slut or worse. But she herself thought she was a woman who knows what she wants - and normally takes it.

The biggest problem, however, was that the offer was a little weak at the moment. Maybe she had to diversify her loot pattern a bit more and throw her steel-blue eyes not only at the sporty beauties. On the other hand, a self-confident, emancipated woman also had her demands.

She shook her head in amusement and smiled at the thoughts that flashed through her head. Her dark brown curly hair fluttered in the icy wind.

She only noticed the car approaching at the last moment. The light of the headlights cast their shadow far in front of her onto the asphalt.

Maggie whirled around at lightning speed. One single movement later and she was safe on the side of the road.

The olive-green dented Offroader just missed her by a few inches, rolled and only came to a standstill at some distance. The brake lights bathed the surroundings in an eerie red glow and turned Maggie's flawless face into a lifeless grimace.

The smell of burnt rubber went up her nose. Only slowly did she realize what had almost happened to her. Such a bum, she thought, as she raised her right arm and stretched out her middle finger.

"Wanker," she screamed towards the waiting car.

Tom had been on the road for a few hours now. He struggled with the tiredness that threatened to win.

Life as a freelancer was marked by privations and all kinds of inconveniences. The many rides and the never-ending work gnawed slowly but surely at his substance. Tom could take a lot. But he had been there too long and had seen too much to go to work with the same energy and enthusiasm as his younger comrades-in-arms.

A few years ago it looked different, but the times were over. A new generation followed and went to work with zeal.

Fortunately, the pay was still right. In most cases at least.

Thanks to tiredness, he would no longer make it home without another stop. He had become accustomed to such situations years ago, even though he had never liked it. He decided to drive at least a few more miles and then look around for a small motel. A compromise not to have to spend another night in the car at this cold. Six to seven hours sleep should do it, then a quick breakfast and back on the road.

Deep in his thoughts, he took his old Offroader into a right-hand bend - just to suddenly pull the wheel around. He pulled the car to the left and

avoided the person on the right side of the road by a hair's breadth. At the same time, he stepped on the brakes with all his might. The car started to wobble, but Tom tore the steering wheel again and brought the car back into the right lane. The vehicle finally came to a standstill with a protesting squeak.

Frightened, he looked into the rearview mirror. Tom took a deep breath, paused briefly and slowly let the air escape from his lungs. Another look into the rear-view mirror to be sure. Slowly he turned on his seat and looked through the rear window. The young woman, dressed more than inappropriately for this time of year, came staggering onto the car with her middle finger outstretched. She seemed less frightened than angry. Tom looked again in the rear-view mirror, all good things come in threes, then turned back again and engaged the reverse gear.

Maggie stopped when the white taillights of the car lit up and raised her hands in front of her now radiant white face. She took a step to the side and let the car stop right next to her.

"I'll finish him off," she said quietly to herself.

Slowly and with an unpleasant crunch the window of the passenger door lowered. The man leaned over

the seat to the window and looked into Maggie's still angry eyes.

"Everything all right?" he asked with a smile on his lips. Maggie was amazed at the sympathetic appearance. He wasn't the perfect beauty, but he had a nice face. He could well be a welcome pastime, she thought spontaneously. He didn't seem too hard, but he wasn't too soft either, and the three-day beard did the rest to arouse certain desires in her.

"Is everything all right?" the man asked again.

"What? ... Oh yes, ... of course ... I'm fine," stammered Maggie and deliberately put more embarrassment into her voice than she actually felt. She couldn't take her eyes off him. And the certainty spread in her that it would be HIM tonight. The decision was made.

"Now that you almost ran me over the edge, how about giving me a ride? As a little excuse for the horror they gave me." Keenly, she flirted with the guy and stroked a strand of hair from her face.

"I think that's the least I can do in this situation", he replied, still with that smile on his lips.

The man bent over a little further and opened the passenger door. Maggie opened the loudly crunching door completely and got into the car.

Exhausted, but extremely happy, she let herself fall back in the seat. The car was old, but quite

well in shape. With a quick glance she noticed the slight abrasion on the cushions and the quirks in the plastic fittings, probably an admission of age. Otherwise no flaws were to be recognized.

A nice, handsome man who values a well-kept environment, she thought pleased. Her matching facial expression spoke volumes.

But the most important thing was: it was warm in the car. And the man exhaled a fragrance that increased her desire. As if he could have read her thoughts, he released one hand from the wheel and held it towards her.

"Hi, I'm Tom. I'm sorry I almost ran you over."

The handshake was strong and yet tender. What an excellent and tempting mixture this stroke of luck was.

"Maggie. It's already forgotten. Nothing happened," she replied.

Tom started the car, and with a slight bucking it started to move.

"Where should we go," Tom asked as he looked over at her. Maggie returned the look and glanced at him with a demanding look. She knew what she wanted.

"Into the next town, just follow the road. That would do me for now."

"For now?"

Maggie had been expecting this question, because she loved this moment when her conversation

partners fell for simple tricks like this - and thus fell into her trap.

"Well, it's already late." Her voice now sounded determined. Clearly. "You will certainly not want to drive through the whole night. Do you, Tom?"

She was sure Tom had understood the message. But he kept his gaze firmly on the road, tightening his grip around the steering wheel. Maggie's smile widened and she looked contentedly out of the passenger window at the passing dark forest.

"What brings you to this barren area, Tom?" she deliberately changed the subject.

"I'm on the road for a living."

"And what do you do for a living? Maggie's voice contained a lively undertone that made the question sound like a singsong.

"I work in the waste management industry."

"Disposal industry?" Maggie looked at him with an incredulous look. "Are you a garbage man or what?" She giggled.

"No, rather... How shall I put it?"

"Just try it, sweetie."

Tom blushed and struggled noticeably for the right words.

"Well, people can book me. I'll take care that things that bother them are disposed of."

"What kind of things?"

"Everything possible. Tom looked over at her for a moment before he looked back at the street. Maggie wasn't convinced yet. It could already be a little more information.

"How long have you been doing that?"

"Very long. I couldn't tell you exactly when I started." This answer was as vague as the previous one. It simply didn't get anything useful out of this man. But she liked it when she knew a bit more about her partners before. In this case she probably had to continue drilling.

However, Tom didn't let her get involved at all.

"What are you doing?" he asked. "I mean, professionally? And, of course, all alone at night on a deserted street? Tom's question thwarted her plan. She didn't like it when someone else took the lead. She had to quickly regain the upper hand. As much as she was interested in her men, the less she wanted to reveal about herself.

"I let myself be run over by garbage men who are also alone at night on an abandoned road," she sniffed back. But when Tom didn't get into it, she added: "I'm an artist - a performance artist".

"Could it be that I have already seen you then?"

"Well possible. But men never forget this body here." She pushed her jacket back - and in a flowing movement also pushed the top down a little to allow a better view of her breasts, but still

to leave it covered enough to get her rescuer's fantasy going.

Now she reaped a reaction from Tom. Even if he didn't want to show anything, his embarrassed look revealed that he was impressed.

Maggie felt a touch of triumph. With this scam she had gotten everyone by now. And also Tom with his three-day beard and the cool leather jacket would belong to her at the end of the night.

"So, where are we at? I'd like another drink. In the next town there is a small pub that also offers rooms. If we exaggerate, we wouldn't have it far."

She continued playing with her top. Her left hand stroked her upper body several times. To her satisfaction she saw Tom looking at her from the corner of his eye and perceiving her arousal.

"Well, to be honest, this has never happened to me before. At least not with..." He faltered and looked for a suitable word. "...someone like you." Maggie abruptly stopped her seduction.

"What does that mean?"

"You know. Someone like you." Tom smiled suggestively.

"Are you saying I'm a hooker?" Her tone became aggressive and scary. Tom had hit a nerve, and she had a bad feeling that he was doing it on purpose.

"No, but you know." His voice suddenly sounded callous, and Maggie didn't like that at all. What

did he mean? She now had to put everything on one card in order to finally reach her goal. The night would soon be over, and she urgently needed it. Seductively she looked over at him again. A mixture of apology and forgiveness.

"Let's start all over again." Maggie licked her lips and looked at him with a seductive look.

"Would you have a problem with that if I were someone like that? Don't you like me?" Tom took a quick look at the young woman, and then immediately looked back at the street.

"Well," he said quietly. "It's just that I'm pretty tired and, frankly, such happiness doesn't happen to me very often. Actually not at all," he continued. Amused, Maggie shook her head and began to whisper softly in his ear. "When I'm done with you, you know what tired means."

Tom laughed quietly and pulled his woolen scarf into place with his right hand.

She had already noticed the scarf earlier when she had patterned his thick brown leather jacket. Both were a perfect match for his overall look and gave him the look of a bold everyman. An interesting mix, as she had to admit. Again she went on to a verbal attack.

"Let's stop at the side of the road for a moment. My skirt could accidentally slip up and we'll see what happens next." Her hands slid along her body and stopped at the bottom of the tight

garment. The hem gave her fingers a reason to play and she slowly rolled the fabric up.

"I don't think that's such a good idea."

Tom's voice suddenly sounded so hard that it almost frightened her. Then her surprise changed into anger. Damn, what else did she have to do? This game had lasted too long now. Slowly she got tired of the back and forth.

"What's the matter with you, buddy? Are you gay?" Maggie didn't bother anymore to sound seductive. If this guy wanted it the hard way, then he should get it - maybe that turned him on.

But Tom only acknowledged the outbreak with a laugh - and made her even more angry.

The car slowed down and just rolled on. Tom slowly turned his head to her and looked deep into her eyes.

"I must confess something to you."

Maggie rolled her eyes and leaned back.

"Well, gay after all. I should have known."

Tom's gaze was still on her as he continued speaking.

"No, it's not that. I must tell you that you will not leave this car in one piece."

Now it was Maggie who laughed. And it was so shrill that she drowned out even the booming engine.

"Are you a psycho killer or what?" she asked Tom in a very amused way. He turned his gaze back to

the road and couldn't resist a mischievous smile. The game began to please her again, and she decided to play it on for a while. She would then end it in her own way.

"I've never had a psycho killer before," she threw at him with her eyebrow raised and a mocking grin. Maggie's hand slid along his right leg and stopped just before his crotch. She noticed that her moment had come and it would go right to the point.

But Tom stepped on the gas again and drove without any reaction. He didn't even give Maggie a quick glance.

His behavior only made her more greedy and determined. Slowly she pulled her hand back and leaned into the passenger seat. No more lust for games. She would now take what she wanted.

Without warning she jumped forward at a sheer inhuman speed, ripping her mouth wide open and sinking her long fangs into his neck. Normally the place where neck and shoulder met was covered by a thin layer of skin. The artery below had always been good for a feast.

But this time it was different. Quite different. Her teeth penetrated the leather of the jacket and met resistance with a loud, dull bang. Pain pierced her jaw and flashes of lightning ran through her brain. Tumbling, she flinched back, pressed herself against the passenger door with a

distorted face. No more clear thoughts. Only pain, cold, hard pain.

Tom still didn't look at her.

The surprise and the throbbing in her jaw gave way from one second to the next to an even stronger feeling:

Anger. Raging anger.

Even during the attack he had torn the wheel only minimally. He had to be a completely hardened guy. But she would tear him to pieces.

Unimpressed, Tom grabbed his neck and adjusted his jacket and scarf. A kind of shell flashed, a silver armour protecting his neck and shoulders. The guy knew what was going on in this world!

"Do you believe me now that you can't get entirely out of here?" Tom's laughter echoed through the cabin and now drowned out even the sound of the engine.

Maggie caught herself jerking and suddenly grabbing the passenger door lever. However, her attempts to open the door were unsuccessful. She began to hit the window with all her might, only to find that this plan had no positive outcome either.

Tom continued to laugh and let an unusual restlessness sprout up in Maggie. Real fear now rose in her. Another feeling she hadn't felt for decades. Disturbing. Disgusting.

Her gaze hurried through the cabin in search of a way out. Suddenly she froze and looked spellbound at the lower wooden paneling of the damn door. Deep in the old wood was a symbol carved, an old mystical witch symbol that she knew well.

She had encountered the symbol several times in the past centuries. A spell to capture and hold demons and other creatures of the night.

This guy knew exactly what he was doing and wanted to prevent her from leaving the car. No, he already prevented her from coming out.

Maggie was annoyed that she hadn't noticed the little symbol with the inhuman characters before. She had simply been too sure, too careless. With her next victim, she would be more attentive again.

She shook her body and gathered all the strength she possessed. With renewed courage, her frightened gaze gave way to a determined mask of pale, pure, flawless skin. Muscles, hundreds of years old and yet stronger than those of any human being, stretched to steel-hard formations. With a single leap she jumped towards the driver's seat.

Shortly before she reached Tom, she stopped abruptly. There was only one inch separating her from this son of a bitch, but something prevented her from reaching him for good. Her angry grimace

turned into the stunned face of a young woman. A perfectly normal woman.

A victim!

Tiny glowing particles rose before her eyes, and she noticed an unusual warmth in her undead body. A warmth she last felt two hundred years ago, when she had become a vampire herself. Unbelievably, she looked down to the source of this warmth. As her breast slowly dissolved in a glowing storm, she could see the oak stake that Tom had rammed into her heart.

"Damn Roa..." Her voice stopped.

The bright yellowish shine of the glowing body illuminated the interior of the car and even bathed the direct surroundings in a strange light. A bright glow in the otherwise deep black night.

When the blaze had gone out, thousands and thousands of ash particles floated through the driver's cabin. Tom coughed lightly into his right fist and shortly afterwards operated the electric window regulator on the passenger door. The suction of the airstream pulled the dancing particles into the cold darkness.

The ash tail followed the old Offroader for a few seconds on its way into the dark.