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English 1010

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### Downtown Freak Show

Speeding on a dimly lit downtown side street, I peer into the rearview mirror to see if I'm being followed. My heart is pounding and I'm shaking all over. "Shit!" I notice there is a huge chunk of my hair that's been pulled out. It's knotted and tangled into a rat's nest on the side of my head. At this point I just want to get home, so I'm speeding in that direction. Thank God I have Dan's damn car.

There I was, just a few short hours before getting ready for work, carefully putting on eyeliner and mascara, making sure every hair lay just so around my face. The phone rang. It was my good for nothing boyfriend, who, as usual, had a thousand and one excuses as to why he couldn't drive me to work that night. I plopped down on the couch, arms crossed, pouting and annoyed. That's when my roommate Dan walked in. He was definitely an interesting person. Dan's dream was to invent something amazing. Often we wrote random words on 3x5 cards then put them together and, instant invention. My personal favorite was carbon fiber scrub brush. Dan was a nervous person by nature who often paced about the house muttering and smoking. He actually smoked so much it had turned his mustache, lips and tongue a permanent shade of brownish yellow.

"Not going to work, again?" he asked. His condescending tone hurt my feelings. "You could drive me," I replied, and gave him my best puppy dog eyes. "If I don't go, I'll get fired," I told him. "Then how will I pay my half of next month's rent?" Dan nervously lit up a smoke and

threw me his car keys. "If anything happens to my car..." I was out the door before he could even finish.

Dan's Cadillac was parked out in front of our apartment. I loved to drive it. It made me feel free. It had been given to him as a gift from his parents. An eighties something relic in mint condition, long, boxy, and maroon with chrome all around. The interior matched the exterior, a deep red, with wood like paneling, soft leather seats, and power everything. Driving it was like driving a cloud, all billowy and soft. People seemed to notice it too; I felt good behind the wheel.

I got in, started her up, and drove until I'd made my way downtown. I had always loved the energy there even though it's seedy and dirty. The lights, the signs, the people had a vibe I levitated to like a moth to a flame. Suddenly, I slammed on the brakes, almost running a red light I came to a screeching halt. The light turned green, and I made a left into the parking lot where I worked.

Inside the bar faces lit up left and right as I entered, I lived for my work and everyone knew me. The locals inside greeted me one by one. I made my way into the office. It's drab, dark, and in the distance I could hear the jukebox playing a familiar tune. I put my things inside my locker, grabbed my till, and got to work. All night long, I mixed drinks and they drank drinks. One by one, I watched everyone in the room lose their inhibitions. One by one, their senses became dull, they got loud and rowdy. I had seen it all a thousand times before. Closing time came slowly, but it came. When it did, I was happy. I remembered Dan's Cadillac, and knew I'd enjoy the ride home. Little did I know what was to come.

Standing in a completely dark, quiet bar, I waited for the green light on the alarm system to come on so I could put in the code that would set it. As soon as it appeared, I quickly pushed #2 and began my thirty second escape. I locked the back door, and as the cool night air hit my face I knew I was free. Dan's Cadillac was all alone in the parking lot now, and the street lights glowed in the shiny chrome parts. I got in, started her up and drove away. What a shame to feel so free and have nowhere to go but home. I decided to pull over and call my boyfriend. The streets were desolate and empty as I turned into the twenty four hour gas station. I got out of Dan's Cadillac to make my call, leaving the driver's side door open, engine running and lights on. The number I dialed began to ring and the countless options for the rest of the evening swam through my thoughts. The possibilities were endless. Suddenly, I felt startled and jumped at the sight of a man to my left. He motioned to me with one arm to stop, while the other arm was behind his back, and I knew he had a gun. I was paralyzed with fear, completely motionless and frozen.

"I just want to use your car lady," he said. I felt afraid; I just wanted him to go away. I realized how easy I had made it for him to escape with Dan's car, and my fear turned to anger. There was no way I was going to let him get away without a fight. The man's eyes twinkled with delight when he sat down in the driver's seat. An evil grin appeared on his face. I ran around to the passenger side and opened the door. He put it in reverse and began to roll back slowly toward the street. Running alongside, I begged and pleaded. "Please don't take this car mister, it's not even mine." With that he hit the break and came to a jerking stop. "You want to come along?" I was so desperate, I said yes, and jumped in.

Without a plan, and without thinking, I was in the car. That's when I noticed he really didn't have a gun. My anger sparked at my toes, and when it reached my ears, I felt hot and I had had enough. In one graceful motion, I snatched the keys out of the ignition and threw them out onto the asphalt of the brightly lit gas station. The man looked stunned. He realized what I had done as I tried to make my exit. I was too slow, and he got a handful of my hair. I could feel and hear the hair being pulled from my scalp; it sounded like a crackling fire on my head, and it felt like one too. He threatened to kill me, so I screamed. My life flashed before my eyes as the blood curdling, glass shattering scream escaped my lips.

All I remembered is that he disappeared; ran off in fear, I guess. I was left in the car, which was still rolling backwards, face down on the front seat. Realizing the car was still in motion, I reached down and put my hand on the brake pedal, then put the car in park. Just in time too, before I rolled out into the street. In complete shock, I got out of the car, and with an air of disbelief in my demeanor, I retrieved my keys. Unexpectedly, the gas station attendant ran up to me. "Are you okay? That was crazy, I saw the whole thing." Out of pure frustration, I barked, "Thanks for the help!" "Sit tight," he said, "I called the cops." *Oh hell no*, crossed my mind, as I picked up the pace, jumped in the Cadillac and drove away.

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