

## Road Kill

By Allison Fine  
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They had been on the road five days. She was planning to kill him but she hadn't decided how. The truck was leaking oil and there was a hole in the radiator. She knew that by some kind of psychic message from his twisted brain, he was the cause of all this. There was a leak in his personality structure, a hole in his approach, and somehow it affected everything around him.

Her money and ID were stolen in Boulder. That was his fault too, she decided. The entire world problems were his fault. Road problems were certainly his fault.

He was an alcoholic, verbally abusive man who chased after girls twenty years younger than him. She looked at his profile with disgust. There was nothing nice about this man; he was repulsive, she knew it.

Not to mention he was, without a doubt, the least coordinated man on the planet. His inability to drive a stick shift also translated into his inability to drive his own stick. They hadn't driven together in years. It was only an accident of fate that they were together on this trip. She was determined to make sure he would not have the opportunity to drive another woman again. Anywhere. All she wanted to do was kill him and be done with it.

At every rest stop she contemplated ways to do it. Perhaps she could dress him up as an animal and pretend to run over him by accident. She considered drugging him and dumping him in the national park. There had been a glut of bears attacks that summer, chasing and devouring people. He could be lunch for some lucky bear.

The further east they went, the more hateful and ugly his behavior became. The eastern winds blew hot and mean, and he blew out a lot of mean air with them. She wasn't sure she could tolerate him past Chicago, and they had to get to New York. She was sure one of them would be dead by then.

At a rest stop Idaho a young man in leather approached.

“Want a ride?”

He pointed to the spit and shiny Harley parked there.

“Oh yeah,” she said, hardly thinking, “but I'm stuck here with my ex.”

“You traveling with your ex?”

“Yeah.”

“That's an accident waiting to happen.”

It was there she conceived her plan. If only she had more drugs. One or two Prozac was not enough to deaden him; he was drug intolerant. His huge, beefy frame consumed vast quantities of food, beer, and drugs--he could handle an

entire pharmaceutical store. Still, maybe this biker had some shit on him.

“Whaddaya got on you?” she asked, casually. Ex was in the bathroom.

“Quaaludes, some Trip Medicine, nitro inhaler.”

“Yeah.”

“Yeah?”

There was a psychic link between them. He understood exactly what she was looking for.

“Be right back.”

He went to the bathroom. Ex came out, sniffing, snorting, and blowing his huge honk of a nose on the filthy red hanky that had traveled in his pocket since Spokane.

“Luke, I just met this guy--”

“We gotta get back on the road, Bonnie, I have been keeping track of mileage and gas all the way. I figure if we stay on track--”

The bike came up behind Luke and punched him playfully on the shoulder.

“Hey dude.”

Luke turned.

“Don’t fucking mess with me, animal,” he said, Luke-like.

The biker laughed. Nothing phased him. He handed Bonnie an envelope.

“For the road, girl.”

“Thanks.”

She took the envelope with gratitude. The biker revved up the Harley and spun off in a cloud of noise and exhaust. She was jealous and sad at the same time.

“You want to go with that freak?”

“Never mind.”

They got back into the jail cell called a truck and continued on. Nebraska was endless, best to get through it quickly. Next rest stop was 43 miles up the road. She figured she'd have time to pour this shit into the beer he had in his filthy thermos.

Next time they stopped, he was asleep. She woke him up.

"Luke, wake up."

"What the fuck for?" he snapped.

"Because."

He rolled down the window and looked out.

"Where are we?"

"Out of Nebraska."

"Thank the fuck God."

He creaked out the door and slammed it shut.

His thermos hung from his belt.

"Hey, where's your thermos?" she asked.

"Right here, Bonnie. Now shut up."

He ambled to the bathroom. Foiled again. The nitrate inhaler was out. She'd have to put that stuff in the little plastic envelope into his coffee or whatever next time they made a meal stop.

Meal stop was McDonald's further up the road. When they sat down with their McShit Meals he had to go to the bathroom again. She poured the contents of the little white

envelope into his coffee, crumbling up some pills the biker had given her as well. She had no idea what effect this would all have on him, but she hoped it would be short lived before he axed out.

He came back from the bathroom and started scoffing his food down.

“This coffee tastes like shit.”

“It’s McDonald’s--what do you expect?”

“I expect my coffee to taste like coffee, not poison.”

She tittered uneasily.

“What’s your problem-o?” he asked, taking a huge bite out of his McBurger.

“I’m here at McDonald’s with you--what other dreams could I possibly have?” she replied.

He snorted. She contemplated his McDeath. Perhaps it would happen even before they got back on the road again. That would be a blessing. He started to cough, took a gulp of coffee, and resumed chomping on his burger and fries.

“Ready?” he asked, mouth full, ketchup dripping down the side.

“Yeah.” She tried not to look at him; it made her feel sick.

They were back on the road, driving through Illinois and Michigan. Personality changes, even more out of the ordinary than his usual horrible nastiness, began to manifest. His head started jerking around suddenly on his neck, like a puppet. He rubbed his eyes frequently, complaining of some changes to his visionary status.

“What’s the matter with you, you okay?” she asked as they continued down the road.

“I’m fine. I think I’m having a reaction to that coffee, is all.”

“Coffee?”

“They probably put fingernail shavings in there.”

She laughed. Humor of the dying, she thought. It was relatively harmless.

Past Michigan moving into Pennsylvania he started going comatose. His head fell forward onto his chest and conversation ceased. This made her nervous. She felt for a pulse and found it, good and strong. Maybe this stuff just made him pass out. She was unsure what to do next.

It was a miracle. She spotted the biker in a small stop off the highway in Pennsylvania just before they crossed into New York.

“Hey dude!” she ran after him as he entered Denny’s.

He turned.

“Oh you,” he said diffidently.

“What the hell was in that stuff you gave me?”

He looked around.

“What stuff? Do I know you?”

“Come on, you know what I mean.”

He held his hands up.

“I have no idea who you are.”

She looked at him.

“You dipshit. I’ve got the license number on your bike and I can describe you perfectly if anything happens.”

“Nothing’s going to happen,” he said with finality, and walked into the restaurant. She stood there, forlornly looking after him. Brain dead was comatose in the passenger seat, oblivious to everything.

She made a decision to dump him off at some emergency room and hope for the best.

The nearest hospital was down some God-forsaken road in the middle of some strange town in Pennsylvania. Frontage Road. Every road off the highway in every town was named Frontage Road. She kept driving and driving and driving, listening to Iroquois women singing basket-weaving songs. He was sleeping, snoring, just as if he were on some long drunk. It had lasted since Idaho, however, and this worried her.

Every so often she would look outside and wonder why the hell they were on this trip, what was the purpose, why did they do it? She kept reminding herself, it was to sell the other truck she’d left in New York. He was helping her with the driving. At least, that was the plan. Here she was, doing all the driving, with him practically dead beside her.

At the hospital the emergency room was packed. Every kid in town had decided to fall off his bike it seemed. She asked one of the attendants to drag him out of the car. They brought a stretcher and wheeled him in.

“What’s the problem?” the attending nurse asked.

“He’s got some kind of drug overdose.”

“What drugs?”

“How should I know? I just picked him up is all. Listen, I am in the midst of a road trip here. Can you take care of him and let me get on my way?”

The nurse gave her a really strange look.

“Aren’t you related or something?”

“No, he’s just some hitch hiker.”

She left a slip of paper with a name and address on it in case they needed to contact her. It was actually the name and address of a friend of hers who wasn’t living there anymore because she went to Europe. The phone was disconnected as well. Hoping for the best, she grabbed her backpack and walked out, free at last, oh lord, free at last.

The truck sold for a lot more than she ever imagined. It was enough to fly home to Montana. She didn’t give him a thought until she get back home and saw her voice mail light flashing. There were fifteen messages. Her publisher wanted another draft of the novel before end of fall. She was swamped immediately.

One message was from Luke’s mother.

“Hi, Bonnie, this is Sharon Burkey. Luke died in a hospital in Pennsylvania under mysterious circumstances. I

thought I’d call you because I thought you two were on some kind of road trip together.”

She never got arrested. It wasn't as if she were a suspect. Luke was a renowned drug abuser. She briefly considered hiring a lawyer in case there was any problem, but nothing ever came up. It all faded away like a bad memory. Luke's mother called once again to remind her about the funeral but she didn't go. She didn't feel it would be tasteful.

She had always wanted plastic surgery, so when her book advance arrived she went and got it. It was part of creating a new identity and a new life. She settled in a cute little town on the coast of Oregon. Luke was never on her mind. The highways were littered with road kill all the time.

The End