

## SIMONE'S GUN

It was the 80's, nobody had cell phones.

Simone had been shopping all day. She barely thought about the traffic. She listened to the noise. She had been Christmas shopping all year. She had collected what she thought were appropriate gifts for those she loved, and would send at least cards to everyone else. She loved Christmas and she loved shopping.

She listened.

What was it? All the lights went on.

She pulled to the side of the road and her car quit running.

Boyt and Chandler were cruising down the highway in the opposite direction.

“The tow truck from Hell, “ said Boyt.

Boyt was driving. Chandler called Boyt “Bit”, short for “Orbit”

Boyt was pulling a pull of tobacco into his face. He had been awake for three days.

“Maybe she’s a looker,” said Boyt.

“Maybe,” said Chandler.

The traffic had come to a standstill.

“How we going to get through this?” asked Chandler.

“We’re not,” said Boyt. He had spent the previous two nights with a shotgun, on his porch, waiting for the creatures to come down out of the trees around his trailer out in the middle of nowhere. He had kept fixating on the stars and that captivated him. The cosmic lights were spelling out words in his head, telling him things he didn’t believe.

“You want to say something?” he asked, looking at the radio.

“Might as well,” said Chandler, who had just completed rolling a cigarette with one hand. “We’re on our way,” he said into the crackling radio.

Simone waited at the side of the road, roughly twenty miles away. Her feet hurt from the gravel she’d kicked up walking to the emergency phone booth and back to the car.

Auto despair. She saw the words form on her mouth as she applied lipstick, looking into the rear view mirror.

She smoked another cigarette. Ate a mint. Thought about her disturbing dream about her marriage. She and Tom are having sex, and she's thinking about something else, a contract, the business, her work.

A gold van pulled off the road behind her. She couldn't see the driver from her rear view mirror.

She looked at her Rolex. They said no more than a half hour. The traffic was thinning out, and it was getting dark. Where was the tow truck?

She pushed the button beside her to make sure all the doors were locked and felt reassured by the sound of the door locks engaging. She looked back again, moving the mirror to inspect her eyes and her lips. She pursed her red lips, inspected the lines at the corners of her eyes and sighed.

The cars around her had their lights on.

Why didn't she listen to the radio? The car was locked, but should she run?

She straightened the rings on her fingers and a tear rolled down her cheek. She looked at her watch again, then through the rear view mirror.

The driver's side of the van opened. It was a fat white man in grey coveralls.

She turned her head.

He was facing her at the window. He pulled the stub of a cigar from his face.

"You need help, lady?" he shouted through the glass. "I'll give you a ride." His heavy voice was muffled by the window.

"No!" she shouted. "Thank you."

“I can’t hear you, lady!” he shouted , moving his ear to the window.”

“No thank you!” she shouted.

“Think about it,” he said. His small eyes were bloodshot.

The hair on her neck stood up. She watched him walk back to his van and close the door.

She opened the glove compartment. Pushed on it without a key. Took out the bag in which she kept her 38 police special.

“There she is, Bit! A blue Benz!” said Chandler.

Boyt turned the emergency lights on, then slowed and pulled of onto the center divider. He waited for the traffic to clear, then made his turn across the highway.

“A blind horse will find a hole,” said Boyt.

Simone had the gun in her hand.

The gold van pulled past her and she began to cry.

Orbit was on the radio talking to dispatch while Chandler was hooking her up.

“Another hysterical one,” he said spitting out the window, “I’ll never understand these rich people crying about their cars.”

Tom Murphy met Simone at the garage

“I was scared. I almost shot someone.”

“Did you get the license plate?”

“No.”

“Did you talk to the police?”

“No.”

“Good.”

She pulled herself away from his as they left the garage. She turned on him at the edge of the sidewalk.

He had put the key in the passenger side and opened the door.

“I’m fine,” she said getting into the car. “Fine.”

Tom: “That wacko brother of yours told me he’s doing visualizations that we’re friends.”

Simone: “Tom, that’s how he works. And he means well.”

Tom: “He’s lucky.”

Simone: “Some people are.”

Tom: “Why him?”

Simone: “Why not him? You want a mint?”

“I don’t know.”

“I have conversations with you when I’m alone,” she said, “important conversations.”

“What are we talking about?”

“You’re speeding!”

“Christ,” he said.

There were red, blue and yellow lights arcing through the car.

Tom rolled down the window as the patrolman approached. He took the key out of the ignition, opened the glove compartment with the key and pulled out a folder.

“May I see your driver’s license and registration?”

Tom handed him the registration packet and took his license out of his wallet and handed that to him.

“I clocked you at 75 miles an hour.”

Tom looked at him. Said nothing.

“I’m going to run a check of your registration, sir. This is a two plate state, I’ll have to cite you for that too.”

Tom glared at him. Sighed.

“I’ll be right back.”

Tom and Simone looked at one another and she said: “I should tell him about the man in the van.”

Tom rolled his eyes. Sighed again.

Simone lit a cigarette.

Tom: “I’ve asked you not to smoke in my car.”

Simone put out the cigarette in Tom’s clean ashtray. She watched the passing traffic, then noticed a gold van as it passed. “So much for that,” she said.

Tom: “Exactly.”

The next morning, Tom drove to work at Lomax Inc. through the downtown. It wasn't the same town he had been a kid in. The theater was closed, the high school had moved, the candy store was gone, his grandmother's house was a parking lot.

He stopped at the corner of First and Main where there was a stop sign, rolled through it, then hit the breaks when he saw the truck.

Tom got creamed. They had to pry his unconscious body out of the wreck.

He woke the next day thinking for some odd reason that kindness matters.

Lomax was practicing visualizations when his sister called to tell him her husband was out of the woods. It was the 80's, he was visualizing a world at peace.

