

not in houndstooth! ALWAYS REMEMBER A MAN TAKES EVERYTHING FOR GRANTED. Even himself. No need to get nervy, it's only a body, men's bodies moving softly through the dark, in & out, in & out, if Clive only knew! What it is to be Clive! Just the flare of a match, I remember to light my own first, the butt between my finger and thumb, no one suspects, it's gesture more than any thing, just holding back with a shrug an answer, drawing in the breath slowly, sensuously, aaah. Somebody's lungs burst into a staccato laugh, like gunfire, ash shooting all over the grass, glowing embers, don't look back . . .

Someone, a woman who could be me in a soft brown suede dress and feline boots, a scarf at the throat, is crossing the park . . . teetering in our midst . . . I shuffle warningly with the others, who is she? who does she think she is, here like this? doesn't she know? Skirting the monument by the trees, the rows of dead, Ypres, Flanders . . . 'They Served Us Well', clicking little heels, wavering, electric, asking for it . . . 'Well, what sort of a woman

anyway . . . ' – I smile grimly in the shadow of my moustache, trying to slide out of focus, but out of darkness she grasps my lapels, purple nails and hot little tongue, 'Forty bucks a throw,' she rasps, hot sour breath over mine. Try to push her off, straighten my tie, hunch right down – this is a mistake! – well, what else did I expect? Remember that's what they're there for (unclench those fists) – she would be fourteen, fifteen! – Whistle if you want it. If you want it, or if you don't, as you will. If you feel like it.

Still trembling, back in the crypt, the underground. It's one A.M. A train rumbles in a subterranean passage far below, another level . . .

Turn the key, 406D, in the lock. Take our *her* clothes, release her now, my other self – put myself in reverse –

Dusting of powder . . . touch of blush, it doesn't take long. Peel off the moustache – that thin strip of bright lipstick another death –

HITCHHIKERS ARE TROUBLE

A Short Story by Rosamond Bailey

When I see a strange female drive up to the pumps in Holton Curtey's truck, I know right away there's something wrong. Holton spends most of his time chasing girls in that truck, but even if any of them was fool enough to get in, he wouldn't let them touch the wheel. She climbs down and I see she's only young, sixteen maybe, in tight jeans like they all wear nowadays and a T-shirt without anything under it – asking for trouble, I call it. She grabs hold of the cab door to keep from falling down, and I think right away she must be drunk or on drugs. So I run out to head her off. "What are you doing with Holton's truck?" I say, real loud.

She just stares at me, so I ask her again. She shakes the hair out of her eyes and tugs at her shirt, which is tore at the neck. "Can I use your phone?" she mumbles.

"Who do you want to phone?"

"The police," she says.

For a minute I don't know what to do. What has Holton got himself mixed up in now, I wonder. I always feel kind of responsible for the Curtey boys – after all, they are my own cousins.

By this time Addie's half way across our yard. She must of heard me yelling, or maybe it's just that she seen me talking to a female she doesn't know. Not that Addie's jealous, just curious. She gets kind of lonely out here so far from town.

Anyway, the girl seems to forget about calling the police. She heads right for Addie and starts to cry. The next thing Addie has an arm around her and is helping her back to the house. I'd of thought Addie would be nervous of a scruffy-looking kid like that – she's always afraid I'm going to be held up by some teenager. You can't never tell what women are going to do next.

I make sure everything's locked up, including the truck. That

girl just left the keys in it. At least she hasn't done no damage to it, far as I can see. I hope she's by herself, without a boy friend hiding somewhere nearby. I don't like those kind of characters hanging around my garage. Or my home. I can't understand what's got into Addie.

When I get to the house, I see the girl is making herself at home, laying on the kitchen couch with a blanket over her. Addie's making tea. Women always seem to make tea when there's some kind of trouble.

I get myself a beer.

Addie mutters something about the girl being in shock. Well, Addie used to be a nurse, maybe she knows. She chases me out of my kitchen and I turn on the news – always the same, killings and drugs and riots. I keep wishing the Curteys had a phone so I could find out what's going on.

About ten minutes later I go out and find the two of them sitting at the table. The girl has a plate of doughnuts in front of her but she isn't eating, just turning her cup around in the saucer. At least she's combed her hair and washed her face, and she's wearing one of Addie's old sweaters over her T-shirt. I pull up a chair and reach for a doughnut. Addie frowns at me but I don't pay no attention. The time has come for this girl to do some talking.

So she tells her story. Her name is Karen, and she's on her way to the city to get work. She claims she got off the bus for a coffee and the bus left without her. So she tried to get a lift.

And she flagged down Holton. Of course he stopped – he'd stop for anything female. The girls in town think he's a big joke – they won't go for a ride with him, no matter how much he tries to fix up that old truck of his. I feel kind of sorry for him. There isn't no real harm in Holton, I've always said.

The girl says she figured on getting a ride right to the city once she got to the main highway. But Holton wouldn't let her out. He kept right on driving and turned off on a side road, and she got frightened.

"Girls who hitchhike are taking a big risk," I say. "But you needn't of been scared of Holton. Why, he wouldn't know what to do with a girl if he did get one into his truck." Addie glares at me. "I bet he never laid a hand on you," I say.

"No, but –" She looks like she's ready to start sniffing again, and I try not to get impatient.

He didn't stop, she says, till they got to his place – "an old farm, with the buildings nearly ready to fall down." She got out then, and started to run.

"And two big dogs – black German shepherds – came at me, out of nowhere it seemed. A man yelled at me from the house to stop if I didn't want to get hurt. I tripped over something – an old rusty car engine, I think – and fell. The dogs were almost on top of me." Her voice is shaking.

"Did they hurt you?"

"No – they just watched me till I got up. So did the men. The older one – Ezra – said for me to get in the house, and the dogs followed me all the way. He said if I sat down and kept quiet they wouldn't bother me."

"Ezra's had some trouble with them dogs, but he's got them pretty well trained now," I say. "I mind the time he got Tim Slade backed right up against my garage wall, scared to death. That was Ezra's idea of a joke. Don't tell me you took him serious."

Addie sniffs. "I don't think much of that kind of fun," she says, and brings the girl another cup of tea.

"The woman who was making supper – she let me have some meat and bread after the men had left the table. I had to help her wash the dishes, and all the time those dogs watched every move I made.

"The men went into the other room, where there was a television. They turned it on, but they were talking so loud they almost drowned it out. Ezra kept telling Holton he had really got them in trouble now. Holton said he – he wanted me to stay, I was pretty, I hadn't laughed at him like the town girls did. Ezra said not to be a fool and to remember last time. I think he must have been talking about the other girl."

I take a drink of my beer and nearly choke.

"Other girl?" Addie says, and looks at me.

"Somebody they had there last spring," the girl says. "She – I'll come to that in a minute. That's really why I wanted to call the police. Holton was getting mad, saying he couldn't ever have anything he wanted and it was all Ezra's fault. I thought there was going to be a fight. Then Ezra came out and got some beer out of a cupboard and told the woman to leave the dogs right where they were till he got Holton quieted down. I yelled, 'What about me?' but he never even let on he heard me.

"I waited. It seemed forever. I tried not to keep looking at the dogs. The woman started to leaf through a catalogue – she kept showing me dresses and things and saying 'Ain't they pretty?' The television was on real loud now and the whole place was starting to smell of beer and cigarettes.

"Finally I asked the woman if she could help me get away. I wasn't so scared of Holton now – he seemed more like a big overgrown kid – but that Ezra, he looked at me just the same way the dogs did. He's got the same yellow eyes." She takes a gulp of her tea. "The woman kept shaking her head. Then I said she could have my wrist watch. That got to her. She said she'd never owned a watch in her life.

"She said we'd have to wait till their favourite program came on – so we did. It was something with a lot of cars driving around and smashing into each other, from the sound of it. Anyway, the woman got a chunk of meat and threw it into the pantry and the dogs were so quick they nearly knocked her down. She shut them in – and I was already on my way to the door.

"I was praying Holton had left the keys in the truck. I was almost there when I heard footsteps behind me, and I was so scared it was Ezra I couldn't even look around. But it was only the woman. She'd come for the watch. I could hardly get it off, I was shaking so bad.

"She said – she said I seemed like a nice girl, and Ezra would be mad, but if I stayed here I might be killed like the other one."

Addie lets out a gasp, and I slam my fist down so hard I nearly upset my beer.

"Now see here," I say. "I've knowed the Curteys all my life. They're my own kinfolk. I've kept an eye on those boys ever since the old man died. I don't know who you think you are, coming here with a wild story like that. A hitchhiker from God knows where. You get a ride with Holton, he's good enough to take you to his place for supper – and you steal his truck."

"It wasn't like that at all," she says, her voice going high. "And I wasn't stealing it. I would have left it here. I just had to get away and call the police –"

"You think they'd believe you? I know what happened. You got insulted because Holton wouldn't let you out of the truck, and Ezra made out he was going to sic the dogs on you. If you fell and hurt yourself it was your own fault for running. You could of walked out of that house any time you liked. There they are, two harmless fun-loving boys, and you want to get them in trouble, out of spite. Nobody asked you to hitch a ride with Holton in the first place."

She seems to grow smaller while I'm talking. "But the woman told me," she says. "This other girl was a hitchhiker Holton picked up, just like me. They let the dogs kill her. Or else Ezra couldn't stop them in time. Anyway, she's buried right there on the farm, in the potato field." She looks like she's going to be sick.

"Look here," I say, trying to keep my voice quiet and reasonable. "Binnie's not quite all there. She's likely to say anything."

"Why would she make up a story like that?"

"She probably wanted to make sure you didn't ever come back. Binnie don't want another woman on the place. She's got the idea Ezra is going to marry her some day."

The girl finishes her tea, which must be cold by now. She looks into the cup like there were tea leaves for her to read.

"You stole the Curteys' truck," I say. "You broke the law. That's how the police will see it. Of course" – I make it real sarcastic – "maybe you could convince them, you and Binnie, to go out there and dig up the potato patch, just in case there is a body in it."

She looks me right in the eyes for a long minute. "Maybe I could," she says.

There is another pause, while Addie looks from the girl to me and back again, kind of puzzled.

"Or I could just go now, without saying anything about what Binnie told me. Then you wouldn't say anything about me taking the truck. Does that sound like a good deal?"

I nod, slowly.

"Okay," she says, getting up and pulling off Addie's sweater. "I'll get a ride with a big truck. No more farm boys for me." She tries to laugh.

"Can't you stay the night here?" Addie says. "You could have

the couch. I wouldn't want a daughter of mine out on the road after dark."

The girl shakes her head. "Thanks anyway," she says, looking at me again. "I'll take my chances on the highway." The door shuts behind her and I heave a big sigh.

I pour another beer and concentrate on getting a good head of foam on it. Addie starts clattering things in the sink, the way women do when they're a bit upset.

"It's no wonder they don't bring Binnie in to town very often, if that's the kind of crazy story she's telling," I say.

Addie doesn't answer.

"Young girls hitchhiking – they're asking for anything that happens to them."

Still no answer.

I know what Addie's probably thinking about – that night last spring when Holton came and hauled me out of bed, saying they needed help. Of course I went – what are relatives for? I told Addie that Holton had gone in the ditch and wanted my tow truck. She never asked any more questions, but she must have wondered why I was so late getting back home. Those boys just didn't know what to do – even Ezra was scared.

Funny, all the while I was helping them dig, we never knew Binnie was watching us. I think we'll have to do something about Binnie.

I sure hope Holton don't pick up no more hitchhikers. Like I always say, they're nothing but trouble.

UNE CRÉATION (*sans titre*)

Marie-Claude Brosseau

Tout étant prêt pour ma mort, j'ai commencé à écrire ce dont justement je sais qu'il vous serait impossible de pressentir la raison, d'apercevoir le devenir. C'est à votre incompréhension que je m'adresse toujours. Sans cela, vous voyez, ce ne serait pas la peine.

– Marguerite Duras

Elles longent la plage. C'est la vague qui les fascine. Toutes, elles ont le front haut, le regard creux. Elles voudraient être nues. Un courant traverse leurs mains. Elles ont des envies obscures de se voir. Elles se racontent des histoires. Elles ont perdu leur mari, elles sont seules désormais, savantes de tant de souffrances. Elles ont tous les torts, elles se sont trompées du tout au tout. Elles se meurent de ne pas savoir comment elles auraient pu éviter la catastrophe. La mort est arrivée, sournoise, comme quelque chose qui clôt l'accusation. L'ultime preuve qu'elles ont tort. D'ailleurs, elles se tordent les mains. Une main, c'est fait pour servir. Et leurs mains sont usées. Elles sont grasses et peu soignées, elles ont perdu tout attrait. Elles ont surtout envie d'être nues pour profiter des dernières lueurs. Elles se font vieilles. Il faut être vieille pour survivre à quelqu'un. Elles n'ont pas de réponse à l'ennui, à la solitude. Ne sont-elles pas les femmes d'un seul homme?

Le repos viendra bien assez vite. Elles marchent sur la plage. Elles rencontrent des jeunes femmes qui marchent, elles aussi, sur la plage. Celles-là, c'est tout de suite qu'elles n'ont pas les réponses. Elles ont un ventre emprunté. Elles traînent déjà leurs souvenirs, des souvenirs de cliniques où elles étaient seules. Des tourments qu'elles ont en tête. On a besoin d'elles.

C'est toute une histoire dans le sable, l'histoire des femmes. Ça se répète comme la vague, fascinante. C'est à suivre des yeux. C'est autre chose aussi. Il y a les surnageuses, des fortes qui marchent, qui appuient bien fort dans le sable pour que ça se lise mieux. Il y a les misères quotidiennes, des joies ici et là, car il ne

fait pas oublier les levers de soleil sur autre chose, qui sait, un ailleurs. Il y en a tellement qui marchent, des anonymes, des inconnues, des trop fortes qui s'épuisent, d'autres dont on répète les noms, pendant un temps. L'histoire des femmes, c'est d'abord anodin, il n'y a pas de noms propres, l'histoire est lente. On ne se retrouve pas facilement, ça se répète. Mais nous attendons toutes l'été.

On dit que le plein été s'annonce, c'est possible. Je ne sais pas. Que les roses sont là, dans le fond du parc. Que parfois elles ne sont vues par personne durant le temps de leur vie et qu'elles se tiennent ainsi dans leur parfum écartelées pendant quelques jours et puis qu'elles s'effondrent. Jamais vues par cette femme seule qui oublie. Jamais vues par moi, elles meurent.

– Marguerite Duras

WOMEN'SPEAK:

A Gala Celebration of Canadian Women Poets/Le gala de la parole des femmes canadiennes on the occasion of the launch of *SP/ELLES: Poetry by Canadian Women/Poesie de femmes canadiennes* (ed. Judith Fitzgerald, Black Moss Press). Saturday, November 8, 1986
A Space
183 Bathurst Street at Queen
Second Floor, 364-3227
7:00 p.m.

Gay Allison
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Dorothy Livesay
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