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750 words

Driver's Seat

By Samuel Roen

I wasn't supposed to be in the driver's seat. No, that was Dean's responsibility. The designated getaway driver. But, since he'd shown up drunk, my suspended license seemed a non-issue. Besides, if a cop pulled us over, we were screwed no matter who they found behind the wheel. At least I could see the goddamned road.

Late night downtown Wilmington loomed in front of us, the drunken shit show just ramping up. Since I hadn't driven in a while, I wrapped my fingers tightly around the steering wheel of our newly acquired black Ford Mustang and paid rapt attention to the road, my face a bit too close to the windshield. Couldn't risk getting pulled over.

"Take a right, man," said Dean.

"Don't," I said. He was right, of course he was, but I went straight instead, and turned right a block up. Probably wasn't the time for pettiness, but I couldn't help myself. "Can't believe you brought a knife."

"C'mon, I said I was sorry." He waved the knife around in full view of any onlooker. I shot him a look and he tucked it away in his jacket pocket. "You have to admit, man, it upped the tension. Can't tell me you didn't feel alive."

Headlights lit up behind us. I made a left, a right, and then another left. I was paranoid at the best of times, but as I actually had something to hide this time round, nearly every car I saw looked like a cop.

"What were you going to do?" I said. "Stab someone?"

"Nah, man. Was just for fun."

"I swear to God...if we get arrested because of you."

"Again, I'm sorry, man. I won't do it again." Dean pulled something else out of his jacket. A flask. He took a long pull. "C'mon, don't look at me like that. It's medicinal."

A phone rang. Came from behind me.

"That you?" I said.

"Nah, man."

"Shit." I glanced over my shoulder. The backseat was empty. The ringing stopped. "She might be able to track her phone."

"Sounds like it's coming from the trunk," said Dean.

I took a right and drove down a red-bricked, residential street. Historic homes lined one side. A church on the other. Luckily, there was room to park on this block. I pulled to a stop and the phone rang again.

"Stay here." I got out of the car.

Dean followed. "This is some ominous shit, man." He stumbled up to the fence and waved his flask toward gravestones. "They say this cemetery right here...they say it's haunted as hell."

"Don't care." I made my way to the back of the car and popped the trunk.

"Like one of the most haunted places in town, man. Just saying, wouldn't speak ill of the dead here, you know?"

I couldn't see much in the trunk. Too dark. "Can I get a light?"

Dean stumbled over to me, his flask in hand. He turned on the flashlight setting on his phone and pointed the light into the trunk.

"Uh," said Dean, casually. "That's a problem."

Two unblinking eyes stared up at us. I slammed the trunk and did a quick scan of the surrounding area. No one in sight, I popped open the trunk again.

"Is that Steve?" I said.

"Think so."

Steve, a local barfly I'd met a couple times in passing, wasn't moving and had a ghost-like paleness.

"Is he dead?" I said.

"Seems pretty dead."

"You don't know that."

"Yeah." Dean put a finger to Steve's neck. "Pretty sure he's dead, man. No pulse. And the, uh, extra hole in his head kind of gives it away."

"Right," I said. There was a long pause as we both stood there having a staring contest with dead Steve.

"Thoughts?" said Dean, finally. "Opinions?"

"Get in the car."

To my surprise, Dean listened. I made my way to the driver's side, hopped into the car, and sat in silence for a long while. My mind went mostly blank, but I found time for the occasional, *What the fucking fuck?*

Finally, I said, "Do we call the police?"

"Why?" Dean said. "We didn't kill him."

"You're joking, right?"

"Nah, man." He took an inordinate amount of time to continue. "Think about it. We jacked Kelly's car. Sure, it was a prank, but do you really think the cops will believe us if we say we weren't involved?"

I near lost it. " We were just fucking with her. Think of all the shit she's pulled on us. We didn't know we'd find a body in the goddamned trunk!"

Dean merely shrugged.

"So, what?" I said. " We do nothing?"

"No, man," he said, taking a drink. "We do what any other sane person would do."

"What's that?"

"We forget."

Dean reached into his jacket, pulled out a second flask and tossed it to me. It landed in my lap. I hesitated, then picked it up.

"This is fucked," I said. "Do you think she killed him?"

"Don't know, man. But, just in case, remind me never to get on Kelly's bad side."

I hated myself for it, but I undid the flask's top and emptied it.

Dean followed suit. "Should probably get the car back to the lot before that kicks in. Wouldn't want you getting pulled over for drunk driving."