

Short Story

The Road

A DRIVE THROUGH THE MIND

Arashk Azizi

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By:
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Dark clouds were covering the night sky and Adam was driving alone in his Opel on an empty road in the desert. It's been almost three minutes since the last car he has passed by. Although he was alone in his car, still passing by other cars would make him feel less lonely. Not that he was a people person, but still being alone in that darkness was a little scary for him. He was always complaining from people in the city, of their driving, their walking, and even their being. The rush of the city was not his favorite thing in the world. Yet here he was driving alone on an empty road feeling that it couldn't hurt seeing some more cars passing by. If something would happen to his car and had to stop on the road that would be really scary. He didn't know how to fix his car, yet probably he would get out of the car, put the hood up, and just look at the engine and other stuff that he had no idea what they were. His car never stopped working in the middle of nowhere, but he always had this picture in his mind. Maybe after he got out of the car the doors would close automatically and would be locked out of his own car with the keys inside the car. Then a wild animal would attack him a wolf, a snake, or worst of all a frog. Nothing would scare him more than frogs. He could deal with being bitten by a snake or being eaten by a wolf, but even the idea of a frog on his body would make him shiver a bit. He remembered that he is driving in a desert, so the chance of facing a frog was almost zero. That made him a little more relaxed. But what about ghosts? He could contact a ghost. Of course, the probability of seeing a Jinn in the desert is more than a ghost, but they are all the same anyways. If a ghost wanted to contact him, would it wait for him to stop the car and be locked out of it? Or maybe a ghost could just be in his car right now. He looked at the speed meter, he was driving 110 kilometers per hour. So the ghost has to walk or run or glide? Which one does a ghost do? Maybe they fly. But if a ghost flies really really near to the surface of the earth wouldn't that be a glide? Anyway, if a ghost wants to be in his car he must be gliding at a speed of 110 km/h. But if a ghost did that and suddenly appeared in his car, what would happen if he just broke? Would the ghost still go with that speed and get out of the car? Or maybe once the ghost appears he

becomes solid and sits on the seat like Adam himself. If that's true so the ghost must fasten his seatbelt or if Adam breaks he collides to the windshield. But what happens then? Does the ghost die? Maybe because of these questions ghosts never appear in the cars. They prefer to wait till your car breaks down and get locked out of it then attack you. But if they are not solid how do they want to attack or hurt you?

As Adam was thinking about ghosts with himself a car appeared behind him. Finally, after a while, a car was approaching. He was going so fast. Maybe she was going fast. Still, he didn't know. That car was coming with its light up. Why and why people tend to think that they have to drive with the lights up on the road? Many drivers would do that in the city too. Maybe he swayed his light down when he gets near me. If he was in that car, he would go light down by now. Still, the car was approaching and the headlights were up and in Adam's eyes. He was going with the light down and no car was in front of him. The light got too close and a tear starts to fall from Adam's right eye. Why did he look at the light in the mirror when he can look straight ahead? he better break a little so the car passes faster. After the car passes he'll just go light up to revenge his eyes. The car passed by and he couldn't see the driver. He swayed the light up. But what if the driver is a very big man? And what if he stops his car and makes Adam stop the car and fights him for that he has swayed his light up? That would be a good time for a ghost to appear. maybe the ghost appears and just looks at him getting beaten. Maybe that ghost doesn't even bother appearing and just watching him beaten to death by that big light-up driver. Then after the driver left and Adam locked out of the car the ghost would appear to scare him. even the ghost could make himself look like a frog and jumps on Adam's body. That would be the worst to be hunted by a frog ghost after being beaten by a big wild driver in the desert that is dark as hell. But hell is not dark, it burns with fire. So tonight is dark as something else that is really really dark. The road is so dark that it doesn't matter if you go with your lights up or down. You couldn't see much anyway. Still, that driver was going with his light up. But the car was so far almost out of sight. So Adam decided to sway down the headlight. He pushed the light

knob and the light went off. Suddenly there was no light on the road anymore. He pulled the knob and still there was no light back. What if there was a turn on the road? He would surely go out of the road. He turned the headlight switch off and on again. But still no light. He turned it all the way down, all the lights went out even the lights behind the meter, and turned the switch on again. This time headlight turned on and he could see the road again. And right then there was a turn on the road. He was so lucky to reach this turn just before the lights came back on. The straight road of the desert was almost over, he was reaching some hills. There was surely a straight road after the hills again. The next city was in more than a hundred-kilometer distance. What just happened to his lights? Going light up and coming back down makes his light go off completely. He should test it again to make sure. But now is not the time. After the hills, the road would be more dependable and he can test it. For now, he just let the lights be the way they are so nothing surprising happens. If there was something wrong with the car battery everything would go out, even the car would stop. So he needs not be worried. Even the car stereo is on. He just remembered, he turned the sound almost off to hear a sound from the car. There was nothing worth attending but he forgot to turn the volume up again. It's been almost ten minutes and two or three tracks have passed. He turned the volume up. It was in the middle of "like a prayer" by Madonna. Many years ago he liked that song but not today. He didn't know why it was still in his archive. Pressed next and a track by Bon Jovi started playing. No, not the time for Bon Jovi either. Camel would be a better companion for this road. Of course, there may be a camel up ahead in the road. A real camel could be wondering the road even at this time of night. He would be so pleased to see a camel by the side of the road, even more, pleased than to see another car. Camels don't blind your eye with their lights. They are better creatures than humans. Every creature's a better creature than humans. No good track is coming up. He pressed next on every track till the Eagles started playing "Hotel California". He liked the Eagles, not as much as Camel of course. Still, if he wanted to choose between real camel and eagle he would have preferred eagle. But he never saw a real-life eagle.

He never touched an eagle, at least he had seen and touche one or two camels before. So maybe if he could see a real eagle he could judge better. But for now, flying high in the sky was more attractive than wandering in the desert. So for now eagle is a better choice. But Camel the rock band was one of his favorites of all time. Still, the Eagles song played first so he let it play. No, he started thinking that he lost the first part of the song. So he pressed the previews button and the song started from the first. The smooth arpeggio of acoustic guitar that starts the song has always joyed him. The solo of the bass guitar and then singer starts. "On a dark desert highway, cool wind in my head" he sang aloud with Eagles. He was on a dark desert highway. There were some shimmering lights in the distance and each one of them could be a Hotel California. For once he would like to get out the road and follow one of the dirt roads to a small village. A village so small sometimes there were less than 50 people living there. From this distance it seemed there is just one light in each one of these villages. Maybe they were not villages and just some work area or government thing was there. Anyways he didn't want to change his way tonight. He started singing again "last thing I remember I was running for the door, I had to find the passage back to place I was before ..." and the solo guitar started. Actually, it is a duet with two electric guitars. But everybody calls it a solo, so he called it a solo too. He played the solo part on his steering wheel and plucked the pics with his right hand on the gear stick. He liked his old steering wheel better. He could perform better guitar solos on it. Almost five years ago, one night he parked his Opel in the street in front of his friend's house. And in the morning when he wanted to go back home, he realized that the doors of his car were open. Someone has broken into his car to steal it. But they didn't succeed. All they could do was to open the doors, take out some wires from beneath the dashboard, and broke the steering wheel to get rid of the steering lock. He couldn't find the exact model of his car's steering wheel so he replaced it with a slightly different one. This was a good steering wheel but did not handle the guitar solos very well. The track ended but it was not enough so he pressed the button and it started again. "Hotel California" was one of his all-time favorite tracks.

Although he didn't know any other track by Eagles. He searched for them once, but their other tracks didn't attract him as much as this one. He remembers nothing from their other songs. He always wondered what would happen if eagles hold a concert in his city or somewhere near him. Would he attend the concert or no. he would love to hear "Hotel California" live in concert. But what about other tracks. If they would play the track at the beginning of the concert, he could maybe leave the concert hall, but if they played it at the end of the concert, he had to seat through at least one and a half-hour of music he didn't like, just to hear his one favorite song. And what if they didn't play "Hotel California" at all. How other people go to their concert. Do they like all or most of their tracks or they just go hoping other songs don't bother them until "Hotel California"? Has anyone ever counted how many people leave Eagles concert after they perform "Hotel California". Or maybe they always play it the last song. Or maybe everybody hopes that after the concert ends they reperform it again. Do they even hold concerts after their guitarist and vocalist died in 2018? He had to search a little bit more about them later. But he knew that anytime Camel would hold a concert near him, he would totally go and seat through the whole concert. Maybe it was the same for Eagles fans too. After all, he was not their fan, he just liked one of their songs. The song reached its final solo again. There was also an acoustic version of this song and that was so popular too. But Adam really liked the original one with an electric guitar duet at the end. He always preferred to hear the rock version. There was a sense of drive in the rock version, that the acoustic version didn't have. The rock version was a little bit more, and here is a good opportunity to test the lights. Hills are finished and it seems like a straight road just up ahead. Adam turned the up lights on, waited for almost a minute, and put the stick back to the downlight. The lights went off completely. He turned the lights off and turned them on again. Lights came back on. So there was a problem with up lights. He better not use the up lights tonight. Then something in the far horizon caught his eyes. It seemed like the moon, but different. It was not the moon he always has seen. On his left, in the distance, not so far up in the sky, there was something behind clouds.

There were still no stars in the sky and total darkness was dominant in the desert. There were just some shimmering lights in the far distance here and there and his car's headlights. But it seemed that there was a thin part in the clouds and the moon could almost be seen through them. He knew that moon was bigger on its dawn and set. But it was not that this moon was just bigger than the usual one in the sky. It was also a little reddish. And the clouds made it darker. Some parts of the moon were behind the clouds and some other parts could be seen through a thinner part of the clouds. The clouds were moving fast and changing the view of the moon by second. For a brief time, all the moon hide behind the clouds, but again some part of the reddish big moon appeared. He could not believe what he was seeing. The moon was always hauntingly beautiful at desert nights. But this was something beyond beauty. This was the moon that could convert men to werewolves. This was the moon that has always been in the stories, and he was looking at it right now. Behind the dark clouds, behind the line of mountaintops, the magical moon was haunting him. He could become a werewolf right now, although he has always seen himself more like a vampire. Exactly the enemy of werewolves. He liked to stay up all night. Most of what he had done in his life happened in the night. He even worked mostly at night. He was a lot sensitive to sound and light. He preferred to drive at night. He really liked his steak raw. And most of all he really really couldn't stand humans. So if there were really vampires in the world, he could be one of them. Then it is not a good sign that the moon is like that. If he is a vampire and werewolves are his enemies. Tonight is their night and he is alone in the desert. Maybe if he would be locked out of his car tonight, being attacked by a werewolf could be more dangerous than a frog. But no. still he was a vampire, werewolves were afraid of him the same way he was afraid of him. He was their enemy too, But the frogs couldn't tell the enemy from a friend. They would just jump on him without knowing they could be killed. Still being attacked by a werewolf would be a better choice. Maybe even he could attack a werewolf. Maybe the light-up car that passed him almost ten minutes ago was being driven by a crazy werewolf, and if that driver gets locked out of his car, Adam could just attack him and drink

his blood. Blood is not a good thing to drink. Even if he is a vampire he preferred to drink milk or beer or any other drink than to drink blood. Not that he has ever drunk blood but it seemed to him that it should not be a delicious drink. More than taste there was a problem with where it comes from. Blood is the juice of a human. That is crazy and wild. He would never do that. He would become like some of those new vampire movies where the vampires don't drink human blood and become weak. He would definitely become one of them.

There was a truck moving slowly in front of him. He was approaching the truck so fast and therefore decided to change his lane so he could pass the truck. And as always another car with a high speed was approaching. The new car's light went up and down several times to make Adam noticed its speed. So Adam had to put his foot on the brake pedal a little and wait for the new car to pass. It took a while for the car to reach Adam and the truck. Adam had to reduce his speed almost to seventy kilometers per hour. The car passed. He changed his lane and again reached his speed after a while. It is a rare thing to approach a truck on the road and be able just to pass it, there is always one or even more cars passing from you and the truck exactly at the same time. Pink Floyd started, it was the "shine on you crazy diamond" track. He remembered the moon, looked to the left and there was nothing. Looked around but there was nothing but darkness. It seemed that the moon is hidden behind the clouds again or maybe even it was the moonset he saw some minutes ago.

It was 2 am and Adam felt a little tired. Maybe he could stop at a resting place to drink a coffee or eat something or even fill his car's tank. He had no idea if there was a resting place nearby or he had to wait till he reached the next city. He was not that tired anyway, he could go at least two more hours without any stop. The road was his best meditation tool. He loved driving at night on empty roads. The constant moving through a line of repetitive objects made his mind focused. He turned the stereo off. There was no sound but the sound of his car. He could just ignore the sound of the car, and there was nothing but darkness and silence. Up ahead it seemed that the asphalt on the road has been renewed. It was darker and

the white lines were more bright. He reached the new asphalt and the sound produced from tires contacting the asphalt changed. Suddenly the sound of the car almost vanished. The new asphalt made no sound. Now there was real silence and darkness. New asphalt almost finished, the sound returned. Still, there were some patches here and there with the new asphalt, and driving on them made a rhythmic sound. On new asphalt it was silence and on the old asphalt, there was a humming sound. The fixed patches of asphalt were almost in a straight line. He drove right on them and the rhythm of asphalt began its music. It almost felt like the rhythm of Mozart's "eine kleine nichtmusik". And suddenly the fixed patches finished and the nice rhythmic sound of asphalt changed into a loud noise, it felt like a metal concert this time. The asphalt was broken there and it made the car sound a lot. He slowed a little to make the noise volume less. But still, it was not a pleasant sound. It made him think of the harm his car was taking right now. He had been on the road many times and it was not his first time driving on a bad road. But every time it made him a little angry. There was nothing he could do, the road was always inevitable. Whether it was good or bad, he had to finish it with all its ups and downs. There seemed a resting place up ahead. He could see some lights in front of him. And not so much further than the road, there was a board announcing the resting place in 2 kilometers distance. He slowed down the car even more and got ready to get out the road. There was the exit, he turned and went for the exit. It was obvious that the resting place was recently built. Everything was so clean and new. The gas station still didn't start working, there were no pumps in there. He had enough petrol, so it was not worrying that he couldn't fill his car's tank there. He stopped the car under a tall light. No one was there, just some trucks and one or two cars were parked here and there. It seemed their drivers and passengers were sleep inside their vehicles. There was an open supermarket. He got out of the car, locked the doors, and went toward the supermarket. There was a young boy behind the counter paying attention to his mobile phone. Adam said hi and the boy nodded. That was all the contact Adam needed. He was so happy that the young boy didn't start to speak with him. Surely they had nothing in

common, so why bother trying to speak. He picked up a biscuit and bought an instant coffee with hot water. He went out and sit on a bench in front of his car, waiting for the water to cool down a bit so he could drink it. It was a good temperature, not so cold and not so warm. There was a little wind and besides the sound that wind made, there was nothing else. The silence of the desert got him. He was haunted again, this time by the infinite darkness in every direction. Clouds were still darkening the sky and there was no rain too. No car was passing by and he could just sit there forever. He felt like he was on an island in the vast void of space and time. There was nothing he wanted to do and nowhere he wanted to go. It was never a dream for him to be in a place like this, he even didn't know that there was a place like this. But right now it was all he ever wanted. Just sitting there and thinking about nothing. He didn't like to finish his coffee and go back on the never-ending road. He just laid on the bench, looked at his car, and then closed his eyes for a moment. Maybe he could go to sleep, maybe he would fall down the bench. Maybe someone would wake him up in the morning, maybe not. It didn't matter. For the first time in his life, Adam was in the present and didn't want to go to the future or past. The road always made him look at his future or look at what he had passed in the mirror. His work made him be on the road a lot, so he was always looking to get somewhere or looking to pass something. But tonight, right now, it was the present that mattered. He didn't care if a frog would jump on him now or if he lost his keys and locked out of his cars. That bench under the darkest sky he has ever seen was his dream place, he tried to see the clouds in the sky but it was so dark that even the clouds could not be seen. There was total darkness accompanied by total silence. It was a feeling he had never experienced before. Maybe he would change his life from tomorrow maybe not. But for now, there was no tomorrow. He closed his eyes again and stopped thinking.

24 May 2019

Tehran