

Mess Around

You toss her the keys and scurry into the passenger's side of the beat-up, old Ford pickup truck. You cough, trying to clear your lungs of the thick smoke from the fire you set off earlier. "Hurry up, the cops'll be here any minute!" you exclaim, looking over to see what the hell is taking her so long. She's taking her sweet old time wiping the crimson smudges from her fingernails much to your dismay. Your fingers start to tap tap tap a nervous dance on the scratchy fabric of the too-big jeans you're wearing and wipe a bead of sweat off your forehead with the sleeve of your shirt.

Glancing over again, you see that she's now lazily adjusting the mirror and her hand trails down to the knob of the radio, flipping through station after station. What is she waiting for? You worked too damn hard to plan everything - down to the last detail - and you can't afford to get caught now. Sometimes, particularly today, her dumb antics are too much for you. She's still got her hands all over the radio, and then she starts to rifle through her bag, looking for something. She tells you to relax, babe, they're not gonna find us. You're just about to ask her how the hell she knows this when you hear faint sound of sirens. You tell her to go, GO! and she rolls her car out of the gas station parking lot, then flooring it onto I-5.

The sirens are getting closer and closer and you start to wonder how they're keeping up, she's got to be going at least 90 judging by the way the wind whips through your hair. You pull the lit cigarette out of her mouth and throw it out the window, asking her what would make her think this is a good time for a smoke. She offers you nothing but a pout in response and continues to accelerate down the highway towards Tejon Pass. Her favorite song, *Mess Around* by Cage the Elephant starts to play on the radio, and she tilts her head back and lets out a little laugh. You think for a second how magnificent she is, how someone so beautiful and so graceful can be capable of such terrible things. That's the funny part about it all, how she doesn't give a crap about anyone but herself but she's still got you following her to the goddamn ends of the earth for her little adventures. *She does things just because she can*, you think, right before you shout at her to keep her eyes on the road and her hands on the wheel.

You can see the front of the police cars in the distance through the side mirror and you wipe at your head again with your shirt. Even though you already know where you're going, you open the glove compartment anyway and thumb through the interstate map nestled inside. After a few seconds, you glance over again when you see her start to drift toward the edge of the lane. "Be careful! Come on we can't blow it all now." you shout at her, but by the crinkles around her eyes and her toothy smile it's obvious she doesn't seem to care. "Baaabe," she coos, "but it's all just part of the fun!" She assures you that she's got this, to just sit back and enjoy the ride, but you can't help but slide further forward and glance behind you every few seconds. *I wonder what she's planning to do, they're getting closer and we can't keep this up for much longer*, you think to yourself.

But you're not wondering for long when suddenly you're thrust into Deadman's Curve, the car blowing straight through the turn and you look over wondering what the hell she thinks she's doing. The sly grin plastered across her face is the last thing you see before you speed through the guardrail.

*Written by April Mihalovich
Tabor Academy*

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