

The Old Country Road

by SCC Overton

The governor of the ward drove past an abandoned car. He looked at it in his rear view mirror. It was a normal car: no particular colour or shape. He couldn't even distinguish the manufacturer. It was the most ordinary car in the whole world, but for some reason it held the governor's attention.

Why is there an abandoned car in my ward? he wondered.

Distracted for a moment, he hit an object which he didn't see and immediately stopped by the side of the road. He left the car and checked the road behind. It was an old country road and there were many large stones about and many holes in the surface too.

It was probably a rock, he thought.

He left his car door open and walked across to the abandoned car. It also had the drivers door open: just slightly ajar, not enough to cause any danger to passing traffic. The car had not been parked long; perhaps only a few days, possibly just a few minutes. There was nothing strange about it. It looked like the driver had just got out to investigate something. The governor stood up straight and looked around. He couldn't see anybody in the fields nearby. There were some warehouses about five kilometres away, but he couldn't see anybody walking to or from them. He looked inside. The keys were in the ignition.

Strange that someone should leave a car just like this, he thought.

He turned the key and the car started.

I can't leave an abandoned car here. Not in my own ward, he thought.

He sat in the drivers seat and closed the door.

I'll drive it to the police station, he thought. It's not far.

He drove away, bumping over the stones and holes.

The woman walked along the old country road. She was walking from the police station to her home, outside the town, beyond the warehouses where she worked. She felt upset. She had been questioned about something she hadn't done.

This time I must be more careful, she thought.

The windscreen of the abandoned car caught the late afternoon sun for a few steps. She half-closed her eyes against the light. Her footsteps were careful, measured. She had made this walk hundreds and thousands of times before. She couldn't count the number of times. She was neither too fast nor too slow. There were rocks along the road. She predicted each one and stepped over it without changing her speed.

She came closer to the abandoned car. A second car, which was just as ordinary and innocuous, was driving towards her, heading for the police station. It was moving fast, but not illegally fast. The warehouses were in sight now, five kilometres away across the fields. Her footsteps were careful.

The governor was driving the abandoned car on the old country road. Beside him, on the passenger seat was a handwritten note. It was a normal car, very much like his own. He was driving it to the police station. As it was not his own car, it was illegal for him – even for him, the governor of the ward – to drive it.

It's funny, he thought, that even I, the governor of the ward, cannot drive another person's car, even if I am driving it for a very good reason.

Momentarily distracted by something on the other side of the road, the governor hit a woman, walking in the opposite direction.

The woman was stuck beneath the wheels of the car. She could not be seen from behind it. She tried to move, but it was impossible. A man was approaching the car from behind. He moved slowly, his feet stopping and turning right and left as if he were looking for someone or something. He opened the car door and started the ignition, and then his feet disappeared as he got inside. The engine started and the car drove away.

The governor of the ward drove away, along the old country road, bumping over the stones and potholes.

The woman was walking to her home from the police station. She had been

unsuccessful again. She walked faster than normal, just slightly faster. She had walked along this road more times than she could count. How many more times would she have to do this?

The governor was distracted, momentarily, by an abandoned car by the side of the road.

Why is there an abandoned car in my ward? he thought.

The woman was trapped beneath a wheel of the car. She tried to get free. She could move, but she was in pain. She was nearly free.

I am nearly free, she thought. I can see the shadow of the door on the road. It is so close. If I can get free, I can enter the car and this will be finished.

The governor walked towards the car.

I can't leave an abandoned car here. Not in my own ward, he thought.

He entered the car. It was very familiar. He drove away, bumping over some unseen object in the road.

The woman was walking home from the police station. She felt upset because she had been questioned about stealing something she hadn't stolen. She walked slightly faster than normal. The warehouses were coming into view across the fields, five kilometres away.

This time, she thought. I must be more careful this time.

She could see an abandoned car at the side of the road. It was not an exceptional car. She had probably seen cars like it hundreds and thousands of times before.

Another car approached, heading towards the police station.

This car will hit me, she thought. It will hit me and kill me. The driver is driving fast.

The car hit her, but it did not kill her immediately. The driver stopped immediately. She was underneath the car, close to the central shaft and the front axle. She was not trapped. She could move. She was in pain, but she could

move. She struggled out from under the car and pulled herself into the drivers seat. Somebody – a man – approached the car and looked in at her as she died.

The governor of the ward drove towards the police station. He was an intelligent man and a good governor. He didn't usually do illegal things, but this was a special occasion.

I am driving this car for a very good reason, he thought.

He drove past an abandoned car. It was a normal car, but it was abandoned. Distracted for a moment, he hit some unseen object in the road. He stopped immediately and left the car, leaving the door open.

He approached the abandoned car, turning left and right, looking for someone who might be the owner. As he got closer he saw there was a woman inside, sitting in the drivers seat. She was dead. Beside her, on the passenger seat was a handwritten note. The note said:

I was killed in a car accident.

The door was locked. The governor was alone, but he was not far from the town, not far from the police station. On the road there was only the governor, the abandoned car and the rocks. Five kilometres away, across the fields, were the warehouses where the woman worked.

The governor turned and started to walk to the police station. Without his own car he, even he, the governor of the ward, would have to walk.

I will tell them and they will listen to me because I am the governor of the ward, he thought. I will tell them I found the woman who stole my car.

As he walked, the late afternoon sun cast his shadow in front of him.

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