

## Shannon's Ride

By Kevin Pantoja

A blinding light blasted her in the face as she held her thumb out. Damp, shivering and desperate, Shannon felt nervous as the massive red truck came to a halt in front of her. The passenger door swung open, revealing a husky driver in his dirty trucker's cap, flannel shirt that was about two sizes too small and scraggly beard. A mixture of gasoline and beer stung Shannon's nostrils as soon as she got close to him.

"Hey, miss. Need any help?" asked the driver. Shannon froze for a few seconds, letting the heavy rain drench her. It was now or never. Either get in or return to the party where she left Ethan. Ethan and that whore.

"Yes," was all Shannon could muster as she took the big step into the truck. She sat down and clutched her light pink purse in her lap. It didn't contain much except several makeup items, her wallet and, most importantly, a pocket knife. Although one glance in the side mirror told her the makeup might be just as vital.

"The name's Hank," said the driver as he reached to his side. Shannon flinched, but he was just grabbing some napkins. "Looks like you could use one of these," he said as he handed it to her. Hank tried to awkwardly comfort her, giving her two pats on the back. "Pretty girls like you don't need to be crying over nothing."

Shannon shuffled in her seat and looked at him out of the corner of her eye. *Pretty girl? Is he just trying to get into my pants? Is every guy like Ethan?* She let out a nervous laugh before responding, "I was at this party with my friends. Some of them got rowdy and I wanted to leave. When I found my boyfriend, he was in a bedroom with another girl, who had her shirt off."

Hank clicked his teeth, which greatly annoyed Shannon for reasons she didn't quite understand. He responded, "I don't know nothing about this boyfriend of yours but don't you think this could be some kind of mistake? Maybe there was a good, non-cheating reason why her shirt was off."

Put off by his use of a double negative, more than she usually would be, and even more so by his suggestion, Shannon gave him an offended look. *Is this creep serious?* "There is no good explanation for it. He's a scumbag and that's that. Drop it."

Hank shifted uncomfortably in his seat and asked, "So, uh, where am I taking you?"

*I know nothing about this guy, I can't bring him to my house.* "Could you just drop me off at my best friend's house on Harvey Ave.? My parents aren't home, but her dad's the sheriff and he's home tonight."

Hank's niceties dropped now that she gave him attitude and conveniently brought up the sheriff. They drove in silence for a short while, but Shannon could swear Hank was ogling her. His eyes shifted each time she saw them in the stained rearview mirror. She knew that she was vulnerable in her short white skirt that, by this point, was see through thanks to the rain. Hank took a sharp left, causing Shannon to panic.

"Uh, excuse me, but this isn't the way to Harvey Ave."

Hank seemed irritated and mumbled something about a shortcut. *Oh, my god. He's going to kidnap me.* Shannon fidgeted with her purse. As they neared a quiet, solitary area, the truck slowed down. It came to a full stop and Shannon clenched up.

Hank said, "Goddamn piece of junk just died. Hold on," He exited the truck and went around to the back. Shannon stared into the darkness. Nothing but the road and woods surrounded her, with no other cars in sight. *He's going to kill me, isn't he?*

Shannon leaned towards the window to listen better. She heard his footsteps coming up to her side. She made out his silhouette in the mirror and saw an object in his hand. He swung her door open and instantly, Shannon pulled her knife from her purse and jabbed it into his neck. He fell backwards with blood just squirting out of his neck as if it were a burst pipe. When he hit the ground, the object in his hand fell loose. Shannon stepped out of the truck and looked down, seeing not a weapon, but his cell phone, which was in the middle of a call for roadside assistance.

“Hello? Sir?” said the voice from the phone as Shannon ran off into the darkness.