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ELISE MULLER

Night at the drift

what he gives every time, the lights on, then off again. There go five minutes so Yerby, while she fumbled smoke.
"Heaven!" she cried. "You've been busy for at least a quarter of an hour."
"Come and keep the flash here," he says.

One moment the road was a piece of white ribbon in the car lights, then suddenly everything was dark. A scraping sound of branches over metal follows, a bump, a noticeable swing before the car with a grumble of brakes to downtime is coming. For a long moment there was complete silence. Then the driver, a young man, a long whistle of relief and his arms slipping slack down on the steering wheel on his lap. "Nail scratch," he said muted and turn off the machine.

"What are the lights doing?" the woman next to him asked without her voice betrayed a tinge of anxiety.

"The road of course, this wretched corrugated iron road. I suppose something shook loose somewhere. "

"Now, get down and look," she said.

He smiles; while his hand in the car bag searches for the flash, he peers obliquely to her. The yellow that falls from the switchboard on her face, draw her almost painted lips almost black and emphasize the mat, un-different traits lying around them. This move fits her tone voice. He climbs down, flashes back across the road and calls with a still voice shook with shock: "Dear country, you must see the tracks! Don't you want to come and see where did we go? "

She says a little impatiently: "No, all I'm interested in now is the way forward. "

At the tip, he turns around and opens the bonnet. While he searching for the error, she calculates when they possibly can destination would have reached. It's almost eight o'clock, one and a half hours after sun under. From here Jerrie will have to drive more carefully: one knows never or the lamps may not 101 again later and the road is out-live bad and sheer turns. She smiled as she thought about how handsome he was brought the car to a halt, but around him with the dexterous-congratulations, she doesn't even think about it. She smiles out of self-satisfaction. She is a woman who understands the art of doing good business. The man she hired to drive the car is not not a good driver alone; after a few months he is already starting to came accounting too. Under the train of thought, she switches to the orders

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"I can at least try to ride the flash," he says uncertainly.

She laughed and shook her head. 'Not for such turns. You're free restless. You know what I'm carrying in this handbag, aren't you? Well, must just don't be scared when you hear a shot fall. "

Half a minute later he couldn't hear her footsteps anymore.

In the kitchen of the house above the drift, the flames were leaking. loosely around the wobble stumps in the furnace of fire. A woman stands in thought in front of the stove, her hands folded together under a checkered apron, and in the "flashing light that the fire is pouring over her little face, she looks older than the sixty years she's been wearing. But the moment hearing his footsteps in front of the back door, the exhausted pull disappeared her face. She pulled the black iron pot aside and slapped the fire oven.

The door opens and together with the tall, freshly built man a cold nevertheless enters the warm kitchen so that the candle is on the table blink for a moment. \ "

The woman immediately watched with interest the movement of the Christmas and then asking for her husband. But under the sparse beard she strained mouth tight. "No proof of wind," he replied briefly to the wordless question.

Hopefully she says: "But later in the night maybe ..."

He shook his big head, sat down in front of the table with his elbows supported on either side of his plate. "Quiet," he muttered more to himself than to her. "And no cloud on the sky a night of frost if there ever was one. "And then, after a while, silence in which she spooned out of the iron pot into the fireplace beans soup into deep boards, continued he: "Last week when it got so hot, the ripe we would come again. "He breaks down to do the prayer prayer. His voice trembles at the simple words tonight, so clearly he knows that this sudden sharp cold goes with his daily bread. Then they eat tacitly. There is nothing to talk about but this menacing evil. It exposes their vulnerability; it stands for them reliance on probation. Alas, if there is only a light breeze or clouds _ anything to stop the cold white fire from falling on the semi-mature crop.

With a sudden upward movement of his head, the old man breaks the tense silence. There are obvious footsteps through the silent evening over the hard yard to the stand. A definite knock sounds on the fore-

She threw back the travel blanket from her legs and climbed out. "Cold," he grins she when she took the flash and, leaning against the car, the light-beam dropped over the machine.

Half an hour after they stopped, he looked with an apology shrug after her.

"And now?" she asked.

"Wait until it gets light," he suggests, lighting a cigarette.

"All night here?" Her voice had lost the authenticity of the past. "Can't you fix it then?"

For the first time he shows signs of impatience. "I'm being disowned aspire to be your manager and sometimes bookkeeper - that's all. I have never pretended to have a degree in engineering. "

She ignores the reproach; cool as she said before: "We have to close to the drift and they said that people live there, not true not? "

He nodded in the affirmative. "All right, it's your car drive in the dark, drive yourself. You just don't ask me to climb up no. "

She considered before speaking again. Her eyes wander from the bright starry sky down to where the sugar bushes stand close to the road. "I shall walk," she said.

"And the car?" he mockingly asks because he doesn't think she's serious intends to walk.

"I'll walk; you can stay with the car."

"Afraid of public opinion?" he mocks.

'Public opinion to the moon,' she said promptly. "Do you think that I want to put this long winter night candle upright and put it in your company? "

"You can get yourself a little worse," he said, but then she turned and opening the back door of the car, he noticed that she really was intends to step forward. He says in a hurry: "We can bench for you. "

Behind the car, where a number of heavy suitcases were packed, she fetched a light suitcase and close the door again. "I'm on the six o'clock this morning leg. Tonight I'm going to sleep on a bed, even though it costs me a bit. " scarf around her head, hook her handbag to the arm and pick up the suitcase. "The flash please, Jerrie."

But she stood there alone. 'Good evening, sir,' she said. And van he immediately deduces her voice that she is not as young as her artistry. very make-up made him accept. "I have adversity with me car. Now I'm looking for a place to sleep for the night. "

Then he noticed the small suitcase in her hand and invited her inside. "Get lost?" he asked briefly, but his voice remained friendly.

"The car lamps died out of here."

She shit. After the odorless, crisp night air, the unusual scent penetrates Floors now pop up in her. "This house is the only one I have encountered. "

In the door leading to the kitchen, the old woman appeared. " There is a farm one and a half miles away," she says," beyond the drift. Are you all alone? "

"My ... my partner is at the car."

The two old men look at each other as if they are considering and each other for advice ask. Furiously, she wonders if they should really consider whether they should will provide her accommodation. But almost immediately the woman says, "We will give you the best we have. We can also accommodate your husband. "

The girl smiled. 'We're not married,' she said, immediately noticing the narrowing of the old man's eyes under the contraction of the spleen eyebrows. Of course, it is rejected here, she thought indifferently, that people like Jerrie and his aleen driving around at night. Well, it affects her not what might be thought. Her voice shows no sign of when she explained that she was traveling for an urban firm in linen and that there is sleep! supplies on the car are that they even - close, could not have left along the road nor ~ " 'Jerrie is my manager. We visited the farms along the river until after sunset," she says." people there we pointed the way to Sederhoek along this road. "

The woman nodded in the affirmative. "Then put on the suitcase for as long as possible down the couch," she said." You sure want to eat a piece first, not where not? "

In the kitchen where she sat next to the table, she leaned back against the low backrest of the chair. She lets her eyes go through the small room-wander, over the old-fashioned hearth where the smoldering fire goes down and then, through the broken iron of the stove, a fleeting gleam upon the throwing saucapans over the small window through which she took the road light, a small curtainless windowless window sill. Primitive, she thought. But she already suspected this when she saw the light of the

by. The old man gets up and walks through the candle in his hand cramped front door and open the front door. Because it's a woman standing there, his eyes searching for someone else behind her.

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mens nie; but the long walk in the quiet cold darkness, again_ the sugar bushes dense and dark against each other, her footfall already sounding on the strange road, which fluttered in the uncertain light of the flash, turned and went up and down until there seemed to be no end to it Don't come ... She shivers and sits upright. Thank the father, the walk is now behind it! It was crazy for her to get so excited when there was no reason for that.

"There's bread to eat at the soup, miss," the woman said.

She smiled gratefully and wondered if they were always so simple here- cat tight. But she felt hungry and the smell of the soup sharpened her appetite. What would Jerrie say if he had to see what she was doing? Bean soup, not even cut, and coarse bread with it ... well, it could have been worse. Occasionally, she notices how the old people twitches a look and feel resentful because she knows it with her to do it. They naturally find her looks strange. Would they disapproving her makeup so strongly? Whether dark red lacquered nails are missing keno? In this desolation, such things must be a little strange remarkable. Or they might wonder why she, if she was with the young one man driving alone, but not spending the night with him? late then they guess and look at each other as much as they want and give her a bed give, warm enough to compensate for the hotel amenities without it must cope. Tomorrow morning she will pay them much more and more what this shelter was worth to her. Then she wondered with a chuckle smile, which she cannot hide completely, just how much a human being in a hotel for bean soup and bread.

The old woman stood up: "To fix the room," she and she said walk away through the front house. In the kitchen, the girl now lives alone opposite the freshly built old man. While drinking his coffee and down and down when his lips curled to lick the sparse beards, he asked further.

"Julie's driving around with linen, no, Miss?"

"Yes; linen and embroidery, women's clothes too ..." Vit habit she smiles at the cool-friendly business smile she uses around her advertising.

. But he paid no attention to what she was saying. "You said you were upstairs the river. Maybe you heard about how far the harvest is ... or maybe it's still in the pipe? "

Marvelled, she stared at him. "Who's in the pipe?" she asked. "The vein."

She smiled shaking her head. "Heaven, no! I know nothing about harvest no. "

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"We hope it will blow," said the old woman. "If there is wind blowing, frost it doesn't. "

"And when it rips?"

There was a forgiving smile on the older woman's mouth. "It often ripens here, "she says," but this year the warm weather is so early start that the wheat is already in the pipe. Then it is very dangerous if there is frost. What time does the lady want to get up tomorrow morning? "

"Oh, call me when you get up," said the girl. "My grandmother steering will come naturally as soon as it gets light enough to drive. I eat not breakfast, hear. A cup of coffee will be enough, thank you. "

She quickly undressed, slipping in and out of the cold, starched sheets blow out the candle. For a moment her mind fumbled with the reminder of the walk here - so creepy and lonely in the Dark! She thinks of Jerrie the cold night in the car and she smiles it. Then once more she silenced the old people's voices from the She knew that she was experiencing a prickle of curiosity. Would the two old men at this moment discuss the unexpected gas in bitter outrage over the cigarette in their holy house?

Then she slept.

flash over it; at that moment, she couldn't care less who lives there and what kind of house it is. That there are people nearby living, all was important. She is usually not nervous

In short, as before, he says: "Your lady eats bread."

She didn't know if he meant it as reproach or whether it was used to talk so bluntly. Slightly embarrassed at what she does feeling vaguely like reproof, she looks away from the eyes that come out of them outline of fine wrinkles so consider her straight. The embarrassing heath crushes her. What does this old man have to do with her? She eats bread and she pays for it. What obligation would it further her impose? If these old people go hand in hand, good and whey, but she doesn't let herself be prescribed by them. Annoyed she pulled open the zip of her handbag, take out a packet of cigarettes and keep it in front of him.

His eyes narrowed again disapprovingly. 'No thanks,' he said much calmer than she had expected.

"May I?" she asked, without waiting for the dubious nod of the big head, she took one out, lit it and smoked while her eyebrow resting on the table. When she looked at him again, she noticed that he was over looking at her shoulder. There in the door to the front door stood the woman. The dumbfounded wonder disappears from her almost immediately narrow face, but not before the girl with secret pleasure did not notice. Would never have seen a woman smoking before not? she wonders. Wei, it was worth paying anyway to see so much unfettered disapproval.

She followed the woman leading the candle through the front door. The light plays across the old-fashioned couch with the belt mat and over the two armchairs that, old and tired, fit into the room itself of poverty. The room they come in is small and, like the front house, scantily furnished. There is a double ring bed and the brass le shone unnaturally along the poor look of the wardrobe and old fashioned washbasin. But whoever is seduced must fall in love, she thought tired.

"Do you want some hot water?"

"Please. ' ,

When the woman opened, she sat down on the bed. The spring bullock bag gently below her. Hm ... warm water and such a soft mattress! Jerrie wouldn't believe her when he heard it. Her suitcase stood up the foot of the bed and she opens it.

The woman returns with a tin cup from which to blow. Then when she puts it down on the sink, she says: "I have the window above it relegated. The wind hasn't started blowing yet. "

"Do you expect wind?"

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not believing that she had a pleasant night's rest. She heard him the front room speaks. Would he leave a more favorable impression than she? She slaps the Then, grab her handbag by the arm and get out.

Then Jerrie got up from the table and pushed the empty cup aside. The old man next to him nods to her good-bye and comes out of the kitchen the woman with a brown cardigan in hand. 'Sandwiches,' she said, 'so a few cuts to the road. "

Jerrie takes it and his hand goes to his pants pocket.

"Then, Jerrie," said the girl, "just keep going. I'll be right— And as he walked out onto the yard, she said to the two old men, "This was very kind of you to house me. How much do I owe you? "

"Nothing," answered the old man as if he were doing the interview briefly possible.

She had already opened the zip of her handbag and opened a ten-fringe. She held it before him; he disregards it. 'You owe us nothing, miss,' he repeated.

Then she yerby looked at the old woman. 'But I'd like to pay,' she said she said.

There was an understanding smile on the woman's face; and yet her voice, however tender the tone, is a flame of pride. "For

It was still dusk when the old woman left her the next morning enter room and bring her coffee.

'It is still quite dusk, but now you do not have to hurry-tig dress,"she said, and walked out again drinking coffee, the poor furniture, the overall lack of any luxury items, her suddenly so strong that she was disgusted by it. How on earth does one live in such circumstances? Can people really to be satisfied if they only possess the most necessary? The appearance of the room voices her so cruelly that she swallows her coffee quickly. It she must get away. One night's rest was sufficient and the less one entered seeing the daylight of it all the better. Heme !! the poverty, the craziness of everything!

Even before she got dressed properly, she heard the car whistle. Jerrie of course, she thought and didn't mind in the least that he was so early came. Now she didn't have to wait for him. Only after she has the heard the car, the old woman peers at the door to say that she need not be in a hurry. Her husband went to ask the driver to come and have a cup of coffee.

"Thank you," replied the girl, but it didn't make her mood free. more delicate. Once Jerrie saw the inside of the house, he would

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"Pretty," he said. "Mine doesn't cost me a dime anyway."
 'Neither is mine,' she replied briefly.
 He said indignantly: "What? You paid them, didn't you?"
 She shook her head. 'I couldn't,' she said. "What they had to give, was not for sale. Do you not then know that one is for hospitality no compensation desired? "
 He slows down and glances at her. "You're talking funny this morning maybe you slept on an enchanted bed? "
 She didn't answer him. Her fingers were fumbling in her handbag to her cigarettes. He repeats the question and puts it down this time without quips. "But tell me, where did you sleep? On the couch with the riempiesmat? "
 Then in one bright moment it was as if the walls of the house were in front sliding her away so that she could see at a glance the entire inside of it could observe: the simple three-roomed house. .. In her handbag relaxes her fingers in wonder at first and then shrinks together in unknown remorse. "No," she replies slowly, "I got into the bedroom. slept ... on the only bed in the house."
 A reproach, sharp as the clarity of the winter morning, left her lips tremble around the words. Vit this night she would carry a huge debt not for the love she received, but for the one she expressed withhold pride.

From: *The woman at the shelter*; AA Balkema.

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hospitality, my child, one does not want compensation. "
 The girl stood confused for a moment with the note in her hand.
 "But take it ..."
 Definitely shakes the gray head.
 The girl drops the note in the wallet. She says a lot again thank you for the night's rest and how kind she found it to be her lodged on such a cold night, but the words float meaninglessly to the feeling of defeat in her.
 Then she said goodbye.
 Only near the highway where Jerrie was waiting for her behind the wheel she how hard the ground is under her feet. Would it have ripened after all? In the deceptive light of the early morning she could not detect. An uncle gaze leaves the unexpected intent to step back and to the old Asking if damage came to the crop slows her down.
 But she didn't turn around. The feeling of defeat with which she emerged from the walked home, stopped her so she didn't even get out of the car once don't look back.
 Jerrie switched on and started driving. "Had a good night's rest?" he asked mockingly.
 "Pleasant, thank you," she replied in the same joking tone.
 "And you?"

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"What does it look like, Salmon?"
 Have you fat your body
 The great hand of the
 "No, Sir. Yes, M,
 Inside, I'm squatting
 But I didn't say anything
 But deep down I got the h
 prevent me and Fish Pie!
 Since last year's
 this day. But I did
 with this year's practice
 Unless something happens
 Now the morning has come
 stone hired to Noordbur
 just knocked, but it was
 among the grown-ups
 children in the relay to .
 The day has Vis Pieters
 the sprint. But with this
 jumped off. It was o!
 flipped once after oof!
 He's on the brink
 With Fish's third probe
 For a long time he had I
 then the other.
 I won. It was I
 before my last jump nt
 overcome. I already have dil
 Then the high jump on
 was, there was a tOI immediately
 husband of del; Walt has Ian
 his roaring voice
 Northern citizens.