

Going Home

I reached for my phone when I realized it was dead. I sat there staring out my window trying to gather my scrambled thoughts. How could I have been so stupid? My car had stuttered to a stop after running out of fuel. It was 1 am and I was stuck on the dark streets of Chengalpet, Chennai, India. It didn't help that the street light right next to me was flickering eerily or that the neighborhood dogs were howling. I tried to calm down and think back to any phone booths I might have crossed on my way. As I was trying to think with increasing panic, I suddenly heard a car screeching to a halt on the other side of the road next to me. I looked up and saw a van full of guys cheering and laughing. My heart sank as I saw that they were looking at me and snickering. I looked away and tried to calm my quickening heart. I stared into my blank phone trying to ignore the guy walking towards my car...

It was a guy with ruffled hair, gold chains and a half open shirt that showed his unruly chest. His crooked smile showed yellow teeth that were overexposed to tobacco. He gestured for me to roll down my window. I shook my head firmly and waved at him vigorously to go away. Suddenly, somehow he managed to pull my door open with a force that alarmed me. I stayed put, glued to my seat, shocked. He put his head inside the car and came till inches from my face. He smelled of cigarettes and other nasty things that pulled my stomach till my throat. I panicked and tried to shut my door against him but he hollered at his friends who joined him. One held the door while the other pulled me by my arm out of the car. They brought out a handkerchief to muffle my screams of plea. Two men held me by my arms and dragged me to their car, where they shoved me into the backseat. They laughed wickedly as they tied my arms and legs together and gag me with more cloth. They left me helpless in the backseat as they drove towards a place where nobody would ever be able to find me...

He tapped twice before I jerked back to reality from my horrible paranoia and phone's blank screen. I looked up into the smiling eyes of a stranger. He did not look like your next door thug with gold chains or yellow teeth. Seeing that he had a friendly smile on, I cracked my window down cautiously. "Do you need help, miss?" I stared back and mustered a smile and said "My car is actually out of fuel" He looked at me sympathetically and offered to give me a ride home. I said, "That would be great!" I locked my car and walked towards the other car. I flashed a friendly smile at the other guys and sat in the little space they'd made for me in the backseat. I tried to shrug off my previous paranoia and made small talk with them. Although they looked at me with their eyes popping out, they made no moves to gag me. Within minutes we had reached my house and as I got out I shook their hands and said thank you. They all waved back as I walked into my house. I felt a sense of safety that night which I hadn't felt in a long time.