

The Hitchhiker

by Myrtle Ross

Did I ever tell you about my uncle Butch? No? Well, he's the eldest of my dad's brothers. Spent his life traveling across the US working all sorts of odd jobs. He's been a handyman, worked a shrimping boat, and been a long-haul truck driver. Butch has a million stories, but the best one is from when he was a trucker.

He was hauling something, maybe furniture from the east coast to a chain store in Montana. He was gassing up in this little town somewhere near the edge of North Dakota. As he was walking out of the station after picking up another pack of smokes, he sees what looks like a woman holding a baby. She's wearing a long heavy raincoat, boots, and a wide brim hat pulled over her face. The kid's swaddled up real tight.

Well, he starts walking back to his truck and notices that she's following him. So, naturally he stops and asks her if she's okay. She says that her ride never showed and she's trying to get back home before the storm hits. Now Butch is not what you'd think of when you picture a gentleman, but he's a good southern boy and would never leave a mother stranded. So, he helps her into the cab. Said that she had the grip of a vice, that it could probably even rival mine. If you could believe that.

They're driving through the town and it's really quiet, as it would seem that she's not one for small talk. So, Butch asks if she's mind him turning on the radio. Says she doesn't mind, as long as it's not too loud. Adds in that her place is still a little ways off. So, they keep driving.

Well now they're getting to the edge of town and the DJ interrupts some Eagles song to report that there was a jail break. That the escapee was arrested for a brutal triple homicide, managed to get a guard's gun, and was last seen in the area where Butch just picked up his hitcher. Now his brain starts putting two and two together, which makes him real nervous like.

But it could just be his imagination. So, he keeps driving. All while keeping a sharp eye on his passenger. The rain is just starting to come down. Just a soft drizzle. Nothing the wipers can't handle. The ride has started to get long and the air in the cabin has been growing tense. Suddenly, the baby stirs and he swears it sounded like a low growl. Now mind you, he'd already driving over nine hours. He's really tired and this could have just been the lack of sleep. But what wasn't lack of sleep was the fact that her sleeve rode up while adjusting the baby.

Now the women in our family are quite hairy, as we are hearty mountain folk. Butch said her arm was so hairy, that it almost looked like it was covered in fur. This made him even more nervous, but what set him on edge was that they were long out of town and only surrounded by dark forest. What was even worse was that there were no other cars on the road.

At this point he's sure he's a goner. Especially now that she's asked him to pull over. The man's got two choices. Either keep driving with a possible killer for God know how long, till he reaches the next town. Or pull over now and try to escape. He's worked it all out in his head. Just let the passenger out and drive like hell. The cab door will shut itself.

So, he pulls over. The passenger asks if he can give her a hand getting out. There goes his escape plan. But maybe he was wrong. Or maybe he wasn't. Butch just wishes they'd stop stringing him along and get it over with. After what feels like an eternity, he sighs, hops out of the cab, walks around and opens the passenger door.

He's a bit surprised to find her holding out her hand. No gun, or knife, or blood-soaked hatchet. Just her hand. So, Butch helps her down and asks if she sure this is where she wants to be let off. She says that she's sure and that her husband's waiting right over there, as she points into the woods. Butch slowly turns around and sees a figure standing less than twenty feet away.

She thanks him for the lift and starts walking off into the woods. Butch is just standing there in the rain looking dumbfounded. Then a bolt of lightning lights up the sky. For a moment he sees the once shadowy figure clear as day. As I live and breathe, that man had locked eyes with Bigfoot. And Bigfoot just waved at him. Now being the professional that he is, Butch tipped his John Deer cap at him. Then he climbed back in his cab and drove off into the night.