

On the Road

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Written for the "Senses" challenge at GrangerSnape100.

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Ron had insisted on driving to Ottery Saint-Catchpole for the Sunday lunch, and things had inevitably stretched out. It was already dark when they hit the motorway back to London, and the fog had settled in. The only thing clearly visible was the big red slogan on the white rear of the enormous truck preceding them. She had dozed off when suddenly the brakes screeched. The last thing she saw was the enormous red letters flying at her, distorted in a nauseating close-up, till they went out of focus and past her. Everything was blindingly white, then red, then black.

The acrid stench of burning plastic and hot metal invaded her lungs. Then, dim in the background but far more menacing, the resinous, sickening smell of lazily dripping oil. She tried to wrench herself out of the seatbelt, but she lost consciousness again. The next time she awoke, her first impression was of something missing. The crushing had vanished. The stench had vanished. She was lying on the ground, in darkness.

It smelt first of wet, crushed grass, but another scent floated in – styrax, cloves, asphodel and wormwood – which she breathed in deeply, for it stirred long forgotten memories.

She tried to sit up, but she couldn't move at all.

She couldn't feel her limbs, not even the pain she knew should be there. She tried desperately to feel the ground she was lying on, the cold that should have already seeped through her wet clothes, to assess her position. The effort only sent her spinning out of her body.

A strong hand slid under her head and lifted it. Through her dizziness, she felt the rough texture of the wool sleeve brush against her mouth, then the soft cold skin of an inner wrist press against her lips.

The skin itself tasted of spices and salt, but then something warm and revoltingly bland dribbled on her tongue: something faintly sweet and sour, with a tangy aftertaste of copper. She latched onto the wrist with revulsion and hunger, sank her teeth into the open vein and drank the horror and miracle of life. The blood filled her like a fiery sun, yet left her unsatisfied, and she drank faster and deeper, feeling now its myriad nuances. Like a rich wine, it felt velvety and thick, yet subtle and floral, nourishing both body and soul, appeasing and arousing beyond thought.

The red dawn was still unfurling gloriously in her when the wrist was withdrawn.

"Enough" said the dark voice.

"More," she murmured. She couldn't think of anything else but his blood on her lips.

"Not now. But you'll drink again. Soon."

"Am I..."

"Yes. You were dead, you know."

"Where is Ron?"

"Apparated to bring help. It would have been too late anyway."

"He won't find me..."

"It would seem preferable." A familiar nuance of snark tinged the deep tones.

She buried her head against his chest, trying to feel the reverberations. "Speak to me," she said. "Speak to me."