SNAKE IN THE GRASS

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EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - NIGHT/EARLY MORNING

RORY, 26, petite with red hair, black eye, and a busted lip, trudges through the pouring rain. She adjusts her backpack and hunches her shoulders against the storm. She checks over her shoulder. Her right hand is in her hoodie pocket.

A black convertible - windows tinted - pulls up next to her, engine silent. Rory jumps back and pulls out the mace from her pocket, aiming it as the window rolls down.

Rory relaxes as LUCILLE, 35, a smiling blonde with kind blue eyes and red lipstick, is revealed.

LUCILLE
Hello, darlin'. Where ya headed?

RORY
The airport.

Rory lowers her mace and puts it back in her pocket. She checks over her shoulder again, looking down the road.

LUCILLE
Sweetheart, that's gotta be four hours on foot.

RORY
My flight doesn't leave until noon.

LUCILLE
And walking that whole way makes about as much sense as tits on a bull. Get on in. I'll take care of ya.

Rory takes a step back.

RORY
Oh, I couldn't, really.

LUCILLE
It's really no trouble.

Rory shakes her head. She opens her mouth, but is interrupted by a red 1957 Chevy pickup BACKFIRING. Rory gasps as it drives over the hill in the distance.

LUCILLE (CONT'D)
Darlin'?

Rory opens the car's passenger side door.

INT. BLACK CONVERTIBLE - CONTINUOUS

Rory scrambles into the vehicle's interior. It's spotless. The leather seats are covered in a protective plastic. A lucky rabbit foot hangs from the rear view mirror.

RORY
Only if you're sure...?

LUCILLE
Absolutely.

Lucille puts the car in drive and the doors lock. Rory looks at Lucille, who shrugs.

LUCILLE (CONT'D)
Sorry, child-safety locks. The restorer installed them.

Rory ducks down as the pickup passes them. It doesn't stop.

RORY
Thank you.

LUCILLE
It's my pleasure. I couldn't just leave you out there in that frogwash. You looked like a drowned rat.

Rory laughs and straightens, sitting normally in the seat.

RORY
To be honest, I feel like one.

They laugh together. Then Lucille gasps and slaps her thigh.

LUCILLE
Goodness gracious, where are my manners? I'm Lucille.

RORY
Oh, right. Nice to meet you, Lucille. I'm Rory.

LUCILLE
Rory? Bless your little heart, your daddy wanted a boy, didn't he?

Rory forces a laugh.

RORY
... Actually, it's a unisex name. Like Taylor or Alex.

LUCILLE
Ah. Growing up can't have been too fun for ya, though. Unless... Ya ain't one of them trannies, are ya?

RORY
What?

LUCILLE
Y'know... You an innie or an outie?

RORY
I'm... I'm definitely a girl.

LUCILLE
Oh good. You can't be too sure these days.

RORY
Right.

There's a pause. Rory taps a nervous rhythm on her wet jeans while she examines the vehicle.

RORY (CONT'D)
So, um... nice car you have here.

LUCILLE
Why thank you. I call her 'Big Bad'. She used ta be a heap, but ever since I restored her, she runs like a dream.

RORY
Wait... I thought you said you *had* it restored. When you mentioned the-

LUCILLE
Well aren't you precious. Have you got anythin' between those adorable ears? I never said such a thing.

RORY
Right... If you say so. My mistake.

There's a long silence.

LUCILLE
So... how long you been walking? You must live close by.

Rory shakes her head and thumbs her busted lip.

RORY
I left around ten last night.

LUCILLE
Good Lord, woman, this storm's been going since nine. Don't ya have anyone who coulda given ya a ride?

Rory shakes her head.

RORY
The only ones who give a damn about me are back home.

LUCILLE
Well then why the hell did you leave in the first place?

RORY
My... my husband.

LUCILLE
He the one who gave ya that shiner?

Rory ducks her head and pulls her hair forward over her eye.

LUCILLE (CONT'D)
Lemme guess. He probably lost his temper a lot with you, huh darlin'?

Rory hunches her shoulders and pulls her backpack against her chest. She nods.

LUCILLE (CONT'D)
I can see that.

RORY
... What?

LUCILLE
No offense, sweetheart, but you seem like the type that needs a lot of patience. Not everyone's cut out for handlin' someone like you.

RORY
Excuse me?

LUCILLE
Darlin', you gotta know ya ain't got the sense that God gave dirt.

RORY
What're you-

LUCILLE
You walked all night in the rain. Anything coulda happened to ya, and no one woulda known. If I hadn't come along, you mighta ended up dead in a ditch. Or worse.

Rory ducks her head and squeezes her backpack. She takes a deep breath and slowly breathes it out.

RORY
You're right. Thanks. Again.

LUCILLE
Like I said before, my pleasure.

The sun peeks through the clouds. Rory shades her eyes and looks out the window. Lucille rummages through her purse.

LUCILLE (CONT'D)
Where are my sunglasses...?

RORY
Oh, this is the exit...

But Lucille continues driving.

RORY (CONT'D)
Oh, you missed it. But if you take the next one you can do a u-ey.

Lucille stabs a needle into Rory's arm, who gasps. Rory scrambles for her mace, but her arms are slow and Lucille easily plucks the mace from her hand. Lucille tosses it into her purse - next to a small collection of pepper sprays.

Lucille caps the syringe and puts it back in her purse. Still driving, she grabs Rory's backpack. Rory grunts, but her body is heavy and doesn't move. Her eyes droop.

Lucille tosses the backpack out her window and into the rain.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAWN

The backpack lands on the highway. The taillights of the black convertible disappear into the distance.