

The Long Haul

by

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EXT. ROAD - DAY

It's a bleak, dirty day. A big eight-wheeler truck drives along the road with tarp covering his cargo.

INT. TRUCK - DAY

It's driven by DRIVER, disgruntled and ugly. He stares forward at the straight, never-ending road. There is nothing to distract the mind - bland countryside, as if on a loop. Driver is bemused and uninspired. His windows are, and remain, closed.

He moves his hand to the radio. Switches it on. Cheap talk -

RADIO (O.S.)
- a pair of socks with a puppy on
them! Wow! If you're just joining
us, were talking about bad
birthday presents, and -

He switches channels. A shallow and tedious modern song.

He switches channels. A cheesy radio advertisement -

ADVERTISEMENT (O.S.)
That's when I switched to Full
Moon Life Insurance, and saved
hundreds -

He turns it off. Stares out at the road.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

The wheels turn, over and over. The tarp on the truck flaps in the wind.

INT. TRUCK - DAY

Driver's face is still expressionless. He yawns.

He looks down at his cell phone.

He reaches out to grab it, then stops himself and looks back at the road.

He reaches into his back pocket. Retrieves his wallet.

He flips it open and is caught off guard by an -

OLD PHOTOGRAPH -

Driver, when he was younger, and his arm around a younger girl. A daughter perhaps.

They seem happy. But the photo seems old, worn. A relic.

He forces himself to look away, instead slipping a business card from the wallet.

He looks at the phone number.

He picks up his phone. He SIGHS and dials a number. He holds the phone to his ear.

DRIVER
Hey, this is -

A VOICE can be heard faint through the phone -

VOICE (O.S.)
Driver number?

DRIVER
Sorry, what?

VOICE (O.S.)
What's your Driver Number?

DRIVER
My - Oh, it's D-L-7-1-5.

VOICE (O.S.)
Ok, and what's the problem?

DRIVER
No problem, I'm just checking in.
(pause)
I'm en route, four hundred miles from the destination, and -

VOICE (O.S.)
Ok... Well thanks for that, 7-1-5. Just carry on until you make it there.

DRIVER
Yeah, will do. Thank y-

A busy tone SOUNDS from the phone.

Driver tosses the phone onto the dashboard and TSKs himself.

Frowning now, he looks back out the window.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

The truck RUMBLES along the road, which splits the indistinct landscape. It is alone on the road.

INT. TRUCK - DAY

Driver continues on. His foot is unwavering on the pedal. His hands don't move from ten and two on the wheel.

He looks at the bland landscape. Boring bushes, fallow fields. One thin line of road through it all.

Then something changes in the distance. A small fork in the road, a small slip-road off to the right. And a sign at it -

"DANGER - UNFINISHED ROAD"

The driver's eyes widen. The truck continues on, and he gets closer to the fork. It approaches closer and closer now. Driver looks down at his hands.

He can see where the road ends, with the highway dropping off to a looming drop. Certain death.

He has to make a decision...

He closes his eyes.

His hands turn slightly. His eyes stay firmly shut. He turns the steering wheel right.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

The wheels turn. Pebbles are spit aside by the churning machine as it turns towards the unfinished road.

INT. TRUCK - DAY

Driver's CLOSED EYES

We hear --

The SCREECH of the wheels -- The sign being SMASHED by the truck -- The truck as it BUNDLES off the road -- The CRASH as it hits something hard --

Driver opens his eyes.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

The truck continues straight on the main road, the slip-road passes.

INT. TRUCK - DAY

Driver looks at the slip-road, which drifts away slowly into the background. He looks into the rear-view with yearning.

He SIGHS. He looks back to the unchanging road ahead.

Driver's eyes not leaving the road, he scrunches down in his seat. He reaches his arm down to the floor. His hand scours the area for something.

It comes back up with a bottle of water.

Still looking straight ahead, he unscrews the cap. He lifts it up and empties the contents into his mouth.

But the contents are no more than a mouthful, and he throws the bottle away in anger.

Seething, his breathing heavy, he looks back to the taunting road ahead.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

The road continues on. As does the truck. But the truck seems laboured with the road continuing into the horizon, and past it.

INT. TRUCK - DAY

Driver takes a DEEP BREATH. And ANOTHER.

He stretches out his shoulders, stretches his neck left and right, his arms one by one.

He settles properly into his seat. Gets comfortable.

He looks out at the road.

He is focused.

His eye is drawn to the dashboard. He shakes his head, and stares intently at the road again.

He cannot hold his eye from the phone.

DRIVER

No. I promised I wouldn't.

He focuses on the road. He shouts -

DRIVER (CONT'D)

Agh!

- as he reaches for the phone. He dials a number. He is nervous. Panicked as he waits and listens.

It RINGS. Twice. Three times.

He bites his lip.

A faint AUTOMATED MESSAGE from the phone -

AUTOMATED MESSAGE (O.S.)
The person at this number can not
be reached at this time. Please
leave a message -

He hangs up, panicked.

He puts the phone back on the dashboard.

He looks like he is about to crack.

He looks to the road, and it looks the same as it ever did.

His eyes wander, and he glances back at his phone.

He looks around the area. His empty water bottle. Some rubbish. Nothing else.

He tries the radio again - an obnoxious dub-step song howls. He switches it back off with a groan.

He looks back to the road.

Up ahead, he spots something. Another slip-road off to the side, with the same sign:

"DANGER - UNFINISHED ROAD"

His demeanor changes.

He again sits up straight. Flexes his fingers. EXHALES strongly.

He focuses on the slip-road with all his might. His foot pushes further on the accelerator.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

The wheels turn faster and faster, with stones spitting around them. The slip-road gets closer.

The road ends with a drop that looks like the Grand Canyon.

INT. TRUCK - DAY

Driver grits his teeth. The truck approaches the slip-road.

He's ready. Completely focused on the end of the road.

On the drop.

Then, he is interrupted by a feeble HONK (O.S.)

Driver is confused. He looks around.

There is a little car driving alongside his truck. He turns with anger towards it.

It HONKS again.

He growls at it.

Then sees - In the backseat are CHILDREN - a cute BOY and GIRL - looking out the window at him.

The children smile. They are waving at Driver.

He doesn't know how to react.

Taken aback, he returns the wave.

The children laugh to each other. The boy of them mimics the pulling of a truck's horn chord. His sister copies him. They urge him to beep his horn for them.

He looks up at the chord, as if it just appeared.

He reaches towards it. He eyes the children, who smile expectantly.

He grabs hold of it. He gives it a HUGE TUG.

BLARP! comes the sound from his machine. The kids laugh and high five. They continue to mimic him and laugh.

The car drives on, leaving Driver behind. The children smile happily. They wave goodbye to him.

And Driver smiles happily. He turns the truck in behind them, and the slip-road passes into the distance.

He looks in the rear-view and sees it pass. He waves goodbye to the children - he waves goodbye to it.

And then, both the car and the slip-road disappear into opposite horizons.

The smile remains on Driver's face.

His eye again is caught by his cell phone on the dash.

In his brighter mood, he is not so daunted.

He picks it up.

Gulps, as he dials the number.

Again, it rings. Rings. He breathes hard.

AUTOMATED MESSAGE (O.S.)

The person at this number can not
be reached at this time. Please
leave a message after the tone.

It BEEPS.

DRIVER

Hi. It's... it's me. I know it's been a while, and I know you have your own life now. If you still don't want to hear from me, that's fine. I just wanted to call and see how you are. I'm thinking of you.

(beat)

If you ever want to get in touch. Well, now you have my number...

(beat)

Okay, goodbye.

He puts down the phone, solemn, but glad at his bravery.

He turns on the radio. A happy song plays.

He opens his window, sticking his arm out. He taps his hand on the truck's side in rhythm with the music.

He allows a smile, and as the music swells, he gets caught up in it. He takes his hand back inside and BLARPs his horn with the music too. He whoops and looks down the never-ending road.

He gives his horn a rest and as its sound dies, it is replaced by another. His phone is ringing.

His eyes widen at the prospects. He turns down the radio. Picks up the phone and takes a deep breath before picking up -

DRIVER (CONT'D)

Hello?

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

Hi.

Driver smiles.

DRIVER

Hi.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

With the sun peeking through the clouds and brightening the landscape, the truck speeds down the road, breezing off into the distance.

FADE OUT.