



"Only women walk this road..."

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"Only women walk this road..."

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learned about. But the men never walked it; they drove it, although
sometimes their destination was the same: Sergeant K. D. Roger,
Menus. And the good Deacon himself of couple of decades back.

Only ~~women walk this road. Men, never.~~ And if she did not get
somebody to fix the fan belt and plug the oil pan she would be
walking it ^{herself} again, too, provided there was anything useful left to do.

→ For more than twenty years Lone had seen them, back and forth, back
and forth, ^{women} women crying, staring, ^{women} frowning or just plain lost. Out here
in a gold and copper land cut through now and then with black rock or
a swatch of green, ^(over) women ^{dragged} carried their sorrow up and down the road
between Ruby and the Convent. ^{would} Whatever the sky was doing--
spitting ice at them, ^{handling them like a man} caressing them, or ^{braising} frying the skin on their arms,
^{women} they were the only pedestrians. Sweetie ^{walked} did it, Billie Delia too. And

the girl called Seneca; another called Mavis. Arnette more than once.

And not just these days. Lone ~~knew~~ ^T they had walked this road from
the very first. Soane Morgan, for instance, and, when she was young,

^{HC} the ^{obviously} woman in the Convent. Consolata was her name. Consolata de
^{Socorra} Secorro whom she ~~hoped~~ ^{had} had the good death she ~~was~~ ^{longing for.}

~~Since she deserved it.~~ ^{many} Most of these walks ^{ers} Lone had seen; others she

; out here under skies so ^{star-}~~packed~~ ^{with}

~~stars~~ it was almost disgraceful; out here
where ~~the~~ mind handled you like a man; out
here

learned about. But the men never walked ^{theroad} it; they drove it, although
sometimes their destination was the same: ^{as the women's} Sargeant, K.D., Roger,
Menus. And the good Deacon himself of couple of decades back.

^{if ever there was a time for speeding, this was it. but}
Lone had no license but her cautious driving was based on the
condition of the car. ^(over) Above the dashboard ^{watching -} it was clear she was
traveling about thirty miles an hour, but the road which she could see
through the hold in the floor convinced her she was speeding. In 1960
the wipers, the air conditioning, the radio worked. Now the fierce
heater was the only element reminiscent of the Oldsmobile's original
power. In 1968, after it had two owners, Steeward and then Dovey ^{TIL ?}
Morgan, Dovey asked her if she could use it. Lone screamed ^{her} with joy.
Finally at 79 she was going to learn to drive ^{And have} her own car. No more
hitching up the wagon, no more brakes squealing in her yard at all
hours, summoning her to emergencies that weren't or to stand-bys
that turned into crises. Now she could follow her own mind, check on
the mothers when she wished; toolup to the house in her own car and,
most important, leave when she wanted to. ~~It turned out that this~~
~~solution to her problems of midwifery came~~ ^{craft} too late. Just as she
became truly auto mobile, nobody wanted her. After having ^{Skills/}

Watching the s
Presented Recklessness

fr. Above the dashboard ~~and~~ through
the driver's window blank landscape
moved at 30 miles per hour
but the road seen through the
hole in the floor convinced her
she was ~~travelling~~ speeding.

infuriated the hooved and terrified the clawed; having churned
columns of gold dust up and down tractor trails for weeks, she had no
place to go. Her patients let her poke and examine, but for the
delivery they traveled two hours (if they could make it) to the
hospital in Demby for the cool hands of white men. In spite of her
never-fail reputation (which was to say, she never lost a mother as
Fairy once had) they refused her their swollen bellies, their shrieks
and grabbing hands. Laughed at her clean belly bands, her drops of
mother's urine. ^{Poured her ~~that~~ in the toilet} ^{Nodded}
~~No matter~~ she had curled up on their sofas, ~~sat~~ in
^{it} ^{IT did not} the kitchens, braided the children's hair, ^{took} helped with the care of
fragile calves, planted herbs in their gardens and gave good counsel
for the past 25 years and for fifty more in Haven before being sent
for. She had been good enough to bring them into the world ~~back in~~
~~Haven~~, and when she and Fairy were summoned to continue that work
in the new place, Ruby, the mothers sat back in their chairs, spread
their knees and breathed with relief. Now Fairy was dead there was
one midwife left for a population which needed and prided itself on
^{neighborhood size}
~~large~~ families. Lone believed that there was more to it than the
fashion for Demby. She had delivered the Fleetwood babies and each
of the defectives had stained her reputation just as if she had made

the babies, not simply delivered them. The suspicion that she was bad luck and the comforts of the Demby hospital combined to deprive her of the work ~~she was born and trained for~~. One of the mothers told her that she simply loved the week of rest, the serving tray, the thermometer, the blood pressure tests, the sleeping and pain pills, but mostly she said she loved the fact that people kept asking her how she felt. None of that was available to her if she delivered at home. There she'd be fixing x's breakfast the second or third day and worrying about the quality of the cow's milk as well as her own. Others must have felt the same--the luxury of sleep and being away from home, the newborn taken away each night for somebody else's care. And the fathers. Lone suspected they too were happier with closed doors, waiting in the hall, being in a place where other men were in charge instead of some toothless woman gumming gum to keep her gums strong. "Don't mistake their words of thanks," Fairy had warned her. "Men scared of us, always will be. To them we death's handmaiden standing as we do between them and the children their wives carry." During those times, Fairy said, the midwife is the interference, the one giving orders, on whose skill so much depended and the dependency irritated them. Especially here in this place

where they ^{had come} ~~came~~ to multiply in peace. ^{# Fairy} She was right as usual, but Lone had another liability. It was said she could read minds, a gift from ^{the devil} ~~her mother~~ which she had used as early as two when she positioned herself to be found in the yard, when her mother was dead in ^{the} ~~her~~ bed. Lone denied it; she believed everybody knew what other people were thinking. They just avoided the obvious. At 85 she knew something more profound than Morgan memory or Pat Best's history. And knew what neither ^{memory or history} can say or record: the "trick" of life and its "reason." [#] In any case, her livelihood over (she had been called on twice in the last eight years) Lone was dependent on the generosity of congregations and [#] ~~neighbors~~. She spent her time collecting medicinal herbs, flitting from one church to another, driving her beloved Oldsmobile, and surveying the fields which she loved not because they were open but because they were full of secrets. Like the carfull of skeletons she'd found a few months ago. If she had been paying attention to her own mind instead of gossip, she would have investigated the buzzards ^{as soon as they appeared}. Two years ago at spring thaw, March of 1974. But because they were seen ^{right when} ~~when~~ the Morgan's and Fleetwoods' had announced the wedding, people were confused about whether the marriage was summoning the buzzards or protecting the

town from them. Now everybody knew they had been attracted to a family feast of people lost in a blizzard. Arkansas plates. Harper Jury's label on some cough medicine. They loved each other, the family did. Even with the disturbance of birds of prey, you could tell they were embracing as they slept deeper and deeper into that deep cold.

? Warned the women (of what she had heard?)
Drives back to rally a defense.

The turn was too sharp for such a big car
Lone's ^{car} scraped the sign
Honey

"Early Melons" the sign read. I'll say,
~~thought~~ Lone, spoke to herself. July not over.