

Road Work '92

by Ginnah Howard

This is how she does it:

Forward.....

...Reverse.....Forward.....Reverse

This, on a section about as big as her kitchen. She goes over the same area on an average of eight times. Compacting, compacting, compacting. It's got to meet specification. A little college girl, paid by the state, runs around checking. She's affirmative action just like Carla. Carla's the night crew percentage for women on heavy equipment. The roller she runs is the easiest, most expendable, big machine. All she does is roll fill. There are a few women on the daytime blacktop rollers, but she says she could never do that: We're talking real skill. Those women come to work in make-up, looking pretty, and run that blacktop roller back and forth like they're crocheting. What would be best for the company is if Carla was black: kill two birds with one stone. This is hard to come by upstate. The big boss takes the quotas seriously. If you don't have the right percentages working, you can get shut down. They can't afford that. If they don't meet their contract date, they lose the money they've put up when they made the bid. This is a private contract; not like civil service where people take a week to fill up five potholes. The company's already got crews going twenty-two hours a day. Everybody's pushing like a maniac, especially if the thaw came late. You know what you're supposed to do and you do it. Even if you don't.

Running the roller is a lot better than doing flag or picking rock eight hours a day. Flag is dangerous. Carla almost got run over by a guy on a motorcycle who blew by the flag person at the other end. And it's unbelievably hot; you're standing all day in the sun with a half hour lunch and a couple of fifteen minute breaks. It's not cool to say you've got to sit down 'cause you feel a little faint. Picking rock, well, picking rock, you can imagine.

Her first night on the big roller, Red, the foreman, gives her ten minutes of instruction: do this and then this and then this and she was on her own. No kidding. No safety course. No hitching along for a day, looking over some guy's shoulder to see how it's done. Red switches this on, he pulls this to the left, he pushes this down. "Like that," he says, and he climbs off and never looks back. No good luck and no goodbye.

At first when the big roller goes up on a rock the size of her head, she's sure she's going to tip over. Her first few nights she thinks she may have to stuff her shirt in her mouth to stifle her scream. Though actually it's usually so noisy no one would hear you if you screamed bloody murder. DO NOT CHANGE GEARS WHILE TRANSMISSION IS ENGAGED is about all you have to remember and that's written in inch high letters right under your nose. There are just two gears: slow and fast. She only found out there was more than one after she'd been on the job a month when Red peered up at her through the 4 a.m. glow, after she'd brought the roller to its final stop for the night and said, Carla, tomorrow give fast a look over. Hearing Red's voice coming up out of the dark was a shock: most communication is by sign language. Plus most of the time you're wearing ear plugs.

Doing roller you have two completely different work situations. One is when you're part of the beehive. The trucks go in and dump the gravel, followed by the bulldozer that distributes those piles, followed by Carla on the roller. Not too far ahead are the earthmovers³/₄ machines as big as her house³/₄ totally changing the geography, pushing the hill that was here into the chasm that was there. Unbelievable. And the noise: the ground shakes like some polka hall for giants.

Or you can be all alone. Because the big roller is the last thing to shut down, you can be the only one, except the foreman, still on the site at four in the morning. Whatever's been leveled has got to be rolled because it might rain. Then the site is quiet except for the back and forth clank of her own machine. Forward.....Reverse.....Forward.....Reverse.....This is when you can

fall asleep. Every now and then you kind of jerk and you realize you've been out and already you've had these little bits of dreams, usually dreams that have some sort of clanking at their center.

It gives you a lot of time to think.

What Carla thinks about is this: She wishes she hadn't started right off yelling. She wishes she'd gone into the kitchen, sat calmly down across the table, taken a couple of breaths, and said, Eighty-five dollars is missing from my room, and then just waited. Or even if she started out all wrong, when Tess said, What? You think I'd lie to you? she wishes she hadn't backed away from that, that she'd been able to say Yes. This isn't the first time. It's happened three or four times before. At least. But this is the biggest amount. The first few times she just kept dumping everything out of her purse and carefully sorting through, piece by piece, through every section of her wallet, even the hidden compartment which she absolutely never uses. In between the pictures in the photo fold out. Down in the bottom of her reading glasses case. Ridiculous. And already that heavy stone dropping like what she's got is a deep well from just below her throat to somewhere just above her pubic bone. Tess. Then hiding her money under the cushions in her room and finding it gone. She's pretty sure she knows what Tess is doing with the money. That's the main thing. It's not just the money; that she's stealing from her; the even bigger thing is what she's pretty sure she's doing with it. She can't keep backing away from that. Eighteen and heading for adult time trouble. No more juvenile offender. Name in the paper, on your record, everything. "Tess, I want to talk to you...Tess, I want you to know...Tess, I'm concerned about... If her brother still lived home, she could lean on him, but he's off on his own; there's no more counting on Rudy. Sending Tess to paint with Steve in Utica didn't last three weeks. Well, sure, Steve says, why should she work when she can sponge off you. Father love. And she knows Steve's right, but she's afraid of what will happen to Tess if she kicks her out. She's been reading a book one of the sad-story people left behind. It's by this Zen monk, a

name full of letters in weird places she wouldn't even pretend to pronounce, little bitty readings for each day, and some of it makes sense: the part about leaving no shadows. That's what she wishes she could do when she talks to Tess: Leave no shadows. The way she does it, she casts dark blotches every which direction and Tess ducks in behind one of those and she follows her and they never end up where it was she thought they needed to go in the first place. In fact, after the fight often she can't even remember where that was.

How she got working on the road crew, the last thing she would ever have imagined herself doing, well, maybe one notch above driving tractor-trailer, was that her neighbor's husband says to her one day, after he's heard her bitch for years about what a drag it is never having a car that starts, Why don't you apply for the road work out off Route.12? What? she says. You could be the flag lady...ha, ha, ha and collect unemployment all winter. The ha, ha, ha revved her up; she knows about how they have to hire a certain number of women and working with a bunch of road guys checking you out surely can't be all that different from tending bar. Easier, in fact, since they won't be loosened up with booze. Part-time at the Edgewater Bar & Grill isn't enough to keep things running and the thought of unemployment, of not having to lug her battery in on dark February nights to bed it down by the wood stove so her car will start the next morning, is her idea of going to heaven.

So one day on her way into the Edgewater, she swings over to Route 12 and pulls in by the trailer at the Four Corners which she thinks is maybe the on-site headquarters. She's expecting whoever's in charge to kind of give her the look down his nose or at best, the once-over to size up her biceps, but no, right away after she rap-raps on the door, this man^{3/4}turns out he is actually part-owner of the company and probably worth a million dollars^{3/4}greeted her in a courteous, business-like manner and when she states her name and that she wonders if they have any openings, shakes her hand, gives her an application and moves some stuff off the table so she's got room to write. She's floored. The last time she applied for a real job

at Marwick-Eaton Pharmaceutical, there was a glass window between you and some receptionist and you were lucky if you could catch her eye and get her to make direct human contact. The road work application is straight-forward, no none-of-your-business questions. They do not ask you *What is the highest grade completed?* which actually she minds a lot less now that she's got her GED than when she should've said 8th. They do not ask *What is your marital status?*, always an eeny meany mo question for her since they don't have *estranged* or *occasional*. They do not ask if you've ever committed a felony. Here she can give a straight No, but it always gives her a long pause, wondering who in their right mind would say Yes. There's no place for references; no place for who they should call in an emergency. On the *Previous Employment* lines, she lists the *Edgewater Bar & Grill* in *Stanton*, the *Macumber Box Factory* in *Marwick* and go-go bar in Monterey. The application doesn't include a *doing what* slot, but she wouldn't have put down go-go dancer even if it had. She finishes the application, Bill DeStefanoto takes it, tells her they've got nothing right then, but she should keep checking back because something might open up. She stops by every three or four days and lo and behold a few weeks later she's doing flag: fourteen dollars an hour, time and half if it's over eight, bringing home five hundred a week and likely to get a lot of that back. With unemployment compensation not so far down the winter road that she can't spot it on the horizon whenever her wrists, her muscles, are aching so bad she's not sure she can drag herself out of the bed.

Way past eight and the sun's going down. It gets a lot harder to judge the distances at dusk. Up ahead she sees that one of the earthmovers is waiting for the electric company to finish rerouting a line so the whole beehive has come to a halt. Red is giving her the open hand back and forth under his chin which means Turn off your machine. She does. The two dump trucks and the bulldozers do the same. The site becomes almost quiet. Now you might think that given this unexpected lull, there'd be a bit of conversation, a few

jokes hollered across the way, maybe an update on Ralph's new baby, how Clem's wife's coming along after her operation, what happened at Berton's son's hearing. No. There is no talking while you're working. Usually it's too noisy, but even when it isn't, these men don't seem to feel the need to reach out with words. At first she tried to stir up a little chit-chat during the waiting-around times, thought maybe all their voices needed were little jump starts of interested questions. How many kids do you have? Been working on the roads long? You from around here originally? And though they were polite and gave her brief responses, the conversation sputtered to a stall right away because they never returned with anything near a What about you? Okay, she got the message. You know the word *taciturn*? Yep. They do talk during the midnight break, but it's pretty much always the same conversations: past years hunting stories told again and again with amplifications and what's the present game situation³/₄bucks sighted, where the turkeys are feeding. At least three times she's heard Clem's story about the most beautiful ten pointer ever that he had dead in his sights up on state land, how he didn't move and watched the buck coming on, a perfect shot, and then saw a flash of red just beyond³/₄his brother-in-law making the drive from the other side. He had to lower the gun and let that buck go. The men all shake their heads, yeah they know the feeling, his loss is their loss and she's getting so she feels it too. Or they talk about vehicles: current problems with and advice on, hot items called about in the automotive section of the *Pennysaver* that are already gone, fond memories of faithful trucks or tractors or cars that just wouldn't quit.

Except for Scott, right from the go, they've all been polite to her, treated her like a daughter, a sister. Moved over to make room on a tailgate. Cut way down on the swearing and been apologetic when they forgot. She's had to watch her language lest they be disillusioned. Occasionally when some personal topic forced it's way to the surface: Clem's wife's cancer, Berton's son's DWI, the sympathy was there in the slow nodding of heads, the pained looking away. She's said a little about Tess, her concern. How tough it's

been for Tess not to have a father living home. Kids, Red said, shifting his position, like he was grounding himself for a blow. There seems to be a general consensus: the less said the better; words make it worse.

The electric company's still jockeying with the line. Red signals it'll be about ten more minutes. She shifts around a little to see if her bladder could use a quick trip to the woods and when she feels it doesn't, she stretches her legs and does some neck rolls. She lights up. They're allowed to smoke during temporary shut-down times. She sees Clem and Berton are doing the same. Red's chomping on some vegetable; what he chews on since he quit smoking in June. His doctor said if he wanted his heart to take him through a few more years, he better quit smoking, quit drinking, quit running after fast women. He gives a big laugh at that one since everybody knows he's been married for forty-five years and he'd get the frying pan right on his head if he ever, if he even, well it just wouldn't have been worth the trouble he'd have stirred up at home. He says he's starting to get orange from all the carrots. Red³/₄what a nice man. He's more talkative when he runs her back to her car in his truck at the end of the shift. Usually they're the last ones to go.

She sees that the men ahead of her have gotten down off their machines, out of the trucks, checking their tires. Scott is looking off toward the hills. Just above the stand of pines, that kind of sun³/₄so red, so flat, such a perfect circle stuck in the sky³/₄it doesn't seem real. Like that picture on Del's calendar. That fiery spot up there might be the just-before moment of Del's picture, with its blue-black sky and its pasted on moon, and under this sun, the gypsy would still be playing his lute. The lion watching, the lion exactly the same. That lion and Scott. Yeah.

Men. All of the years she's been studying men as a daughter, lover, wife, mother, and even lately as friend, she still feels like she arrived in the middle of the movie, that she must have missed some important scene or clue that propels the action forward, that convinces you, in due time, it's all going to come together. What

they're doing and why they're doing it is going to, within the larger story, make sense. Be Logical. Be Rational. Isn't that how they've billed themselves? No. That's *it*. This is her latest theory: there are no threads, no dropped hints that when looked back on from the final shot will lead her to exclaim, Oh, gosh, now I get it. Nope. Men are moved by random impulses just like the rest of us, but they square the goopy consequences off every day so they fit into two or three different compartments they've smacked together for storage in order to leave a little space for future maneuvers. And there you have it: the male mind. To her it looks sort of like a combination garage/local post office. At least with women, you know you're in a giant junk shop right from the go, no deceptive advertising, and the most you can hope for is to keep a running inventory, an inventory that never promises to really list everything in stock all at once.

Men. Of course there are many good ones like Red and Clem. But here's the thing: How come with a nice guy, she never feels any electrical activity whatsoever? Besides the book by the monk, somebody left this article around about women who always go for rotten guys. Not rotten exactly, maybe more like *No Vacancy* whenever you're needing a room.

It's that time of evening when all the trees have started to glow, a kind of light, a spell, a shimmer it's hard to describe^¾pink-gold, lavender-lemon, a time when the gods or ghosts may speak. The trunks and branches stand out black against the mowed fields. She likes the way the farmers roll their hay and leave it hunched along the ridges. July is the time of Queen Anne's lace. Hundreds of pale, luminous disks feather up on the banks. And when you look at them close, each one is made of ring upon ring of tiny flowers and at the very center there's a purple blossom, one drop of blood. She never saw that dark center before doing road work until one evening when she was squatting off in a private sea of lace, some distance from the crew.

Red motions her to turn the roller back on, a fistful knock on his chin with his right hand and every one climbs back in and fires up.

It reminds her of those TV concerts where the conductor waves his stick to the side and all the violins begin. She rolls forward in slow, positioning herself so she can watch Scott's profile as he works the dozer. She knows he will not signal when he's done; she'll have to pick it up from the way he turns his head, by his now familiar final checking each side before he swings out of the line. He does not like her and she doesn't know why, but from the beginning he made it clear she can expect nothing special just because she's a woman. He doesn't do anything active; more it's like he looks right past her. A real son of a bitch, she once told somebody, and then for the first time realized what that meant and ever since she's rephrased her description: a real son of a gun, Scott can be a real son of a gun.

Scott swivels to check each side and turns the bulldozer in the direction of Clem's truck. Of course he leaves barely enough room for her to squeeze by. Screw you, Scott. She doesn't grant him the satisfaction of a glower. She'd like to give his arrogant profile the finger, but instead she smiles and raises her hand in a cheery *hey, no problem* wave which he pretends not to see. She moves up onto the piles of gravel and, without any wasted maneuvers, begins her steady roll. Del Merrick should see her now: working, really working. Maybe she should give Del a call.

The first couple of passes over the area, she'll keep it in slow, but after that she can speed up. No question that after three months of this, she's getting more expert. At forty-two she's holding her own, her body's still generating interest, but by Friday the muscles of her wrists, her neck and lower back get so tight, she has to keep up a diet of ibuprofen which she can sometimes feel having its way with her stomach. Running the roller on average of fifty hours a week means that pretty much all she does is work and sleep. Even so there is the constant fatigue; good sleep is hard to come by in the daytime. Just as well she isn't in love at the moment; she's too knocked out for sex. And it's hot even with the fan. Impossible to get it dark enough to fool her sleep system. If you want air, you've got to have a little light too. Usually she's so wound when she first gets home around five, she can't settle. She does a couple of loads

of laundry, defrosts the fridge. She doesn't vacuum since Tess is still sleeping. Later when she finally drops down into that exhausted heaviness where she dreams she's being run over by something with enormous tread, the noise of Tess racketing around on the stairs pulls at her. She wants to yell out her great need to be allowed to stay under, and maybe she actually does, but usually it feels like her mouth cannot pull itself open, that her arms are encased in an oily black ooze.

She overlaps a foot or so the roller mark of her last pass and creeps steadily forward. Around the smell of dust and exhaust, there's the smell of rain. Something's moving in that the sky doesn't know about yet. The lights come on; the big generator hums beneath the clank of her machine, the swash of gravel, the roar of the earthmovers, followed by the scraper's raking screech. Road work is noisy business even through her plugs. The roller lifts as it climbs over several rocks as big as basketballs. There are those tense seconds of imbalance and then the machine settles again. Ahead of her stretch three sections, each the size of her living room. Compacting, compacting until an early break at eleven and then only an hour or so after that on her own; word's come down they're knocking off early with full pay. A reward from the company ³/₄they're ahead of schedule and tomorrow's the Fourth of July. Until then all she has to do is roll.

The monk says it's good to follow your breathing. Breathing in I am going forward. Follow your breathing and just let your thoughts float up. Like a guard at the palace gates, you know what is coming in; what is going out. In the distance, backing the flanks of the biggest machine, the final red glow of the sun. Carla rolls forward and breathes...one.....two.....three It's hard to hear who's coming in and who's going out in all that roar.

Yesterday she found the back of the old dryer dented, the top beaten, the control dial smashed. On the opposite side of the barn, a rocker she'd hoped to fix up, broken to pieces, as though it had

been hurled against the wall and then stamped into bits. Lying in the middle of the floor, Steve's wrecking bar. She knows what has happened: this is the scene of one of Tess's rages. So far she's never witnessed her furious smashing, has only come upon the broken results. Her first feeling always relief: it has been things and not people she's hurled. So far. She knows, has known for a long time, Tess is not okay. There's a misfire someplace. And what Tess is doing is making it worse. Less spaces between. A constant jitter. Steve thinks she's making a mountain out of what's just being eighteen. He can't see it, was out of the house before it started: the going off over nothing, the angry eruption of dislocated words, the spooky silence after. Now the stealing, the coming home after she's gone to bed and still sleeping when she leaves. Of course Tess is hiding, avoiding interrogation. But this weekend, enough hours off in a row to gather her strength. She'll get Steve to come, Steve without Marion. She'll present him with the evidence: the morning after fury in the barn, the crack vials. She'll tell Steve the part about no shadows. Maybe, calmly together, her mother and her father, they can find a way in.

Red's making the rounds, signaling time to shut down. That means everybody but the roller. He motions her that he has info. Up ahead Scott's leveling the last sections she'll do. There's the final mutter of dying machines. She turns hers off too and comes to rest in the quiet, scans her body, the shooting pains in her wrists. Clem and Berton flash her a wave and head out for home. Red cuts the lights along the line, all but the sections she'll roll. She slides down. After her butt and her legs have been vibrating, bumping along for hours, the return to earth surprises her feet. There are a few weightless moments, a shifting of gravity, time to convince her limbs they're of equal length.

In this semi-dark state of imbalance, Red's voice makes her jump. "Carla, I figure you've got about an hour to go. Take whatever break you need and then get that final section good." He sniffs the air,

raises his hand like he's checking the breeze. "Feels like rain and we won't be back till Monday."

She nods and sways from side to side, stamping her feet to bring the blood down.

"Scott'll be done by the time you finish your break and then he's going to hang out till you've rolled and close down for me here. He'll give you a ride back to your car."

"Is that all settled?" she hears her voice say. It's been hours since she's spoken. And what she wishes that voice said is, Red, don't leave me.

"Yep, everything's set." He looks over his shoulder, leans his head to one side and closes his eyes, like he's going through an is-there-anything-I-forgot routine. Then he gives her a smile and moves off in the dark. "Have a good long weekend," he calls. "Get yourself out on a picnic. See the fireworks. You deserve it."

"You too," she answers. Then she hears the slam of a door, watches his taillights recede. The scraping of the bulldozer pushing gravel stops. Just her and Scott, alone on the road. She breathes. Her guard at the gates is making the moves to calm down.

Scott backs the bulldozer in beside the two trucks. He gets off and starts toward the roller. He's a tall man, maybe fifty. One of those men who hasn't started to age. Lean. A man who never sits down. No, he isn't what you'd call good looking, but he's got that, whatever it is, you know he's there without even turning around. The only man on the job who gives her that jolt. Just like the magazine said. She knows he's married, but he's got the eye, that flicker of current; he's still testing the air.

When he's within range, she calls to him, friendly, no edges she hopes, "Going to duck into the woods for a minute, and then get rolling. Get us out of here as fast as I can."

"Okay by me," he says. His face is in shadow, his back to the light. In the three months she's been on the crew, this is their first trade of words.

She leaves him leaning against the machine and with her flashlight locates her path, jumps the ditch and heads for the turf

she's marked as her own. There's the smell of wet grass and manure from the cow yard just down the way. She hears an occasional sighing moo, the thud of heifers bumping the fence. The thicket of pines is her perfect close spot. Portable toilets back by the trailer are too far to do her much good. When she first started working, she'd expected joking asides on her returns from the trees, but instead there's been that same respectful distance, a shy looking away. No question, the bathroom breaks are easier for guys, but with practice she's got it down to an elegant bit. The monk says, whatever you're doing, be doing it. Breathing in I'm unzipping my pants. He's big on the present, says that's all there is. Sounds simple, but no, it's hard to stay *here*. From where she squats in the dark, she sees the fiery glow of what must be Scott's cigarette. Crickets, frogs, some rhythmic chub-chub no one can name, the love songs of night once the road work shuts down.

She scrambles the return bank and heads for her roller's familiar dark hulk. No irregular lumps, no signs of Scott. One cigarette and then hit it and then the drive home^{3/4}to sleep in the cool dark of night, the pleasure of that. And no electrical detours. Remember, she's fasting: No More Men. For awhile. She pockets her flashlight and reaches up for a match. It's then that she knows he's somewhere there in the dark.

"Scott?" she moves away from the roller, back into glow of the lights down the line.

His flashlight goes on. "I'm here by the generator. Just making sure I'm going to know how to shut it all down."

She puts her light back on, too, even though she doesn't really need it here. Is she imagining it or was he spooking around? "Got a match? One quick cigarette and then I'll get going." Just the patter of words stills the bump of her heart. By now he's moved out of the dark. He strikes a match for her and takes out a cigarette for himself.

"Got any big plans for the Fourth?" she says.

"Not really."

She is going to have a conversation with this man. Words, any words, will do. Drain the current out of this situation, her attraction. "Me either. I'm just looking forward to being off that roller for awhile."

He steps back a few paces and haunches down, braces himself against the bumper of the dump truck, but he doesn't offer any response.

Okay, forget the chit-chat; she'll try something real: "Well, actually I'm getting my strength up to deal with my eighteen year old daughter. She's heading into some serious trouble and I'm hoping I can get her father to come down, that between the two of us, we can help her make some kind of turn."

"What kind of trouble?"

Carla, don't blow this. "Well, for one thing drugs. But, not just that, she goes into these out-of-control rages." She's telling this man stuff she has trouble telling herself.

"And you can't get her to see anybody?"

"Just the mention of it, sets her off. She says nobody's going inside her head."

Scott settles full on the bumper and bends forward a little, shakes *his* head like he's in there thinking. She scoots onto the step-up to the dozer cab.

He turns a little more in her direction, "My brother's son's had a lot of problems. Billy, my nephew. Looked like he was just a screwed-up kid at first. Problems in school. Drugs, stealing, you name it."

Up out of nowhere, tears. And they just keep coming. She wipes her eyes and nose with her sleeve.

"You okay?"

She nods yes, gets out another cigarette. He hands her the pack of matches. No, she isn't okay. Tess's been pretty much morning, noon and nighting through her brain for weeks. Oh, longer than that. How many years? And how many years more?

Bugs sputter around the big light poles over by her last place to roll. They sit and smoke. Feels like there's no hurry; the night has slowed down.

"My brother and his wife have actually had to call the police a couple of times to get Billy to a crisis center."

"My god, I don't know if I could do that. Tess'd never forgive me." But that's not quite it.

"That's what my brother said, but he was afraid Billy was going to do himself or somebody else real harm. Well, he just went to the phone and did what he had to do. He knew there was no way of getting him in the car. But here's the thing: Billy's doing better now. No miracles; it took a long time. He goes to this clinic in Marwick."

She knows Tess'd never go to any clinic.

Like he's read her silence, he says, "Yeah, my brother and his wife figured Billy wouldn't ever get help, but after a couple of late night trips to the hospital, he started taking some medication. One of the crisis people got something going with Billy. This young counselor."

Maybe if she'd been there when Tess smashed the rocker, her fear for her, for it all, would have got her to the phone.

"The clinic and the crisis center are listed under Onango County. My sister-in-law said she started sleeping better just having the numbers handy."

"I am so tired of it," she hears herself say.

Scott shifts away a little. "We don't have any kids. So I can't ever really know what any of that feels like. The having to pick up that phone. The rest of it." He rises and looks toward the last section.

"I'm going to start making the final rounds, but I'll be within earshot if you need anything."

He's already passed back into darkness before she jars loose. She steps up onto the roller and shifts into low. The gear is cold in her hand. The roller begins its steady roll; there's always more give until it packs down.

Tess. Something has lifted.

It isn't until she shifts into reverse that Scott's words actually enter her mind. *And all the rest of it.* The longing. And she didn't even respond. No children: She can't begin to wrap herself around that. She creeps the roller forward again, squinting to see, with her back to the light. There's an orange glow from an upstairs room of the farm house down below. This new road, running so close, must be a sad sight for them.

One of those funny moons is just coming up over the barn. It's then that she sees the white spots moving, bobbing about two or three feet from the ground. And hears mournful groans. It's then she realizes what those flashes of white are. She turns the roller off.

"Scott," she calls, trying to throw a calm voice back into the dark. "Look toward the barn." The monk wouldn't have missed this one for anything.

Up on back legs, a white-spotted cow. Mooing. Moaning. Crying and dancing under a lopsided moon.

