

Salome Danced

by Lillian Ann Slugocki

"Prepare the kingdom for my dance."

---Salome

After we'd been on the highway about an hour, it started to snow. Sammy leaned down to pick up the roach he'd dropped, and we skidded off the highway. His black Cadillac landed gently in a smooth gully, the snow drifting around us. We finished smoking the joint, then he put the car in gear, and we took off. We got to the after hours club, all five of us, around 2:00 in the morning. I was out on the dance floor in my silk flamenco skirt and pink feather boa. Two guys shimmied up to me, two strangers, who got a little aggressive, a little too close.

Alarmed, I backed away, and fell into the arms of Artie, a rock star, who invited me out to his car to snort coke. I couldn't believe he had less than a half a gram. We must've been out there a while because when I went back in, I couldn't find any of my crew. I checked the bathrooms, the parking lot, back inside, everywhere. I looked in my bag and found ten cents. The sun was starting to come up. I was 90 miles from home.

The two men from the dance floor, one short and one tall, approached me in the almost empty parking lot, sodium lights glaring and said, What's up girlie? I said, Like my whole crew forgot about me. I need a ride home. The taller one said, Which way you headed? I said, North. He pointed to a tiny car, a Carmen Ghia. Powder blue. He opened the door, Get in. So I did.

I had to sit on the short guy's lap. We hit the highway going way too fast. I was annoyed it was almost dawn, and I felt like strangling myself with my pink boa. Beneath me, the short guy was moving his hips up and down. I could feel his erection. The driver said, So you

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didn't want to dance with us? Is that right? No, its not right, I lied, I was with my boyfriend. The other man replied, What kind of boyfriend abandons his woman in a parking lot. I answered, Not a good one, I guess. Damn sure straight, the driver laughed, pounding the steering wheel.

He turned on the radio, Do you like this song? I was like yeah I love this song. He swerved into the far right lane and parked on the shoulder of the highway. Then he turned to me and announced, Well I'm going to ask you to prove it. Prove what, I asked. Yeah, prove it, prove that you love it, the short one laughed. I laughed, too, like I was cool, in control. The driver leaned over, his breath smelling of bourbon and maraschino cherries, whispered, You don't have a boyfriend.

I don't, I asked. Naw, he replied. And I think you just didn't want to dance with us. Yeah, the other one said, Like you were too good. The sun was out now, and hurt my eyes. I was coming down off the coke. The occasional car streaked by. I just wanted to get home. The driver continued, And if you wanna get home you're gonna have to dance in the middle of the highway, and we get to watch. I said, I could hit by a car, dude. He replied, Not if you move fast enough.

I reached over, opened the car door, and fell out into a snow bank. I ripped off my fake fur coat, and threw it at the short guy. I adjusted the straps on my silver platforms, and strode out into the middle of I-94. I screamed at the driver, Turn up the music motherfucker so I have something to dance to. He did. It was a new song, one I'd never heard before, but I loved it. I knew I wasn't dancing in the middle of a highway for two strangers. Who now looked afraid *of me*. I was dancing for myself. It started to snow again, and I thought that was beautiful.

