

Last Rest Stop  
by  
Hannah Grace

INT/EXT. SUV - DAY

Pop music plays. TIFFANY (16) stares out the window vibing to the music as the arid countryside passes by. Behind her, the SUV is crammed with camping gear.

A muffled indistinct VOICE is heard, unintelligible, drowned out by the music. Through her window, the SUV leaves the dusty two-lane highway, taking a turn-off.

Moments later, the SUV pulls into a gas station and stops. The voice again. Tiffany closes her eyes and rocks softly to the beat, enjoying the music.

FATHER (O.S.)  
(yells over music)  
Tiffany! Did you hear me?

Startled, Tiffany removes her ear buds. The music diminishes to tiny, tinny sounds.

TIFFANY  
What?

FATHER (O.S.)  
What have I told you about playing  
your music so loud?

Tiffany rolls her eyes.

FATHER (O.S.)  
I said, there's still a long way  
to go and this is the last rest  
stop. Better use the restroom.

The sound of the driver door opening and slamming shut.

MOTHER (O.S.)  
Want anything from inside?

Tiffany shakes her head no, about to put her ear buds back in.

MOTHER (O.S.)  
Do as your father says, Tiff. It  
is a long drive.

Sound of the passenger door opening and closing. Tiffany groans, turning the music off. She opens her door and we FOLLOW her out. She slams the door and we FOLLOW her to--

EXT. GAS STATION RESTROOMS - DAY

A small, dark alcove separates the men's and the women's restrooms. We HOLD BACK as Tiffany enters the alcove and pushes the door to the women's restroom open.

Darkness inside. She peers in. Find and flicks a light switch uselessly.

TIFFANY

(loud)  
The lights aren't working.

FATHER (O.S., DISTANT)

(loud)  
You're not afraid of the dark, are you? Go on, I'll keep watch.

Tiffany pulls out her cell phone and activates the flashlight. She steps inside hesitantly. The door slowly swings shut behind her as her tiny light sweeps around.

Father whistles as we very slowly DOLLY in on the alcove.

A door chimes, followed by footsteps, still DOLLYING in.

MOTHER (O.S., DISTANT)

I got you an energy drink.

FATHER (O.S., DISTANT)

You know how jittery they make me.

MOTHER (O.S., DISTANT)

Well, like you said, there's a long way to go and I don't want you falling asleep at the wheel.

A toilet FLUSHES as we DOLLY closer. The sound fades, replaced by soft, rapid, unintelligible WHISPERS.

FATHER (O.S., DISTANT)

What if we give it to Tiff when we get there? Maybe she'll actually help us set up.

The WHISPERS grow louder as we DOLLY closer.

MOTHER (O.S., DISTANT)

That would take something stronger. Here, drink up.

The WHISPERS cease abruptly. A moment later the women's restroom door opens.

Tiffany steps out, ramrod straight, blank expression. Her cell phone lies on the restroom floor, flashlight shining up at the ceiling.

She takes one wooden step and pauses. Another, slightly less wooden. We stay AHEAD of her as step by step her gait approaches normal, all the way back to--

INT/EXT. SUV - DAY

We ENTER the vehicle as Tiffany approaches the open door.

FATHER (O.S.)  
Try not to slam it this time.

Tiffany slides into the seat mechanically, her expression still blank. She stares straight ahead.

FATHER (O.S.)  
Hello? The door?

Tiffany looks at the open door without comprehension. Then, she reaches for it and pulls it shut.

Her Mother's hand appears in frame holding out a package of licorice.

MOTHER (O.S.)  
I got these for you.

Tiffany looks at the licorice blankly. She takes the package and simply holds it as the engine comes to life.

The vehicle starts moving.

MOTHER (O.S.)  
Tiffany! Seat belt?

The car lurches to a halt. Tiffany looks about. She sees the seat belt strap and pulls it across, latching it into the buckle.

The SUV starts moving again.

MOTHER (O.S.)  
What on Earth has gotten into you?

Tiffany stares ahead blankly, licorice still in hand.

MOTHER (O.S.)  
You better drop this attitude  
before we get there, young lady.

Outside, the world slips by with increasing speed. The highway slides closer and the SUV drives onto it, increasing speed even more.

Tiffany stares fixedly ahead, ignoring the view.

FATHER (O.S.)  
Maybe this is one of those TikTok challenge things.

MOTHER (O.S.)  
Like eating Tide pods?

FATHER (O.S.)  
No, kids do these bits and post videos. You know, like lip syncing or doing a popular dance.

MOTHER (O.S.)  
Oh, what was the one from that horror movie? The killer girl that did that weird dance? Tiffany, honey, what movie is that from?

Tiffany doesn't react, she just stares ahead.

MOTHER (O.S.)  
Oh, never mind. Maybe she is doing a bit, like she has to be a robot or something.

FATHER (O.S.)  
Maybe it's a challenge to disrespect her parents.

The car hits a rough bump, jostling Tiffany. She steadies herself. Her brow furrows and she looks out the window.

FATHER (O.S.)  
Traffic is good so far.

Tiffany turns her attention to her father.

MOTHER (O.S.)  
Oh, you jinxed it!

She turns to her mother.

FATHER (O.S.)  
Ha ha. When we get there, you should start on dinner while I put the tent up. It gets dark quick.

She turns at her father.

MOTHER (O.S.)  
You're really looking forward to  
this, aren't you?

She turns at her mother.

FATHER (O.S.)  
Some of my best childhood memories  
were at this campground.

Another jostle. Tiffany looks at the licorice in her hand. She releases the package and it drops to the floor.

She peers over the seats into the back. Tiffany reaches and pulls a clear plastic bin into her lap.

MOTHER (O.S.)  
I'm glad you decided we should go.

She unlatches the lid and lifts it, revealing flashlights, bungee cords, and a sheathed hatchet.

FATHER (O.S.)  
Yeah, I figured it's about time I  
made some new memories there, with  
my own family.

Tiffany unclasps the sheath. Her eyes explore the exposed edge with a blank expression.

MOTHER (O.S.)  
Aww, you're a big softie!

She slides the bin off her lap and holds the hatchet as absentmindedly as she had held the licorice. Her head swivels, following the conversation in the front seats.

FATHER (O.S.)  
(flirty)  
You know, there is one thing I  
never got to do there as a kid.

MOTHER (O.S.)  
(flirty)  
Oh? And whatever might that be?

Tiffany goes still as the WHISPERS rise above the voices of her parents, growing louder and louder, drowning out all other sound. The hatchet hovers in her tight grasp.

The car lurches, pitching Tiffany forward. The WHISPERS cease abruptly as tires screech and a horn blares.

FATHER (O.S.)  
Jesus! Did you see that asshole?  
Thinks he owns the fucking road.

Tiffany sits upright. She unbuckles her seat belt.

MOTHER (O.S.)  
Are you all right hon?  
(beat)  
Tiff? What--?

Tiffany swings the hatchet at her mother. It connects with a sickening thwack and blood sprays back at her.

Screams from the front as Tiffany reverses her swing, hacking her father. More blood sprays.

She hacks her father again and the car swerves dangerously. Then her mother, and the screaming stops.

The car accelerates as she hacks at them over and over, blood splattering and misting everywhere.

Tires screech loudly and--

SMASH TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK:  
CRASH! A violent impact. Glass shatters and metal crunches. As those sounds fade, WHISPERS are heard, growing louder, louder, LOUDER.