

*Elizabeth Brown*  
**Repo Man**

**S**HE WAS DIFFERENT, THIS ONE. It wasn't just about the car, the taking, the power he felt, the dragging of chains to secure the car down. She was behind the usual three payments. The bank tried to contact her the standard number of times. Once someone was over two months behind on payments, repossession was likely, especially if they had a new phone number, which was usually the case. He researched her just like the rest, but something happened with this one, unexpected. If he had to decide when it started, the fixation, he might say it was her name. Audrey Standish. He read it on the work order and repeated it a few times, enjoying the way it rolled off his tongue. He had just slapped together a ham sandwich, cussed Missy for leaving the house a goddamn mess again, dishes in the sink, ants the size of June bugs crawling on the rims of plates and one going right up his pant leg. She was home with Finn and another on the way, complaining, biting her nails to the quick, unshaven legs, hair a rat's nest just like Finn's. The kid screamed like a holy terror if she tried to put a comb in it. So she gave up. She always gave up on everything. Started the dishes, got some weird premonition (she called it) Finn was in trouble, or she forgot to do something, or she just flat out abandoned ship without any logical explanation. She was mercurial that way. She and Finn slept in the same bed since he was born. They ate the same foods, laughed the same, walked the same, rolled their eyes and cussed him out the same. They could have been all one person for all he cared, but he wasn't about to leave. He had a good thing, overall. He had a nice sized trailer he stumbled on by sheer luck. He and Missy were staying with Missy's cousin, Francine, on George Street in Pine Cove County. Francine was big as a tank and asthmatic, but she was an accountant so made a solid income and she was religious, believed in the whole good deeds deal, buying a ticket through the pearly gates, so she offered up a bedroom in her trailer after her roommate OD'd on heroine.

On the ride to her house, he said her name again, Audrey Standish. But this time it took on new meaning, as he had looked her up, had an image of her in his head. The truck made a clunking noise, the chains in the back, cacophonous, reminding him of the dirty deed. He needed to stay focused, knowing this one he was not going to enjoy. Most he did. At some point, he had to admit to himself he derived some kind of perverse pleasure in other's suffering, their loss, the way they reacted. It made him feel omnipotent, made his lowly job, the type of job which attracted the dredges of society, the ex-cons, tolerable.

Audrey Standish. The name sounded familiar. It sounded like a famous name, a celebrity or someone you'd want to know. The names he recalled were either dull names like Susanne or Bradley or outlandish names like Moonbeam or January. But he never knew of an Audrey, aside from Audrey Hepburn, or Audrey Rose, that old 70's movie he watched on YouTube just last week. Missy was always getting him to watch these older horrors. She had a thing with it. And he agreed because she got scared, grabbed him, and one thing led to another. Audrey Rose was reincarnated as Ivory Templeton. Anthony Hopkins, supposedly her father in her other life, stalked her like a psychopath. The girl kept having horrific

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memories of her demise, woke screaming, beating the glass in her bedroom with her hands, thinking she was trapped in this fiery car from past life. The father's lawyer insisted she get hypnotized to prove she was not Audrey Rose, which had tragic ramifications as the poor kid died from the trauma. Evidence she was Audrey Rose, he told Missy. Big mistake. "That sucks!" Missy screeched, and her foot knocked over a full bottle of beer that she had set down on the ottoman. "Shit!" she screamed, throwing Percy across the room, after the fat tabby tried to abscond from the edge of the couch and landed on her lap. When she discovered the dark ale on her laptop, all hell broke loose. She was flailing and thrashing, tossing dishes in the sink, slamming cabinets, doors. Finn was awake, cowering under his bed. He tried to calm her down. "Come on, Missy. My fucking baby is in there." She grew wilder at that, and went at him like a demon. He took the first punch in the nuts and keeled over in agony. She started swinging more, plummeting his head and yanking his hair. He got a glimpse of her, between jabs, and he saw someone else, as if some tortured soul from another life, like Audrey Rose was incarnated inside her. A retaliatory neighbor, waiting for the right moment after Missy came home drunk and drove over their kid's bike, made a call to Department of Family Services. Maybe if the yelling had ceased, but it went on for a good half hour before she stormed out. When she got home she was quiet, fell out on the bed and passed out.

Three more miles to George Street, according to the GPS. But Audrey Standish sounded so perfectly old fashioned, older than the 70's, back to an era that was classy where women could smoke a cigarette with a rosewood holder and look sexy doing it. Then, too, he remembered a Myles Standish, Captain of the Mayflower, some militia leader of the Plymouth colony, something like that, and decided maybe Audrey Standish was a descendent. With an unusual name like that it wasn't so unlikely. He recalled the image he had of her, the one he found on Facebook. He had closed his own Facebook account and other accounts after Missy caught him catfishing on online dating sites. When he tried to deny it, she snuck up behind him and punched him so hard in the mouth when he turned around he thought his jaw was broken. That wasn't the worst. The pain only lasted a week or so. The worst was how she withheld sex, insisted on walking around the trailer half naked, bending down to clean with her tits hanging there, taunting, spreading her legs on the couch. And she never wore underwear. Missy liked her gin and tonics lots of them, and smoked close to a pack of camels a day and rarely bathed and still she was slim and put together, even at four months pregnant. How many could pull that off? She knew it too and flaunted it at the bars. She was a regular at the locals. One night in an effort to placate her, he went with her to Pepe's Bar and Grill; the bartender, Gil, walked past her and said "Hey baby," and slapped her butt. She glanced over at him, sheepishly. "You're my husband. Aren't you going to do something?" He looked at the guy, Gil, weaving his way through the crowd, a couple inches taller and at least fifty pounds heavier, and decided it was not worth it and maybe she provoked it. There was just too much he didn't know. As a matter of fact, if Finn didn't look so much like his baby pictures, he'd question whether he was the father.

There was only one Audrey Standish on Facebook, and he wasn't

surprised. It was a night when Missy was out at the bars. He had brought up her drinking, told her she was five months, showing. He told her to put the beer down, how she was getting their baby drunk. But she flipped him the bird and drove off in their 1994 Buick Century, worn brakes grinding as the back bald tires kicked up dust. It was that night he clicked on Audrey Standish's profile pic to enlarge the view of her. When he found her on Facebook, he felt his face flush, his heart pounded. She looked like Katie Holmes's doppelganger, when she was younger, that music video of her by the Fly's *Got You Where I Want You*. He could not understand what was happening to him. He didn't even know her, and he had never had such a visceral reaction to a female. She had to be so goddamn cute. He felt sick, voyeuristic, she was that sweet. He shook more. He could barely compose himself. When he met Missy, he thought she was cute but she never made him shake. Audrey Standish. He could barely compose himself. He felt himself getting aroused. She was everything he imagined, like some kind of apparition from the past, maybe the 20's or the Victorian era. The image itself was blurry, but he could still get enough to decipher her features, the color of her eyes, green, fair skinned, long brown hair, wavy at the ends. He wished he could have seen more of her, but the profile was set to private so he couldn't access her photos, and she only had a few posts-- a white angora cat curled up on an afghan; the lime and baby blue wool reminded him of the one he got from his grandmother on his tenth birthday. He had loved his grandma Belle like a mother, cherished the afghan. Shortly after they moved into the trailer, when Missy was pregnant but didn't know it, she vomited up tuna casserole all over it. It was the first time he cussed at her, saw her in a gross way; she might as well have vomited on his Grandma Belle's corpse. Missy cried, pleaded, promised to wash it, and then did things for him that made him forget. But he found Grandma Belle's afghan a month or so later, buried in a recyclable bin, mildewed, chunks of vomit crusted, a bit of baby blue still visible but the lime was marred and had turned a sick olive color. He took Grandma Belle's afghan and when she walked in the door, he threw it at her. She gagged, and he thought she'd vomit all over it again; he watched her make a dash to the back of the trailer, in her manic gait, to the makeshift grill, a 15-gallon drum. She threw the grate onto the ground, tossed the afghan into the drum, doused it with kerosene, and lit it up. The flames shot out feral and infernal. He could have murdered her. He left her for a two weeks after that stunt. She got drunk every night and he blamed Finn's speech impediment on her debauchery.

He zoomed in, imagined it was Audrey Standish's bed, looked for folds left over from her body. One image of Audrey Standish was all it took, enough to know he needed to see her teeth, hear her voice, touch her.

For all these reasons, he decided to make sure she was there when he drove up in his rig to take her 2013 Honda Accord LX. He knew inside, no way, he could not actually go through with it and take it from her. He would be fired. Missy would lay into him. He'd have to find another job. How many so far--five, six? He couldn't stay in one place too long. He had a big mouth, said too much.

He turned right, onto George Street. Manicured. Fences. Out of his realm. He squirmed, felt his hands clammy, shake, as he got closer to 32. Audrey Standish. She did it to him. It was dusk. He came early, intention-

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ally. He wanted to see her, just a glimpse. If he was lucky she'd spy him from the window, dash outside, pitch a fit. He imagined her wild, hair flying, breasts shaking as she rushed forward, barefoot, recalling the image of Katie Holmes and the Fly's, the way she ran towards the cliff, pushed the people over, an odd foreshadowing of her divorce from Tom Cruise, after he got her where he wanted her, tried to control her. Maybe that's why she left him. She stumbled on the video one day and the past super-imposed on the present, triggering a younger, more lively self, one brazen enough to break free.

He pulled alongside the silver Honda. He noticed the bumper stickers *Coexist*, and *Do You Follow Jesus This Close?* Religious too, he thought. His heart thumped, imagining taking her to church on Sunday mornings, her eyes still crusty, dry lips, covering up a hickey on her neck in the rearview mirror, cussing at him for putting it there, in a cheeky way; and then in church, hickey bleeding through, all eyes on them, the two kneeling, praying, how she'd smell like lavender, how he'd gesture for her to go ahead of him. They'd walk up to the altar, choir singing the hymns, the way he recalled it as a child, before his parents crashed their car into a tree, before he was forced to live with Grandma Belle and her boyfriend, Jack—Jack the drunk Jack. Bad ass Jack. Jack with the belt. Jack the food hoarder. Jack the whipper. Jack the brute. They'd take it then, the Eucharist, the body of Christ, and then the wine, the chalice, the blood of Christ, and walk back to their pews, heads bowed, purified.

"What the fuck are you doing?"

He didn't have time to take it in, to speak, to defend why he was standing there like an ass. No witty remarks, nothing. She was standing in front of him, Audrey Standish, except not like Katie Holmes, not the Facebook profile, not at all what he imagined. She was shorter, wider, dark rimmed glasses, curly hair, short, and it wasn't lavender but garlic.

"How did you get you here?" When she spoke spittle shot out, adding insult to injury.

"Audrey Standish?"

"What about her, dude?"

"Are you Audrey Standish?"

"Why?"

"I need to take her car." Jesus he hoped she wasn't her.

"She's gone."

"Where?" Deadbeat, he figured, but never the other.

"Heaven? Hell? I didn't know her. Your guess is as good as mine, repodude."

"What?" he felt his face flush.

"She jumped off some roof, high on something."

"Shit."

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"That's what they tell me. I'm just house sitting until the parents sell the place."

"Shit," he said again.

"You okay, repo dude? Did you know her or something?"

"No. I didn't know her." He stood there for a minute, got his bearings, looked inside the Honda, saw a navy blue JanSport, and a black and white checkered shirt, a can of Red Bull in the cup holder, and on the passenger seat a book with a black cover and *The Mysterious Stranger* in red lettering. He remembered that one, Mark Twain's last work about the fallen angel with a pseudonym, Philipp Traum, the way the boy blasted mortals, their mortal stupidity, moral sense, modus operandi, believing we are higher than ants and lower creatures, when in fact we are insignificant, frauds; it was Mark Twain's failure, his last word on humanity. He read it once for senior English and then again and again the following summer. It was providence. He loved her all the more for it, wished he hadn't peeked in.

With each step closer to his truck, he chuckled at himself, head down-cast; he grabbed the wheel, hoisted himself up and inside. Just a few moments ago, in this very seat, he had envisioned Audrey Standish, a new life for himself. He hadn't realized how much he counted on it. He felt his throat burn, his eyes water up; he beat the steering wheel with his fist, swore at himself to stop.

"Jesus, repo-dude. You sure you okay?" The short spectacled one had moved in closer, inspecting him, as if she were intrigued, wanted to lure him back.

He had no use for her, for Audrey Standish, for anyone. He had been duped.

It only took a mile or so before the delusion fizzled out and he thought of his next victim. What was his name? Todd Bingham. Todd. He was good with names. Never was so good with school, or relationships. He'd hit him up later, he decided, imagined Missy home by now, nice and drunk, waiting. *I could have saved her*, he thought, just before turning onto the graveled drive, Willow Creek Trailer Park. His tire hit a familiar rut, the chains clanged, and he grinned, imagining the way Audrey Standish might have grabbed him, pulled him in, kissed him, and he would have let her do just about anything.

Todd Bingham. He was behind three payments on his pebble gray GLK Mercedes. Forty-five years old, unemployed, recently divorced, custody battle, three kids under the age of ten, drug convictions...he'd pack his piece for this one.