



The Midnight Engine

By EnricaDD



Alistair felt the city was getting too small. The skyscrapers of London seemed to lean inward, and the constant hum of the underground felt like a clock ticking down to a life he wasn't sure he wanted. Beside him, Miska, his Siberian grey husky, let out a low huff, her pale blue eyes reflecting the orange glow of the streetlamps. She felt the restlessness too; she was a





Behind them sat Barnaby. He wasn't just any car; he was a classic black British cab with a soul made of iron and diesel. Barnaby had seen decades of rain and secrets, and though his paint was slightly dull, his engine hummed with an ancient, knowing rhythm. Alistair placed a hand on Barnaby's cool, curved fender. "We need to go, don't we, old friend?" he whispered. Barnaby's headlights flickered





Miska didn't need to be told twice. She leaped into the spacious back seat of the cab, her paws clicking against the floor mats. She took her customary spot by the window, her breath already fogging the glass. Barnaby felt the weight of the dog and the spirit of the boy, and his internal gears shifted with a sense of purpose he hadn't felt in years. He was more than a taxi tonight; he was an escape





They left the city behind as the clock struck midnight. Alistair steered Barnaby onto the open motorway, heading north toward the jagged coast of Norfolk. Barnaby's "For Hire" sign was switched off, but a warm, amber light glowed from his dashboard, illuminating Alistair's determined face. The engine's roar was a steady, comforting heartbeat that drowned out the noise of Alistair's doubts.





By three in the morning, they reached the edge of the world. The North Sea crashed against the cliffs with a violent, rhythmic thrum. Alistair and Miska climbed out, the salt spray stinging their faces. The wind here was wild and free, exactly what they had been searching for. Miska barked at the waves, her grey fur blending into the moonlight, while Alistair took a deep breath of the cold, honest air.





Barnaby watched them from the gravel path, his engine ticking as it cooled. He looked out over the horizon and noticed something Alistair hadn't yet seen. The Great Point Lighthouse, usually a steady pulse of safety for the ships at sea, was dark. Barnaby's sensors felt the tension in the air; a storm was brewing, and without that light, the rocky shore below would become a graveyard.





Miska sensed it too. She stopped her play and turned toward the dark tower, a low growl vibrating in her chest. She nudged Alistair's hand, then pointed her nose toward the lighthouse. Alistair squinted through the gloom. "The light is out, Miska. If there's a ship out there in this fog..." He didn't finish the sentence. They had to get there, but the road was a treacherous ribbon of mud





Barnaby didn't wait for a command. His engine roared back to life with a fierce, mechanical growl. He was a city car, built for cobblestones and traffic jams, but his frame was sturdy and his heart was bold. As Alistair jumped back inside, Barnaby plunged into the mud, his tires spinning and gripping. Miska pressed her face against the window, watching the mud fly as the old cab fought the terrain.





The freighter's horn sounded again, but this time it was a signal of thanks as it veered away from the danger, guided by Barnaby's unwavering light. As the sun began to peek over the horizon, painting the sky in bruises of purple and gold, Miska climbed onto Barnaby's roof and let out a triumphant bark. They were miles from home, but for the first time, Alistair knew exactly where he was

