

Classic

The red vinyl squeaked as he squirmed in the booth, staring out the diner's window at his latest purchase.

Idiot, he thought. You are so dumb sometimes.

The alluring scent of fried food diverted his attention from the classic sedan outside to the double cheeseburger and double order of fries that had been placed before him. Wanda, his wife of four years, smiled at him as she disappeared into the kitchen. He fought the giddy grin that always showed up when a diner burger was in his presence, because why should he be happy? He'd just spent \$700 they didn't have on a car.

Sure it was a great deal. Sure it had a brand new engine in it. Sure it drove great and hugged the road. But it was so... old.

It's a classic, he tried to convince himself. I'll be admired and respected.

Right. I'll be ridiculed and humiliated.

"What's the matter babe," Wanda asked, sliding into the other side of the booth while nabbing a couple of his fries. "Was it a bad ride?"

"No, the ride was fine. I only stopped to use the restroom and get gas. Evan fixed me a pretty big basket of sandwiches and stuff for the drive."

"You can thank your wife for that. I called my brother-in-law and said 'Can you please fix your brother a care package for that trip back? People are crazy and he doesn't need to make any unnecessary stops.'"

He leaned over the table and kissed his bride on the lips. She looked out the window at the car and smiled.

"That car is so you babe," she grinned.

"What's that mean," he snapped, his demeanor switching immediately. "Are you calling me old?" Wanda scrunched her face at the question and threw fries at him.

"What is your problem, Mike?" Wanda snapped. He brushed the salt and potatoes off his sweater and looked around, embarrassed. He slid his iPhone across the table. She snatched the phone from his hand and read the screen.

From Duane – Granddad, what was Christmas like in the 40s? - #yourcarisancient

From Matt – Does the radio only play the best of Mitch Miller? #yourcarisonlifesupport

From Duane – I make a motion that Mike never drives when we get wings because we may not make it home. #stranded

Her eyes slowly ascended to meet his. Hurt and embarrassed, he refocused on his meal.

“Seriously,” she said, turning the knife. “This is bothering you?”

“They’re my boys. They both drive brand new cars, they have endless money and they seem to have their lives together. I had to fly to Texas to buy an old car and drive it home, because I can’t get a car loan.” The hurt in his voice bounced around in her head before dropping into her stomach. She slid the phone back across the table and took his hands in hers.

“Your boys, huh?” she asked. “Funny, friends would have gone with you to Texas to get the car, or at least checked on you during your drive home. Let me ask you something – how many wives do your boys have between them?”

“None...”

“How many kids?”

“None.”

“Right. Yet you have a wife who loves you, and two boys who think their dad’s old-new car is the coolest thing ever. Way cooler than the Power Rangers, even. Your boys only seem to have their cars and each other. Now who is really better off?” Mike finally smiled.

“Me. I’m way richer than either of them.”

“That’s my baby,” she said, sliding back out of the booth. “Now let’s go pick up your real boys and take them for a ride in your old-new car.”

“Not old – classic.”