

The smell of exhaust from a diesel truck is some of the worst shit I have ever inhaled. I would have barfed once that truck passed me, but I was too pissed off about running out of gas in the middle of nowhere to focus on anything else. “Keep walking, get gas, walk back, get it over with,” I told myself as I trudged along the interstate. With each step, water sloshed between my toes as sheets of rain covered my body and created tiny oceans, seemingly designed to ruin my designer hoodie, my designer sneakers and my day.

I almost didn’t put my thumb out when I saw the headlights creep up behind me, because of the multiple cars that had already passed me by. But I did.

“Hey,” a sweet southern voice called through the downpour, “do you need a ride?” Before I could respond, my body had already run toward the black Ford F-150 with the 22” black rims that run \$3,000 plus tax and chrome running boards...

How did I know such intimate details about this vehicle? Because it was mine once upon a time. It didn’t hit me until I looked through the window that I’d stepped into my own personal Twilight Zone. My ex-wife was picking me up in my truck. Her smile quickly faded as she realized it was me.

“Oh JESUS,” she barked. “If it ain’t the devil himself...”

Funny, I thought the exact same thing. I rolled my eyes and started heading back to the berm.

“Carlton Jennings! You get in this truck! I have a good mind to leave you out here, but I am a saved, Christian woman, and it would be an abomination to my Lord to leave one of His children out in the cold! Even one as heathenous as you! Now get in here! I ain’t gonna be in front of the pearly gates, tryin’ to answer questions about why I left you on the side of the road!”

“Okay,” I snapped, turning to face the spawn, “first of all, heathenous is NOT a word. Second, I will take my chances out here with pneumonia and axe murderers. Keep it moving, Lisa.”

“CARLTON!” Her tone sent a creepily nostalgic chill down my spine. My body involuntarily got in the car as I scowled. She pulled back onto the highway and turned down her loud gospel music. Don’t get me wrong – I love gospel music, but this woman ruins everything she comes in contact with.

“I knew someday you’d come back to me... I knew you’d need me before I needed you... I told you that...”

“I didn’t come back to you! I told you to drive your happy ass on down the road!”

“Uh-uh! You ain’t gonna be cursing in this truck! Do you know how long it took to exorcise your demons out of this truck? You watch your mouth in this truck! This is the LOOOORRRRRD’S truck! Deuteronomy chapter 3 clearly states...”

I hadn’t seen this woman for a year and a half, and I think she’s still in the middle of the same sentence. You can’t have a regular conversation without hearing about how everything belongs to God, or how many verses from the Bible she has memorized. She still smelled like she’d been frying chicken for days on end. Knee-high stockings sagged around her ankles like the old ladies that used to meet at my grandmother’s house. Her once-pretty lips were now stained with some off-brand, off-color lipstick, babbling chapters and verses at a machine-gun’s pace. Her hazel eyes were now covered by gaudy gold frames. She was the oldest 35-year old I’d ever seen, and I’d had enough.

“Lisa,” I interrupted. “Shut up!” This caught her off guard.

“Who do you think you’re talking to,” she asked, caught off guard.

“You! Shut the hell up for once in your life! Stop talking! You talk too much! You don’t listen to anyone! You don’t know everything! You’re not the only Christian on the planet, but you give the rest of us a bad rap! I’m a Christian too! But you talk too much! You know everything! Your mouth is why we’re not together now!”

She was speechless, for the first time in years.

I hopped out of the truck at BP and thanked her for her time.

It wasn’t such a bad day after all.