

Inside, Outside

by Linda Manning

You drive that '67 Ford PU down highway 73 like it's gonna take you where you want to go. Pig truck makes you want to roll up your window, but it's just too damned hot. You stop on the shoulder next to a sign that tells you not to, and you look in your glove box for a smoke. Should call it a screwdriver box or a hammer box though, 'cause it never seen no fancy gloves, and who would put their work gloves in there anyhow?

Darren's letter and a lipstick. No smokes. You open the letter and read it again. Try as you might, you still don't care. And you don't even try 'cause all your tryin' dried up long ago. Lipsticks are the new cigarettes, so you give yourself a swipe just to stay busy 'til the pig truck takes its reekin' shit out of your life.

Back into first then, and you've got the only two-axle on the road that doesn't do the shifting for you. The cars fly past like wasted years and leave you with a window full of dirt. Darren will be out in three days.

He'll come to you asking for something that ain't his and you'll remind him of that dress you never wore. You'll remind him of that promise he never kept, the jokes at the tavern, and the money he still owes you.

He'll take whatever don't bite him, bust whatever ain't broken, and catch a few winks in-between. He'll go with you to your bubba's funeral and flirt with the girl in the blue. She'll dis him, though, and he'll act like he don't care. Then he'll tell you that your hair ain't blond enough, you ain't thin enough, and why bother with you anyhow?

Then he'll end up back inside and you'll still be outside, but don't matter. His hell is your hell now, and there ain't no letter writin' for you 'cause there ain't no outside of outside.

