ROAD LESSONS

by sara t.

“I'll take care of you when I get rich” says the younger one. Turning to his older brother he blurts “And not you, cuz you're a loser”. With that line, the good feeling of the first line took a nose dive as I countered “Do you have to call your brother a loser? He is not a loser and that was just uncalled for.”

My daily trip back and forth over the bridge into Brooklyn for school and work has been witness to countless bickering, whining, foot fights, fist fights and crying as well as singing, laughter and conversations about sex, homosexuality, drugs and less serious but still important issues.

My car looks like we live in it. The Dunkin Donuts paper bags, cups, wrappers and leftover crumbs and spills litter the front passenger seat and peak out from under them as well as lining the back seat with its evidence. Mail, homework assignments, sunglasses and bottle caps and the perfunctory small change lie about assured of their place in my little world on wheels.

I hate it. I hate it with a passion this daily drive to and from insanity. The potholes and short stops. The idling engine in bumper to bumper traffic. The being caught in the rain and snow with no visibility, basically winging the ride and praying to come out alive. The sitting in the car waiting for it to warm up while everyone sits with sleepy eyes and foggy realization of the day ahead. The cold in winter, the heat in summer are somehow exacerbated in this hell on wheels.

How many times have I sat in the driver seat in traffic, while an accident blocked the road, clenching my innards, almost crying in pain, because my bladder is on the verge of bursting and I idiotically didn't think I needed the bathroom before I left? Or one of the boys

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would say “Lets stop I need a drink, I'm so thirsty”. And we would argue back and forth, me the merits of waiting till we get home because stopping would take an extra three minutes which seems a waste of time to me, and him arguing that “you're so mean I'm so thirsty I must drink now or I'm gonna faint” and what can a mother do but stop lest she be accused of child neglect?

We have been doing this for two long years now. And I look forward to the day when the schooling will be over and in the car peace will reign once more as I rule my solitary kingdom. But I also know that one day I will look back on these days and think I was luckier than most. I got to spend this precious time with my children, in their most vulnerable and impressionable years, laughing and crying together and imparting important life lessons. Taking every bump in the road as a sign that this is a teaching moment, a learning moment, a loving moment for all of us.