

IN THE DUST

Chip Lands

I'M GONNA *be stuck here forever*, Stacy thought.

The 18-wheeler in front of her wasn't exactly tearing up the country, and she was in a hurry, despite having no fixed destination. Lost on a surprisingly busy stretch of two-lane blacktop somewhere in lower Alabama, Stacy couldn't muster the courage to test her vehicle's passing gear. The car, a rusting Dodge convertible, had left the factory with enough horsepower to sweep the semi without effort, but that kind of performance was now a memory.

Her flight from Mississippi had thus far taken her east, although she'd about made up her mind to head south on reaching the Florida panhandle. It was her intention to light in a town along the coast, one with a white sand beach which drew lots of tourists to its restaurants and bars so that she might find employment and a man, one a damn sight better than that shithead Derrick.

It was unseasonably warm and Stacy was wearing almost nothing. That she was clad in so little wasn't by choice. She'd packed in a rush to avoid a commotion that might awaken her drunken mate. Tired of his constant criticism and frustrated with her own seeming inability to satisfy, Stacy had plied him with Old Crow upon his return from work the night before, let him exhaust what little energy he had clumsily groping at her, then bolted from their duplex when he finally passed out.

The semi was doing upwards of 60, but Stacy was getting impatient. She had places to go, after all, and people to see – couldn't this stupid trucker tell? Obviously not. If he knew her plight, he would surely put the hammer down. But there were not a few folks bound for points west that Saturday, most headed for Biloxi and the gaming there, Stacy reckoned, and she settled in for the duration.

As she marveled at how dirty the back of the trailer was, Stacy noticed something etched in the dust on its sizable doors. She eased forward, closing the gap between her car and the rig's rear bumper. When she pulled up to where she could make out what was written, Stacy was stunned. In a harried and artless script, someone had scrawled SHOW HOOTERS.

She rolled her eyes. It reminded her of her soon-to-be ex-husband's brand of humor. She recalled how Derrick would often etch an "Eat Me" or a "You Suck"

on the rear windshields of vans while gathering carts in the parking lot grocery store where he worked. It was dumb. *He* was dumb. Most kids were content with writing something clever like "Wash Me." Not Derrick. He was a natural born fool.

Stacy figured the driver must have put it there. *You know how those skimmers are*, she thought. What with their naked lady mud-flaps and nudie tattoos, why they were all just a bunch of hopeless horn-dogs. "Mound Hounds," as Derrick (who should know) might say. It made perfect sense.

Under ordinary circumstances, Stacy would have taken offense to such tackiness. How could anybody think an appeal so base would move a girl to doff her blouse in front of God and everyone? The very idea! But the more she studied it, the less ridiculous the idea became. She didn't want to admit it was happening, but her interest in doing so herself was growing, and quickly.

Sitting there in the open cockpit of her only real possession, the hot sun shining down on her anxious skin, Stacy had a revelation. Abandoning one's previous life, she reasoned, demanded a symbolic gesture, a deed consistent with their newfound liberation. And she knew just what form that gesture should take.

When she'd spied a sufficient break in oncoming traffic, Stacy mashed the accelerator and swung over into the adjacent lane. After nosing the hood of her car even with the big diesel's cab, she slipped a thumb beneath the hem of her Bud halter and pulled the tiny garment to her chin, exposing her bosom. Careful not to steer the Dodge from the lane she now tenuously occupied, she then turned to face the party she assumed had inspired her act.

Stacy's young breasts rocked gently to the roll of the road. How free she felt! The exhilaration of having done something so impetuous, coupled with the hope she suddenly had for the future, lifted her spirits in a way she hadn't known since having wed. For the first time in far too long, she was actually pleased with herself, and her nipples swelled with pride, an occurrence not lost on the person just scant feet above her.

As she accelerated again, Stacy tore the top from around her neck and tossed it into the air, squealing with delight as it sailed away behind her. With that, she took her place in front of the Peterbilt and hurled

toward her destiny.

Well fuck me running, the driver thought as the flatulent auto sped by, *now I'm even MORE confused*. He'd spent the entire morning trying to figure out why women kept giving him the finger, and then here comes this gal flashing her tits – nice tits – at him! Why? He'd about decided they must be sore at him for not going especially fast, but that last one . . . what was that about? After showing herself off, even *she* left him in the dust.