

The Younger Woman

I could hear in his voice pure joy tinged with fear. He said it was perfect: no rust, clean, a better price than anything else he had found on the net. Could he buy it?

“It” was a 1978 Chevy Cheyenne four-wheel-drive half-ton pickup truck.

Why would I allow my husband to buy such a thing?

Let me explain our decision making process. I was educated as a mathematician, my husband as a physicist, and we both have had various technical jobs for decades. Given our backgrounds, we naturally tried to find logical solutions to whatever problems came our way. That is to say we would have long drawn out debates. Given that my husband is more determined - you might say stubborn or maybe even willful - he won these debates.

After years of losing, I decided that sometimes my dearest was just wrong. What a relief. No more infinite disputes, evading every tortured argument; no more finding the hidden flaw in his convoluted reasoning. I just stonewalled and told him he was mistaken.

One day he confided in me, he had made a great discovery: *logic is a way to be wrong with confidence*. I was so excited! My lover had, at last, seen the error of his ways. It took me several days to realize that he meant my logic, not his.

The bottom line is that our decision making process is defective. It's my only explanation for the truck now sitting in our garage.

I did extract one compromise before he bought the truck. I would be allowed to name it, provided that he got a veto.

When my husband drove the truck home, I got my first look: big, black and boxy, with a garish red interior. It seemed slightly sinister, a lady of the night. Jezebel. It was perfect, but hubby exercised his veto.

My husband had his work cut out for him. The antifreeze leaked. The truck went to the mechanic. I guess I should consider myself lucky that the whole contraption didn't disintegrate on the initial trip home, because the cab was not properly bolted to the frame. With the help of a neighbor, hubby secured the cab. My husband didn't like the arrangement of the gauges, so he dismantled the instrument panel and put it back together. It went smoothly, except the speedometer no longer functioned. Hubby solved that problem by using his GPS navigator to tell him how fast he was going. I loved the anachronism.

Ultimately the truck went to the mechanic to have the speedometer fixed. Then there was a visit for the voltage regulator, and another for the exhaust manifold gaskets, and another for the water pump, and another for the master cylinder, and another for the carburetor. We were visiting the garage so often that I started referring to it as the vet and called the

truck The Beast, a name hubby didn't veto. When we told the mechanic, he said he was just happy that he didn't have to put The Beast down. At least not yet.

Each day seemed to bring another problem. My husband bought a complete set of manuals and studied them. He spent hours discussing all the details with the neighbor. When he wore out the neighbor, he'd call his brother. And when he could spare a little time, he'd talk to me. He hadn't acquired a vehicle, he had bought himself a hobby.

After much research, hubby found out that the box on the truck was eight years younger than the rest of the vehicle, but this enhancement came with problems. The hose to the gas tank had been jury-rigged. To get gas in the tank, it actually had to flow uphill. Furthermore the hose was not for use with gasoline and had rotted. Just as I suspected, The Beast was a death trap.

So back it went back to the vet for major surgery, which included installation of two new gas tanks, a mechanism to switch between them, and a safe way to fill them up.

Each day, first thing, hubby called the mechanic and got an update. Each day he paced and chewed his nails. He wasn't this worried when I was pregnant. I thought about the brand new stereo he bought for The Beast and the fancy rubber liner for her box. When was the last time hubby spent hundreds of dollars on me? Make that thousands of dollars. No. It wasn't The Beast. It was my husband's Younger Woman. It was only thirty-two. How could I possibly compete with a girl born decades after me?

Not only was he nervous about his baby, he was grouchy. Ask him a question and he'd snap. Just when I was thoroughly fed up with the whole thing, when I was ready to admit defeat and let hubby ride into the sunset with his new love, she came home. After ten days of drama, the Younger Woman was declared fixed and ready for action.

That evening my husband suggested we go out to the Greek place for dinner. I was delighted. At last he was going to pay attention to me. Maybe he even realized what a pill he'd been while his baby was being fixed. Little did I know that the route to the Greek restaurant was right through Classic Car Night.

It seems that my husband is not the only one enamored with classic automobiles. Every summer Friday night, the local village allows all owners of antique vehicles to park on the main drag. There are black Model Ts and Deuce Coupes with red and yellow flames. There is a car from the seventies, so low to the ground that it looks like an elephant sat on it. Some of the cars don't have hoods, exposing their spotless innards. Some of these innards are enhanced, like the exaggerated muscles of a steroid-overdosed body builder. These shiny metal entrails are so tall that they block the driver's view of the road.

As we slowly cruised Main Street people waved. "Nice truck," one fellow yelled. "What year?"

"1978." Hubby beamed.

After a quick dinner at the Greek place, we headed home, back through the gauntlet of aging jalopies.

We've been having Souvlaki just about every Friday night. And all summer, Hubby has taken a little evening ride downtown. He claims it's to make sure he has all the truck's bugs worked out before the bad weather hits, but I know the truth: he's showing off his baby.

How do I cope with hubby's Younger Woman? I'm counting my blessings. Hubby sold his motorcycle to help pay for the truck. The Younger Woman is safer than a motorcycle. And she keeps him so busy he has no time to get into other mischief. Then there's the brownie points I've accumulated. Surely there's a little trinket I need that costs as much as he's spent on the truck, say a Tiffany diamond or a grand piano.

But most important, I have a new way to get out of trouble. No matter how unhappy he is with me, all I have to do is suggest we take a ride in his truck. He'll forgive anything for a spin with his honey.