**Wouldn’t That Be Something**

Elisabeth Harrahy

Under my steaming pickup

antifreeze streams

onto the coarse concrete

small rivulets of neon green

run for cover in the grass

off the side of I-25

in middle-of-nowhere

Wyoming

I straighten up

hair blowing every which way

under the blazing sun

my tools of no use

against a failed water pump

The whoosh of a semi

pulls at my sundress

and 18 tires screech to a stop

before backing up the quarter mile

to where I stand with a hand

like a visor over my eyes

An older man

with a neatly-trimmed beard

jumps out of the Kenworth

approaches me with a quick stride

looks under my car

then offers a ride to Sheridan

I climb up into the cab of his rig

at once fascinated with the CB radio

switches on the dash

and air ride swivel seats

I tell him I’ve always wanted to drive

an 18-wheeler

how I used to hold naked Barbies

against my backseat window

pump my fist to get truckers to honk

I ask about the pattern for shifting ten gears

what it’s like to double clutch—

he asks how I know such things

I tell him my dad taught me

about cars and trucks

took me to NHRA drag races

and that Shirley Muldowney is my idol

The driver chuckles

then looks me over

in a way that makes me turn

to the prairie out the window—

nothing but pale yellow-green

as far as the eye can see—

while the red curtained sleeper bunk

looms behind me

But he tells me he knows

Shirley “Cha Cha” Muldowney

once helped her into her fire suit

years before that infamous 250-mph crash

she survived

He goes on about the need to trust

the one who helps you into your fire suit

before he asks if I have someone

I can trust like that

I turn back to the grasses that sway

out there in the wide open

look up at the lonely half-moon

hiding in the bright blue sky

and am lulled by the smell of diesel

the vibration of the tires

beneath me

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Twenty years later

I decide to buy

a muscle car of my own

from an elderly man here in Wisconsin who

after two heart attacks decides it is time

to sell off his collection

I’m here for the 1967 Plymouth Satellite

that boasts a 440 cubic inch engine

because

as I’ve tried to explain to my husband

I like the back-off look of it

long for the rumble it will rouse in my chest

While my kids climb in back

stick their fingers in the old ashtray

and try to figure out the roll up windows

the man apologizes for the NHRA sticker

stuck on the back windshield

I say I don’t mind

I am a fan of the NHRA, in fact

Shirley Muldowney is one of my heroes

He chuckles, then tells me

Shirley “Cha Cha” Muldowney

used to race a Plymouth Satellite

that he knew her before

she moved up to top fuel dragsters

and became famous

And with that—

I am suddenly back in that big rig

with the flames painted on the sides

cruising down I-25

talking trucks and speed

with a stranger

who seems to see right through me

And I look at this man

and he looks at me

and yes he used to drive a semi out west

and yes he did stop to pick up a stranded young woman

or two

And then he says yes

now that you mention it

I do remember talking about “Cha Cha” Muldowney

with a girl in a summer dress

And I say holy cow

wouldn't that be something

if that was me

and that was you

and now here we are

both of us wanting to believe

that the world really is

that small

and that we were once capable of making

such lasting impressions