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Study in Pewter

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I took my son Earl to the Toyota dealership over on Windsor Road. He wanted a truck. They had a chic model advertised in the morning paper; only slightly used, creme de la creme stuff, loaded, rock bottom price, must sell by sundown. You know the pitch.

"Fine as shit," Earl said when he saw it, running his hands over the racing stripes.

"Racing stripes on a truck? What does it mean?" I asked. He just smiled and kicked the right rear tire. It was a sure sign that he was growing up: all men kick the right rear tire when they like a car. It's a tribal rite expressing affection. I felt my doubts disintegrate; I knew for certain he was old enough now for a vehicle of his own.

"Howdy ma'am. Hep ya'?" He startled me coming up behind us as together we admired the rich upholstery and automatic windows.

"Howdy." I believe in speaking Rome to a Roman. We shook hands and exchanged weather forecasts on the late September heat wave: "Trucks," I said eventually. "They're like luxury cars nowadays."

Mom! Earl said, embarrassed as usual. They gave one another a knowing look and began to talk technical. I'm pretty good about motors and carburetors—I can change tires and oil and lubricate in a pinch—and talk all kinds of car talk. But the truth is, I don't know from trucks. Least of all luxury trucks. I never dreamed I'd need to.

"Well," I broke in finally, "It's a lot of truck for a sixteen year old. Is that the best price you got? \$13,500?"

"Yep." They both looked annoyed.

"Seems like an awful lot."

"Not for this," they said simultaneously.

"It's just a li'l ole truck!" I asserted ignoring their bewildered stares. I figured that unless one of the two of them wanted to write the check it didn't really matter if I offended their sense of value. "It's about twice as much as I intend to spend."

he salesman guffawed. "Twice as much? How much you lookin' to spend, ma'am?"

"Say about six or seven."

He guffawed again. "Ma'am. This is 1988."

"The truck isn't."

"Nope. But it's a hot number, ma'am. It's a fully loaded '86 4x4."

"It's a sweet machine," Earl agreed. "Pewter. I want Pewter or Black."

"It's not real pewter. It's just paint."

Earl climbed in, adjusted the seat, fiddled with the stereo. "Live sound system."

"Sound system? Why would a truck need a sound system? It only has two seats."

"Four," again in unison. They demonstrated how it all worked: the seats pull down in back and so on and so on and

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"Well, it sure is fine," I agreed. "Now show me what you

Study in Pewter

By Miriam K. Harris

Grey skies
Smiling at you
Nothing but grey skies
Wapa dooooo 000 000 0000
Grey skies
smiling at me
Nothing but grey skies
do I see eee eee eee

have from 1985, or '84, or even '83?"

"Sure. Glad to. Let's just step inside and I'll pull my inventory sheets."

"Sweet as shit," my son muttered longingly.

The salesman led the way up the steps, swaggering a bit, I thought. "Ladies first," he turned, gallantly smiling as he held open the door for us.

SPLAT. Something black and wet hit his arm. A tiny bird swooshed over, landed in the eaves just left of the door.

"Well, I'll be damned." He looked at his arm. So did I. So did Earl.

"Pardon my French, but . . . will you excuse me a minute please." The glob was crusting in the heat, turning sorta grey. Pewter.