

A Model T came over the hill. They gawked as it approached making a distinctive pockity-pockity-pockity sound. When the driver leaned out the window to wave, red hair flashed in the sunlight. It was the first glimpse any of them ever had of Miss Millie, but it burned into their memories forever. She was gorgeous. And she was driving the most unusual car in the world.

Raymond bolted for his bike, pushed it up out of the ditch, and peeled out after her. Wally was right behind him, bike wagging from side to side as he pumped for all he was worth. As the other boys rode off Bud stood in the ditch and yelled, "Hey, wait a minute! Where are you guys going?"

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Raymond recognized the tractor-like sound before he turned to see it. There she was, pulling into the station and up to the pump. She asked Goofy Gil for a fill-up. He got flummoxed. Mashing his paper Phillips 66 hat to his heart, he started bowing, like she was royalty or something. She smiled. He blushed and completely forgot where he was.

She leaned out the window, aimed her thumb toward the gas tank, and said, "Gas, remember?" Gil came to his senses and stumbled for the pump. Her laughter hung in the air like music.

Unable to stand it any more, Wally went around to the driver's door. "Hey, Lady, I ain't ever seen such a sight. What in the hell kind of car is this?"

"How old are you, young man?"

"Thirteen, well, I mean, I will be in October. Why?"

"Because by the time you get to my English class I hope you will have learned how to address a lady. Swearing is not the best way to make a favorable impression." It was the first time Raymond or Bud ever saw their leader stupefied, unable to find words.

"Since you asked, it's a 1925 Model T Ford. Dad got it when he started his practice, and he was right. He said if I wanted to be noticed today I should drive the Model T."

Raymond spilled his guts. "Lady, you coulda rode in on top of a load o' watermelon and still got yourself noticed."

"Well hello there, sailor!" She smiled at Raymond. "I believe you mean 'I could have ridden in on top of a load of watermelons and still been noticed.' But thanks for the compliment."

Raymond blushed and looked away. She paid Goofy Gil and drove off laughing, leaving them standing in silence on the oil stained ramp, the aroma of asphalt, antifreeze, and gasoline swirling around them. This was their home, but they stood there like Indians who had seen Pilgrims wade ashore.