

SITTING AT A RED LIGHT IN AMERICA

Written by

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A MOTHER sits at a red light which goes green before she can shake herself out of her thoughts. She speaks to herself and her teenage son who sits with headphones on. It's not clear if he hears her or not or if she is speaking in her head. Either way, he does not reply.

GREEN LIGHT

Green. Good. Go. Go?

(She sits frozen at the wheel.)

I know I could just order one from Amazon. I could even order the whole backpack. Yours is getting worn out. Yeah, I could order it online. And kill another small business. But it's not like it's any old sweet, sentimental store in town. Like the old gift shop that closed down. No, it's not a Hallmark card shop, that's for sure. You remember don't you? The one on 7th and Oak Street? It's "Ray's Dry Goods" now. It sounds wholesome enough. Whatever dry goods are. Cigarettes, Flour, blue jeans. But they've got cute little fuzzy yellow chicks on sale too. Some groceries. And guns.

(Sighs.)

In town.

(Laughs.)

Downtown. Where the Hallmark shop used to be!

(Hopefully.)

I could just order it online. Then maybe it would close down too.

(Sighs.)

Doubt it. It's always full. Weird young men at the counter staring down the barrel of a gun. And besides, where else would we get it? The same store that sells guns. Totally logical. Talk about supply and demand.

(Looks at her son)

I know, I know. You don't want one. But Cynthia put them in each of her five kids' -- yes, five! Five kids' backpacks. Bullet proof Trapper Keeper-sized human shields/

(A car horn blares behind her.)

Okay, okay sorry. Geez Louise. Get off my bumper. I'm going, I'm going.

(She drives)

I know you don't want one in your backpack. But I do. End of discussion. You don't sit at home worrying you'll not come through the door at 3:30. My heart leaps when I hear the bus stop but no key in the lock. I know, I know. You like to sit out--in this cold?--and check your messages. I get it. You need your alone time.

YELLOW LIGHT

(The car ahead comes screeching to a stop at a yellow light. The Mother honks her horn.)

Geez what are you doing? It's a yellow light, lady!? Apply the brakes gently next time will you?!

RED LIGHT

Geez. She's probably one of those drivers that backs up when they've missed the turn in a round-a-bout!

What is this American love affair with intersections? There is so much space here! Why are there so few round-a-bouts?! Hello!? They turn fatalities into fender benders and allow rush hour traffic to continue to rush except for when you need to just slow down a little, make your way around the circle and if you do have an accident it's not usually... death.

If there were more round-a-bouts, people would get used to them. Humans get used to everything. But no, we prefer to go merrily along, ignore the warning yellow light, smack on the brakes, screech into the intersection. Sit on our phones waiting for the green light and start all over again. And if someone in the intersection misses *their* stop. Death. Death.

You don't want me to buy the bullet proof shield. I get it. You're the age where you want to make your own decisions. Great. But this decision is mine.

(Brightly.))

It fits in the back of the bag. No one but you --and I-- need to know it's there. I need to know it's there.

I'll pick one up and then we'll go find those trees and fake grass you want for your diorama. That sounds like a dry good to me. They might have them. Or we'll try that hobby store next door. A battle scene, eh? More guns. Geez.... (Sighs.)