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AN EXPLANATION TO MY LOVED ONES AS TO WHY I CAN'T SHUT THE HELL UP

By Boniblu Choate

Today, while we waited for the gas to pump, I reminded you of a flat root beer you bought there once, and I pointed to the gas station, and of how you had said that for fifty years, that cashier had worked there, and that one night, on the way out of there, you'd seen an armadillo the size of a large dog at the very edge of your headlights. You'd seen its glowing eyes for certain, you had said. It's summer, and you keep the red wasps from hovering in through the truck window, and through the truck window you say that you never said any of those things. I get to run the money in and think about how you're wrong. You buy us pops, and don't pick up all of the change you drop in the dirt, because one's a penny fallen heads up, and someone else could use it, though you've said you don't believe in luck for years. The pops are flat, but we don't complain because you say things always get better, and they do, but they haven't yet and even gas station owners need some time. You leave that with the penny, for me to think about. Because when I remember to remember something that you say, I'm saying that I love you, what's of you, that you, calling it unimportant, leave on last week's highways, in last week's phone calls. On toll roads, you're throwing names of men in towns at me, and names of towns you used to run around in. They rattle into the bucket and you're reminding me which is The Perfect Country and Western Song. There's a tip jar between my right and left side brains, I've realized. You're cramming one hundred dollar bills into that thing at every awkward silence.

