

Butterfinger Blizzard:
Or How Chelsea Clinton Left One in My Mother's Car

I got the nod to drive the day before Chelsea's second visit to Terre Haute during the Primary Campaign of 2008. The Clintons were fighting hard to win the nomination and the Indiana Primary was crucial. On Chelsea's second visit, the topic was her mother's healthcare plan. I was assigned to pick her up at the local airport, drive her to a local hospital for her speech and then return her to the airport. Simple enough, but I was so freaking excited I couldn't contain myself. I should have been getting used to this whole star-studded atmosphere the election had created in our little town; the whole Clinton family had visited at least once. Hillary created a sensation. Bill, well, Bill is Bill: he left many star-struck in his wake. Chelsea whipped up the college crowd on her first visit. My meetings with Bill and Hillary had been brief. This was the chance to be face to face with Chelsea for more than just a photo op. Cool!

Chelsea would have three people with her: Her assistant, Dr Parker who was helping with the speech, and another driver for the doctor's vehicle. I was the lead driver. Since the campaign was only renting one car, we decided to use my mother's car for the doctor to ride in. I would drive the rental car with Chelsea.

Two months before, I met Tressman in the line for Hillary's visit to Terre Haute and we became fast friends and fellow campaign workers. Tressman was in love with Chelsea Clinton and routinely told people he was Chelsea's fiancé. Our District Director, Erin, and our Field Organizer, Alexis, thought it was funny, at first. But when he went from telling everyone he was marrying her to telling them she was having his baby, it lost its humor. When we got word on Chelsea's visit, Erin and Alexis told me that I was under no circumstances to tell Tressman. "We don't want any kind of scene" Erin told me. That's all she needed to say. Tressman driving Chelsea might lead to harassment charges or at the least Erin getting fired; Tressman could not be trusted with Chelsea Clinton.

The morning of Chelsea's visit, my mother and I drove to Hulman Field International Airport to pick up the rental car at the lone rental agency. On the way, I phoned the agency to confirm the car. The reservation form said I would

be picking up a Suburban or another large SUV. When I relayed this information to the agent, she paused.

“We only have one car in that class. An H2.” A Hummer? Not good.

“You have nothing else?” I asked.

“No. We don’t rent them very often. We’d have to send over to Indy to have one delivered.”

“Okay,” I said. “If that’s all you have, that’s what we’ll have to take.”

I immediately called Erin. “All they have is an H2. The media will have a field day with this. Hillary’s Green Jobs plan and the campaign is using a gas guzzler. People won’t realize it’s rented.”

“You’re right.” She paused. “But we’ll have to take it. There’s nothing else we can do.”

The plane was late coming in from Evansville, of course. Campaigns never run on time. We had the cars lined up, and when the plane finally landed and everyone disembarked, Chelsea’s assistant frowned and walked over to me as I sat by the Hummer.

“We have to switch cars. Chelsea can’t ride in this,” she said as she pointed her finger at the H2.

“Yeah, I know. But it’s all they had.”

She consulted with the other driver then returned to my vehicle. “You’re driving Dr. Parker in the Hummer. Pat will drive Chelsea in the other car.”

My heart sank. That meant no big celebrity moment for me, and I was embarrassed that Chelsea was now riding in my mother’s car. The car was clean, but was it clean enough? I didn’t have time to think about it. Everyone switched cars and we were off, me driving the H2 and this other woman driving Chelsea in my mother’s 2002 Saturn Vue.

After a short, five minute drive to the hospital we arrived to a large crowd waiting impatiently inside. Once the cars emptied, I sat and waited outside while Chelsea started her speech. It felt kinda cool; I felt important. Once people knew who was inside, they started looking at the vehicles and staring at me and the other driver. I tried not to worry about the H2 creating bad PR. I had a more pressing concern at the moment. As I peeked around at the crowd outside, I exhaled: no sign of Tressman.

Halfway through the speech, I sneaked inside to see how it was going and I nearly peed my pants at what I saw

inside: Tressman, lurking in the front row, taking photos and trying to get as close to Chelsea as security would allow. How the hell did he find out?

“Damn!” I hurried outside and fired off a text to Alexis.

Tressman is here.

Crap! Avoid him!

Will do!

I crouched down in the car as far as I could, door closed and windows rolled up, even though it was late April and the temperature was unseasonably warm. I sweated it out, literally and figuratively, until the speech ended and people started to file out. Then I saw Tressman head straight for the H2. He was taking photos of the vehicle, obviously expecting Chelsea to be riding in the black SUV with tinted windows. I leaned over pretending to look in the glove box but it was too late. He slammed his hand on the windshield. I looked up into his blue eyes and shrugged. His jaw dropped.

“I’m driving the doctor, not Chelsea.” I said.

His bottom lip started to quiver.

“I’m sorry!”

Before he could respond, our passengers piled into the car and we sped off. I felt sick knowing that I had hurt a friend’s feelings; and I felt guilty. What if Tressman had driven Bill? I would have been jealous and hurt, too. I bit my lip. How in the world could I ever make amends to him?

We drove a couple of blocks, and then the Saturn pulled over into the Dairy Queen parking lot. I stopped when I realized they were no longer behind me and I watched as Chelsea and her assistant hurried into DQ.

“They’re hungry,” Dr Parker explained.

“Oh, ok.”

“I’d love some coffee myself.”

“Sure thing.”

I told the other driver I would be across the street at Joe Muggs in Books-A-Million bookstore.

The Saturn met us across the street a couple of minutes later and Chelsea and the assistant got out again. “They want coffee too,” the driver told me. I went inside to make sure they hurried. They were late for the Indianapolis event as it was and I didn’t really want to get blamed for creating a delay.

As I entered Books-A-Million, I glanced at the table for featured material in front of the store and my stomach dropped. There on the table with an assortment of political books sat a stack of Hillary Clinton Voodoo Dolls. I glanced over at Chelsea, but she appeared to be unaware. I hustled over to the clerks who were standing behind the counter with open mouths.

“Uh, yeah, can you move those voodoo dolls behind the counter until we leave. How would you like to walk it a store and see something like that of *your* mother?” I pointed to the stack of dolls.

“Uh, what?” They said, still staring at Chelsea.

“That’s Chelsea Clinton!”

They fell over each other trying to get the items off the table.

Coffee in hand, we sped to the airport, and after my mother and I each got our picture taken with Chelsea, she took off for the next stop.

My mother and I headed for headquarters. We chit chatted and at a stoplight, I glanced into the back seat and burst out laughing.

“Oh my god! Look at what’s in the back!”

“What’s that?”

“Chelsea Clinton’s Blizzard!” There it was, half melted and half eaten in the rear cup holder. I knew just what I was going to do with it.

Tressman milled around headquarters, trying not to sulk, but when he saw me, he almost burst into tears.

“Wait! Come out to the car! I have something for you!”

He followed and I opened the back door for him.

“Look! It’s Chelsea’s Blizzard!”

“What?!” he nearly jumped in the air.

“She left it. It’s yours!”

After he took five or six photos of the cup as it sat in the holder, the car, the seat where she sat, then taking it into headquarters to show everyone, he took the Blizzard home. He left smiling. The Blizzard became the topic of conversation up until Election Day. Tressman proudly displayed numerous photos on the office wall: photos of the Blizzard on the table in head quarters, him holding it next to his face, and the car photos. A couple of weeks later, the election took place, the Indiana campaign ended and our close-knit band of friends

dispersed to return to their normal lives. A few of us kept in contact afterwards. Tressman and I remained good friends.

Tressman moved last year. He IMed me shortly before he left town.

I had to throw out the Blizzard.

That's sad. ☹ Why couldn't you take it with you?

It got nasty in the fridge.

I laughed myself sick. I knew he would keep the cup, and the spoon of course, but I had no idea he had kept the *whole* Blizzard all this time. Though, I don't know why it surprised me. At least he didn't eat it.

This week, my mother traded in the Saturn on a newer car. I felt a twinge of sadness, but I told her "Mention the Blizzard to the salesman. Maybe he'll give you more on the trade-in." That car had served as a reminder of a pivotal time in my life, a time full of tears and triumphs. But it reminded me of the Blizzard and the friendship that it surely saved. But time marches on, things change as we all know. The car and Blizzard are now both in parts unknown. God speed to them both.