Crash

Arnold was distracted for only a second, searching for ***Gimme Shelter*** on his car's USB, when he felt a huge bump and a huger *crunch* sound. Not the horrendous sound of metal shoved against itself, an awful screech, but a crunch, followed immediately by a thud. The thud was followed by a large sound of flopping and shredding, and then the car ground itself to a halt.

He sat stunned, then pressed the emergency flasher button. ***Gimme Shelter*** began ominously on the car speakers.

He was on a section of a four-lane local highway, blocking one of the two lanes going his way. Immediately cars began going around him, not giving him a second look, frustrated at any delay. It took a long wait before he could safely get out and look at the damage. He felt okay.

When it was safe, he got out and went to the front of the car. He felt numb. The front right bottom fender was scraped but the fender itself was intact, except for a small missing chunk. The tire was shredded, the wheel rim broken in half, the wheel tilted.

He thought for a moment, then used his fob to turn off the engine.

Arnold phoned the local auto club, he was a member. What did people do before cell phones? Wait for a police car to stop and phone it in? He phoned the auto club again, forty minutes later, then an hour after that, when he was told it would be another forty-five minutes. By then, his son-in-law had arrived and gotten out the jack. His son-in-law had the wheel off by the time the auto club tow truck arrived, two and a half hours after he first called.

The axle was leaking fluid. The spare tire was useless. The car was towed.

It sank in. No car. He was retired but his wife worked, she usually had the car, he had it today for an errand. She would need a car. That evening he learned it would be two weeks before an insurance inspector could check out the car and assign it for repairs. If it could be repaired. He always had a car, from 18 on. Now he was eighty. He imagined life without a car. Without crashes.

He rented a car the next day, to use until he knew if they had to buy a new one. He decided it was time to pretty much stop driving…not completely…yet.

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