

# **Pothole**

**A ten-minute parable**

**By Jake Lewis**

CAST:

Travis - 30s, clean-cut, well-dressed

Christy - any age, any appearance

Tow Truck Driver - any age, any appearance

Nate - approx. same age as Christy

SETTING:

The present, breakdown lane of a highway

*Lights rise on:*

*TRAVIS standing center stage, looking out towards the audience at something, an annoyed expression on his face. The sounds of cars going by quickly are heard. A guardrail runs behind him. After a moment, Travis notices one car pull over. A moment later, CHRISTY appears.*

CHRISTY: Hey.

TRAVIS: *(not breaking his stare)* Hi.

CHRISTY: You're not going to run out into traffic, are you?

TRAVIS: Well, now that you mention it...

CHRISTY: I feel it's my job as a concerned citizen to at least try and stop you. Plus, you'd screw up the morning commute.

TRAVIS: *(Points towards audience/road.)* That is my problem.

CHRISTY: The highway?

TRAVIS: That pothole the size of an Oldsmobile.

CHRISTY: Oh, you mean Bertha?

TRAVIS: You've named a pothole?

CHRISTY: Sure! I see her everyday. This guardrail is Ray, and that billboard is Billie. With an I-E.

TRAVIS: Got it. Well, your friend Bertha just blew out one of my tires.

CHRISTY: I figured as much when I saw your lopsided car back there.

*TRAVIS goes back to staring at the road. CHRISTY comes up beside him.*

CHRISTY: I can promise you that you're going to lose this staring contest with her.

TRAVIS: *(Lightbulb moment)* You got any spray paint?

CHRISTY: Nice segue.

TRAVIS: I could outline it. Y'know, make it--

CHRISTY: Her.

TRAVIS: Make *her* more noticeable for other drivers.

CHRISTY: Look at you! Mr. Good Samaritan! But sorry, fresh out of spray paint. Would chalk do?

TRAVIS: Even better!

CHRISTY: Who carries chalk with them? Let me ask you, even if I did have spray paint, or chalk, or a Sharpie, how could you get out there, do your little coloring job, and make it back without becoming a Jackson Pollock painting across Route 290?

TRAVIS: I could do it. I'd just have to be nimble. I used to be a dancer.

CHRISTY: Well, I suppose if you got creamed by a Mack truck while you're out there, what's left of you could fill Bertha in. So, problem solved!

TRAVIS: Ha. Ha. Anyway. Triple-A said they'll be here soon.

CHRISTY: So that means sometime in the next three to five hours.

TRAVIS: I don't mean to be rude, but--

CHRISTY: Cue rude comment.

TRAVIS: --don't you have somewhere else to be?

CHRISTY: Maybe I'm meant to be right here.

TRAVIS: *(taking small steps backward)* Well, that sounds only a *little* creepy.

CHRISTY: You're right, it does. Sorry. I'm here to help you get over this bump in the road.

TRAVIS: Bump, pothole. You're a quick one. But it's too late. And I told you, Triple-A--

CHRISTY: *(points to road)* I don't mean *that* bump. Or *that* road.

TRAVIS: Great. Metaphors. Just what I needed. What "bumps" and "roads" do you mean, then?

CHRISTY: You tell me.

TRAVIS: Are you some sort of roadside psychiatrist? Where's the couch?

CHRISTY: Well, it is called the breakdown lane for a reason. Come, step into my office. *(She walks back to the guardrail and sits on it, waiting.)*

TRAVIS: Listen, uh...

CHRISTY: Christy.

TRAVIS: Travis. Christy, I don't know you from a hole in the wall--

CHRISTY: Or a hole in the road.

TRAVIS: (*building in intensity*) And don't get me wrong, It's awfully nice of you to pull over and see if I'm OK, truly, but if it's alright with you, I'll just go back to my car, listen to my podcast about the collapse of the Roman Empire, and wait for the tow truck driver to come and look at me like I'm not a real man because I can't change my own tire. And I'll be all like, "Yeah? Well, if *men like me* knew how to do it, you'd be out of a job, pal, so what do you think of that?" And then he'd say, "Easy, pal, can't you take a joke?" And I'll say, "You must have talked to my *husband!*" And he'll give me that look -- you know what I'm talking about -- and then I'll feel bad because I'm just projecting my insecurities onto him, so he'll do his thing under the car, and I'll stand around awkwardly, not knowing what to do, probably scrolling up and down on Facebook for the umpteenth time already, avoiding the look of passersby rubbernecking, in hopes there's been some accident, and oh yeah, they'll see one, a big one -- me, foiled again in life, but this time not even by a vindictive ex-husband, but by something that is essentially the manifestation of nothingness, which coincidentally has the cutesy nickname of Bertha!

CHRISTY: You're right. You're totally OK. Seeya' later.

*CHRISTY starts to exit.*

CHRISTY: And for the record, my Nate wouldn't have seen you that way.

TRAVIS: Is Nate your husband?

TRAVIS: Yes. My late husband. He was a tow truck driver, ironically.

*CHRISTY continues to go.*

TRAVIS: Wait. Don't go.

*CHRISTY stops.*

TRAVIS: I was on my way to my divorce hearing.

*CHRISTY turns around.*

TRAVIS: And now I'm not going to make it on time, which will look like I don't care.

CHRISTY: But the flat tire. Bertha. Show them the receipt from Triple A. They'll understand.

TRAVIS: You'd think so, wouldn't you? Daniel's lawyer, though...She'll make it look like I was a reckless driver, or I'm in an unsafe vehicle, or some clever trick.

CHRISTY: You're in a freakin' Land Rover. They use those in Africa to protect people from lions and tigers.

TRAVIS: I'm not going to do the "and bears" you're expecting.

CHRISTY: You just did. And anyway, I wasn't expecting it because there are no bears in Africa. So there.

TRAVIS: Yo got me there.

CHRISTY: I know! I'll just go with you and confirm your story.

TRAVIS: Oh, sure. “Hey everyone, this is a complete stranger I met on the side of the highway who’s going to tell you I’m late because I hit a pothole she’s named Bertha.”

CHRISTY: Yeah, I can see how that might not help.

TRAVIS: The truth is, I don’t really care if Daniel gets everything. Take the house, the money in the bank account, whatever -- take the three-tired Land Rover! There’s just one thing he can’t take from me.

CHRISTY: Your kid.

TRAVIS: Wha-- How did you know?

CHRISTY: I mean, it’s not the most original story I’ve ever heard.

TRAVIS: True enough. *(As he’s taking out a photograph and handing it to CHRISTY.)*

CHRISTY: He’s handsome.

TRAVIS: His name is Will. He’s biologically Daniel’s, which will help in court, too, but it feels like he is a physical part of me. Do you have kids?

*CHRISTY is silent a moment, her face changing.*

TRAVIS: Sorry, I didn’t--

CHRISTY: No, it’s OK. No children, although I’ve always wanted five or six. But my Nate...We just didn’t get to it in time.

TRAVIS: I’m so sorry.



CHRISTY: Why, were you the driver who fell asleep at the wheel and hit him while he was replacing a flat tire right on this stretch of highway?

TRAVIS: What? No, all I meant--

CHRISTY: Relax. I'm just messing with you! Nate knew it was always a risk that goes with the job.

TRAVIS: Makes me feel a little stupid now, complaining about a flat tire when he took his life in his hands everyday.

CHRISTY: He loved helping people in what feels like one of their worst moments. I guess he and I have that in common. It's how we met, as a matter of fact.

TRAVIS: I wish I could say that Daniel and I had a meet-cute like that. We found each other online. Not very original.

CHRISTY: Bah, "original" is for movies and books. It doesn't matter how you met in real life. As long as you met and fell in love. You gotta focus on the good, even if the ending is sad. (*hands back photo*) Like him.

TRAVIS: Will wants to be a dancer when he's older. Takes after me in that way, I guess.

CHRISTY: Nate loved to dance, too! He would come in from a long day on the road, and even before washing off the grime from his hands, or drying off if it had been raining that day, he would sweep me up, and dance with me right in the middle of the living room. (*Beat.*) I think I miss that the most. The smell of the oil and his sweat mixed with the soap he used.

TRAVIS: He sounds like a great guy.

CHRISTY: He was married to me, so obviously.

TRAVIS: Of course. But I still don't get why you're here.

CHRISTY: I drive up and down this stretch, between exit 29 and 30, and then back, over and over, every day, making sure what happened to Nate doesn't happen to someone else, and carrying on his legacy of helping when I can.

TRAVIS: That must get lonely.

CHRISTY: Sometimes, but I get to meet a lot of interesting people. Like you.

TRAVIS: I can't believe I'm saying this, but I almost want to thank Bertha. Almost.

CHRISTY: The road works in mysterious ways.

TRAVIS: Life is a highway. (*Realizes how corny that sounds.*) Forget I said that.

CHRISTY: Sometimes I think, if I just drive this road long enough, if I hit a certain quota, I'll see Nate again. His spirit or something.

TRAVIS: I hope you're right.

CHRISTY: (*Holding out her keys.*) Take my car. Get to that mediation.

TRAVIS: Ha! I can't just take your car! First of all, how do you know I'd return it?

CHRISTY: Well, if you didn't, I'd get a 2020 Land Rover with a brand new tire out of the deal, and you'd get a 92 Subaru with almost 300,000 miles on it. So I'm pretty sure I'll be seeing it again.

TRAVIS: Good point. Well....ok!

CHRISTY: Good luck.

*TRAVIS nods and starts to run off. He stops and turns around.*

TRAVIS: Maybe you can meet Will someday.

CHRISTY: You know where to find me.

TRAVIS: I guess I do. Thank you! And I hope you get to see Nate again.

*TRAVIS smiles and exits.*

*CHRISTY sits on the guardrail. After a few moments, tow truck lights start to flash. Soon after, TOW TRUCK DRIVER enters.*

TTD: That your vehicle back there?

*CHRISTY nods. As the TTD continues speaking, his/her voice eventually fades and NATE enters.*

TTD: Alright, I'm going to need the keys to get access to the spare. If you can just stand behind that guardrail. You don't know how many times I've almost....

*CHRISTY sees NATE and rises from seated position, smiling. Lights begin to dim on the TTD as he/she continues talking to CHRISTY.*

*We are now in CHRISTY's dream state. NATE crosses to her, and extends his hand. She takes it.*

CHRISTY: Oh, Nate. How I've missed you.

*They embrace and slow dance (music optional) in the flickering tow truck lights as the stage slowly fades to black.*

The End