



Source: Mark Lawson, "[Slick start for channel despite Arab bias](#)", *Guardian News & Media in Sydney Morning Herald online*, 17/11/06.

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Frightening how the rest of the world floats away when we drive around the suburbs, and how it's always night. Night makes us timeless, dissolves our histories so all we have are words.

'You're so funny,' he says. 'The funniest girl I've ever met.'

The car purrs at the lights.

'I've driven down this highway so many times that I can't do it sober anymore,' he says.

'This could be an anti drink-driving ad right here,' I say. 'You say that, then a semi trailer hits us. I am dressed as Jayne Mansfield. We've come from a fancy dress party: "Dress as your favourite celebrity death"'.

He laughs because I'm the funniest girl he's ever met and I turn on the radio. Classic rock summer, hits of the 70s and 80s. This is the only music that is permissible to listen to in his car, it fits with the beige upholstery and the lack of fuel efficiency.

It's Prefab Sprout's 'Cars and Girls': *Just look at us now, quit driving, some things hurt more much more than cars and girls.*

'There is nothing more important than cars and girls,' he says.

'Then the semi-trailer hits us?'

'Okay okay, then it's back to the sidelines, where the makeup girl will dab powder on me because I have a habit of sweating profusely when I'm nervous.'

'Why are you nervous? Is this your first ad?'

'No, it is because I've fallen in love with you.'

'At first sight?'

'We need that Stems song to come on right now!' he says, pointing to the radio with a flourish like a magician. No luck. An ad for an auto wreckers instead.

'So you've fallen in love, at first sight, with me, your co-star in the anti drink driving ad. However I do not notice and think you are a neurotic, sweaty mess who keeps stuffing up his lines. How do you win me over?'

'I notice you have a stamp on your wrist that's the same as the stamp on my wrist, which meant that we went to the same gig the night before.'

'What gig? It has to be something obscure but yet popular enough for there to be a bit of a crowd.'

'The reformation of the Plug Uglies.'

'Good one! Then we find out we have other things in common. Neither of us like cats, although all of our friends do. We both live in apartments, in adjacent suburbs, on either side of a main road. Both of us lie in bed at night listening to the same sirens wailing along the same road.'

'Please let it not be this road.'

'Of course it's this road. You'll never escape this road. You're doomed to drive up and down it, like Sisyphus and his rock.'

'Not exactly like that when you think about it.'

'Ah, who cares, I just wanted to say Sisyphus. I'm the only person in the city saying Sisyphus in a car right now and you, lucky man, get to hear it. Shall I say it again?'

'Sure.'

'Oh Sisyphus, don't cause a fuss, but you're gonna get caught, by the booze bus.'

'You're joking, aren't you?'

'I don't think so, see all those flashing lights. I thought you were joking about not being sober before. Are you drunk?'

'Sort of.'

'We're sunk!'

We stop talking and stare at the police up ahead, waving fluorescent batons to direct cars to the side of the road. I feel like giggling, as I always do when something bad and serious is about to happen and I have to bite the inside of my cheeks to stop it. Like his actor alter-ego, a bead of sweat has broken out on his forehead.

'This has never happened to me before,' he says. 'I promise.'

I shrug because I'm going to giggle if I open my mouth.

'Why tonight?' he whines, and it is now that I can't stop it anymore. Giggles burst out of me and fill the car and by some incredible constellation of luck the police do not wave us over and we've past them now. I turn up the classic hits radio and he laughs too and we'll keep driving so the dawn never catches us and night will go on forever.

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Vanessa Berry.*