



Source: Matt Apuzzo, 'Iran gets \$324m bill for bombing', AP in *The Age online*, 24/12/06.

Tags: [intimacy](#)

Writer/s: [Myrel Chernick](#)

© 2008 Barbara Campbell and the writer/s

I was shocked when I came home tonight and heard your voice on my answering machine. The cadences were still so familiar, even after all this time, the rumble soft and low, and the rhythmic, seductive tones compelled me to stop short. How long has it been, 15 years, or even more? I could figure it out if I tried. I could get precise. All I know is that I have done my best to put you out of my mind. I immediately thought about our last encounter, I remember we were at the lake house and you came to visit. Your car broke down, that old junk heap you had. We used to laugh about it once upon a time, at least I did until that time it died on our way somewhere out west on a highway in the middle of nowhere after you told me you had it serviced before we left. We were lucky someone came along in a pick-up truck that volunteered to drag us to the next gas station.

I sat in front and the guy wanted me to jerk him off, while he was driving, remember? When I said no I thought he would dump us right there and let us rot but he turned to me plaintively and said, will you at least watch while I do it? I said yes because he seemed so sad and believe it or not I actually felt sorry for him. We really were in trouble and I figured he wouldn't be able to come by himself while holding onto the steering wheel and manoeuvring the truck and of course I was right. Even though he had the biggest hard-on I'd ever seen he gave up pretty soon, zipped his pants with one hand and continued driving. I was pretty angry and upset by then, especially when you had no money and I had to pay for the repairs. But I was already used to that.

I always paid for everything because I was a working drone and you were the free spirit. Your creativity flowed into me and made my life interesting and worth living, at least when we were together. That was the trade-off. But I lost it at the lake house.

You never liked that house or my family. Luckily they knew the local mechanic and he made a special trip all the way out there to look at your car. 250 he wanted to get it running again, or was it even more than that? Of course you didn't have the money and you looked at me with those eyes of yours, you were about to say that you would pay me back this time, of course you understood that I couldn't keep doling it out, and you were so grateful for everything I had done and you had it all written down, everything you owed me and at the first opportunity you

would start paying me back, ha! I put up my hand to staunch the flow of words.

Something broke in me right then and I had had enough.

'I'll take you to the bus', I said. 'You can come back for the car when you have the money to pay for the repairs.'

'I'll walk,' you said.

And so you did. You walked away down the long driveway toward the town and I watched you go. The car sat there for a while, rusting in the damp and the mist that rose from the lake and then after the rainy winter it really was in bad shape, paint peeling off and the bottom completely corroded. Later that year they got tired of the eyesore and had it hauled away and it took me a long time but I stopped thinking about it and eventually of you too.

I did wonder what had happened to you, wondered for years of course, hoping every time the phone rang that it would be you or that you would wander back into my life one day, just like that, that you would show up at my door or be sitting on the porch or the front stairs when I got home from work. I dared to think you might actually make good on your promise and have a wad of bills in your hand, why should I really care that you took all that money from me, what's mine is yours, isn't that what they say about true friends? Now look here, if anyone had a right to be angry it was I, not you. So how dare you make me feel even worse, like I was responsible for your walking away that day.

I eventually changed jobs, got a promotion, had a series of lovers, and even moved to this nice apartment. I stayed at the other place too long, I realise that now, because I thought that if I moved, you might not be able to find me.

I guess you found me anyway, when you wanted to. Are you going to ask me for a favour, for old times sake? I didn't even listen to the message all the way through. I wonder if you'll have the nerve to call me again, but you always were the daring one, the adventurous one.

I'll just pour myself a drink and sit here for a while. And if the phone rings, well, I guess I'll have to decide then if I want to pick up, but don't count on it.

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Myrel Chernick.*