

Story for performance #776  
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Source: Isabel Kershner, 'Palestinians say Olmert and Abbas are set to meet', *New York Times online*, 05/08/07.

Tags: [intimacy](#), [crime](#)

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Matt was driving his brand new car—'a stylistic pumpkin has morphed into a magic coach' said the ad—and he felt the acute pleasure of being the only one driving the new BMW Z4 in California (for a little while, because nothing lasts, as he knows all too well...)

His hand lightly on the wheel, almost an erotic touch, his foot barely touching the pedal, his elbow sticking outside, the bare skin caressed by the warm breeze of a hot late afternoon in the no man's land of a Californian highway, Matt was aware of the sleeping presence of his companion (and it spoiled the pleasure, the pure pleasure of sliding through the bright almost tropical sunset in the silent car, like a shiny fish in indigo water).

Ibrahim was asleep in the passenger seat, his head slightly bowed as if he had been crying or praying.

'Ibrahim', thought Matt, 'is fraught with potential problems'. His Moroccan friend was indeed in trouble, not for being a member of the Islamic Jihad group nor of the Al Aksa brigades—Ibrahim certainly didn't have the vocation of a martyr—but for having been caught dealing some shit in Lower Manhattan. Poor Ibrahim! He freaked out and called his friend Matt, who decided to take him to the West Coast for a change.

'It's a nice gesture, mate, I appreciate it', said Ibrahim in his sing song accent, holding Matt's hand perhaps a tiny bit too long. Matt, for some reason he couldn't quite explain, was happy to help him and to escape like a castaway, leaving behind the crowded blocks around Wall Street and the air-conditioned office where he spent most of his time.

Matt was happy, although he could feel the burden of Ibrahim's presence, his dense body beside him, the dark shade of his unshaven chin, the long eyelashes covering his green eyes. The deal between them was that Matt would deliver Ibrahim to his brother-in-law, a Palestinian who had made heaps of money selling software and who lived in a mansion somewhere near Venice Beach. Matt didn't like the idea—probably because he wanted to spend more time with Ibrahim, or try to keep him away from his relatives, or just because he wished he could keep driving smoothly, gliding on the highway across California, forgetting about the world and all the

fundamental issues that no one seemed to be able to solve.

He liked Ibrahim for his innocence. Besides, there was a special bond between them, a sort of pledge of friendship since that night in Fez, a few years ago, when Matt, a silly young man looking for danger, got entangled in an ugly situation; he was stabbed by the boy he was following, and who of course wanted his money, his shoes and his mobile phone. Ibrahim miraculously appeared, threatened the boy and took the bleeding Matt home. There Matt spent ten days recovering and being treated like her own child by the big mother, Djamilia, who fed and nursed him. He couldn't remember being treated so well by his own mother, a tough blond socialite who only liked dogs.

Almost falling asleep himself, Matt turned on the radio, and the world was back, with its never ending deals in the Middle East and its sterile series of gestures, which generally led to more disasters. 'It's just entropy', thought Matt, casting a quick look at Ibrahim, who opened his beautiful green eyes.

'Where are we?' Hollywood was glittering in the sunset, Hollywood with its entertainment comfort food, where fiction was more powerful than reality, but was feeding on reality like a vampire.

'Do you think I could be an actor?' asked Ibrahim. 'Sure', said Matt absent-mindedly: he could see in the rear-view mirror a police car approaching, and when the sirens became deafening (like a bad Hollywood movie) he knew they were in trouble.

A big purple cloud covered the sinking sun, and Matt could sense that, once again, they wouldn't have time to deal with the fundamental issues.

Ibrahim put a hand on the driver's knee: 'Thanks for everything, Matt, and see you in Paradise.'

'Or Hell!', and Matt laughed, for there was nothing else to do.

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Marie Gaulis.*