

# Saturday Drive

*Benjamin Laut*

---

AS USUAL, Arthur had been driving too fast.

Janet was giving him that look from the passenger seat again. Before she had a chance to spill vitriol all over the upholstery, the cigarette lighter burst the tense silence with a pop. Arthur's hand crawled around the dash until it managed to pluck a cigarette from its silver case.

Janet watched as Arthur raised the lighter to his mouth, keeping his eyes on the road. Her lips did that tight, wrinkly thing.

A deer could have hopped in front of the car and spoiled their Saturday drive. Janet knew that Arthur's glazed, hollow eyes were pointed at the road. Janet hated that hollow look. Arthur had that same empty canvas on his face last year, when she told him she was going back to work. His face went so hollow it turned inside out. She waited for him to tell her no, but he didn't. She waited for him to tell her they would try again, but he didn't.

What if a child ran out onto the road? Arthur would smash the unlucky waif into a thousand jagged pieces. He would sob and beg Janet to forgive him for not driving at a sensible speed. But she wouldn't forgive him. He never gave the child a chance, so why should she?

Janet plucked the cigarette out of Arthur's mouth and threw it out the window. She felt fantastic. She had saved the children and the deer and all other little forest creatures that might have needed saving. The lit cigarette might have led to an immense forest fire, leading to the horribly painful deaths of thousands of little forest creatures, maybe even some wayward boy scouts. Luckily it didn't, otherwise Janet would never have heard the end of it from Arthur.

Arthur greased his neck then turned to face her.

'You're going bald you know,' said Janet.

Arthur wound up the window, using the small plastic handle built into the door.  
'Yes, Janet. I know.'

Arthur turned back to the road and adjusted his grip on the steering wheel. His knuckles had been turning as white as the hairs on his temples. He couldn't help but feel the weight of the atmosphere pushing him inevitably down into the soil.

Arthur wondered what would happen if he let the car veer onto the other side of the road. He wondered if the crash would hurt much or if he would be pulverised instantly. He imagined that it would hurt a great deal, making a decision like that.

Arthur wondered if he was steering the car, or if it was the road that steered him. He couldn't easily point his car at the moon and keep on driving, could he? He couldn't point the wheels at his past and make the same mistakes again, could he?

Maybe one day he would. Maybe one day the wheel would relax into his hands and he would point it at the sky.

Janet probably wouldn't let him.