

(prologue
climax
dénouement)

R.H.



(prologue, climax, dénouement)

Renée Holleman

I like to drive through small towns. I drive through these places not out of interest in other people's lives, but in my own. I want to know that its possible to live differently so that I can imagine for myself another life into which mine could fit. I drive through them looking for ideas, details, pictures of a life I might live if I wasn't me.

There is so much space between these towns. Vast expanses of unfamiliar territory. Kilometres and hours and petrol endlessly adding up or diminishing, depending on how you look at it. Highways and byways, forests and veldt that compose

themselves and resolve from turn to turn. The mist and the sunlight and the darkness.

When I can, I pull over at the road-side picnic spots with their cement benches and peppercorn trees. As you stop and climb out you are always surprised, even astounded by the silence. The cessation of the noise you had forgotten you were hearing. Your car passing through the air, its tires on the road, its engine turning, your music playing, your voice singing.

I stopped in this small town one day for a cup of coffee. I cant remember the name. Bedford, Peddie, Naboomspruit. The clouds had gathered and it looked like rain. The kind of rain that will stop you in your tracks, turn the record back. I pulled into the parking lot of the nearest petrol station, its Wimpy sign flashing against the darkening sky, and parked next to a green Toyota. It was there that it happened. There in the parking lot outside the Wimpy as the clouds gathered and the rain came down.

A downpour. Big drops smashing onto the windscreen, people running, chip packets in the wind. I decide to wait.

In the car next to me there is a couple sitting with takeaways, small clutched paper cups fogging the windows. She gestures towards him, pointing towards the town, someone else, someplace else, her hands moving forwards and backwards in time. He shrugs. She gestures again more fervently and he looks away. They sit staring for some time. It is still raining when the conversation starts up again, now angrily. They are shouting, but for some reason I can't seem to hear what they are saying. Right next to me here in this small town parking lot I cannot make out a word.

A door slams and he, I now see, jacket and tie walking away

while she cries. She sobs. In the car next to me she is weeping.
He stands near the petrol pumps, sullen, fingering a cigarette.
When he returns they continue alternately silent and raging,
and I their spectator, bewildered, unexpectedly torn.

They continue like this for some time, like the rain, in a
language I'm unable to understand.

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WhatiftheWorld / Gallery
#1 Argyle Street Woodstock
Cape Town, South Africa, 7925
info@WhatiftheWorld.com
www.WhatiftheWorld.com

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