

TRUCKIN' by Jenny Edwards

Man and woman, married, in a truck. He's driving. She's reading a book.

A few seconds pass before anyone speaks. He takes a sip of coffee from his go-cup. She takes a sip of coffee from her go-cup.

♂ This is *good* coffee!

♀ Yep. Not too shabby.

♂ Peets. Peets coffee is the best.

♀ (*She looks at him—not this again.*) I know, dear.

♂ The best.

♀ (*Reading*) You make a mean cup.

♂ (*Nods in agreement, takes another sip*) We brought plenty, right?

♀ Enough for us AND your whole family. ...for a week, not just a weekend.

♂ Good, 'cause once we leave the Bay Area it's no more Peets. And if I have to drink my brother's coffee I'll go even madder than I will be normally after a weekend in Atascadero. (*Silence*) Sorry we got such a late start.

♀ It's alright. I know how important a *very* clean truck is to you.

♂ It's 'cause I couldn't find my microfiber car-wash mitt.

♀ How well I know.

♂ It wasn't where I left it. (*Pause*) In the pail to the right of the generator.

♀ For the umpteenth time, I did NOT touch your microfiber car-wash mitt.

♂ Pretty weird.

♀ Besides, they're bad for the environment. (silence) Well, we've made pretty good time from soHum so far. If this keeps going, we'll make it to Salinas before 11:00, spend the night, and cruise on into Atascadero in the morning.

♂ Don't forget, this baby (patting the dashboard) needs an oil change tomorrow morning.

♀ Right. I bet there's a Les Schwab in Salinas.

♂ Les Schwab? They don't do oil changes at Les Schwab. Les Schwab is only for tires.

♀ You sure?

♂ Yep.

♀ I'm going to look it up.

♂ Go ahead.

(She takes out her smart phone and looks it up. Their body motion shows that the truck suddenly accelerates.)

♀ Whoa! Why are you speeding up?

♂ Some Yahoo's trying to pass.

♀ So. Let him.

♂ He thinks he can own the road with his Chevrolet Silverado.

♀ Let him own the road! You know that he only owns that monster and drives that way because he is genitalia--ly challenged. *(She works with the unusual word.)* Genita-li-a-l-ee .

♂ *(Talking over her.)* 33 inch tires. *(His body language lets the audience know that he is maneuvering to keep someone from passing.)*

♀ Please don't put my life in danger because of testosterone poisoning. Be a bigger man than he is, if you take my meaning. (She pats the coffee cup which is between his legs.)

(He stops his competition with the passing truck.)

♀ *(Getting info from her smart phone)* Well, you're right. I don't see any thing about oil changes. It looks like Les Schwab is only for tires: selling, fixing , balancing, rotating, inspecting. ...and free tire-tips! Tips for tires from Les Schwab! Les Schwab. You would think with a name like that, Les would have chosen a different name for his business. Like Tires-R-Us, or something. Les Schwab.

(She looks at ♂ and says slowly and carefully:) Lesssss Sch...wab. Try saying it fast, like 4 times. Les Schwab, Les Schwab, Les Schwab, Les Schwab! You didn't do it! Do it. Try saying it fast 4 times.

♂ No.

♀ Why?

♂ I don't want to.

♀ I didn't want to hold the hose while you swabbed the truck. But I did it. Hey, swabbed! You Schwabbed you car.

♂ Enough with the name, OK?

♀ OK *(Silence for a bit; she does research on her phone.)*

♂ *(He breaks out into song)* "Truckin' got my chips cashed in, Keep truckin' like the doodah man, Together, more or less in line, Just keep truckin' on."
Grateful Dead, 1970.

♀ *(She interrupts him somewhere in the above song:)* Wow. Listen to this: Les was from Bend, Oregon. Was orphaned as a teenager, lived independently and paid his own way from the age of 15 . His marriage to his high school sweetheart lasted 70 years. He was in the Army Air Corps during WWII. In 1952 he sold his house and borrowed money to buy his first franchise which had one employee and no

bathroom or running water. At that time his son was 11 and his wife was expecting. From there he built his Les Schwab Tire Center empire with currently over 400 stores, his success being due to treating his employees like partners and his customers like family. Wow. This was the man that my mother wanted me to marry.

♂ Not to mention your father.

♀ Yeah. Sorry about that. He couldn't help it. He looked at you with a father's eyes and saw a long-haired hippie with no money and no prospects.

♂ And he was right. (*Singing*) "Sometimes the lights all shining on me. Other times I can barely see. Lately it occurs to me. What a long strange trip it's been. "

♀ So, whadda you think?

♂ About your father?

♀ No. Les.

♂ Quite the guy. But I wonder if he's as perfect as his bio. implies. How would it read if his wife had written it? But, no doubt, he's a better man than I, Gunga Din.

♀ Why'd you say that, now I have to look *that* up.

♂ It's from a poem by Rudyard Kipling. Check out this truck that's passing.

(Both watch it pass)

♀ What about it?

♂ It's a brand new Tundra. (*He gazes fondly after it.*) Check out the rack! I could use a rack like that.

♀ Yeah?

♂ Oh, yeah! Expensive though. See the verticals? They just snap into place.

♀ I bet that if Les Schwab were in the rack business he would have come up with that and built a truck-rack empire with currently over 400 rack stores.

♂ Just snap. (*Gesturing*) Horizontals too.

♀ Very Schwabian.

♂ Traffic's slowing down. First time this whole trip. We cruise through Santa Rosa and come to a stand still now, at 7:30 in Novato? What's with that? Must be an accident. Rubber neckers. God, this coffee's good. How come gas is so much cheaper down here? Even in Laytonville it's 20 cents cheaper. What's with soHum? Some kind of cartel? This person ahead of us is a very bad driver. I bet she's on the phone, (*He sings:*) "You'd better hang up before you go" Bubble Puppies. Psychedelic rock band from Texas. 1969. (*He sings:*) "I've got to reach you before you go."

♀ Oh, my God!

♂ What?

♀ Remember, I put the coffee in that Trader Joe's bag?

♂ Yes.

♀ And I put it down on the wood pile and went back in the house to get my phone charger-'cause I almost forgot THAT- and when I came out you asked me to hold the hose for you while you washed the truck and I...didn't pick it up again.

♂ The hose?

♀ The bag.

♂ You left the coffee on the woodpile?

♀ It kind of blended in.

♂ The Trader Joe's bag blended in with the wood pile?

♀ I'm sorry. (*Silence. He looks ahead, then at her. Their eyes*

meet. He looks back at the road. She remains looking at him.) I'm sorry.

♂ You flunked.

♀ I know.

♂ Big time.

♀ I know.

♂ Very un-Schwabian.

♀ Very. (Silence)

♀ You know they sell Peets in grocery stores, we can...(She sees the look on his face.) I know. I know. Only the freshest from the outlet stores.

♂ Do you think Les would settle for second best? .. coffee tired and old from sitting on a grocery shelf for God knows how long? Put that phone to good use and find out where the nearest Peets is and when they close.

♀ *(She uses her phone to do so.)* There's a Peets behind us in Novato and one ahead in a mall in San Rafael, less than 10 min away. It closes at 8:00. We have 15 min. We can do it. If this traffic moves.

♂ I know the place. Went there when I lived in Marin County. *(Silence)* There's another one on 3rd Street in San Rafael. *(Silence)* And another one in Fairfax. *(Silence.)* Can you reach the chips? *(She gets the chips & sets them up for him to eat, which he does, revealing his emotional state.)* Why does every woman in Marin County wear her hair in one of those short...*(He gestures.)*

♀ Bobs?

♂ Yes. Promise me you'll never get one of those.

♀ I promise. (Pause) You're being nice.

♂ Yes. I am being nice.

♀ I bet Les Schwab would not have been nice to his wife in a situation like this. (Pause) I bet Les would have yelled at his wife and made her miserable.

♂ Probably

♀ I bet Les would have pulled over and gotten out of the car, yelling the whole time and listing off all the things his wife forgot over the years because he was the kind of man, although hard-working, who carried a grudge and remembered every stupid mistake his wife made.

♂ Not to mention that Les was not as handsome as me.

♀ Not half.

♂ And he never sang.

♀ Not even in the shower.

♂ Traffic's starting to move

♀ Oh good!

♂ *(Silence)* Check out this driver coming up on the right. I must have passed him 8 times in the last half-hour. *(Fake calling to the driver:)* That's why God created cruise control! *(He sings)* "How can people drive so badly? How can people drive so bad?" Three Dog Night. 1972. No, '73, 'cause I'd just moved up to Humboldt. *(MAY HAVE TO CHANGE THIS "MOVING TO HUMBOLDT" DATE~J)*

♀ And....you had just met me.

♂ Yes. And you know what? That was a move Les would have been proud of.

♀ Yeah? I agree. It was very Schwabian of you.

♂ Yes. And from those humble beginnings we found land, borrowed money to purchase it, worked hard and built our house and

our homestead...

♀ And raised our kids and put them through college and today we reside on our 400- I mean, 40-acre empire.

♂ (He takes a sip from his go-cup. Then she does.) Ah, we're moving pretty good now.

♀ Think we'll make it to Peets?

♂ We'll make it. (perhaps they toast with their coffee cups...?)
THE END

As the anthropologist Clifford Geertz famously said, "Man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun."

James Baldwin's definition of art: "to prove, and to help one bear, the fact that all safety is an illusion."