



# Date Night

By Barbara DeMarco-Barrett  
(after Christopher Allwine, Date Night)

**IT WON'T BE** long now. I hear they're coming for me. We had a long run. I can't say exactly how many miles I've covered because I've outlived my odometer. I'm sixty-two now, not nearly old enough to say goodbye to this world, yet I've never been one to complain. I no longer have a four-barrel carburetor but pondering the end does choke me up a bit.

There's still a beauty about me; I hear I still have a glow. People walk around me and say kind words. Things like, "Check out that old Chrysler Imperial—they don't make 'em like they used to." They talk about my long lines and elegance and fancy taillights and "all that chrome! You don't find it in newer models."

Those were the good old days: six-way power bench seats, V-8 engine, power steering, power brakes, push button this and that. My eerie and modern dashboard lighting that glowed in the dark. I admit I liked my toothy grill; people said I looked as if I was smiling.

Cruising down the highway, songs like "Little Deuce Coupe," "The Little Old Lady from Pasadena," and "Drive My Car" playing on the radio. Funny aside: Used to be when you hit the brakes the kids in the back would tumble on the floor. Seatbelts have their advantages, of course, but they also clutter things up.

Now, in my last days, I've settled into one of my favorite places: the Starview Drive-in. Automobiles were a novelty when drive-ins began. People loved watching movies in the comfort of their own cars. It was like sitting in their own living room. In 1959 when I was born, there were more than 4,000 drive-in theaters around the country. When I think about the old days here at the Starview, I feel happy. I haven't felt this electrified since I was hotwired back in the '70s.

Wasn't so long ago the family crowded in to watch movies: "Jaws" was a favorite, all the kids screeching and cowering. Why they let the little ones watch the movie is anyone's guess. They had nightmares for days.

"The Long Hot Summer," too, with Paul Newman at his finest with Joanne Woodward—that's when they knew they couldn't ignore what they felt for each other.

Then "Belle du Jour," "Endless Summer," and even "Psycho." The kids were asleep for that one. There was "Viva Las Vegas," "Rebel Without a Cause," "It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World," and "Mary Poppins." The kids loved "Mary Poppins." At intermission the lobby filled up with purchasers of 7-up and popcorn and milkshakes and fries. I smelled like popcorn into the next day.

And Date Night, when the car grew quiet except for the clip-on speakers on the window broadcasting the film.

I saw it all, not all of it good. JFK, protests to the Vietnam War, Summer of Love that ended with that Manson night of hate. Then the big hair, big collared '70s, and then the '80s when cars shrunk like dried up mushrooms. All that detailing: tail fins segueing into streamlined but nondescript bumpers.

It's fitting the end comes here for me at the Starview—though it's not the *end* end. I hear I'll be reincarnated. As for the drive-in, the stars may no longer visit the big screen, but they mob the sky like daisies in spring.