

McDonalds is the Centre of the Universe

Because we can't get into One World Bar, because they won't let us go dancing at The Roxy, because the cafes are filled with too-old people, because the parks are filled with dodgy strangers, because we've already seen all the movies at Greater Union and Westfield is shut at night, because of all of this, the McDonalds parking lot is the centre of our night-time universe, at least for now.

Everyone that has a car or knows someone who does, parks and sits there spilling out their windows. This evening we've been lucky enough to get Shadi's cousin's Commodore. Shadi gave his cousin the twenty dollars his mother gives him every week (behind his father's back), to let us and Mo and Shadi's girl, Sal from the pool, sit in it while he goes off to meet his mates at the movies.

Since Shadi's cousin has guaranteed that we will both lose our balls if we sit on his newly reconditioned leather seats with McDonalds, the four of us are standing outside it eating our hamburgers. I got a new haircut and brought Mo some flowers I nicked from the front of our apartment building. Shadi's got a new shirt on. I think we're doing pretty well.

We eat and watch two guys break-dancing on the concrete and the girls let out a little squeal and get closer to us each time they jump head first onto the ground and spin. Now that I've got through my nervousness, I'm completely exhausted. I listen to what Mo has to say about all sorts of things I don't know nothing about. She tells me about her school, her father's fruit shop, the family trips back to Egypt every summer. Mo doesn't like *The Fast and the Furious* or video games or the Parramatta Eels. She likes books about travel and studying French. She likes the Twilight movies. She likes Robert Pattinson. She likes to talk and talk. She speaks without drawing breath so that I lose the ability to follow along until she says, 'Michael, are you listening to me?' like Mum used to say. I put my arm around her and we lean against the iridescent green of that car.

She smiles that amazing smile and says, 'I'm cold,' and I don't have anything to give her so we climb into the front seat of the car and sit shoved up against each other. In the back seat Shadi (Shadi!) is making out with Sal, I can see Mo watching them through the rear-view mirror so I decide to make my move. I put my hand on her thigh and lean in.

She leans back and says, 'Nah, time to go home,' then she's silent for the first time in the evening and we both stare out into the parking lot, watching everyone in the McDonalds universe coming and going.