

## Driving Under Construction

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**By: Robin Pascoe**

“Back up!!!” one local driver gestured wildly to another through a soundproof windshield.

“I can’t! There’s three cars behind me! YOU move your car!!” The second driver rolled down his window to be heard.

“Well, there’s FOUR cars waiting behind me!!” In frustration, the first driver leaned on his car’s horn, as if the sound would make the construction equipment disappear and along with it, the dozens of cars parked in thoughtless positions along narrow lanes.

“I guess we are just going to have to sit here then!!!” Everyone shouted and honked at once.

For the fifth or sixth time that day – they had lost count already – the local municipal workers laying down the city blocks of pipe laughed their heads off. “Boy I love laying down this pipe,” said one of the workers, lighting a cigarette and sitting back to watch the confusion. “It makes the foreigners crazy.”

“Let’s be sure to surprise them again tomorrow. Why don’t we set up our equipment, say, over there? That way we will block out that small dead end lane completely,” said his co-worker. “Be sure to put up a sign just written in any language but English. Only foreigners live down that street. It will make them really go nuts.”

“Great idea.” They laughed some more as the honking continued.

Sitting in one of the cars, an expatriate man was ready to explode from a combination of frustration and exhaustion. He had spent yet another sleepless night. The sound of jackhammers was permanently embedded in his brain. All around his house, new homes were being built. It seemed the minute one was finished, another one was going up. He was having nightmares involving scaffolding.

He had chosen his home specifically for its location on a quiet dead end street. Within one month, he was living in the midst of a permanent construction site. Cements trucks routinely blocked his driveway. Workers began at dawn and hammered away late into the night to meet a deadline that seemed years away. The stress of living with all the noise and mess was killing him. On this day, he just wanted to escape to the health club to work off some of the tension. And now he sat in his car, incapable of moving backward or forward. He looked wistfully at his gym bag on the seat beside him.

Suddenly, he saw an opportunity to move his car forward. Yes! he thought, I can do it! I can do it! Oh no!!! His left front end scraped the right tail of a car parked so badly and selfishly that as far as he was concerned, the car deserved to be hit. But before he could figure out what to do, he felt a crunch in his own back end.

He jumped out of his car to examine the damage and meet the person responsible, fists at the ready and mind working overtime to cram in all the invectives he planned to throw if verbal rather physical abuse fit the occasion.

He stopped dead when he saw the other driver getting out. It was his wife’s best friend.

"Oh, I'm so glad it's only you!" she said immediately, her relief running down her face in the form of teardrops. "I was terrified that someone was either going to throw a punch or swear their brains out at me." She raced over to him and kissed him on both cheeks.

"I'm far too civilized for that!" he said, calming himself down with deep breaths.

"Isn't this dreadful?" said the woman. "I would never have hit you if the man behind me hadn't been honking and pressuring me to move."

He knew she was right. It didn't lessen his anger any. He would have loved to at least yell at somebody. Now his hands were literally tied.

"How bad is your car?" she was asking him. "I know we have insurance for this."

Who cared about insurance? thought the man. It was the headache of getting the car fixed. His wife would be mad at him. He was mad at himself.

"Anybody planning to move these cars?" Another expatriate voice had arrived on the scene. "I can't believe this! What are you two doing here? Don't any of you use drivers anymore? They would know how to sort this out."

"I gave my driver the day off," said the first man. "That's how I got into this situation in the first place. You just don't know anymore where these construction sights are going to pop up. They are making me nuts."

"Well, my car is more or less moveable. Can I give you a ride somewhere? Where do you all live?"

They both named a part of the city that had been under construction as long as anyone could remember.

"Sorry. No way I am detouring around that mess. See you at the club one day soon."

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