

Woman in America

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Being a woman in America means
not being able to joke with
the guy in the liquor store
when you're buying your tampons, or dr. pepper, or cat food
because he might follow you home.

At best it's just the menacing beam of headlights behind your car,
turning when you turn
pausing at your house
and then the loud suggestion out the car window
which you ignore as you plan the best route from car to house door.

At worst he rapes you
(or, I suppose, at worst he rapes you then murders you,
but let's not even think of that)
while you kick and scream and shout and struggle
(because you're a well-read feminist who subscribes to *Signs*
and you've read Pauline Bart —
but this time it doesn't work).

And when he comes up for trial
(since, good victim that you are, you memorized
his face, his car
and left deep scratches on his back)
he'll plead you wanted it.

Because,
after all,
you smiled when he laughed at your joke.