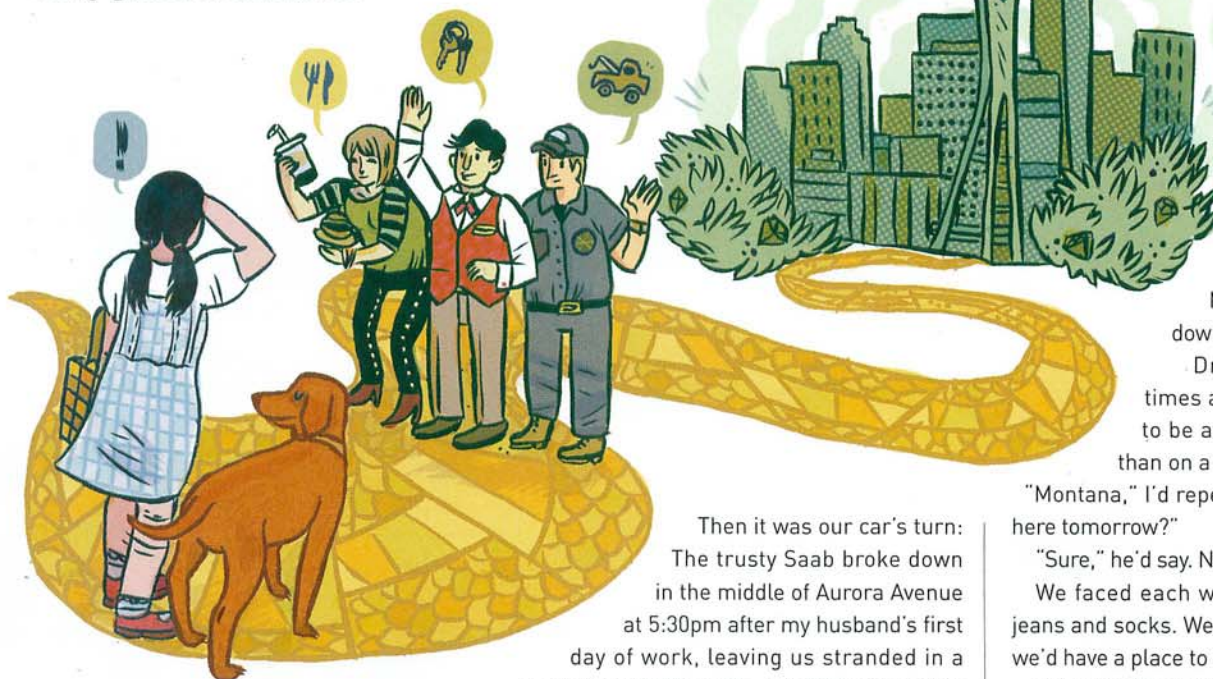


# Snubless in Seattle

What chilly reserve? What icy reception? Here's how big-hearted Seattle really greets newcomers.



**I**n the Cape Cod town where we lived before, being a newcomer would get you a gushing welcome. But as soon as we decided to move to Seattle the warnings started pouring in: Seattle is the exception to the rule about Westerners being friendlier than Easterners. Prepare for an initial deep freeze. For the first few years, you *will* feel unloved.

Terms like “chilly reception” and “passive-aggressive” flew at us. Was it the weather? “It’s that old Scandinavian reserve,” one veteran lamented. We packed our things and hoped my husband could prove his Swedish heritage.

From the moment we pulled into the driveway, Seattle gave us a beating; one unlikely incident after another made us feel marked by an unlucky charm. Our moving van took seven weeks to arrive—about how long the trip takes by bicycle, and five weeks longer than promised. Nearly 3,000 miles before reaching Seattle, Driver Dan got the truck stuck under a bridge in Manhattan. Then he broke down in Arizona and, I suspect, detoured to visit relatives somewhere. Maybe Buenos Aires.

Then it was our car’s turn: The trusty Saab broke down in the middle of Aurora Avenue at 5:30pm after my husband’s first day of work, leaving us stranded in a passive-aggressive sea. I started wishing the other drivers would swear and holler as they do in Boston, but they flashed quick, sweet smiles as they passed, pretending to feel sorry for us. I wanted to throw rocks at them.

A few days later, the same car got hit by a King County Metro bus. No one was injured, luckily, but the car was good and smashed. (Side note: It seems a bit unfair for a transportation system to have its own internal security force investigate accidents and its insurance system decide who’s at fault.)

Our dog had a rough go too. Each time we thought Driver Dan was about to arrive, we dropped her off at a kennel so she wouldn’t be underfoot while we moved in. The first time she caught kennel cough. Twice she came back with urinary tract infections. Outside the kennel, she met such total social rejection at every dog park that I began to question my parenting skills; Seattle dogs certainly seemed to live up to their city’s frosty reputation. Then she—a big Rhodesian ridgeback—got beat up by an Australian shepherd, necessitating a trip to the pet ER for ear surgery and seven

staples in her chest. (For non-dog people—are there any in Seattle?—this is roughly equivalent to a Microsoft intern taking down a Rat City Rollergirl.)

Driver Dan called a few times a week, always claiming to be a few hours away rather than on a South American joyride.

“Montana,” I’d repeat. “So maybe you’ll be here tomorrow?”

“Sure,” he’d say. Not yes or no, just “sure.”

We faced each week wearing the same jeans and socks. We ordered an armchair so we’d have a place to sit.

But throughout our ordeal, instead of blasting us with the cool, reserved air we’d heard they use to blow off newcomers, Seattleites made us feel as if we’d accidentally landed in Savannah. Neighbors materialized with necessities like cutting boards and pots and pans, then with more exotic gifts: homemade pesto, just-picked heirloom tomatoes, a gift certificate for a massage. A woman I’d met once created a go-to list of all the take-out places in the neighborhood, with careful directions on what to order. When she found out we hadn’t yet tried Red Mill, she showed up on a Monday afternoon with a cheeseburger deluxe and coffee milkshake.

Before I threw any rocks, some of those drivers passing on Aurora actually stopped to help push the Saab off the street, something unthinkable in Boston. When the tow truck finally arrived, instead of waving good-bye at the nearest repair shop, the driver insisted on schlepping us miles out of his way to his favorite Saab specialist, then drove us home and waited at the curb till we got in the door. And after the bus encounter, a nearby body

shop gave us more breaks, including the free loan of a dilapidated '84 Saab for a few weeks, just because we were new. The vet's office left voice mails asking how our fur-kid's wounds were healing.

One night, a new acquaintance invited me for a quick drink at Canlis. When I rattled into the covered driveway, the loaner's engine made a serious falling-apart noise. As I lurched toward an impeccably dressed man at the curb, I realized that valet parking is not optional at Canlis. I'd brought him

**I DROVE HOME IN THE RAIN, WONDERING IF THE VALETS AT CANLIS REGULARLY TOWELED DOWN THEIR CUSTOMERS' MUDDY DOGS.**

a car whose engine sounded like a prop plane and whose backseat was occupied by a slightly maimed, extremely muddy and smelly dog fresh from a walk in the pouring rain. The valet brushed aside my excuses as easily as I brushed the heating vent out of the droopy dashboard and onto the floor with my purse. And off they went, the impeccable valet, the broken heating vent, and my broken dog. On returning, I was shocked to find the vent replaced and doggo lounging in the front seat, completely clean and dry. I drove home in the rain, wondering if the valets at Canlis regularly toweled down their customers' muddy dogs.

In October, Driver Dan reported he was a day away—12 days in a row. The last time, he said he was actually in Seattle.

"Where are you?" I asked.

"Near the water," he replied icily. Our conversations had been getting tense.

"Thanks for being so specific," I said, but from the way his voice softened I knew he took it as a compliment. I smiled, realizing I was getting the Seattle knack for saying the meanest thing in the nicest possible way.

Then I forgave Driver Dan, and we smiled and bought him dinner when he finally showed up. Because if nothing else, Seattle's taught me that no matter how much people piss you off, giving them a warm welcome is the right thing to do. ✨

**Live it up!**

**CONCERTS  
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**Jonny Lang**  
Thursday, Aug 16th • 8pm

**Charlie Daniels Band**  
Saturday, Aug 18th • 8pm

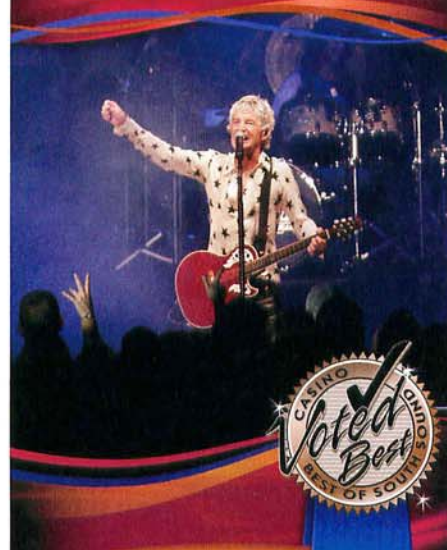
**Bill Cosby**  
Saturday, Sept 1st • 6:30pm & 9pm

**B.B. King & Etta James**  
Saturday, Sept 15th • 7:30pm

**Ron White**  
Saturday, Oct 27th • 7pm & 9:30pm

**Carlos Mencia**  
Friday, Nov 2nd • 7pm & 9:30pm

**Doobie Brothers**  
Friday, Nov 9th • 8pm




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