

# Hard and Fast

A love story

By: Jess Foster

TIME:  
Now.

SETTING:  
Roger's garage

CHARACTERS: (3M)

ROGER- 40's. Has a business rebuilding cars and a passion for restoring classics.

JOHN- 40's-50's. A lawyer.

PARKER- John's son. A 16-year-old boy about to receive his first car.

NOTE: The police scanner and the radio should be part of the soundscape of the shop as much as possible without interfering with the dialogue.

Don't feel pressure for the cars onstage to be fully realized. I love cars, but I know they're not easy to get onstage. In whatever form they take, they should always be a strong presence.

SCENE 1

Roger's shop: Messy and cluttered at first glance, but with a sense of organized disarray. ROGER (40's) is working on a car, which is half assembled (or disassembled depending how you look at things). He is greasy from the cars. There is another car next to that one with a sheet draped over it, hiding it from view. JOHN (late 40's) enters, dressed in a collared shirt, tie and slacks. He looks very put together, important and out of place in this garage. ROGER is listening to the radio and does not react to the sound of JOHN entering.

Hello?

JOHN

*(Without looking up.)*  
Hi there. What can I do you for?

ROGER

Are you Roger?

JOHN

Last time I checked.

ROGER

You're the "R", where's the "M"?

JOHN

Excuse me?

ROGER

The sign says R&M Auto.

JOHN

The "M" was lazy. Screwed me over on a paint job. I tied him up and threw him out back with the parts cars.

ROGER

How long has he...

JOHN

ROGER

Going on a couple weeks.

JOHN

A couple...weeks?

Roger stops, wipes his hands off on a rag.

ROGER

I'm just fucking with you. There never was an "M".

JOHN

Oh...right...

ROGER

It sounds better on the sign to have two letters, don't you think? No one wants to come to a place called "R" Auto. Sounds like some loser running the garage by himself.

Roger walks over to John and shakes his hand.

ROGER

I'm Roger. Sole proprietor of R&M Auto. Nice to meet you.

JOHN

Do you greet all your customers that way?

ROGER

No. Sometimes I pretend I have tourette's, or I'm schizophrenic, or that I have Narcolepsy. That one's great. I'll be in the middle of talking to someone and then...  
*(He drops his head on his chest and snores. Lifts his head and starts laughing.)*  
You'd be surprised how long some people stand there not saying anything.

JOHN

I can imagine.

ROGER

So... I'm sorry, I don't think I caught your name.

JOHN

John. John Bridges.

ROGER

John Bridges...where've I heard that name...?

JOHN

I'm in the papers a lot. I work on high profile cases.

ROGER

A lawyer. Do you own your own firm?

JOHN

I'm one of the partners.

ROGER

Which one?

JOHN

Steere, Bridges and Wilhelm.

ROGER

Ahhh. So we both have our names on a sign. Law offices and car shops. Both are named after people, and need more than one to sound official.

JOHN

Well, technically you only have your first initial.

ROGER

You must make a good lawyer.

Pause.

JOHN

I came to see about a car.

ROGER

What kind of car? We got standard cars, compacts, SUV's... You see anything you like out front?

JOHN

Well...not really...

ROGER

It's all shit, isn't it? I don't like any of it either, to tell you the truth. I just put that stuff up by the road to make it look like I do something with my time.

JOHN

It's not bad, just...

ROGER

Not what you're looking for. I get it. Not a problem. Now what we normally do is you tell me what you want, I go to an auction and find a nice wreck, buy it, bring it back here and fix it up just the way you like. You know what you're looking for yet?

JOHN

I have an idea.

ROGER

You don't seem like the kind of guy who buys a rebuilt car.

JOHN

It's for my son. He's turning 16.

ROGER

Ahhh. First set of wheels.

JOHN

Can't get the feeling of your first car back.

ROGER

And I've built my life trying. You don't want to buy him a nice little Jetta down at the dealership? Hell, they even have a ton of used models if you're worried about spoiling him.

JOHN

I want it to be a little more special.

ROGER

So you came to a salvage yard.

JOHN

Never know what will turn up, right?

ROGER

*(Eyeing him, suspicious.)*

I'm flattered you came to me, but I doubt I'm gonna have what you're looking for.

JOHN

Do you mind if I look around?

ROGER

You can look at whatever you like. I just don't want to sell you something that isn't right. I don't swindle people. I want them to love what they drive.

JOHN

I appreciate it.

ROGER starts working with something on his workbench. JOHN walks around,

pretending to look as he makes his way to a car covered by a sheet. He looks around and then lifts the corner of the sheet.

JOHN

This is nice.

ROGER rips the sheet out of his hand, flustered. His cool has melted away.

ROGER

That isn't for sale.

JOHN

You working on it for someone?

ROGER

It isn't for work. It's a hobby.

JOHN

What's the difference?

ROGER

When I'm done restoring it, I keep it.

JOHN

You have any more like this?

ROGER

*(Roger grunts. "Yeah idiot, I have all kinds of limited edition Austin Healy's just sitting out back.)*

Not on hand.

JOHN

Could you get one?

ROGER

They're...one that's in good condition is hard to come by.

JOHN

And here you are with one.

ROGER

I've kept my eyes open for 30 years.

JOHN

I'd be willing to put in extra money for something of value.

ROGER

*(Patronizing.)*

Do you know what that is?

JOHN

It looked like a 3000 Austin Healey. '59 or '60. I didn't get a good look at the grill.

Pause.

ROGER

So that's why you're here.

John nods.

ROGER

Sorry to have wasted your time.

JOHN

No room for negotiating?

ROGER

Not on that one.

JOHN

What if I find another?

ROGER

Then I'd say you should buy a lottery ticket instead of talking to me.

JOHN

You can find anything in this world if you look hard enough. Leave that part to me. Let's keep it hypothetical if you want.

ROGER

Half the time you get into one of these cars and find more problems than you were looking for. Some of them weren't taken care of very well... Half of them were found rotting in barns. Even if you have it shipped from California, it could have lived up north for a while with all that road salt eating away at the frame. That's not to mention that the damn wiring's all backwards on these British cars. When I bought this one the horn went off every time I closed the door. You can't just throw money at a restoration and expect that to take care of your problems.

JOHN

Then I guess it's important to find a guy who knows what he's doing.

ROGER

What makes you think you could find another one so easily?

JOHN

I only need one.

ROGER

There's no way you're getting this one. I didn't become an expert on British car restoration to let my dream car get away.

JOHN

We all have a price on our dreams.

Pause.

ROGER

If it's for your son you should save yourself the trouble and get a kit car.

JOHN

Excuse me?

ROGER

It looks a lot like the real ones when you're done. And you can guarantee the parts won't have any rust or wear, plus it will save you quite a bit of money.

JOHN

I'm not looking to spend that amount of money on a replica.

ROGER

It's not like it's fake. It's a real car. Perfect for a boy who wants to look impressive.

JOHN

Would other people know it was a kit car?

ROGER

Depends how well they know cars.

JOHN

Would you drive one?

ROGER

No.

JOHN

I'm interested in authenticity. I can't believe in something if deep down I know it's fake.

ROGER

You should do some research. Really figure out what you want. A car like this...it's a lot of money and time for something you like the idea of.

JOHN

I want something that can't be confused with every other car in the grocery store parking lot.

ROGER

If that's your only problem we can paint one of these cars orange.

JOHN

I'm looking for something with character.

ROGER

*(Knowingly.)*

You can't find character in cars today.

JOHN

I drive a classic myself.

ROGER

What's that?

JOHN

'48 Fleetline.

ROGER

Chevy man...

JOHN

Only for classics. The stuff they make now... well everything they make now is crap. Plastic bumpers, plastic grill...

ROGER

Lifeless headlights...

JOHN

They make tires better, I'll give them that. But no character. You can see the way these things were designed to roll off the assembly lines—metal all bent to look the same. You can feel the forced design, the calculation.

ROGER

It's like they forgot people would be sitting inside, driving through their lives.

JOHN

Except for the extra cup holders.

ROGER laughs. Pause.

ROGER

Is this something your son wants?

JOHN

I think he'll love it.

ROGER

But does he *want* it?

JOHN

*(Chuckles.)*

He's a teenage boy. Of course he wants a cool car.

ROGER stares, not amused.

JOHN

I'm not sure what you're asking.

ROGER

Why this car? There are other classics that are easier to come by.

JOHN

Well...uh, I had one. When I was a kid. And I loved it, so I guess I'm trying to relive my childhood through my son. Sounds horrible, I know.

ROGER

Does he even know what an Austin Healey is?

JOHN

He's heard me talk about it enough.

ROGER

Why don't you buy it for yourself?

JOHN

There's nothing more pathetic than a man stuck in the past.

ROGER

I thought we all got one mid-life crisis.

JOHN

I've moved on. Not enough hair left for the wind to blow through.

ROGER

What makes you think he even wants a Healy?

JOHN

What teenager wouldn't?

ROGER

What makes you think he would respect it? How do you know if he'll really appreciate what he's getting?

JOHN

Just because he's a young man doesn't mean he approaches everything in life with reckless abandon. We were both young once. I treated a lot of things in my life like shit: girlfriends, family, teachers. But don't you remember the relationship you had with your car? That's sacred.

ROGER

For our generation it was. I'm not sure it's the same any more. Boys these days can grow-up without ever having grease on their hands. Has your son ever looked under the hood of a car?

JOHN

Sure.

ROGER

Besides looking under propped hoods at car shows?

JOHN

I'm not sure he's even been to a...

ROGER

Has he ever *touched* anything under there or just looked with his hands behind his back?

JOHN

What are you...?

ROGER

Could he even change his own tire if he got a flat? Or would he call AAA?

JOHN

He hasn't had to before, but I'm sure he *could*...

ROGER

If he hasn't done it, then he doesn't know the first thing about cars. How do you expect me to put something so special in the hands of someone who would be oblivious to what he has?

Pause.

JOHN

How often do you sell a car around here?

ROGER

Often enough to keep my doors open.

JOHN

Probably not in this economy. I bet it's been awhile, huh?

*ROGER stares at him.*

JOHN

I have money, you have car expertise. The only difference is, I can probably walk out that door and find another grease monkey, but you don't know when the next buyer will come along. Especially not one who's willing to open his wallet this wide.

ROGER

You wouldn't find anyone as good.

JOHN

No. I'm sure I wouldn't.

ROGER

You need this car.

JOHN

Oh, there's always one more popping up somewhere. Isn't that the type of story people like you live for? One more of it's kind just when they were thought to all be accounted for? But his birthday is in a couple weeks... It'd certainly make my life easier if I didn't have to wait. I'm willing to pay for that convenience.

ROGER

I'm sorry. I've waited so long to get one...

JOHN

Men like you have a garage full of car fantasies. Always with a few going at once. Now that you scored this one, the high's over and you'll be ready to move to the next soon. Come on, times are slow, tax season's here... Let me help. I can finance your mortgage and the next five dream cars.

Pause.

ROGER

You'll pay up front.

JOHN

Always do.

ROGER

And it's non-refundable.

JOHN

If you complete the job.

ROGER

But I have a condition.

I can't, in good conscience, hand over a car to a boy who doesn't know anything about cars past upholstery and shift knobs. What's your son's name?

JOHN

Parker.

ROGER

Tell Parker he has to come to the shop and help me finish restoring this.

JOHN

You want my son to...what? Do your work for you?

ROGER

I could finish this faster working by myself. I'm offering you a double service. If he's going to drive a Healey, he needs to learn a few things about it first.

JOHN

I don't know...he's involved in quite a lot already. His mother's worried that he might be over-committed.

ROGER

If he can't find the time to learn it, doesn't have the right to drive it.

JOHN

If he doesn't agree?

ROGER

Then the deal's off. Same if he punks out and quits. Classic cars are finicky. Either you're in it for the long haul or you're not.

JOHN

I'll have to talk to him.

ROGER

Take your time. It's a commitment. And if it doesn't work out, you can still use the kit car as a fall back.

JOHN

Yeah. Thanks.

JOHN exits.

SCENE 2

John's house. Night. PARKER is sitting on a couch surrounded by torn wrapping paper and boxes. There are new sneakers, shirts, a basketball, video game console, etc. surrounding the area. JOHN enters and sits next to him.

JOHN

Did you have a good birthday?

PARKER

I could have done without mom trying to make us wear party hats. But, yeah, it was pretty good.

JOHN

Every mother wishes she could keep her little boy young. Dads on the other hand, we want to help our sons grow up to be young men.

PARKER

Dad...

JOHN

Don't worry. This isn't one of our talks.

JOHN hands him a wrapped shoebox size present.

JOHN

You haven't gotten everything you wanted yet, have you?

PARKER looks at him excitedly, grabs the present and tears it open. HE sits looking in the box, disappointed and confused.

PARKER

What's this?

JOHN

A car!

PARKER

No, it's a picture of a car. With a question mark. Is it on back order or something?

JOHN

Not exactly. Do you know what this is?

PARKER

Um...no.

JOHN

*(With bravado)*

It's an Austin Healey. Remember, my stories about the one I had...?

PARKER

You bought me a used car?!

JOHN

It's not *used* Parker. It's a classic.

PARKER

But it's been driven by other people.

JOHN

Yes.

PARKER

*(Dryly.)*

Awesome.

JOHN

It is *awesome*. It's low to the ground, has manual steering, accelerates around corners...

PARKER looks unimpressed.

JOHN

Even if you don't know the features, any idiot can see that it's a *convertible*.

PARKER

Yeah, I know.

PARKER examines the picture.

PARKER

You had one?

JOHN

When I was 18. My first car. You know, besides driving my parent's. This one was mine. Had to work hard for a couple years to buy it. You better believe grandpa didn't give me a dollar towards more than the floor mats.

PARKER

Didn't you, um...not have many girlfriends in high school.

JOHN

I had a lot more after I bought this car if that's what you're getting at. But forget about the girls. Sitting that low while you're cruising with the top down...there's nothing like it. Cars like this, they only gain value as they get older and there are fewer of them around. A lot of kids in your school probably don't know what this is.

PARKER

It's cool.

JOHN

Really? You like it?

PARKER

Yeah. I just hadn't...seen one I guess.

JOHN

You're going to love it. I swear. I remember the first time I drove mine... It was like I couldn't go back to other cars after that.

PARKER

Why'd you get rid of it?

*John looks confused.*

PARKER

You said you loved it and they only gain more value...

JOHN

Certain cars you grow out of. Can you picture me driving a car like that now?

PARKER

*(Shakes his head.)*

Does that mean you became less fun?

JOHN

Is that a question you want to ask the man buying you a car?

PARKER

When can I see it?

JOHN

Well...it's at the shop. Being finished.

PARKER

When will it be done?

JOHN

...that partially depends on you.

PARKER

What does that mean?

JOHN

These cars are very hard to come by. Even more difficult to restore. I found a man knows these British sports cars inside and out. One of the best in the country.

PARKER

So?

JOHN

So, he has it partially restored.

PARKER

And when will it be complete?

JOHN

A couple months. Provided you work on it with him.

PARKER

What?!

JOHN

He's a little... overly attached to his cars. He would only sell it to me with the stipulation that you come in and work on it with him. To learn the value of the car before you own it.

PARKER

And you went for that?

JOHN

It was the best I could do. You're lucky he gave it up at all.

PARKER

The best you could do was volunteering your son for slave labor?

JOHN

It will be a small amount of labor, Parker. It might be good for you.

PARKER

When would I even go over there? Mom won't let me join any more extra-curriculars because she's afraid it will cut into my homework time.

JOHN

You could do it on the weekends without it interfering with your studies. You have plenty of time now that basketball's over.

PARKER

Yeah, plenty of time to do things I want!

PARKER gets up and starts looking around.

PARKER

Where's mom?

JOHN

She's not here.

PARKER

Why not? Where is she?

JOHN

She stepped out. She thought this should be a father/son moment.

PARKER

So she thought this was a stupid idea too.

JOHN

No, she knew you'd throw a fit and didn't want to deal with it.

PARKER

Well she was right! I thought I was getting an actual car for my birthday and instead I'm getting this second hand clunker that I have to give up my weekends for!

JOHN

Stop it, Parker. I'm not going to put up with your tantrums. You don't like the car? Fine. We'll go shopping and you can pick out whatever you want from a lot that is filled with hundreds like it. I just thought I'd give you a chance to stand out.

*(Pause.)*

Any little boy can get his license and drive his mother's SUV. It takes a real *man* to own a car like this. It takes even more of a man to be able to work on it.

PARKER

You bought your car finished.

JOHN

I worked on them when I was your age. When you get a job you can pay someone else to do it for you. Until then...

PARKER

I have to do it myself.

JOHN

He's going to teach you.

Pause.

PARKER

When do I have to decide?

JOHN

Whenever you want. I just don't know how long he'll hold it for you.

Pause.

PARKER

Can I check it out first?

JOHN

I wouldn't be too fickle if I were you. He didn't want to sell the car to begin with. He could change his mind if you become a pain.

PARKER

I'll risk it.

JOHN

I'll see what I can arrange.

Lights down.

SCENE 3

Roger's garage. ROGER enters and flicks on the lights. He greets the cars.

ROGER

Good morning ladies.

ROGER walks around the rest of the shop, turning on shop lights, preparing for the day. This is his routine. He gets into his shop overalls.

ROGER

Which one of you would like attention today?

*(Looking at the exposed car.)*

Should we go with business...

*(Looking at the sheet covered car.)*

Or pleasure.

He pauses, weighing the options, then sighs. He lifts the sheet.

ROGER

I'm sorry, I have a deadline. You'll have to wait another day.

He turns on a police scanner.

ROGER

Let's see what's going on in the world.

He turns a radio on. It plays behind the crackling of the police scanner. It's playing "Take it Easy" by the Eagles. Roger joins.

ROGER

*(Singing.)*

Well I'm running down the road trying to loosen my load, I got a world of trouble on my mind. Lookin' for a lover who won't blow my cover, she's so hard to find. Take it easy. Take it easy.

PARKER enters dressed in nice jeans and a button up. He shouts above the music.

PARKER

Hello? Mr. Malone?

ROGER is startled. He quickly walks over to the radio and turns it off.

ROGER

You must be Parker.  
It's nice to...

The scanner erupts in a message calling units. ROGER walks over to the scanner and turns it down.

ROGER

Sorry, I like to keep up on my current events.

PARKER

That's the news?

ROGER

It's better than the news. Events as they happen. And with less of that commentary bullshit.

PARKER

*(Looking at the radio.)*

You have a lot going on in here.

ROGER

Even the best news can use a little music. I'm Roger.

ROGER takes off his glove and shakes hands with PARKER.

ROGER

I'm glad to see your dad at least taught you how to shake hands. Did he tell you what this is all about?

PARKER

I guess.

ROGER

You guess or he did?

PARKER

I unwrapped a present for my birthday and it was a picture of a convertible with a question mark over it. I'm the only kid at my school whose parents gave him a job for his birthday.

ROGER

He's doing you a favor. A boy shouldn't grow up without learning a few things about cars.

PARKER

I guess.

ROGER

You sure guess a lot. You can't be indecisive every time you speak or people won't take you seriously. If you don't know what you want to say then just don't say it. You listening?

PARKER

Yes, sir.

ROGER

*(Chuckles)*

Sir? I appreciate the show of respect, but we're in a garage. We're all men here.

PARKER

I'm sorry.

ROGER

So, your dad said you wanted to check the situation out. How am I doing?

PARKER

Okay... I thought if I saw the car first...

ROGER

What do you know about the car?

PARKER

Just what my dad told me. He said that he used to have one and it sounded pretty sweet. The way they accelerate around turns, the sound of the engine...

ROGER

The dings on your windshield from low flying rocks, the way the top gets stuck every time you try to put it up in the rain... It's like every relationship, I guess. It has its ups and downs.

PARKER

As long as its not as needy as all the girls at my school.

ROGER

*(Chuckles.)*  
Worse.

PARKER

*(Groans)*  
Seriously?

ROGER

But I'll give it to you that sixteen-year-old girls are pretty high on the list.

ROGER looks at PARKER.

ROGER

You headed to a party after this?

PARKER

No...

ROGER

Why you dressed like you are?

PARKER

This is how I dress.

ROGER

Well you don't have to dress up for me. You have anything else you can wear?

PARKER

Not with me.

ROGER

Hang on, I think I have an old pair of overalls that might fit you.

PARKER

I didn't think we'd start today. I haven't made my decision yet...

ROGER ignores him and keeps digging for the overalls.

ROGER

You can't wear nice clothes in a garage. This place is all about tearing things apart and getting dirty.

PARKER

I thought we were putting things back together.

ROGER

Eventually. You don't get to that step for a while.

ROGER leads him to the other car.

ROGER

Like right now I'm taking this car apart so I can reupholster it. Sounds easy enough, but you have to take off every handle, door panel and cup holder first.

PARKER

What happened to the inside?

ROGER

Part accident, part neglectful owners. Plus, I think they were smokers. Now, I could take the time to clean it, but if I'm going to put in that much effort I might as well do it over. After that we'll strip down the outside, Bondo all the dents and repaint it. It'll look as good as new.

PARKER

If you have to re-do everything why buy it in the first place? It sounds like it would be easier to make a car from scratch.

ROGER

Ahhh, well that's where my gift comes into play.

PARKER

What is it?

ROGER

I can pull out dents with my mind.

PARKER

Uhhh...

ROGER

Just kidding. People think I'm good at this because I know a lot about fixing cars, but the real reason is because I know what to buy. You have to be able to see value in the wreckage.

PARKER picks up a mangled piece of the car and looks at it.

PARKER

How do you do that?

ROGER

Insurance companies total these cars out because they go by mechanic's standards. Me, I'm not a mechanic. I don't fix cars, I rebuild them. If you're rebuilding you get to do things the way they should be done, instead of having to follow the book on how you're *supposed* to do everything.

ROGER points to a big dent.

ROGER

See this? It's a pretty huge dent, takes up the whole panel. You bring this to a shop and they're going to tell you that you need to replace it. They'll also notice the panel next to it that has a dent as big as a marble, tell you to replace that too s'long as you have it in there. Replacing things like that takes a lot of money. Then you have someone like me who says, "hell no, I'm not replacing that panel. I'll hammer that sucker out, slap some Bondo on it, and we're good to go."

PARKER

What's "Bondo"....?

ROGER

It's like putty. You fill holes with it, sand it down and paint it up without ever being able to tell that anything's wrong with the car body.

PARKER

So you can just take short cuts?

ROGER

It's not like I'm selling anyone a bad product, though. I'm meticulous. If anything, the car's in better condition leaving my place than it was leaving the assembly line.

PARKER

What if you don't know how to fix something?

ROGER

Stupid question. I know how to fix everything.

Pause. PARKER's uncomfortable.

ROGER

Okay, there might be a couple things I don't know, but that's not the issue. I look for cars that have the kind of problems I'm best at fixing. The stuff that I'm not so hot at fixing, or that is just a pain in the ass, I try to avoid. Take this car here. I already told you how I have to tear it all apart, and it undeniably looks like a piece of shit. So why do you think I bought it?

PARKER

You like a challenge?

ROGER

Not really. This is exactly the kind of car I'm looking for when I go to an auction.

PARKER looks closer.

PARKER

Well...the tires look okay.

ROGER

Yeah, that will save me a couple hundred dollars. What else?

PARKER

I don't know. Is the air freshener still good?

ROGER

What makes those tires valuable?

PARKER

Um...

ROGER

A little thing we like to call the engine. Come here.

ROGER opens the hood.

ROGER

Your dad told me you've seen one of these before.

PARKER

Yeah...

ROGER

What do you see?

PARKER

I don't know. It all looks pretty normal to me...

ROGER

Exactly. The engine didn't get busted up in the crash. Which would you rather mess with: cosmetic stains and dings or every piece of this engine?

PARKER

Stains and dings.

ROGER

Right. The less I have to mess with a car's engine, the more time and money I save rebuilding it. As it is, I'll have to change the oil and clean it up a little, but there aren't any real problems. So I look for a good engine, low mileage and a few bumps and bruises that haven't damaged the frame.

PARKER

I can't imagine spending thousands of dollars for something that looks so gross.

ROGER

Not many people can. That leaves it to people like me to benefit from seeing the potential in something that might not be pretty to look at. Why don't you get into those overalls and you can get to work?

PARKER

We're going to do work already?

ROGER

I thought we might. Or did you just come for the tour?

PARKER

I just didn't think we'd start today.

ROGER

We probably should if you want a car to drive.

PARKER

What are we starting with?

ROGER

I was thinking we'd change the oil on this.

Points to damaged car. Parker points to the Healey covered by a sheet.

PARKER

I thought I was here to work on that car.

ROGER

You think I'm going to let you touch that prize car over there, before you've even gotten your hands dirty with another one?

PARKER

Yeah...

ROGER

You have a lot to learn before that happens.

PARKER

Do I at least get to look under the sheet first?

ROGER

Probably not a good idea. Once you see a car like that, it's hard to concentrate on anything else. You'll get a look at her soon enough. Just have to learn a few things with this beat up one first.

PARKER looks at the covered car and then starts to put on his overalls.

ROGER

Don't worry about it. We'll be working on that one before you know it.

SCENE 4

Roger's garage It's dark. We hear a person enter. ROGER flips on the fluorescent lights that gradually warm and light up the garage with an eerie glow. He walks over to the sheet and lifts it up, revealing the beautiful front of an Austin Healey.

ROGER

I'm sorry I have to keep you under this sheet all the time. I just...have an assistant helping me around the place. His name's Parker. Sweet kid. Young. Boy does he know *nothing* about cars.

*(Laughs to himself.)*

He's going to take a lot of work. But you'll like him, I think.

Deciding to change the subject.

You look a little dull.

He goes over to the workbench and returns with a duster, container of wax and a cloth. He starts dusting the car.

ROGER

I can never figure out how you get so dusty sitting under this cloth. I'd get you a fancy one with elastics around the bottom, but I don't want something too tight. You need a little room to breathe, right?

*(Referring to the rest of the cloth.)*

May I?

He peels back the rest of the sheet slowly, seductively as he continues dusting the newly uncovered parts. He eventually takes off the entire sheet.

ROGER

You're still as beautiful as the day I bought you. With a few improvements and coat of paint from me of course. We'll shine you right up and you'll feel like new.

He gets the can of wax and starts putting it on the front grill in careful circles.

ROGER

At least you haven't been eating any tar or bugs staying inside here. I can't wait to get you out on the road, though.

He buffs out the wax on the grill and front hood.

ROGER

There. Now you have a nice, healthy shine.

*(Pause.)*

If I didn't know any better I would say you're glowing.

He caresses the side of the headlight. The POLICE SCANNER starts to crackle.

POLICE SCANNER

Dispatch to all local units, we have an 11-80 reported at 379 Robinson Street. Fire and emergency units are needed at the scene immediately for an 11-80. We have a rollover on 379 Robinson Street.

ROGER pauses.

ROGER

Business is always calling.

ROGER starts to pull the sheet up over the car.

ROGER

You look beautiful.

He finishes pulling the sheet over the car and exits.

SCENE 5

Roger's garage. There is a charred car in place of the other one that was there before. ROGER is working around the shop and singing along to "December 1963" by the The Four Seasons. PARKER enters wearing semi-worn clothes.

ROGER

Hey, Parker. Come on in.  
I got us a new car yesterday.

PARKER looks at the charred frame.

PARKER

Where's the other one?

ROGER

Sent it off to get painted. I have a guy down the road does it cheaper than I can. Plus it saves me the headache. Let's get to work cleaning out this one.

PARKER

What happened to it?

ROGER

The scanner reported that it was a roll over...that caught on fire. They had to call for three fire trucks to put it out. I got dibs for them to bring it here after the insurance company officially totaled it.

PARKER

It's a mess.

ROGER

I'll have to take a look at the engine to see if it's worth saving. We'll probably end up using this one for parts.

PARKER puts on a pair of gloves and tentatively starts removing charred items from the car. A mix of personal items and trash.

PARKER

Did anyone die in this crash?

ROGER

I don't ask. It's not information I want to know.

PARKER

I feel like I'm digging through a grave.

ROGER

You're digging through a corpse. People aren't the only things that die in crashes.

PARKER

It's creepy to think about.

ROGER

Just part of the business. Besides, if this car didn't get wrecked, we wouldn't have the parts to save the other one we're working on.

PARKER

*(Chuckles)*

Do cars have to declare if they're organ donors?

ROGER

*(Serious)*

All cars will give whatever parts they can to complete another one.

Pause.

PARKER

What should we call this one?

ROGER

You want to give it a name right before you rip out its parts and give them to other cars?

PARKER

Why not?

ROGER

You shouldn't name things that aren't going to stay around for long. I don't want to be looking for an odometer and have you refuse to take it out of that one because you're attached.

PARKER

The odometer's cracked.

ROGER

You know what I mean.

PARKER

Do you name your cars?

ROGER

Not the ones I'm planning to sell. It's up to the new owners to pick out a name after it's theirs.

PARKER

Do you name the cars you restore, then?

ROGER

Sure. Some that are...special. If I'm going to keep them.

PARKER walks over to where the Austin-Healey is covered.

PARKER

I guess that means I get to name this one...

ROGER

I guess. Get back to work.

PARKER goes back to where he was working.

PARKER

*(Pause.)*

How do you come up with names?

ROGER

I don't know. How do people name anything?

PARKER

Baby name books? The internet?

ROGER

It usually comes to me after I've been working on it for a while and can picture what the car's going to be.

PARKER

When does that usually...?

ROGER

It's not like I set out to name any of them. It's just that once you reach a certain...emotional connection with one it becomes more than a make and model.

There comes a point where the car is calling out for a name and it tells you what it is. Not like I'm picking one for it. More like it's introducing itself.

Pause.

ROGER

Chevy Fleetline, right?

PARKER

*(Nods.)*  
Sage green.

ROGER

Big car.

PARKER

Needs to fit his ego.

ROGER

*(Amused.)*  
Yeah?

PARKER

Sorry, I... He's just my dad, you know?

ROGER

I gotcha.

PARKER

He always thinks he's right. Always has to get his way...

ROGER

It's hard to listen to your own dad, even if he is right. They want you to avoid their mistakes and you want to find your own way.

PARKER

Right! That's how it was with this car. My dad wants me to have it so bad that I almost don't want it at all. I know that makes me sound like a brat.

ROGER

I was the same way with my dad until he passed. Then I wished I had listened.

PARKER

Was he a car guy?

ROGER

Typewriters. But still, smart guy.

PARKER

My dad's smart too.

ROGER

Doesn't make 'em perfect. It's okay to want to figure out things on your own.

PARKER

Yeah, like he likes those big, chunky cars, but I'm more into the idea of Austin Healeys. An old car that can take its top down and go fast.

ROGER

*(Musing.)*

But there's something to be said for a big car that can handle its weight. Fleetlines are majestic; regal. The way the fenders curve around, nice and large...

*(Stopping himself.)*

They're not as boring as they sound. But you do have to be a certain kind of guy to pull off owning one of those.

PARKER

Leave it to my dad.

ROGER

How long'd it take him to restore it?

PARKER

Oh, he didn't do any of the work.

ROGER

How long did it take everyone *else* to restore it?

PARKER

I don't know. He bought it this way. Already finished.

ROGER

Oh. Sorry, I... I'm not around many guys who buy a car that's turn-key ready. Usually it's about the satisfaction of doing the work...making it exactly what you want.

PARKER

I guess it was already the way he wanted it. It's a pretty car.

ROGER

Maybe you can show it to me sometime.

PARKER

You can just walk in. It's not like my dad ever locks the garage.

ROGER

I wouldn't just...

PARKER

I was kidding. I'll show you.

ROGER

*(Nervous laughter.)*

Right. Sounds good.

*(Changes topics)*

How're you coming with the clean out?

PARKER

Starting to get past the really charred parts to the kind of charred parts.

ROGER

Okay, just let me know when you're finished.

*(To himself, thinking.)*

Fiona...

Pause. PARKER looks at the sheet covered Austin Healey.

PARKER

If I'm going to think of a name, you're going to have to let me see it at some point.

ROGER

Huh?

PARKER

The Healey.

ROGER

You mean if you're going to *hear* its name.

PARKER

Right. So? When do you think that will be?

ROGER

When you're ready.

PARKER

Do you have anything more substantial to go by, Mr. Miyagi?

Who?

ROGER

The sensei from *Karate Kid*? You act like you're an old sage teaching me the sacred ways of car restoration.

PARKER

Well, I am.

ROGER

When will I be "ready"?

PARKER

When you know enough about cars to not ruin that one.

ROGER

(*Karate student*)  
But you have already taught me so much, esteemed one.

PARKER

Don't be a smartass. You've learned a lot, but you didn't even know what a drive shaft was before you came to me.

ROGER

But you have to admit I've picked up on it quickly. Go ahead, quiz me.

PARKER

I don't need to quiz you.

ROGER

Just ask me a few questions.

PARKER

It's not about questions...

ROGER

What's a carburetor? How many spark plugs does a 4 cylinder engine have?

PARKER

(*Outburst.*)  
There are skills you can't be quizzed on.

Pause.

PARKER

Okay, it was just an idea...

ROGER

Sorry, it's just...It's not all about what you *know*. There's a certain level of intuition involved.

*(Pause.)*

You've made good progress in here. I'm sure you'll be ready soon. I just...don't want us to get ahead of ourselves. Right?

PARKER

I guess.

Lights down.

## SCENE 6

Roger's garage, night. Roger is pacing around the garage, trying to blow off steam. Finally, he turns to the Healy and starts to speak. A confession:

ROGER

I know we haven't known each other that long, but you've been really good to me. You're a great listener and I really love hanging out with you. But, I haven't been completely honest with you. The thing is, this kid Parker? He's not just here because he likes cars. You could probably tell that from the second he walked in here. Kid barely knows how to hold a wrench. He's here because I made a deal. That he can have you if he helps me work on you. I never really thought he could go through with it, a kid like him that's used to dressing in polo shirts and having his parents pave every road before it gets hard. And now...I'm losing the gamble.

I know I shouldn't just make deals about you as though you're just some kind of object, but... It's a lot of money. Not that that's what it's all about or anything, but I really *need* it. I have bankers making house calls and I can only sweet talk them for so long before they just want you to hand over a check.

I want you to know that I really like you. I've been looking for a car like you my whole life and now that you're here...I have to give you up. Maybe the timing was wrong, you know? I really hope you understand. At the end of the day it's all just business. It has to be.

He starts to walk away, then stops short.

ROGER

What?

Audra, is it? That's a beautiful name.

I like being with you too, Audra.

I don't see any reason why we can't enjoy the time we have left together.

ROGER smiles.

SCENE 7

The kitchen of John's house. PARKER is sitting at the counter reading car magazines. JOHN is quickly making breakfast.

JOHN

You sure you don't want eggs? I can make extra.

PARKER

No thanks. I made my own breakfast.

JOHN

Coffee?

PARKER

And chips.

JOHN

Your mother will kill you if she finds out.

PARKER

Mom doesn't care what I eat.

JOHN

Well, I do then. Eat something healthy once in a while, okay?

PARKER

Uh huh.

Pause. Parker reads.

PARKER

Hey dad, what made you want to get a Chevy Fleetline? They don't go very fast do they?

JOHN

With these new engines they go a lot faster than they used to. But it wouldn't do well in a race.

PARKER

Why'd you get it then? It's kind of weird to go from an Austin Healey to that.

JOHN

There were plenty of cars in between. I guess I just changed over time. Got married, had a kid, important job... Can you imagine me pulling up to the courthouse in that?

PARKER

It would be pretty badass.

JOHN

Probably wouldn't help my case, though. It's stately. When it first came out all the top businessmen were driving them. And now it's rare. Not the kind of car that blends into the crowd.

PARKER

Didn't you say I'd stand out in the Healy?

JOHN

Your mother will only let me have so many cars. Maybe I'll borrow it sometimes.

PARKER

You have to take Roger's training course first. So you decided that a Fleetline's what you wanted and you went out and found one?

JOHN

I was at a car show, remember?

PARKER

You went to car shows?

JOHN

I used to go all the time.

PARKER

You never brought me to any.

JOHN

I guess it was something I did with the guys. No children, grab a couple drinks after kind of thing. So I was there with some guys I knew from work. I'd always admired Fleetlines, but the desire became immediate when I saw this one at the show. It was everything I had pictured owning. The owner wasn't even looking to sell, but if you offer the right price you can drive it home that night.

PARKER

You didn't ever consider finding one and restoring it?

JOHN

I don't have time for that. And even if I did, I never could have made it look the way this guy did.

PARKER

But you could have found one and paid people to restore it for you just the way you like.

JOHN

I guess I wasn't overly interested in owning one until I saw what I wanted. Why are you asking so many questions about the Fleetline?

PARKER

I'm working in the garage every weekend in order to learn to appreciate cars, right? It made me wonder what made you like this one, that's all. Everyone has a different kind of car that calls to them.

JOHN

*(Chuckles.)*

I liked the car and decided I wanted to own it. I wouldn't say we had a spiritual connection. How are things going over there? Making progress?

PARKER

Last weekend I had to go through this car that had caught on fire. There was all this burnt up gross stuff inside. It was awesome.

JOHN

Why were you doing that?

PARKER

Roger was teaching me some general knowledge stuff. You know, because he's already done a lot of work on the Healey.

JOHN

It sounds like a misuse of your time. Maybe I should talk to him.

PARKER

No. He's teaching me a lot. I think it's good that he's having me work on other cars for a while. Really.

JOHN

Okay, but let me know if it gets out of hand and I'll take care of it.

PARKER

I will.

JOHN

You don't still hate me for making you go there?

PARKER

I still think you're weird, but I don't mind it.

JOHN

I'm sure you'll be out on the road in no time.

The doorbell rings. PARKER goes to answer it and he and ROGER return together.

JOHN

Hi, Roger. Come on in.

ROGER comes in and looks around. JOHN is finishing his rush to get ready.

JOHN

Thanks for doing this for me.

ROGER

No problem. I didn't want Parker to miss a day.  
You usually work on Saturdays?

JOHN

Sometimes things come up. We're in the middle of a high profile case. All of the partners have to be there.

*(Grabbing his coat.)*

I have to get going.

*(To Parker.)*

I'll be pretty busy, but your mother said she'd keep her cell phone on if you need anything. Maybe ask her if she can grab dinner for us tonight, okay?

PARKER

Alright.

JOHN

See you tonight.

JOHN exits.

ROGER

You ready?

PARKER

Yeah. Hey, you want to see the Fleetline?

ROGER

Uhhh...don't you think we should get going?

PARKER

Come on, I thought you wanted to see it. It will only take a second.

ROGER

Okay. Why not?

PARKER brings him to the garage door and flicks on the lights, revealing Fiona.

ROGER

Wow, you weren't kidding. She really is something.

PARKER

I still don't understand why my dad would want to own a car that doesn't go fast.

ROGER

People look for different things in their cars.

PARKER

Well I like your style better than my dad's.

ROGER

I wouldn't say I have a specific style. I'm interested in a pretty diverse range of cars. Besides, I can see why your dad would be attracted to such a beautiful Fleetline.

PARKER

I guess. You ready to go?

ROGER

Sure.  
Nice meeting you, Fiona.

Lights down as they exit the garage.

SCENE 8

ROGER is in the shop talking to PARKER and showing him a calendar featuring car pictures.

ROGER

March is a beauty. '32 Ford. With a rumble seat in the back. She came in great condition, but she was too high maintenance. I don't mind a car that needs a little attention, but this was...it just wasn't fun to take her out any more. I sold her to a really nice guy from Florida. I knew he'd take care of her.

ROGER flips to the next month.

ROGER

Oh, one of my firsts. Mint condition Stanley Steamer. She was more of a boyhood fling. Those steam engines were interesting, but once I got older, I needed more...complexity.

ROGER flips to the next month.

PARKER

You've owned all of these cars?

ROGER

Well, no. But I guess I had some kind of...interaction with all of them. It was hard to narrow it down to twelve. I've known hundreds of cars and they were all special.

PARKER

You can always pick different cars for next year.

ROGER flips to the next month.

ROGER

This one here I actually met in a friend's garage.

PARKER  
You *met*?

ROGER  
What would you call it?

PARKER  
I don't know. It just sounds funny.

ROGER  
If you spend a certain amount of time with a car it's almost impossible not to develop a bond.

PARKER  
I guess I've never felt that way. About any cars.

ROGER  
You're still young.

Pause.

PARKER  
I've been trying to learn about cars on my own lately.

ROGER  
Oh yeah? What have you been learning?

PARKER  
Just stuff. I picked up a few books, magazines, that type of thing. There's a lot written about cars. At least five monthlies on the magazine rack. I bet I could spend the rest of my life just reading what's out there.

ROGER  
Some people do.

PARKER  
I probably won't devote my life to it, but I'm trying to learn more about the whole car scene. It's interesting getting a little more background on the stuff we do here. You ever go to any car shows?

ROGER  
When I was younger I would look around. Now it just feels like a meat market. I like to have a more personal connection with a car.

PARKER  
My dad's taking me to a car show this weekend.

Oh yeah? Which one?

ROGER

This one.

PARKER

PARKER hands ROGER a flier.

ROGER

This is statewide. Ought to be a pretty good mix of cars there.

ROGER scoffs.

PARKER

What?

ROGER

These ads have it all wrong showing women draped over cars. You can barely see the cars!

PARKER

I don't think that's the point of the ad.

ROGER

It should be, it's a damn car magazine.

PARKER takes the ad and puts it back in his pocket.

PARKER

I think it will be fun anyway.

ROGER

Maybe you'll meet a nice lady draped over a car.

PARKER smiles.

ROGER

Why don't we get to work? I thought today I'd have you install the distributor cap.

PARKER

Really?

ROGER

You've been paying attention to what I told you, right?

PARKER

Yeah but I didn't think you were going to let me do it...

ROGER

Do you not want to?

PARKER

*(Quickly.)*

No! I want to.

ROGER

Then quit standing there and open the hood.

PARKER does. ROGER starts instructing him, his demeanor getting gentler as they get into it. He's a good teacher, just a tough one.

ROGER

First you want to disconnect the old wires one at a time and plug them in the same place on the new one. Make sure they go to the right terminal otherwise you mess up the whole thing.

PARKER carefully starts unplugging things.

ROGER

As long as we're in here we should clean those spark plugs off.

ROGER hands him a wire brush and cleaner. PARKER takes it and cleans the spark plugs.

ROGER

Be careful. You don't want to scrub too hard. Just enough to loosen the dirt.

PARKER

Like this?

ROGER

Yeah...just be gentle.

PARKER screws the sparkplug back in and repeats with the rest. ROGER watches proudly as PARKER does the rest.

ROGER

Now you need to plug the wires into the new distributor cap, just make sure they all...

PARKER

Match up to the right terminals. I know.

PARKER finishes plugging in all of the terminals.

ROGER

There. You did it. That wasn't so bad, was it?

PARKER

No...

*(Admitting.)*

I was a little nervous.

ROGER

People only get nervous about things they know are important.

ROGER takes out a couple of sodas and hands one to PARKER. They lean against the bench and take in the victory.

PARKER

What's next?

ROGER

I think it's time you meet Audra.

PARKER

Who?

ROGER

Uh...the Healey.

PARKER

Really?!

ROGER

You just did some impressive work. You deserve it.

PARKER

That's... wait. I thought you hadn't named it.

ROGER

I hadn't but she... It's just something I came up with that I liked.

PARKER

*(Not a big fan.)*  
Audra?

ROGER

Yeah. You can come up with something different if you want.

PARKER

I might.

ROGER

Grab the other side of the sheet.

ROGER goes to one side of the sheet and PARKER quickly goes to the other. They lift off the sheet and reveal a partially restored Austin Healey.

PARKER

Woah!

ROGER

Pretty nice, isn't it?

PARKER

*Nice?* This is awesome!

ROGER smiles. PARKER opens the door and gets inside. ROGER all of a sudden looks nervous. PARKER plays with knobs and dials in the car.

ROGER

Be careful, now. You can't just go fiddling with everything. Some of it's not completely put together.

PARKER

It looks put together! Wow, this is further along than I thought it was. We'll be able to finish this in no time!

ROGER

*(Nervous.)*  
It still has a long way to go. You should get out now before...

PARKER

Relax, I'm not going to break anything.

PARKER gets out of the car and admires it.

PARKER

What color were you going to paint it?

ROGER

It's already painted...

PARKER

You were going to keep it *red*?

ROGER

It's the original color of this car.

PARKER

It's my decision to make now anyway, right?

ROGER

I guess. I don't know if we're going to spend time repainting things I've already done...

PARKER

*(Interrupting.)*

What about a metallic blue?

ROGER

I don't think metallic *anything* would look good.

PARKER

I think it would look pretty sweet. Especially if we added a leather interior, maybe put some updated gauges in the dashboard...

ROGER

Wait, what?

PARKER

I've been looking into hot rods. I like that style of restoration.

ROGER

It's not restoration, it's desecration. You can't tear this car apart to make it look fancy.

PARKER

I wouldn't be tearing it apart, I'd be making a few improvements on the model.

ROGER

It doesn't need improvements.

PARKER

Didn't you say that this year's models had bad rear suspension?

ROGER

Yes, but that doesn't mean you should go around trying to modify everything. The shortcomings of each model are part of their charm.

Tense pause.

ROGER

I mean...I've already done a lot of work on this car, trying to do a restoration true to the original model.

PARKER

But maybe we can tweak a couple things and make it go a little faster or...

ROGER

It already goes fast! It broke records at Bonneville.

PARKER

That was a long time ago.

ROGER

It was unprecedented! With all the reading you've been doing you'd think that you might have stumbled upon that.

*(Deep breath.)*

Look Parker, hot rods take a lot more work than even experienced restorers can handle sometimes. I think it would be best if we just stick to the basics for this one. If you get another car in the future you can play around with it a little bit, make a few adjustments, you know? I just think for this car it would be a little more than we're equipped to do.

PARKER

I don't think it would be that...

ROGER

Trust me. We should just stick to the plan.

Lights down.

SCENE 9

ROGER comes into the shop. He takes the sheet off the Austin Healey.

ROGER

Hi Audra. We need to talk.

I've been having a lot of fun with you, and I think you're a great car, but...we can't keep doing this. We're in a business relationship now and I can't get too attached or I'll...

I'm a jealous person. When Parker was sitting inside you today and touching all your knobs, I just couldn't take it. And that's not even to mention the fact that he's eventually going to...have you.

*(Frustrated and helpless.)*

Why did you ever tell me your name? I can't go back now, Audra. With all the other cars I could so I thought it would be fine, but...you're the car I've waited for. I didn't realize how serious it was at the time, but you are. How can I be expected to give you up? How can I...?

*(Painful pause.)*

I need to stop seeing you so much. When we're here it has to be strictly business. There might be days I come in and work on other cars without even looking at you. Please don't think I hate you. I...have to distance myself. You're not mine. You can't be.

ROGER kisses AUDRA on the hood, turns out the light and exits.

SCENE 10

PARKER is over by the Austin Healey. ROGER is paying extra close attention to the other car in the garage, making a concerted effort not to look in Audra's direction. He's not very responsive to PARKER.

PARKER

Pretty nice day out.

ROGER

Uh huh.

PARKER

It looks like spring's just around the corner.

ROGER

That'd be nice.

Pause.

PARKER

You're quiet today.

ROGER

Just concentrating. This needs to get done. Why aren't you busier? You already finish what I gave you?

PARKER

Just did.

ROGER

Good. Now you can get started on the carburetor. The new one's over on the bench.

PARKER goes to the bench and finds the new carburetor. He takes it out of the box and walks back to the Austin Healey. He is surprised that ROGER is not over there to guide him. He clears his throat and gently addresses ROGER.

PARKER

So...you going to show me how to do this?

ROGER

I'll walk you through it.

PARKER

It seems pretty complicated.

ROGER

It's not that hard. Just give it a try.

PARKER

Seems pretty hard.

ROGER

First you need to disconnect the battery and the fuel lines at the carburetor.

PARKER does this. When he's done he keeps his eyes on the engine waiting for further instructions.

PARKER

Okay.

ROGER

Then you take off the Flange nuts and lift it out so you can clean under it. Be careful not to tilt it or you'll spill gas all over the place.

PARKER carefully does this.

PARKER

So you ever been married?

ROGER

*(Taken off guard.)*

Why are you asking me that?

PARKER

Isn't that what guys talk about in a garage?

ROGER

Sometimes. No. I never have.

PARKER

Never found the right woman or...?

ROGER

You having girl troubles or something?

PARKER

Just making conversation...

ROGER glances over at the car.

ROGER

Put some rags over the opening or you'll have all kinds of junk clogging it up.

PARKER goes over to the bench to get some rags and returns to put them over the opening.

PARKER

I'm between girls right now.

ROGER

Make sure the intake ports are covered.

PARKER

They are.

ROGER

Okay, then you can clean the new gasket surface and reassemble it all with the new one.

PARKER

My last girlfriend broke up with me months ago, but I'm having trouble moving on...

PARKER starts to clean the gasket surface.  
ROGER looks over.

ROGER

Are you using a soft cloth?

PARKER

Yes.

ROGER

Okay, just...be careful. You don't want to use too much pressure.

PARKER does this as he talks.

PARKER

My guy friends all tell me I'll get over her as soon as I find another girl to sleep with, but I'm not sure...

ROGER

Does that really work?

PARKER

Shouldn't you know more about this kind of stuff than I do?

ROGER

I never got hung up on a girl.

PARKER

I already am and you're like 3 times my age.

ROGER

I had other priorities.

PARKER

Didn't you ever want to have kids?

ROGER

Thought about it. Decided to devote my life to cars instead. It's not much different than having a family. I fix them up and send them out into the world. And then there are some that I just can't give up as easily.

PARKER

You're not supposed to play favorites are you?

ROGER

The restores always have a special place in my heart. It's easier not to get attached to the rebuilds—that's just for business.

PARKER

It's a lot different, isn't it? Fixing one up just so someone can drive it to work. And the others you're uncovering secrets of the past. It must be hard not to feel connected.

ROGER

*(Grunt of approval.)*

Never heard it said like that. But it doesn't matter why I buy them, I have to give restores up too.

PARKER

How can you keep remodeling classics if you know you'll eventually have to give it up to get to the next?

ROGER

I'm still working on that part. So what are you gonna do to get over this girl?

PARKER

I don't know. Just try to avoid her in the hallway I guess. Figure the rest out later.

ROGER

If it were me, I'd focus on something more important. Something that I loved.

PARKER

I don't know what that is.

ROGER

If you don't know what you love then how can you love a person?

Pause.

PARKER

That's pretty deep for a guy who's never been married.

ROGER

The way I see it, that's what you're supposed to be figuring out at this age—what you love. Don't worry about that girl. Her problem is she doesn't know what she wants either. The morning's half over before she decides what she wants for breakfast and here you all are trying to date each other. Sounds like one big mess to me.

PARKER

And when you think you love something? Like I did?

ROGER

If it doesn't work out then you try to forget it. Find something else to love.

## SCENE 12

JOHN's garage. It is night and the lights are dim. There is a large car under a sheet. A figure, ROGER enters through the main door, spilling light from the street into the garage. HE quietly closes the door.

ROGER

Hello again, Fiona. I wanted to properly introduce myself. My name's Roger. I'm a... I guess you could say I'm a car connoisseur. If you don't mind, I thought I might get to know you a little better.

He lifts up the sheet.

ROGER

Wow, you have quite a body. The green looks great on you. Leather interior...I would have gone with the traditional cloth, but it suits you.

*(Pause.)*

Fiona, if you don't mind I'd like to take you for a test drive. I know what you're thinking, but I swear I don't usually walk into a garage like this. I'll admit, I've known a lot of cars, but I usually meet them in *my* garage. This doesn't have to *be* anything. I'm not looking for a commitment. I'm...kind of on the rebound and looking for a good time. I'm just a man who loves cars. And I promise I'm always safe.

He produces a condom.

What do you think?

ROGER

ROGER receives permission and he quickly and excitedly disappears under the sheet. The outline of his body under the sheet makes its way along the edge of the car, until it reaches the back by the tailpipe. He gets on his knees and starts a thrusting motion. During all of the action under the sheet he emits sounds of pleasure. There are loud sounds from inside the house. The movement under the sheet stops. The sounds grow louder and closer. ROGER tears out from under the sheet and darts out the door he came from. The door from the house opens, and a light flicks on, revealing JOHN standing there. He looks around, then turns off the light and goes back inside.

SCENE 13

JOHN and PARKER's kitchen. PARKER is eating breakfast at the table when JOHN enters.

Parker.

JOHN

Dad.

PARKER

Have you been in my garage?

JOHN

Um, probably. Why?

PARKER

Were you in my garage last night?

JOHN

No, I was up in my room.

PARKER

Are you sure? JOHN

Why are you...? PARKER

*(Cutting him off.)*  
You happen to leave something? JOHN

JOHN pulls out a used condom.

What the hell...?! PARKER

I found it when I went to take Fiona out this morning. More specifically, I found it in the tailpipe. JOHN

A condom in the...?! PARKER

Yeah. JOHN

It wasn't me! PARKER

Then who was it, Parker? It's not mine, and I'm pretty sure your mother doesn't use condoms when she's driving. JOHN

And you think *I* do? PARKER

Look, I understand that you're at an age where you're getting to know yourself... JOHN

Dad. PARKER

and you want to experiment... JOHN

Please shut up. PARKER

JOHN

but you need to be careful. What if the tailpipe had been hot?

PARKER

It's not like a tailpipe can be hot when you never drive it.

JOHN

Excuse me?

PARKER

It just sits in the garage. It's not like there's much risk there.

JOHN

It sits in the garage because it's safe in there. Or at least I thought it was until I found out that my son thought he could just walk in there and...

PARKER

Dad, I didn't fuck your car!

Pause.

JOHN

I don't need an apology, Parker. I just want you to know you can talk to me. I know growing up can be pretty weird. God knows when I was that age I had a few escapades of my own. Once I was at a fast food drive-thru and...

PARKER

I don't want to hear about your sex life!

JOHN

Okay, fine. I just thought you'd like to know that having urges to try out different things is normal. Especially when I know you've been getting to know a lot more about cars so I can see where this new fixation might be coming from. Kind of.

PARKER

It's not a fixation. I'm not... Why aren't you listening to me?

JOHN

I hear you, Parker. I just want you to know if you have any questions about anything this is a no judgment zone, okay?

PARKER doesn't answer.

JOHN

*Okay?*

PARKER

I'm going to leave now.

JOHN

Whatever you want.

PARKER starts to leave.

JOHN

Parker? I'm glad you're using protection.

PARKER rolls his eyes and leaves.

SCENE 12

PARKER is sanding down a car with Roger. It is stripped down metal. The Austin Healey is covered up.

PARKER

Why are we doing this?

ROGER

So we can paint it. Are you forgetting things now?

PARKER

Why are we doing it on *this* car?

ROGER

Don't make me regret letting you work on the Healey. You still have things to learn on these other cars. I warned you it would become an obsession.

PARKER

Is that such a bad thing?

ROGER

It can be. If it gets in the way of work. We'll work on the Healey in the afternoon. I wanted you to get a chance to do some body work. Besides, I've spent so much time showing you how to do things that I'm behind on all my other cars.

PARKER stops and observes.

PARKER

It's funny. How blank cars look when they're stripped down. At this stage they could be almost anything.

ROGER

That doesn't mean they're your empty canvass to do whatever you want.

Pause.

PARKER

What do you have against hot rods?

Roger doesn't answer.

PARKER

Did your mother run away with one when you were a kid or something?

ROGER

People who build hot rods have no connection to what the car is. They just turn it into whatever they want it to be, instead of reconstructing what it is.

PARKER

It's just a make over.

ROGER

It takes away the essence of the car completely.

PARKER

You always talk about cars like they're people. They're machines. They're meant for us to play around with and improve, or even screw up a little bit if that's what it takes. It's not like they have feelings or personality or...

ROGER

That's just the way a hot rodder thinks.

PARKER

How's that?

ROGER

With complete disregard for a car's history. You have to remember that only a certain amount of each of these models rolled off the assembly line. Real motor heads like me grew up reading magazines about limited edition cars, not knowing if any of the models survived the years or if they'd all been destroyed. Then, years later, you'd hear about one that was found in a barn in original condition and it would give you hope that something that important could actually survive the years.

Hot rodders don't worry about any of that history. All they care about is speed, sleek paint and fancy looking interiors.

PARKER

Hot rodders just don't get stuck in the past. They figure out a way to take those old, cars and update them so they're important again.

ROGER

These cars aren't being made any more, Parker. You can't just play around with them and say "oh well" if you screw one up beyond repair. I find it hard to respect anyone who threatens to take away the few models of these cars we have left. People who make car models closer to being extinct with every mechanical *experiment* they feel the need to make.

PARKER

Why would people neglect the cars in the first place if they were so special?

ROGER

Because they were morons! They didn't know what they had.

PARKER

Maybe they did and thought it was shit.

ROGER

How can they know when the only part of the car they're familiar with is the cabin? A hot rodder just pays other people to do the work on the car for him, or buys it new, without ever getting his hands dirty.

PARKER

They do a lot of their own work.

ROGER

With new, clean parts off an assembly line. You're not a real mechanic if you don't know what it's like to have grease constantly stuck under your fingernails.

PARKER

Maybe they're better mechanics because they know how engines work well enough to design their own and not just have to rebuild an engine someone else designed for them.

ROGER

Then, when they're done putting in the newest, cleanest, fastest engine imaginable, they'll have the car *shipped* to a car show, because heaven forbid something happens to the car while you're *driving* it. They've already chopped it down for show, why not castrate the car by taking away its actual function??

PARKER starts to argue, but ROGER cuts him off.

ROGER

Stop! I can't listen to any more of your opinions. It...makes me too upset.

ROGER busies himself at the workbench while he calms down.

ROGER

We can have different opinions on cars, Parker. But as long as you're in my shop you need to appreciate what these cars are. And the answer is that they are *not* just machines.

Lights down.

#### SCENE 14

It is night in Roger's garage. ROGER enters. He is carrying flowers. He removes the sheet on Audra.

ROGER

Hi there. It's nice to see you. It's been a while... I brought you something.

He reveals the flowers from behind his back.

ROGER

I'll put them over here so you can look at them.

He puts the flowers in a can over on his workbench. He pulls up a chair to the front of the car and sits.

ROGER

You look good. Parker's done a nice job on you. He follows direction well, even if he is an idiot about some things...

*(Pause.)*

I've been alright. Business has been steady and...well, I've been keeping myself busy.

*(Beat. Dropping the front.)*

I didn't come here to lie to you. This has been torture, Audra. Having to be around you every day and act like I don't notice you any more than every other car. The more I avoid you, the faster my heart beats just thinking about how close you are.

*(Deep sigh.)*

The other night I went to see another car. A beautiful Chevy Fleetline, completely restored to its original specs, down to the very last gasket. And we, you know... I don't need to get into the details. My point is, when I was there all I could think about was the way you look at me with your headlights. The way your grill smiles at me right after I wax it. The way your dashboard calls out for me to adjust your dials. I guess what I'm saying is I know we shouldn't be together and I'm not supposed to think about you the way I do, but I can't stop.

I know that we have some obstacles ahead, but... I think we can make it work. I don't know how, but we have to. I mean, if you want to. I don't know what I would do if you weren't here, Audra.

He leans in to nervously kiss the front of the car.

ROGER

Sorry, I'm... a little nervous. Maybe we should take it slow. I know it sounds silly when my hands have been all over you. But it was strictly professional. Okay, not strictly, but I was as well-behaved as you can expect from a guy in my position. I just don't want it to be all about physical stuff. Maybe we can... just spend the night together?

After a second Audra's door swings open, inviting Roger inside. Roger smiles.

ROGER

Thanks.

He walks to the door, takes off his shoes and then stops.

ROGER

Audra...? You like the way you are, right? I mean, do you like being restored to your original condition or do you sometimes, you know, wish you could be something else? I was paying such close attention to what I thought you should look like that I never thought to ask you.  
Good. I'm glad it's what you want.

He gets inside the car and closes the door.

SCENE 15

PARKER and ROGER are working on an engine that's on a stand next to Audra. ROGER is concentrating very hard. PARKER peers past him to look.

PARKER  
What are you doing now?

ROGER  
Attaching the connecting rod.

PARKER  
Oh, ok.  
*(Pause.)*  
Is it hard?

ROGER  
What's it look like?

PARKER  
It looks kind of hard.  
*(Pause.)*  
I thought you didn't buy cars that needed engine work?

ROGER  
I made an exception.

PARKER  
Why?

ROGER  
I'm not good at following rules when I'm restoring cars.

PARKER starts to ask another question, but ROGER interrupts him.

ROGER  
Can you grab the bolts for this?

PARKER walks to the workbench.

PARKER  
Where are they?

ROGER

In the peanut butter jar. It should be labeled.

PARKER looks around and finally grabs it and comes back. ROGER is straining to hold something in place.

PARKER

Can I do that?

ROGER

No.

PARKER

Why not?

ROGER

*(Straining.)*  
Because...it's...difficult.

PARKER

It doesn't look any harder than the carburetor I did.

ROGER

It's too hard to explain, Parker. Just give me the bolt!

PARKER begrudgingly hands him the bolt and then he goes to sulk. ROGER gets the bolt in and then relaxes.

ROGER

Are you going to come back over here or are you going to sulk?

PARKER

I'm not sulking.

ROGER

Then what are you doing?

PARKER

What do I need to stand over there for when you don't even need me?

ROGER

Parker, no one ever said I need your help. This is to teach you. It's not for me.

PARKER

Well I'm tired of learning if all it means is that I have to watch you work on the car.

ROGER

I've given you plenty of tasks.

PARKER

Not today. You've barely let me touch it. Did I do something wrong? I installed the carburetor right, didn't I?

ROGER

Yeah. It looks fine. Some of these procedures require a little more experience, that's all.

PARKER

How am I going to get experience if you'll barely let me near it?

ROGER

Fine. I'll give you something to do.

*(Thinks.)*

Why don't you clean the rest of the bolts?

PARKER

You want me to clean bolts? That's what you came up with?

ROGER

We can't put them back in all corroded.

PARKER

Why don't you just buy new ones? They come clean.

ROGER

These are the original bolts.

PARKER

Like anyone can tell the difference.

ROGER

There are a lot of guys who would die to have an engine in good enough condition to salvage the original components.

PARKER

I bet.

ROGER

I wouldn't expect you to understand the value of authenticity. You'd just paint the bolts metallic blue.

PARKER

I wouldn't paint the bolts blue. I'd replace the whole thing with a Turbo LS1 engine.

ROGER stops and looks at him. This knowledge could be dangerous.

PARKER

*(Smug.)*

I told you I've been doing some reading.

ROGER

Read about something more useful.

PARKER

I'm just saying you might as well stop obsessing over every little aspect of this engine. You never know what will happen...

ROGER

Don't go messing with this engine. Austin Healeys were designed around their superior engines. That's the last thing that needs to be screwed with.

PARKER

The engines were very good for their time, but a lot of mechanical improvements have been made since then. Not to mention, if you install one of these newer engines, you don't have to worry about saving every little part of the original and paying out the ass for replica parts.

ROGER

But once the engine is finished the original way, you wouldn't just tear it out to replace it.

PARKER

*(A threat.)*

Everyone wants to go faster, Roger.

ROGER

Of course everyone wants to go fast! The difference is that some people will spend the time tweaking every part of the original engine to optimize performance, and people who are too lazy decide to drop an entire new engine in so they don't have to do a damn thing.

PARKER

You say tomato, I say tomahto...

ROGER

Get out of my garage.

What?  
PARKER

We're done.  
ROGER

It's not even lunch yet...  
PARKER

We're done, period. I'm terminating this little internship.  
ROGER

What do you mean?  
PARKER

I'm not teaching you another damn thing, and I'm certainly not selling you the car.  
ROGER

But...you have to!  
PARKER

I can do without the money.  
ROGER

You and my dad had a deal! I've been coming into this shop for two friggin' months!  
PARKER

Deal's off. Now go home.  
ROGER

This is bullshit! My dad's not going to let you get away with this!  
PARKER

PARKER exits, fuming.

SCENE 16

ROGER is working in his garage, the drone of the police scanner is in the background.  
JOHN enters.

JOHN  
Hi Roger.

ROGER  
John. It's been a while.

JOHN  
How's it coming?

ROGER  
It just needs a few more finishing touches.

JOHN  
Great. When can I expect to have it?

ROGER  
I guess there was a misunderstanding. You can't.

JOHN  
Why not?

ROGER  
He's not ready.

JOHN  
*(Looking at the car.)*  
What's left to be done?

ROGER  
No. *He's* not ready. Parker.

JOHN  
Ready for what, Roger?

ROGER  
I'm not selling it any more.

JOHN  
You had my son come in here and work for free and now you want to renege on the offer?

ROGER

I'll pay him for his time.

JOHN

We don't want the money. What we want is the car. I think I've been quite clear about that from the beginning.

ROGER

How do I know that you won't chop it down?

JOHN

You don't.

ROGER

If you don't keep up your part of the deal, than why should I?

JOHN

Our agreement was that my son would work for you, giving you the opportunity to teach him the importance of your philosophy. It's not my fault if it didn't stick.

ROGER

We had an understanding, then. Now you decide to walk in here and tell me you want something different than what we talked about and...

JOHN

The only one wavering in his intentions here is you.

Pause.

ROGER

I can't sell you this car in good faith.

JOHN

Your faith isn't in question here. You don't have a choice.

ROGER

What are you going to do, steal it?

JOHN

I don't have to. I'll use the law.

ROGER

I haven't done anything wrong.

JOHN

You'll have to prove that.

ROGER

What are you accusing me of, exactly?

JOHN

Breaking a contract. A "deal" as you would call it.

ROGER

We didn't have a written agreement. You'll lose.

JOHN

I probably would. If we were on level ground. Do you have a lawyer?

*(Pause.)*

You won't get far enough to tell your side of the story. By the time it's your turn to talk you'll be steeped so high in debt you'll have to sell the car just to pay for the lawyers protecting it.

ROGER doesn't answer.

JOHN

So I'll ask you again: when can I expect this in my garage?

ROGER clears his throat. He speaks meekly.

ROGER

Well...um...the door handles have to be reattached. And there are some small issues that need to be attended to. But, you know, all of those small things add up after a while so it could take some time. Maybe a couple months even...

JOHN

It looks finished.

ROGER

Of course it appears that way, but...

JOHN

We'll take it the way it is.

ROGER

But there are some key components that haven't been...

JOHN

Parker told me you two finished the engine. That's the only part I'm really worried about. We'll pick it up tomorrow.

ROGER

You can't ask me to sell you an incomplete car!

JOHN

Most people would jump at an opportunity to receive full pay for an unfinished job.

ROGER

I'm not trying to do business. I care about what's best for the car.

JOHN

You shouldn't get so emotionally involved in your work.

ROGER

I protect the things I care about.

Pause.

JOHN

Fine. I'll give you a couple of days to do whatever tinkering you want. But I really don't think a couple missing door handles are going to make much difference. We'll come by to pick it up at the end of the weekend. If you give us any problems you'll have a lawsuit waiting in your mailbox on Monday.

JOHN exits.

## SCENE 17

ROGER is in the garage sitting on a blanket he has spread on the floor in front of him and Audra. There are candles lit. ROGER has a picnic basket and is wearing an ill-fitting suit, but a suit nonetheless. He's trying hard to be optimistic.

ROGER

I know this is a sad night for both of us, but I don't want us to think about it that way. I want us to enjoy each other's company and put everything else out of our minds. Make this a night we can both remember...for as long as we need to.

*(Turns to basket.)*

Are you hungry? I brought something I think you'll like.

ROGER pulls out premium motor oil.

ROGER

You must be. You've been positively empty.

He opens the hood and pours it in.

ROGER

I got you the best. It's supposed to lubricate all of your insides so you'll be good and protected, even if they forget to change the oil for a while. Hopefully they won't forget. I'm sure they won't. I just worry.

I'll check up on you. You'll be okay, I promise.

He closes the hood.

ROGER

There. That should do it. It's nice being able to spend time with you. I think we should stay up all night and just be together. I don't mean we have to be "together" together. I wouldn't mind it, either. That leather interior does look very attractive on you...

But, I guess I'm saying that...being here with you is enough.

ROGER starts to break down, crying on Audra's hood.

ROGER

Oh, Audra, what are we going to do? I can't stand to give you over, but there's no other solution, is there? I should refuse to let him take you and they can lock me up. But we'd still be apart wouldn't we? Tell me what to do. How do I make this better?

He tries to stop crying.

ROGER

I'm sorry. This is supposed to be our night. I don't want to ruin it thinking about tomorrow. We will have more memories together. I'll make sure of it.

SCENE 18

ROGER is standing with JOHN and PARKER, showing them a few things on Audra.

ROGER

The seatbelt gets stuck behind the seat here once in a while, but if you reach back far enough you can grab it. The spare tire is in the trunk, you can't really miss it. And the...

JOHN

I think we can figure all of that out, Roger. Why don't we start it up?

ROGER

Yeah, okay...

JOHN

*(To Parker.)*  
Jump in.

PARKER looks excited and opens the door and jumps in. He fumbles with the key and inserts it.

ROGER

Calm down there, you can't just turn the key.

PARKER

Why not?

ROGER gives JOHN a "told you so" look, but remains cordial.

ROGER

You need to put the choke on. These cars need a lot of it to get started. You can let up on it a little once it catches, but you'll want to give it a few minutes to warm up before you go anywhere.

PARKER

Yeah, okay.

PARKER adjusts the choke and tries to start the engine. It whines, but doesn't turn over.

ROGER

A little more choke. Remember, if it doesn't catch after a couple seconds you want to give it a rest.

PARKER tries again, but the engine doesn't turn over.

ROGER

Here, if you just push it in a little bit more...

ROGER reaches for the choke and PARKER slaps his hand away. ROGER pulls back, powerless.

PARKER

I know what I'm doing.

PARKER tries again. The engine doesn't turn over.

PARKER

What the fuck is wrong with this car?

ROGER

You flooded it. Give it a break.

PARKER angrily gets out of the car and slams the door behind him.

JOHN

Calm down, Parker. You'll get the hang of it.

PARKER

I did exactly what you told me to.

ROGER

There's not a quantifiable amount of choke needed at any given time. These cars take a lot of persuasion. You have to play with the choke until it feels just right. Healeys take patience.

JOHN

Have you started it before?

ROGER

Not exactly. But there's no reason it shouldn't work.

PARKER

*(With an attitude.)*  
Why don't you start it then?

ROGER

Sure. I'll give it a try.

ROGER carefully lifts the handle and gets in the car. He feels the steering wheel, takes in the moment of sitting in the car.

PARKER

Well?

ROGER takes his time adjusting the choke so it's just right. He turns the key and the engine starts immediately. The engine is loud; "basso profundo". ROGER smiles, maybe even yelps for joy. He revs the engine a few times. This moment is pure joy for him. PARKER plugs his ears.

PARKER

*(Shouts.)*  
It's loud!

JOHN pats him on the back. He motions to ROGER to switch places with PARKER. ROGER adjusts the choke and reticently gets out of the car. PARKER jumps in.

ROGER

Remember, take her slow. This is her first time out for quite a while.

PARKER nods and backs her out of the garage. ROGER watches, waving.

ROGER

*(To Audra.)*  
Take it easy! Come back and visit sometime.

The car pulls away. JOHN shakes ROGER's hand and ROGER looks out towards the sound of the car growing fainter.

ROGER

*(To himself.)*  
Be careful.

SCENE 19

John's garage, night. Audra is parked next to Fiona. ROGER enters stealthily with a flashlight.

ROGER

Hi. It's me.

He turns on shop lights to cast just enough light.

ROGER

*(Awkwardly, as he passes.)*  
Oh, hi Fiona. How have you been?

ROGER passes Fiona and gets to Audra.

ROGER

Hi sweetheart. How are you? My garage has felt so empty without you. I haven't been able to park another car in your garage port. I have cars out in the yard just freezing, but I can't bring myself to do it. I don't want to cover up the grease stain you leaked on the floor. I figured I can work on one car at a time on the other side and it won't be a problem.

I missed you! It hasn't been too awful here, has it?  
Does he take you out at least once a day?  
And he gives you plenty of time to warm-up?

*(Protective.)*  
I don't care if he's in a hurry, that's no excuse to...you're right. I'm glad you're staying positive about it. Does he handle you gently?

*(He blushes.)*  
I would hope not as gently as I do. There is a certain finesse used to handle a car that an adolescent boy just doesn't understand. A kind of...sensuality...

ROGER locks eyes with Audra's headlights. He starts kissing her passionately. He makes his way to her door, and opens it as he fumbles to take his pants off and get inside. He starts turning the knobs on the dashboard

and rubbing the interior as he grinds. It remains passionate, but also reflects the knowledge of an experienced lover. They finish. Roger sits back in Audra, relaxed and out of breath. After he recovers from the throes of passion:

ROGER

I promise we will always be together, Audra. Even if I have to sneak in here every night to be with you.

Noises come from the house. Roger starts up and grabs his pants from the ground.

ROGER

Shit! I have to go. I'll be back again soon. I love you.

He kisses Audra and runs out of the garage, carrying his pants. He exits just before PARKER enters the garage. He looks around and sees the shop light on. He walks over to the outside door, looks out the window and locks the door. He turns out the shop light and exits back into the house.

SCENE 20

PARKER is at a store, perusing the magazine rack when ROGER enters.

ROGER

Oh, hi Parker. How's it going?

PARKER is startled and then steely.

PARKER

What are you doing here?

ROGER

You know, just looking for some new reading material. You still into car magazines?

PARKER

Yeah.

ROGER

Are you looking for information about Aud... I mean, the Healey? Because you can always come to me if you have any questions. Just because you're done coming over doesn't mean you can't still ask my advice or...

PARKER

I'll figure it out on my own, thanks.

ROGER

She's not having any problems, right?

PARKER

No, Roger. Stella is running fine.

ROGER

Stella...?

PARKER

I finally named it.

ROGER

Oh...

PARKER

I thought it was about time to really take ownership.

ROGER

*(Feigning happiness.)*

Yeah, that's... It's still the same car, right?

Roger laughs awkwardly. Parker doesn't respond. Pause.

ROGER

So are you enjoying the way she handles and everything?

PARKER

Yes, she's handling fine.

ROGER

The steering is a lot different than modern cars. You have to be careful not to turn it too hard one direction or it will just send the car flying off into...

PARKER

I really don't want to talk to you about this, Roger.

ROGER

I'm just making conversation.

PARKER

I think it's better if you don't.

ROGER

Fine. I can give you space...

ROGER starts to leave.

PARKER

I better not find you by her in the parking lot when I leave, either.

ROGER

You can't keep me from looking at her; it's a public place.

PARKER

Like the *place* matters to you. Look all you want, from a distance. If you even get close enough to touch it, no matter where you are, I'll call the cops.

ROGER

Why are you treating me like...?

PARKER

The car's mine now. Just stay away.

ROGER

You privileged little brat...

PARKER

Be careful what you say, Roger. You don't want to make me angry right before I'm about to drive.

ROGER stands, glaring. He tries to speak calmly.

ROGER

No. I wouldn't want that. Just...drive carefully. Please.

ROGER exits.

SCENE 21

ROGER is working in his shop, listening to the radio and police scanner as usual. “(I know) I’m Losing You” by the Temptations is playing. The scanner starts crackling as a message comes through.

POLICE SCANNER

Dispatch to all units, we have an 11-79 reported on North Oak and Main. All local units please report to North Oak and Main.

ROGER continues working, with garbled scanner chatter behind him.

POLICE SCANNER

Dispatch calling all local units to report to a reported 11-79 on North Oak and Main.

The message catches ROGER’s attention and he turns down the radio to listen better.

POLICE SCANNER

*(Responding voice.)*

This is unit 52. We’re on our way to the scene.

*(Dispatch)*

Dispatch to 52. A small, red convertible has run into a telephone pole on North Oak. Extent of injuries are unknown, but callers are reporting severe damage to the vehicle. Please report immediately.

The description registers with ROGER. He quickly grabs his jacket and runs out, without turning off any lights, or closing the door.

SCENE 22

Side of the road. JOHN stands there, pacing.  
Sound of tires screeching to a halt and  
ROGER runs onto the scene frantically.

JOHN  
Roger, what are you...?

ROGER  
Where is she? What happened?

JOHN  
It's okay, Roger. Parker's fine. He broke an arm, but they said he's lucky that's all that happened considering the way the car looks.

ROGER  
Where's Audra?

JOHN  
Who?

ROGER  
The car! Where is she?

JOHN  
Didn't you hear what I said? The car's totaled. It's amazing Parker walked out of it alive.

ROGER  
Where's the car?!

JOHN  
They already cleared it away.

ROGER  
Where did they bring her? Which salvage yard?

JOHN  
I would assume they brought it to a wreckage yard.

ROGER  
No.

JOHN  
There wasn't anything left to salvage.

ROGER

There's always something to salvage! They can't just crush her into a square with useless pieces of scrap metal.

ROGER looks around frantically.

JOHN

I know it's really unfortunate this happened after all the work you and Parker put in. I'm sure the insurance company won't even begin to cover the cost I put into it...

ROGER turns on him.

ROGER

He wasn't ready. I told you that and you didn't listen.

JOHN

*(Getting irritated.)*

I'm just as upset as you are, Roger, but we need to focus on the fact that Parker will walk away from this relatively unharmed.

ROGER

I should have never let you take her. I should have let you sue me or...

JOHN

Everything we lost can be replaced.

ROGER

Don't you understand?! She's gone!

ROGER stumbles back in a daze.

ROGER

I need to find her. I need to...

JOHN

I'm going to check on Parker.

*(Pause.)*

It was just a car, Roger.

JOHN exits. ROGER continues mumbling. He catches the sight of a headlight and a piece of the front bumper lying in shattered glass. He walks over to the headlight, picks it up and cradles it.

ROGER

She'll be okay. She'll be okay. She'll...

He breaks down into tears. Lights fade on  
ROGER.

SCENE 23

A month later. ROGER is working on a car.  
There is a headlight displayed on one of his  
work shelves. PARKER enters.

PARKER

Roger?

ROGER looks up. He's startled to see  
PARKER.

ROGER

Parker.

PARKER

Hi. I...um, mind if I come in?

ROGER doesn't answer. PARKER takes a  
step in. He pauses for a while, and then  
speaks.

PARKER

*(Awkward small talk)*  
How have you been?

ROGER

...fine.

ROGER busies himself at the bench.

PARKER

I get the cast off next week. The doctor said it was a clean break so it was easier to set.  
I'll be healed in plenty of time for basketball.

ROGER

*(Distant.)*  
That's good.

PARKER

Then my parents might let me drive again. My mom was worried I couldn't drive safely with one arm, but I think my dad just didn't want to spend more money on another car. He didn't talk to me for a week after. He acted like I meant to crash it or something.

ROGER

He put a lot of money into it.

PARKER

Yeah. But, he doesn't understand that it wasn't all about the money.

ROGER

*(Pained.)*  
No.

Pause. PARKER takes a deep breath.

PARKER

I didn't mean for it to happen. I took my eyes off the road for one second. Went to change the radio station. When I looked up there was a squirrel in the road and I...guess I wasn't used to the manual steering. I swerved right into the telephone pole. I had to crawl out through the shattered glass of the window. When I looked back at the car I couldn't even see where there had been room for my body to fit.

ROGER has frozen with his back turned, listening.

ROGER

I'm glad you're okay, Parker.

PARKER

What I ruined...it can't be replaced. I know that. I...I'm really sorry.

Pause.

ROGER

Thank you.  
*(Pause.)*

So what are you back here for? Another car?

PARKER

No. After my dad freaked out about the expense of the last car I decided to get a job to buy the next one myself.

ROGER

Not a bad idea.

PARKER

Thanks. It will just...probably be a while before I save up enough.

ROGER

It depends what you're in the market for.

PARKER

I think I'm going to stick to newer cars for a while. Well, it won't be *that* new, but it will be something that rolls off the assembly line with a million others like it.

ROGER cracks a grin.

ROGER

It will still be special to you.

PARKER

I know it will.

*(Pause.)*

What are you working on?

ROGER

Something a little different.

PARKER

I'm guessing you're not going to let me look under the sheet?

ROGER

Maybe when it's finished.

Pause.

PARKER

Cool. Well I guess I should let you get back to work...

ROGER

Thanks for stopping by. And let me know...if you need help looking for your next car.

PARKER

Thanks. I will.

PARKER exits. ROGER waits until he's gone and then pulls back the sheet, revealing

the front of a car, missing one headlight. HE walks to the shelf and gets the headlight that was being displayed there. He installs it in the empty headlight socket. It does not match the other one, but fits. Roger smiles.

ROGER

There you are. I knew you wouldn't leave me.

ROGER leans down and kisses the headlight tenderly. Lights out.

End of play.