

"CRASH"

Screenplay by

David Cronenberg

Based on a novel by

J.G. Ballard

**SHOOTING DRAFT**

**EXT. AIRFIELD -- DAY**

light  
field.  
We are moving through a small airfield full of parked planes. There are no people around. We move through the cluster of planes toward a hangar on the edge of the

**INT. HANGAR -- DAY**

are  
covers  
with  
We are still moving through light planes, but now we are inside the hangar. Some of the planes have their engine covers open, parts strewn around. Others are partially covered with tarps or have sections missing. There is even a sleek executive jet parked in one corner.

against  
trailing  
flying  
pulled  
metal  
As we float past the planes we notice a woman leaning against the wing of a Piper Cub, her chest against the wing's edge, her arms spread out to each side, as though flying herself. As we get closer we see that her jacket is pulled against the wing, open to expose one of her breasts, which rests on the metal of the wing.

CU breast on metal. CU hard nipple and rivets.

hair,  
follow  
CU woman -- Catherine. Early thirties, dark, short stylish executive clothes. Her eyes are wide open but unfocussed. A hand grips her shoulder from behind. We

crouched the hand down behind Catherine and discover a man behind her, kissing her back.

her Catherine is standing on a low mechanic's platform and  
She skirt has been raised and hooked over the wing's flap.  
wears garters and stockings but no panties.

enters The man, handsome, cruel-looking, rises up behind her,  
She her, kisses her neck. Catherine half closes her eyes.  
rotates her pelvis gently against the thrusting.

**EXT. FILM STUDIO -- DAY**

Art We are floating toward the modest gates of a small film  
studio; the sign above the gates says 'CineTerra' in  
Deco script.

**INT. FILM STUDIO -- DAY**

for a We now float through a film set on which a commercial  
mini-van is being shot. Lights are being reset, the van  
polished for a beauty tracking shot.

the We pick up an assistant director as he strides through  
action, looking for someone.

**AD**

I'm looking for James. Has anybody  
seen James Ballard? You know who I  
mean? The producer of this epic.

a A dolly grip with very close-cropped hair looks up from  
wooden section of dolly track which he is adjusting with small  
wedges.

**GRIP**

I think I saw him in the camera  
department.

**INT. FILM STUDIO. CAMERA ROOM -- DAY**

room  
shirt  
She  
stomach  
magazine,

We float toward the door marked CAMERA DEPT. Inside the  
we find a young woman, a camera assistant, wearing a T-  
and heavy woolen socks and work boots and nothing else.  
is draped across a table strewn with camera parts,  
down, head resting on a black, crackle-finish camera  
her legs spread.

everywhere.  
Camera parts and cases, tripods, changing bags

deliberately  
A man is behind her, kissing the backs of her thighs.  
We hear the sound of the AD approaching with  
heavy footsteps. The AD pauses just outside the door.

**AD**

(off screen)

James? James, are you in there? Could  
we please get your stamp of approval  
on our little tracking shot?

The man, James, looks up from the woman's thighs.

**JAMES**

Of course. Be there in a minute.

her  
The camera girl twists around on to her back and throws  
legs over James's shoulders.

**CAMERA GIRL**

It'll take more than a minute.

**EXT. BALLARD APT. BALCONY -- NIGHT**

Ballard  
airport.  
hangar,  
behind

Catherine stands at the railing of the balcony of the  
apartment, which overlooks a busy expressway near the  
Her arms are spread wide as they were in the airplane  
only now it is James, her husband, who is standing  
her. They are both half naked, and he is inside her.

though it  
uninterrupted

Their sex-making is disconnected, passionless, as  
would disappear if they noticed it. An urgent,  
flow of cars streams below them.

**JAMES**

Where were you?

**CATHERINE**

In the private aircraft hangar.  
Anybody could have walked in.

**JAMES**

Did you come?

**CATHERINE**

No. What about your camera girl? Did  
she come?

**JAMES**

We were interrupted. I had to go  
back to the set...

and

Catherine turns toward James and pulls open her blouse,  
exposing her left breast. She pulls James's face down  
presses her nipple against his cheek.

**CATHERINE**

Poor darling.  
(pause)  
What can I do about Karen? How can I  
arrange to have her seduce me? She  
desperately needs a conquest.

**JAMES**

I've been thinking about that, about  
you and Karen.

**INT. DEPARTMENT STORE. LINGERIE DEPARTMENT -- DAY**

changing

curtains

is

James lingers among racks of nightdresses outside a  
cubicle. Monitored by a bored, seen-it-all middle-aged  
saleswoman, James glances now and then through the  
to watch Karen help Catherine try on underwear.  
Karen, Catherine's secretary, a moody, unsmiling girl,

Catherine's methodically involved in the soft technology of breasts and the brassières designed to show them off. Karen touches Catherine with peculiar caresses, tapping lightly with the tips of her fingers, first upon the shoulders, along the pink grooves left by her underwear, then across her back, where the metal clasps of her brassière have left a medallion of impressed skin, and finally on the elastic-patterned grooves beneath Catherine's breasts themselves.

gabbling Catherine stands through this in a trance-like state, to herself in a low voice, as the tip of Karen's right forefinger surreptitiously touches her nipple.

**INT. UNDERGROUND PARKING-LOT -- DAY**

his James sits in the car beside his wife. She watches as fingers move across the control panel, switching on the ignition, the direction indicator, selecting the drive lever, fastening his seat-belt.

As the car moves off, James puts his free hand between Catherine's thighs.

**INT. FILM STUDIO. JAMES'S OFFICE -- NIGHT**

architect's James studies storyboards for an automotive battery commercial, which are spread out over a broad a table. He makes notes on each panel of the boards with sharp pencil.

point of As we move around him, we reveal his secretary, Renata, sitting and watching him intently from the vantage her corner chair, her hand poised to write down anything he might say in a small, leather-bound notebook.

he From her point of view, we watch James from behind as

correct a  
point of  
provokes a  
is

works. Every movement he makes -- bending over to panel, manipulating the pencil, touching the sharp the pencil to his lip, straightening up again -- different tiny response from Renata, so attuned to him she.

But he says nothing to her, and she remains poised and vigilant.

**EXT. FILM STUDIO. PARKING-LOT -- NIGHT**

door  
a  
with  
has

James settles into his car -- a boring American four-sedan -- running through his control-panel routine like pilot before driving off. This time his routine ends the switching on of the windshield wipers because it begun to rain heavily.

**EXT. RAINSWEPT ROAD -- NIGHT**

at 60  
the  
with a  
rim.

Driving home from the studio, James hits a deep puddle miles an hour and suddenly finds himself heading into oncoming lane. The car hits the central reservation thump and the offside tire explodes and spins off its

**INT. JAMES'S CAR -- NIGHT**

In the car, James fights desperately for control.

**EXT. RAINSWEPT ROAD -- NIGHT**

and  
speed  
toward

The car hurtles across the reservation and, bouncing slamming down on its suspension, heads up the high-exit ramp. Three sedans are barreling down the ramp James.

**INT. JAMES'S CAR -- NIGHT**

wheel.

he

of

barrel

chest,

head

footwell.

into

windshield

the

car, as

James

and

at

brought

the

dashboard

James

pumped

triton

James pumps the brakes and sails away inexpertly at the

He manages to avoid the first two cars, but the third

strikes head-on.

At the moment of impact, the man in the passenger seat

the other car is propelled like a mattress from the

of a circus cannon through his own windshield and then partially through the windshield of James's car.

The propelled man's blood spatters James's face and

his body coming to rest half inside James's car, its

dangling down into the dark recess of the passenger

James's chest hits the steering wheel, his knees crush

the instrument panel, his forehead hits the upper

frame. As this happens, James is vaguely conscious of

same thing happening to the woman driving the other

though she is a bizarre mirror image.

Slammed back into their seats after the initial impact,

and the woman look at each other through the shattered windshields, neither able to move. The woman, handsome

intelligent-looking, supported by her seat-belt, stares

James in a curiously formal way, as if unsure what has

them together.

Out of the corner of his eye, James can see the hand of

dead passenger, now his passenger, caught on the

and lying palm upwards only a few inches away from him.

squints as he tries to focus on a huge blood-blister,

up by the man's dying circulation, which has a distinct

shape.

James shifts his focus to the hood ornament of his car, twisted up into the cold mercury-vapor glare of the roadway lights but still intact. It is the same triton imprinted on the palm of the dead passenger, the car manufacturer's logo.

**EXT. RAINSWEEP ROAD -- NIGHT**

Traffic is beginning to back up behind the accident and a growing circle of spectators, some of them pedestrians, some drivers who have left their own cars, begins to form. The more adventurous members of the crowd paw hesitantly at the seized doors of the two cars, afraid really to yank them open in case the violence of that act might trigger some further unnamed catastrophe.

**INT. JAMES'S CAR -- NIGHT**

Numbly watching James as she fumbles to undo her seat-belt, the woman in the other crashed car inadvertently jerks open her blouse and exposes her breast to James, its inner curve marked by a dark, strap-like bruise made by her seat-belt.

In the strange, desperate privacy of this moment, the breast's erect nipple seems somehow, impossibly, a deliberate provocation.

**INT. HOSPITAL -- DAY**

We are close on a face having makeup applied to it. It is a very pale, blotchy face, and the makeup is smoothing it, making it appear healthy and even slightly tanned. There are also some crude black stitches in this face, and we realize

Catherine

that it is James's face, and that a very serious  
is applying the makeup.

from  
lower  
driven  
semicircular  
the  
second

James's legs are up in a sling, drainage tubes coming  
both knees. Wounds on his chest: broken skin around the  
edge of the sternum, where the horn boss had been  
upwards by the collapsing engine compartment; a  
bruise, a marbled rainbow, running from one nipple to  
other. Stitches in the laceration across the scalp, a  
hairline an inch below the original. Unshaven face and  
fretting hands.

airline

Catherine is dressed more for a smart lunch with an  
executive than to visit her husband in hospital.

**CATHERINE**

There, that's better.

**JAMES**

Thank you.

his

James examines himself in her hand-mirror, staring at  
pale, mannequin-like face, trying to read its lines.

There  
looking

Catherine looks around her as she puts her makeup away.  
are twenty-three other beds in the briskly efficient-  
new ward, all of them empty.

**CATHERINE**

Not a lot of action here.

**JAMES**

They consider this to be the airport  
hospital. This ward is reserved for  
air-crash victims. The beds are kept  
waiting.

**CATHERINE**

If I groundloop during my flying  
lesson on Saturday you might wake up  
and find me next to you.

**JAMES**

I'll listen for you buzzing over.

cigarette  
she is  
Catherine crosses her legs and tries to light a  
with a heavy, mechanically complex lighter with which  
obviously unfamiliar.

**JAMES**

(referring to the  
lighter)

Is that a gift from Wendel? It has  
an aeronautical feel to it.

**CATHERINE**

Yes. From Wendel. To celebrate the  
licence approval for our air-charter  
firm. I forgot to tell you.

She  
Catherine finally succeeds in lighting the cigarette.  
takes a deep drag. James props himself up on his elbow,  
breathing with transparent pain.

**JAMES**

That's going well, then.

**CATHERINE**

Well, yes.  
(pause)  
You're getting out of bed tomorrow.  
They want you to walk.

warm  
James gestures for the cigarette. Catherine puts the  
tip, stained with pink lipstick, into his mouth.

**CATHERINE**

The other man, the dead man, his  
wife is a doctor -- Dr Helen  
Remington. She's here, somewhere. As  
a patient, of course. Maybe you'll  
find her in the hallways tomorrow on  
your walk.

**JAMES**

And her husband? What was he?

**CATHERINE**

He was a chemical engineer with a

food company.

She A dark-haired student female nurse comes into the ward.  
wags a finger at James.

**STUDENT NURSE**

No smoking, please.

stubs it As Catherine retrieves the cigarette from James and  
glamorous out in a glass, the nurse examines Catherine's  
figure, her expensive suit, her jewelry.

**STUDENT NURSE**

(to Catherine)

Are you this gentleman's wife? Mrs  
Ballard?

**CATHERINE**

Yes.

**STUDENT NURSE**

You can stay for this, then.

bottle The nurse pulls the bedclothes back and digs the urine  
from between James's legs. She checks the level and,  
satisfied, drops it back, flips over the sheets again.

thighs Both Catherine and James watch her closely, her sly  
bends under her gingham, the movement of her breasts as she  
her to check the chart at the foot of the bed, the pulse in  
throat. The nurse catches them watching her, smiles  
enigmatically back at them, and leaves.

slips a Catherine pulls out a manila folder from her bag and  
set of storyboards for a commercial out of it.

**CATHERINE**

Aida telephoned to say how sorry she  
was, but could you look at the  
storyboards again, she's made a number  
of changes.

body, James waves the folder away. Catherine examines his

aloofly curious.

**JAMES**

Where's the car?

**CATHERINE**

Outside in the visitors' car-park.

**JAMES**

What!? They brought the car here?

**CATHERINE**

My car, not yours. Yours is a complete wreck. The police dragged it to the pound behind the station.

**JAMES**

Have you seen it?

**CATHERINE**

The sergeant asked me to identify it. He didn't believe you'd gotten out alive.

**JAMES**

It's about time.

**CATHERINE**

It is?

**JAMES**

After being bombarded endlessly by road-safety propoganda, it's almost a relief to have found myself in an actual accident.

**INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAYS -- NIGHT**

James is taking his walk through the hallways,  
trundling his IV stand along with him like an awkward pet.

A white-coated doctor -- Vaughan -- steps into the ward  
from a room at the end of the hall. He is bare-chested under  
his white coat. His strong hands carry a briefcase filled  
with photographs, which he pauses to shuffle through, as  
though checking a map.

pockmarked  
that  
He  
mouth,  
terrifying  
of

As James approaches this new visitor, Vaughan's  
jaws chomp on a piece of gum, creating the impression  
he might be hawking obscene pictures around the wards,  
pornographic X-ray plates and blacklisted urinalyses.  
sports copious scar tissue around his forehead and  
rumpled and puckered as though residues from some  
act of violence.  
Vaughan looks James up and down, taking in every detail  
his injuries with evident interest.

**VAUGHAN**

James Ballard?

**JAMES**

Yes?

**VAUGHAN**

Crash victim?

**JAMES**

Yes.

make out  
caught in  
flirtatious  
it

Vaughan shuffles his photos again. James manages to  
the shapes of a few crushed and distorted vehicles  
lurid, flash-lit news style. Vaughan flips through them  
distractedly, then with an unexpected, almost  
flourish slides them back into his briefcase and tucks  
under his arm.

**VAUGHAN**

We'll deal with these later.

the  
the  
him,

He flashes James an enigmatic smile, and walks off down  
hallway.  
As James turns to continue, a young woman comes out of  
same room that Vaughan appeared from and moves toward

into  
marking her  
  
her  
  
thinking.

using a dark wooden walking stick. She presses her face  
her raised shoulder, possibly to hide the bruise  
right cheekbone.

The woman is Dr. Helen Remington, whose husband died in  
car crash with James.

James stops as she approaches. He speaks without

**JAMES**

Dr. Remington...?

approach.  
as if  
moves  
deliberately

The woman looks up at James as she continues her  
She does not falter, but changes her grip on the cane,  
preparing to thrash him across the face with it. She  
her head in a peculiar gesture of the neck,  
forcing her injury on him.

him to  
tissue on  
long,  
her

She pauses when she reaches the doorway, waiting for  
step out of her way. James looks down at the scar  
her face, a seam left by an invisible zip three inches  
running from the corner of her right eye to the apex of  
mouth.

mauve  
white  
armpit

James is acutely aware of her strong body beneath her  
bathrobe, her ribcage partly shielded by a sheath of  
plaster that runs from one shoulder to the opposite  
like a classic Hollywood ball-gown.

Remington  
parading her

James steps aside. Deciding to ignore him, Helen  
walks stiffly along the communication corridor,  
anger and her wound.

**INT. HOSPITAL -- DAY**

hospital

Catherine washes James's body as he lies in his bed, gently exploring his bruises and his wounds.

**CATHERINE**

Both front wheels and the engine were driven back into the driver's section, bowing the floor. Blood still marked the hood, streamers of black lace running toward the windshield-wiper gutters.

wet

strokes

Catherine resoaps her right hand from the bar in the saucer on the bed tray, a cigarette in her left. James strokes her stockinged thigh as she continues her monologue.

**CATHERINE**

Minute flecks were spattered across the seat and steering wheel. The instrument panel was buckled inwards, cracking the clock and the speedometer dials. The cabin was deformed, and there was dust and glass and plastic flakes everywhere inside. The carpeting was damp and stank of blood and other body and machine fluids.

**JAMES**

You should have gone to the funeral.

**CATHERINE**

I wish I had. They bury the dead so quickly -- they should leave them lying around for months.

**JAMES**

What about his wife? The woman doctor? Have you visited her yet?

**CATHERINE**

No, I couldn't. I feel too close to her.

**EXT. ROAD HOME FROM HOSPITAL -- DAY**

taxi.

finds

Catherine and James travel home in the back seat of a taxi. Learning against the rear window of the taxi, James

approaching  
real.

himself flinching with excitement toward the  
traffic streams, which now seem threatening and super-

exhilarated,  
traffic.

Catherine watches him, aware that he is over-  
very excited herself by his new sensitivity to the

**EXT. BALLARD APT. BALCONY -- DAY**

rails

James sits in a reclining chair on the balcony of his  
apartment, looking down through the anodized balcony  
at the neighborhood ten stories below.

lots of  
flyover  
one of  
sedan

Cars fill the suburban streets, choking the parking-  
the supermarkets, ramped on to the pavements. Two minor  
accidents have caused a massive tail-back along the  
which crosses the entrance tunnel to the airport. In  
them, a white laundry-van has bumped into the back of a  
filled with wedding guests.

sculpture,

James gazes raptly down at this immense motion  
this incomprehensible pinball machine.

him,

Catherine comes on to the balcony, kneels down beside  
begins to toy lovingly with the scars on his knees.

**CATHERINE**

Renata tells me you're going to rent  
a car.

**JAMES**

I can't sit on this balcony forever.  
I'm beginning to feel like a potted  
plant.

**CATHERINE**

How can you drive? James... your  
legs. You can barely walk.

**JAMES**

Is the traffic heavier now? There  
seem to be three times as many cars

as there were before the accident.

**CATHERINE**

I've never really noticed. Is Renata going with you?

**JAMES**

I thought she might come along. Handling a car again might be more tiring than I imagine.

**CATHERINE**

I'm amazed that she'll let you drive her.

**JAMES**

You're not envious?

**CATHERINE**

Maybe I am a little.  
(rising)  
James, I've got to leave for the office. Are you going to be all right?

**INT. BALLARD APT. GARAGE -- DAY**

building's  
most  
those  
things  
sill, a  
hump.

James stands at the entrance to his apartment underground garage. Only about a dozen cars are there; of them have been driven to work. James walks among those that remain, absorbing the details of the personal things left in them -- a silk scarf lies on a rear window-sill, a pair of sunglasses hooked over a carpeted transmission hump.

He  
the

James stops in front of the empty bay marked 'Balladr'. He stares at the familiar pattern of oil-stains marking the cement.

**INT. RENTED CAR -- DAY**

Renata's  
legs

A steering wheel, an instrument panel, a windshield. Renata's hips gripped by the fabric of the passenger seat, her legs

James  
the

stowed out of sight beneath her red plastic raincoat.  
drives Renata in a rented car, his first drive since  
accident.

**EXT. FIRST CRASH SITE -- DAY**

few

The rented car slows and stops on the concrete verge a  
yards from the spot where James's crash took place.

**INT. RENTED CAR -- DAY**

**RENATA**

Are we allowed to park here?

**JAMES**

No.

**RENATA**

I'm sure the police would make an  
exception in your case.

on her  
shoulder

James unbuttons Renata's raincoat and places his hand  
thigh. She lets him kiss her throat, holding his  
reassuringly, like an affectionate governess.

**JAMES**

There's still a patch of blood there  
on the road. Did you see it?

**RENATA**

I saw the blood. It looks like motor  
oil.

**JAMES**

You were the last one I saw just  
before the accident. Do you remember?  
We made love.

**RENATA**

Are you still involving me in your  
crash?

her

An airline coach passes, the passengers bound for Milan  
staring down at the couple in the car. Renata buttons  
coat.

**EXT. FIRST CRASH SITE -- DAY**

after  
dead  
glass

James steps from the car, his right knee giving way the effort of driving. At his feet lies a litter of leaves, cigarette cartons and small drifts of safety-glass crystals.

also  
watches  
shoulders  
road  
peers

A hundred yards behind them, a dusty old Lincoln is parked on the verge. The leather-jacketed driver James through his mudspattered windshield, broad hunched against the door pillar. As James crosses the road the man picks up a camera fitted with a zoom lens and peers at James through the eye-piece.

Spotting the man, Renata opens the car door for James.

**RENATA**

Who is that man? Is he a private detective?

James gets back into the car.

**INT. RENTED CAR -- DAY**

**RENATA**

Can you drive?

**JAMES**

I can drive.

toward the  
of  
the  
sunlight  
around

James shifts the car into gear and cruises slowly toward the man with the camera. As they approach him, he gets out of his own car, ignoring them, and kneels down to study the hieroglyphics of the skid marks on the road surface. As James and Renata drive past the kneeling man, the sunlight highlights the ridges of scars on his forehead and around his mouth.

the  
The man looks up at James and he recognizes Vaughan,  
young doctor he last saw in the hallway at the airport  
hospital.

**EXT. AIRFIELD. HANGAR -- DAY**

Karen  
to the  
James proudly shows off his new car to Catherine and  
at their offices at the airport. The car is identical  
one he crashed.

weirdly  
James sits sideways in the driver's seat, door open,  
jaunty.

**CATHERINE**

I can't believe you've done this.

**KAREN**

This is the exact same car as your  
old one, isn't it?

**CATHERINE**

Yes, it is.

(to James)

Are you planning to have another car  
crash?

**JAMES**

I'm not thinking about the crash at  
all.

is the  
Catherine's  
it.  
James is telling the truth. What he is thinking about  
way that Karen's hip casually brushes against  
hip, without either woman seeming to be conscious of  
it.

**EXT. POLICE POUND -- DAY**

shows  
stamped, he  
James enters the gate of the police pound on foot, and  
his pass to the guard at the gate. His pass now  
hesitates for a beat before he enters.

**INT. POLICE POUND -- DAY**

sunlight  
far end  
cabin  
abruptly

Some twenty or so crashed vehicles are parked in the  
against the rear wall of an abandoned cinema. At the  
of the asphalt yard is a truck whose entire driving  
has been crushed, as if the dimensions of space had  
contracted around the body of the driver.

car to  
towing  
panels  
windows  
glass.

Unnerved by these deformations, James moves from one  
the next until he comes to his own. The remains of  
tackle are attached to the front bumper, and the body  
are splashed with oil and dirt. He peers through the  
into the cabin, runs his hand over the mud-stained

stares

Without thinking, he kneels in front of the car and  
at the crushed fenders and radiator grill.

They  
resent  
driver's

Two policemen cross the yard with a black Alsatian dog.  
watch James hovering around his car as if they vaguely  
his touching it. When they are gone, he unlatches the  
door and, with an effort, pulls it open.

back  
into  
compartment

James eases himself on to the dusty vinyl seat, tipped  
by the bowing of the floor. He nervously lifts his legs  
the car and places his feet on the rubber cleats of the  
pedals, which have been forced out of the engine  
so that his knees are pressed against his chest.

yard.

The two policemen are exercising their dog across the

plastic, are  
polaroid  
with her

James opens the glove compartment, forcing the shelf  
downwards. Inside, covered with dirt and flaked  
a set of route maps, a mildly pornographic novel, a  
of Renata sitting in the car near a water reservoir  
breasts exposed.

to his  
calls  
a  
wrecked  
car  
massive  
turns  
James's  
her  
the  
husband.  
hand  
damage to  
anything,  
and  
to  
progress.

James pulls open the ashtray, which promptly jumps on lap, releasing a dozen lipstick-smearred butts.

Someone passes in front of the car. A policeman's voice from the gatehouse. Through the windshield, James sees a woman in a white raincoat walking along the line of cars. The woman -- Helen Remington -- approaches the next to his, a crushed convertible involved in a rear-end collision.

James sits quietly behind the steering wheel. Helen from the convertible. She glances at the hood of car, clearly not recognizing the vehicle that killed her husband. As she raises her head she sees James through the glassless windshield frame, sitting behind the deformed steering wheel among the dried bloodstains of her husband.

Helen's strong eyes barely change their focus, but one rises involuntarily to her cheek. She takes in the damage to the car, then takes in James. Without giving away anything, she turns and moves toward a damaged truck, then turns and comes back as James gets out of his car.

She gestures toward the damaged vehicles, then speaks to James as though continuing a conversation already in progress.

**HELEN**

After this sort of thing, how do people manage to look at a car, let alone drive one?

(pause)

I'm trying to find Charles's car.

**JAMES**

It's not here. Maybe the police are still holding it. Their forensic people...

**HELEN**

They said it was here. They told me this morning.

its She peers critically at James's car, as if puzzled by distorted geometry.

**HELEN**

This is your car?

grill, She reaches out a gloved hand and touches the radiator among the feeling a chrome pillar torn from the accordion, as if searching for some trace of her husband's presence blood-spattered paintwork.

**JAMES**

You'll tear your gloves.

grill. James gently takes her hand and moves it away from the

**JAMES**

I don't think we should have come here. I'm surprised the police don't make it more difficult.

**HELEN**

Were you badly hurt? I think we saw each other at the hospital.

(pause)

I don't want the car. In fact, I was appalled to find that I have to pay a small fee to have it scrapped.

**JAMES**

Can I give you a lift?

(almost apologetically)

I somehow find myself driving again.

**INT. JAMES'S CAR -- DAY**

pound. James is driving Helen Remington away from the police

**JAMES**

You haven't told me where we're going.

**HELEN**

Haven't I? To the airport, if you could.

At these words, James is stricken by an odd feeling of loss.

**JAMES**

The airport? Why? Are you leaving?

**HELEN**

Not yet -- though not soon enough for some people, I've already found. A death in the doctor's family makes the patients doubly uneasy.

**JAMES**

I take it you're not wearing white to reassure them.

**HELEN**

I'll wear a bloody kimono if I want to.

**JAMES**

So -- why the airport?

**HELEN**

I work in the immigration department there.

intently  
the  
would  
scars,  
raincoat.  
right

James is very aware that, as they speak, Helen is watching his hands and feet operating the controls of car, perceiving these motions in a way that she never have before her crash with him. He, in turn, has trouble taking his eyes off her facial which she now makes no attempt to hide. She pulls a cigarette packet from the pocket of her She searches the instrument panel for the lighter, her hand hovering above his knees like a nervous bird.

the

Having found the lighter, her strong hands tear away  
cellophane from the cigarette pack.

**HELEN**

Do you want a cigarette? I started  
to smoke at the hospital. It's rather  
stupid of me.

**JAMES**

(suddenly very agitated)  
Look at all this traffic. I'm not  
sure I can deal with it.

**HELEN**

It's much worse now. You noticed  
that, did you? The day I left the  
hospital I had the extraordinary  
feeling that all these cars were  
gathering for some special reason I  
didn't understand. There seemed to  
be ten times as much traffic.

**JAMES**

Are we imagining it?

the

Helen waves her cigarette in a gesture that takes in  
whole interior of the car.

**HELEN**

You've bought yourself exactly the  
same car again. It's the same shape  
and colour.

**EXT. FIRST CRASH SITE -- DAY**

place.

allows

central

packs

They are now passing the spot where their crash took  
Intimidated by the aggressive traffic around him, James  
the front wheel of the car to strike the curb of the  
reservation, throwing a tornado of dust and cigarette  
on to the windshield.

**INT. JAMES'S CAR -- DAY**

airline

The car swerves from the fast lane and veers toward an

to  
wheel.  
coach coming out of the exit ramp. Helen quickly shifts  
the left of her seat and, pressing her shoulder against  
James's, closes her hand over James's hand on the

behind  
the coach.  
With Helen's help, James just manages to pull the car

them,  
horns sounding.  
They watch the cars swerving past on both sides of

**HELEN**

Turn up here into the car-park. It  
won't be busy this time of day.

**INT. AIRPORT CAR-PARK -- DAY**

higher  
soothing  
The car winds its way slowly up the rampways leading to  
and higher parking levels. James finds the rhythm  
and begins to calm down.

**HELEN**

I've found that I enjoy burying myself  
in heavy traffic. I like to look at  
it. Yesterday I hired a taxi-driver  
to drive me around for an hour.  
'Anywhere,' I said. We sat in a  
massive traffic jam under an off-  
ramp. I don't think we moved more  
than fifty yards.

(pause)

I'm thinking of taking up a new job  
with the Road Research Laboratory.  
They need a medical officer. The  
salary is larger -- something I've  
got to think about now. There's a  
certain moral virtue in being  
materialistic, I'm beginning to feel.  
Well, it's a new approach for me, in  
any case.

**JAMES**

The Road Research Laboratory? Where  
they simulate car crashes?

**HELEN**

Yes.

**JAMES**

Isn't that rather too close...?

**HELEN**

That's the point. Besides, I know I can give something now that I wasn't remotely aware of before. It's not a matter of duty so much as of commitment.

car-  
major  
take-  
They have now reached the top level of the multi-story park, and James pulls into a parking spot overlooking a runway. An immense jumbo jet is maneuvering into its off position.

She  
well  
James turns off the car and puts his arms around Helen. offers no resistance, as though the whole scenario were understood and agreed upon. James kisses her mouth, her eyelids, unzips her dress.

lifts  
fingers  
awkwardly  
in  
With the jet engines screaming for accompaniment, Helen her right breast from her brassière, pressing James's against the hot nipple. Helen now straddles him and, meshing with the technology around them, they make love the driver's seat of the car.

**INT. BALLARD APT. -- NIGHT**

in the  
preceding scene.

Helen in  
James's thoughts keep flashing back to himself and his car, the images mixing confusingly with his present lovemaking to Catherine.

**INT. FILM STUDIO. JAMES'S OFFICE -- DAY**

is  
James is back in his office, but it is obvious that he

only nibbling at the work that has piled up in his  
absence.

Renata comes in.

**RENATA**

I almost forgot to give you this.  
Probably because I know you're going  
to like it.

Renata hands James a brown manila envelope with no  
markings  
on it.

**JAMES**

What is it?

**RENATA**

A complimentary ticket for a special  
stunt-driving exhibition. Definitely  
not part of the big auto show. There's  
a map in the packet and a note  
requesting you be discreet about the  
location.

**JAMES**

Really? What kind of exhibition is  
it?

**RENATA**

I suspect it involves re-enactments  
of famous car crashes. You know,  
Jayne Mansfield, James Dean, Albert  
Camus...

**JAMES**

You're kidding.

**RENATA**

Serious. But you'll have to take  
your new friend, the female crash-  
test dummy. She dropped it off for  
you.

**JAMES**

You're not jealous, are you? You  
have to understand... Helen and I  
had this strange, intense...  
experience together.

Renata kisses him hard, then bites his lip. James pulls  
away  
in surprise.

**RENATA**

We've had a few of those ourselves,  
haven't we?

leaving Renata turns on her heel and floats out the door,  
James to contemplate the contents of the envelope.

**EXT. COUNTRY ROAD -- NIGHT**

black We are looking at the words 'Little Bastard' written in  
script on silver metal, enamel on unpainted aluminum.  
We pull back to reveal the entire metal object, which is a  
1955 Porsche 550 Spyder race car. It is small and  
curvaceous, and is being fussed over by several men in overalls. The  
number '130' is painted on its hood and doors.

heavily The Porsche sits on a country road, two-lane blacktop,  
lining wooded, lit by a series of movie lights. On the hills  
the road a few rough wooden stands have been erected.  
A blond man -- Vaughan -- stands near the rear of the  
Porsche, a microphone in his hand. His voice floats eerily out  
of the woods from speakers mounted on a series of pine trees.

**VAUGHAN**

(over speakers)

'Don't worry, that guy's gotta see us!' These were the confident last words of the brilliant young Hollywood star James Dean as he piloted his Porsche 550 Spyder race car toward a date with death on a lonely stretch of California two-lane blacktop, Route 466. 'Don't worry, that guy's gotta see us.' The year, 1955; the day, September thirtieth; the time: now.

**EXT. COUNTRY ROAD. GRANDSTAND -- NIGHT**

at  
James's

Helen and James sit in a half-empty stand, looking down  
the road from amid the trees. Helen has her arm around  
waist, her face touching his shoulder.

**JAMES**

It's strange -- I thought all this  
would be far more popular.

Helen is consulting a yellow program sheet.

**HELEN**

The real thing is available free of  
charge. Besides, it's not quite legal.  
They can't advertise.

**VAUGHAN**

(over speakers)

The first star of our show is 'Little  
Bastard', James Dean's racing Porsche.  
He named it after himself, and had  
his racing number, 130, painted on  
it.

**JAMES**

Who is that? The announcer. Do I  
know him?

**HELEN**

That's Vaughan. He talked to you at  
the hospital.

**JAMES**

Oh, yes. I thought he was a medical  
photographer, doing some sort of  
accident research. He wanted every  
conceivable detail about our crash.

**HELEN**

When I first met Vaughan, he was a  
specialist in international  
computerized traffic systems. I don't  
know what he is now.

**VAUGHAN**

(over speakers)

The second star is stuntman and former  
race driver -- Colin Seagrave, who  
will drive our replica of James Dean's  
car.

**EXT. COUNTRY ROAD -- NIGHT**

behind  
Dean  
loafers,  
mounted  
with  
to be  
ringmaster,

Seagrave, a coarse and burly man, wriggles his way the wheel of the delicate little race car without acknowledging the cheers of the crowd. He wears James clothes -- a red windbreaker, a white T-shirt, jeans, prescription glasses with clip-on sunshades. As he talks, Vaughan tours the phalanx of tripod-mounted cameras to check their placement, and chats off-mike with the pair of cameramen with hand-held cameras. He seems to be more the director of the event, possibly the ringmaster, than an actor in it.

**VAUGHAN**

(over speakers)

I myself shall play the role of James Dean's racing mechanic, Rolf Wütherich, sent over from the Porsche factory in Zuffenhausen, Germany. This mechanic was himself fated to die in a car crash in Germany twenty-six years later. And the third and in some ways most important party, the college student Donald Turnupseed, played by movie stuntman Brett Trask.

waves  
tone,  
which  
yards.

Trask, slim and wiry, wearing loafers and a blazer, waves his hand and gets into a replica of Turnupseed's two-tone, black-and-white 1950 Ford sedan. He starts up the Ford, which smokes badly, and drives it up the hill about 100 yards.

**VAUGHAN**

(over speakers)

Turnupseed was on his way back to his home in Fresno for the weekend. James Dean was on his way to an automobile race in Salinas, a dusty town in northern California. The two would only meet for one moment, but it was a moment that would create a

Hollywood legend.

cotton  
thin  
standing  
if  
side of

At this point Vaughan, who is dressed in light-blue 1950s mechanics' overalls, sees James and Helen in the crowd and waves to them, as though they were long-aficionados of crash spectacles. He doesn't wait to see they react, but immediately steps into the passenger side of the Porsche, microphone still in hand.

**VAUGHAN**

(over speakers)

You'll notice that we are not wearing helmets or safety padding of any kind, and our cars are not equipped with roll cages or seat-belts. We depend solely on the skill of our drivers for our safety, so that we can bring you the ultimate in authenticity. All right, here we go. The fatal crash of James Dean!

also  
silver

Vaughan hands the microphone to a stills cameraman who functions as an assistant, and then sinks down into the car.

a  
Porsche  
road.

Seagrave starts the Porsche, which settles quickly into husky idle. A few blips of the throttle, and then the is reversed down to the edge of the lighted strip of

An  
car  
hill.

When the Porsche stops, the excited crowd goes quiet. assistant with a walkie-talkie kneels beside the silver car on the driver's side, co-ordinating the start with his opposite number standing next to the Ford over the

and  
the

There is a calculated pause before anything happens, then the Porsche spins its wheels and accelerates up hill.

can  
two  
respective

From their vantage point in the stand, James and Helen clearly see that the Ford has also started and that the cars are headed toward each other, each in its lane.

a

The Porsche accelerates hard, the Ford lumbers along at moderate pace, swaying clumsily on its soft springs.

point  
cars  
center  
back  
though

As the cars approach each other, James notices a fresh clearing at the side of the road at just about the where they seem likely to pass. Sure enough, when the cars are about thirty yards apart, the Ford wanders over the center line. As the Porsche approaches it, it seems to move back into its own lane, but then suddenly swerves again as though making a left turn.

American  
into  
wad of  
into

The Porsche, in its turn, swerves to avoid the big American car but they collide, the immense chrome grill punching into the side of the fragile race car, crumpling it like a wad of tin foil and shunting it unceremoniously off the road into the clearing that has been prepared for it.

stand up  
rolling  
Seagrave  
still  
of the

As the Porsche hobbles to a stop, Vaughan seems to stand up on his seat and then throw himself out of the car, rolling over what's left of the front hood on to the ground. Seagrave remains slumped in the driver's seat. Vaughan lies still where he lands, a few feet ahead of the crumpled nose of the race car.

begins  
crowd,

The door of the Ford opens and Trask stumbles out. He begins to walk around in a dazed and agitated manner, and the crowd,

away  
the  
which has been buzzing, goes silent again. Trask walks  
from the crash site and disappears into the shadows at  
edge of the road.

**EXT. COUNTRY ROAD. GRANDSTAND -- NIGHT**

James  
worried.  
There is no movement from either Seagrave or Vaughan.  
is not sure how to react, but Helen seems genuinely

**JAMES**

Is that part of the act or are they  
really hurt?

**HELEN**

I don't know. You can never be sure  
with Vaughan. This is his show.

beside the  
the  
or  
handed  
melodramatic  
speakers.  
A stills cameraman runs out of nowhere and kneels  
apparently stricken Vaughan in the weeds at the side of  
road. It is not clear whether he is taking his picture  
ministering to him. It soon becomes clear that he has  
him a radio microphone because Vaughan's low,  
growl now ripples out of the woods from the tree

**VAUGHAN**

(over speakers)

Rolf Wütherich was thrown from the  
Porsche and spent a year in the  
hospital recovering from his injuries.  
Donald Turnupseed was found wandering  
around in a daze, basically unhurt.  
James Dean died of a broken neck and  
became immortal.

**EXT. COUNTRY ROAD -- NIGHT**

Trask  
crowd.  
Vaughan now leaps to his feet, hands raised in triumph.  
Seagrave stirs behind the wheel, then raises his hands.  
emerges from the woods, waving to the now-supercharged

is  
Vaughan  
of

Seagrave tries to get out of the collapsed Porsche but  
jammed behind the wheel. Without missing a beat,  
dances over to the car and begins to haul Seagrave out  
his seat.

**COLIN**

Hold me. I'm dizzy. I can't stand  
up.

**EXT. COUNTRY ROAD. GRANDSTAND -- NIGHT**

Helen stands up as the crowd buzzes.

**HELEN**

I know that man, Seagrave, the stunt  
driver. I think he's genuinely hurt.

toward

Helen makes her way down the rickety grandstand steps  
the road, and James follows her.

**EXT. COUNTRY ROAD -- NIGHT**

cars,  
halt

Just as James and Helen step on the road, six police  
lights flashing and sirens wailing, converge on the lit  
stretch of road, three from each end. They screech to a  
and dozens of cops pour out of the cars.

on to  
cars

The crowd panics and streams down from the grandstand  
the road. A loudspeaker mounted on one of the police  
begins to blare.

**POLICE**

(over loudspeaker)

This is an illegal and unauthorized  
automotive demonstration which is in  
contravention of the Highway Traffic  
Act. You are all liable to fines and  
possible arrest and confinement...  
Disperse at once! Disperse at once!

first  
as

Because James and Helen are just in advance of the  
wave of spectators, they manage to link up with Vaughan

into he helps haul a still-groggy Seagrave off the road and  
the woods. Helen takes Seagrave's free arm.

**HELEN**

(to Vaughan)

What's the matter with Seagrave?

**VAUGHAN**

Hit his head, I think. His balance  
is off.

people at The police spread out through the crowd, collaring  
random before they are able to escape into the woods.

**EXT. WOODS -- NIGHT**

the James and Helen help Vaughan hustle Seagrave through  
woods. The din of the roadway fades away behind them.

**JAMES**

Why are the police taking this all  
so seriously?

**VAUGHAN**

It's not the police. It's the  
Department of Transport. Internal  
politics. It's a joke. They have no  
idea who we really are.

that In the gathering darkness of the woods, it is apparent  
James doesn't really know who they are either.

**INT. VAUGHAN'S LINCOLN -- NIGHT**

landscape. Vaughan drives the Lincoln through a scarred, bleak  
Seagrave is In the front seat with him are Helen and James.  
lying down in the back seat with his eyes closed.

**VAUGHAN**

That was glib, wasn't it? 'James  
Dean died of a broken neck and became  
immortal.' But I couldn't resist.

not Vaughan puts his hand between Helen's thighs. She seems

while.

to notice, but her eyes close dreamily every once in a  
James watches microscopically.

stares

Sometimes, when the flow of traffic allows, Vaughan  
intently at James while his hand works away between  
thighs, and James looks away, flushed, like a

Helen's

schoolgirl.

**EXT. SEAGRAVE'S GARAGE -- NIGHT**

garage

The Lincoln turns into the forecourt of Seagrave's  
and showroom. His business, which has clearly seen  
days, is hot-rodding and customized cars. Behind the  
glass of the showroom is a fiberglass replica of a  
Brooklands racer, faded bunting stuffed into the seat.

better

unwashed

1930s

through

They get out of the car, helping the woozy Seagrave  
the door at the side of the showroom, which leads to  
stairway up to the apartment above the garage.

the

**INT. SEAGRAVE APT. -- NIGHT**

featuring

The Seagrave apartment is dirty and depressing,  
cheap, cigarette-scarred leatherette furniture.

living-

television

young

Vera,

James watches Helen and Vaughan steer Seagrave into the  
room, where two people sit on a couch watching  
with the sound turned off: Gabrielle, a sharp-faced  
woman who is rolling a hash joint; and Seagrave's wife,  
a handsome, restless woman of about thirty.

shaky

Vera stands as they come in and rushes over to the  
Seagrave.

**VERA**

Oh, God. What happened? Here, lie  
down.

three-  
helps

Vera and Helen lay the confused Seagrave down on the seat sofa, while Vaughan sits next to Gabrielle and her prepare another hash joint. James, awkwardly left standing, notices long scars on Vera's thighs and legs.

**HELEN**

They did the James Dean crash. It seemed to go perfectly. But he started to feel nauseous on the way back. I'm sure it's concussion.

**VERA**

Ah, well... We're familiar enough with that, then, aren't we?

small  
brings a  
the  
waiting

James watches Gabrielle and Vaughan. As she rolls a piece of resin in a twist of silver foil, Vaughan brass lighter out of his hip pocket. Gabrielle cooks resin, and shakes the powder into the open cigarette in the roller machine on her lap.

bacillus  
notices  
close her

On Gabrielle's legs are traces of what seem to be gas scars, faint circular depressions on the kneecaps. She James staring at her scars, but makes no effort to legs.

she  
leg is  
becomes  
she is

On the sofa beside her is a chromium metal cane and, as shifts her weight, James sees that the instep of each held in the steel clamp of a surgical support. It now obvious from the over-rigid posture of her waist that also wearing a back-brace of some kind.

but  
and

Gabrielle rolls another cigarette out of the machine, does not offer it to James. Instead, Vaughan gets up takes it over to Seagrave, who has managed to sit up.

**VAUGHAN**

I'd really like to work out the details of the Jayne Mansfield crash with you. We could do the decapitation -- her head embedded in the windshield -- and the little dead dog thing as well. You know, the Chihuahuas in the back seat. I've got it figured out.

He  
grease  
Seagrave takes the lit joint and draws heavily on it.  
holds the smoke in his lungs for a while, studies the  
on his hands before he answers.

**COLIN**

You know I'll be ready, Vaughan. But I'll want to wear really big tits -- out to here -- so the crowd can see them get cut up and crushed on the dashboard.

with  
his  
James turns to go, leaving Helen to her conversation  
Vera, but Vaughan follows him through the door, holding  
arm in a powerful grip.

**VAUGHAN**

Don't leave yet, Ballard. I want you to help me.

**INT. VAUGHAN'S WORKSHOP -- NIGHT**

rooms.  
carefully  
James follows Vaughan down a cramped corridor to a photographic workshop formed out of a warren of small  
Vaughan eases James into the first room and then  
closes the door behind them.

**JAMES**

Do you live here? With Seagrave?

**VAUGHAN**

enamel  
(laughs)  
I live in my car. This is my workshop.  
Pinned to the walls and lying on the benches among the  
pails are hundreds of photographs. The floor around the

and  
makes  
enlarger is littered with half-plate prints, developed  
cast aside once they have yielded their images. Vaughan  
a sweeping gesture that takes in all the photographs.

**VAUGHAN**

And this is the new project, Ballard.

pages  
discarded  
pictures  
close-  
As Vaughan hunts around the central table, turning the  
of a leather-bound album, James looks down at the  
prints below his feet. Most of them are crude frontal  
of motor-cars and heavy vehicles involved in highway  
collisions, surrounded by spectators and police, and  
ups of impacted radiator grills and windshields.

James. He  
adjusts the  
Vaughan opens the album at random and hands it to  
leans back against the door and watches as James  
desk lamp.

hospitalization,  
Gabrielle --  
The first thirty pages record the crash,  
and post-recuperative romance of the young woman  
a social worker, the photos suggest -- who is currently  
getting very stoned in the next room.

an  
the  
been  
incredibly  
therapy  
By coincidence, her small sports car had collided with  
airline bus at the entry to the airport not far from  
site of James's own accident. Vaughan had obviously  
there, shooting film, moments after the crash. The  
detailed photos end with her affair with her physical  
instructor.

James's  
encounters  
Catherine.  
The remainder of the album describes the course of  
own accident and recovery, and includes his sexual  
with Renata, Helen Remington, and his own wife,

ready

Vaughan stands at James's shoulder, like an instructor to help a promising pupil.

James closes the book.

**JAMES**

What kind of help can I possibly be to you? You seem to be everywhere at once as it is.

room

At that moment, there is a knock at the door, and then Gabrielle enters and takes a few stiff steps into the

to

on her shackled legs. She holds out a couple of joints  
Vaughan.

**GABRIELLE**

Thought you might be missing these.

(to James)

So here you are at the nerve centre. Vaughan makes everything look like a crime, doesn't he?

one

Vaughan takes the joints and lights them both. He hands to James, who takes it gratefully.

**JAMES**

What exactly is your project, Vaughan?  
A book of crashes? A medical study?  
A sensational documentary? Global traffic?

**VAUGHAN**

It's something we're all intimately involved in: the reshaping of the human body by modern technology.

**INT. FILM STUDIO. JAMES'S OFFICE -- DAY**

at the

saying,

involving

touch

it,

James watches Renata and Catherine talking animatedly other end of his office. He can't hear what they are but Renata is showing Catherine layouts of ads images of private planes flying in formation. They each other from time to time without seeming to notice

but James notices it.

**EXT. VARIOUS LARGE CITY ROADS -- DAY**

separate  
James  
her,  
James and Catherine set off for home in their own cars. At times, they are within sight of each other and watches her microscopically, as though he didn't know as though, perhaps, she isn't human.

old  
At one point he sees her with her hands resting on the steering wheel, her right index finger picking at an adhesive label on the windshield.

of  
sports  
And then, abruptly, James is aware of the dented fender Vaughan's Lincoln only a few feet behind Catherine's car.

roadway as  
the  
his  
cuts in  
Vaughan now surges past James, crowding along the if waiting for Catherine to make a mistake. Startled, Catherine takes refuge in front of an airline bus in nearside lane. Vaughan drives alongside the bus, using horn and lights to force the driver back, and again behind Catherine.

Vaughan  
Catherine,  
James moves ahead along the center lane, shouting to as he passes him, but Vaughan is signalling to pumping his headlights at her rear fender.

a  
Tires  
with  
with his  
Without thinking, Catherine pulls into the courtyard of a filling station, forcing Vaughan into a heavy U-turn. screaming, he swings around the ornamental flower-bed its glazed pottery plants, but James blocks his way own car.

fuel  
Heart racing, Catherine sits still in her car among the

pumps, her eyes flashing at Vaughan.

who  
before,  
the  
James steps from his car and walks across to Vaughan,  
watches James approach as if he had never seen him  
scarred mouth working on a piece of gum as he gazes at  
aircrafts taking off from the airport.

**JAMES**

Vaughan, what the hell are you doing?  
Are you trying to create your own  
Famous Crash?

Vaughan hooks his gear lever into reverse.

**VAUGHAN**

It excited her, Ballard. Your wife,  
Catherine. She enjoyed it. Ask her.

running  
early  
Vaughan reverses his car in a wide circle, almost  
down a passing pump attendant, and sets off across the  
afternoon traffic.

**INT. BALLARD APT. -- NIGHT**

to  
James and Catherine lie naked in bed, she with her back  
him, buttocks pressed into his groin. He is inside her.

**CATHERINE**

He must have fucked a lot of women  
in that huge car of his. It's like a  
bed on wheels. It must smell of  
semen...

**JAMES**

It does.

**CATHERINE**

Do you find him attractive?

**JAMES**

He's very pale. Covered with scars.

**CATHERINE**

Would you like to fuck him, though?  
In that car?

**JAMES**

No. But when he's in that car...

**CATHERINE**

Have you seen his penis?

**JAMES**

I think it's badly scarred too. From a motorcycle accident.

**CATHERINE**

Is he circumcised? Can you imagine what his anus is like? Describe it to me. Would you like to sodomize him? Would you like to put your penis right into his anus, thrust it up his anus? Tell me, describe it to me. Tell me what you would do. How would you kiss him in that car? Describe how you'd reach over and unzip his greasy jeans, then take out his penis. Would you kiss it or suck it right away? Which hand would you hold it in? Have you ever sucked a penis? Do you know what semen tastes like? Have you ever tasted semen? Some semen is saltier than others. Vaughan's semen must be very salty...

other. They both have huge orgasms within moments of each

**INT. HELEN'S CAR -- DAY**

Helen We are close on the distracted, solicitous face of Remington.

**HELEN**

Have you come?

seat of Helen Remington and James are having sex in the back  
to Helen's car, Helen sitting on James's lap with her back  
worked him. She dismounts him and touches his shoulder with an  
uncertain hand, as though he were a patient she had  
hard to revive.

**EXT. AIRPORT CAR-PARK -- DAY**

car-  
traffic,

Helen's car is parked on the upper level of the airport park, which is currently quite busy. Streams of both pedestrian and vehicular, flow past the car.

**INT. HELEN'S CAR -- DAY**

around  
a

James lies against the rear seat of the car while Helen dresses with abrupt movements, straightening her shirt her hips like a department-store window-dresser jerking a garment on to a mannequin.

**JAMES**

Please finish your story.

**HELEN**

The junior pathologist at Ashford Hospital. Then the husband of a colleague of mine, then a trainee radiologist, then the service manager at my garage.

**JAMES**

And you had sex with all of these men in cars? Only in cars?

**HELEN**

Yes. I didn't plan it that way.

**JAMES**

And did you fantasize that Vaughan was photographing all these sex acts? As though they were traffic accidents?

**HELEN**

Yes.

(laughs)

They felt like traffic accidents.

**INT. ROAD RESEARCH LAB -- DAY**

created  
the

We are witnessing a spectacular road accident re-created under laboratory conditions in the immense confines of the Road Research Lab.

collision

A motorcycle is in the process of having a head-on

violent  
dummies,  
technology.

with a sedan bearing a family of four -- an extremely  
and disturbing crash, despite the use of cradles,  
rails, cables and extensive metering and recording

numerous  
officials, are

Among the many witnesses to the crash, including  
engineers, technicians and Transport Ministry  
James, Helen and Vaughan.

jeans,  
in

Vaughan is energetically masturbating through his  
shielded by a sheaf of publicity folders which he holds  
his other hand.

motorcycle  
sideways

There is a terrific metallic explosion as the  
strikes the front of the sedan. The two vehicles veer  
towards the line of startled spectators.

car  
in a

The motorcyclist and his bike sail over the hood of the  
and strike the windshield, then careen across the roof  
black mass of fragments.

to  
have  
lopsided  
of the

The car plunges ten feet back on its hawsers and comes  
rest astride its rails. The hood, windshield and roof  
been crushed by the impact. Inside the cabin, the  
family lurch across each other, the decapitated torso  
front-seat woman passenger embedded in the fractured  
windshield.

toward  
behind  
striding

The engineers wave to the crowd reassuringly and move  
the motorcycle, which lies on its side fifty yards  
the car. But it is Vaughan -- a black-jacketed figure  
on long, uneven legs -- who arrives first at the bike.

himself,

For a moment it seems that he might try to lift it up

up but he then backs away to where technicians are picking  
pieces of the motorcyclist's body, and then turns away  
completely and rejoins Helen and James.

his Vaughan holds up the bundle of technical hand-outs in  
grip.

**VAUGHAN**

Get all the paper you can, Ballard.  
Some of the stuff they're giving  
away is terrific: 'Mechanisms of  
Occupant Ejection', 'Tolerances of  
the Human Face in Crash Impacts'...

hurdle. Helen takes James's arm, smiling at him, nodding  
encouragingly, as if urging a child across some mental

**HELEN**

We can have a look at it again on  
the monitors. They're showing it in  
slow motion.

tables to An audience of thirty or so gathers at the trestle  
watch a slowmotion replay on a huge television monitor.

As the hypnotic, grotesque ballet unfolds, the crowd's own  
ghostly images stand silently in the background, hands  
and faces unmoving while the collision is re-enacted. The  
dream- like reversal of roles makes them seem less real than  
the mannequins in the car.

with a James looks down at the silk-suited wife of a Ministry  
official standing beside him. Her eyes watch the film  
daughters rapt gaze, as if she were seeing herself and her  
dismembered in the crash.

**INT. VAUGHAN'S CAR -- NIGHT**

aggressively, James rides in Vaughan's car. Vaughan drives  
the rolling the heavy car along the access roads, holding

until

battered bumpers a few feet behind any smaller vehicle  
it moves out of the way.

**VAUGHAN**

I've always wanted to drive a crashed  
car.

**JAMES**

You could get your wish at any moment.

**VAUGHAN**

No, I mean a crash with a history.  
Camus's Facel Vega, or Nathaniel  
West's station wagon, Grace Kelly's  
Rover 3500. Fix it just enough to  
get it rolling. Don't clean it, don't  
touch anything else.

**JAMES**

Is that why you drive this car? I  
take it that you see Kennedy's  
assassination as a special kind of  
car crash?

**VAUGHAN**

The case could be made.

first

They approach a major intersection. For almost the  
time on this drive, Vaughan applies the brakes.

slide

The heavy car sways and goes into a long right-hand  
which carries it across the path of a taxi. Flooring  
the  
accelerator, Vaughan swerves in front of it, tires  
screaming  
over the blaring horn of the taxi.

the

screaming

lifts a

As they settle down, Vaughan reaches behind him and  
briefcase off the back seat.

**VAUGHAN**

Take a look at this and tell me what  
you think.

of

James opens the briefcase and slides out a thick packet  
glossy photographs, all of them marked up with coloured

ink

pens.  
newspapers,  
uniform  
in the  
marked up  
areas,  
their  
circles

The photos are culled from a variety of sources --  
magazines, video stills, film frames -- blown up to  
8' x 10' size. Each one depicts a famous crash victim  
prime of life, and each one has the wounds to come  
very explicitly -- lines circling their necks and pubic  
breasts and cheekbones shaded in, section lines across  
mouths and abdomens. Handwritten notes complement the  
and arrows.

these  
parts  
part:  
from  
marked

A second packet of photographs shows the cars in which  
famous people died. Each photo is marked to show which  
of the cars destroyed or fused with which famous body  
for example, a close-up of the dashboard and windshield  
the Camus car -- Michel Gallimard's Facel Vega -- is  
'nasal bridge', 'soft palate', 'left zygomatic arch'.

**JAMES**

It's very... satisfying. I'm not  
sure I understand why.

**VAUGHAN**

It's the future, Ballard, and you're  
already part of it. For the first  
time, a benevolent psychopathology  
beckons towards us. For example, the  
car crash is a fertilizing rather  
than a destructive event -- a  
liberation of sexual energy that  
mediates the sexuality of those who  
have died with an intensity impossible  
in any other form. To fully understand  
that, and to live that... that is my  
project.

**JAMES**

What about the reshaping of the human  
body by modern technology? I thought  
that was your project.

**VAUGHAN**

A crude sci-fi concept that floats on the surface and doesn't threaten anybody. I use it to test the resilience of my potential partners in psychopathology.

horn,  
up  
he  
scraping  
divider.

The traffic has jammed up to a walking pace. Using his  
Vaughan forces the drivers in the slower lanes to back  
and let him across on to the hard shoulder. Once free,  
accelerates past the lines of traffic, occasionally  
the right flank of the Lincoln against the cement  
In the distance the airport car-park looms.

**INT. AIRPORT CAR-PARK -- DAY**

of  
young  
provocatively  
and  
out of

The Lincoln spirals its way up toward the upper levels  
the airport carpark. James just spots a sharp-faced  
woman in a very short skirt, an airport whore,  
bent over a railing ostensibly to watch airplanes land  
take off, when Vaughan slams on the brakes and jumps  
the car.

**VAUGHAN**

You drive.

begins to  
like  
returns

The startled James numbly obeys, sliding over into the  
driver's seat as Vaughan approaches the whore and  
negotiate with her. James gingerly maneuvers the boat-  
car to one side to allow traffic to pass as Vaughan  
with the gum-chewing whore in tow.

hipped  
joint  
his

As the girl, with short black hair and a boy's narrow-  
body, opens the passenger door, Vaughan hands her a  
and lights it for her. Then, lifting her chin, he puts

flicking fingers in her mouth and plucks out the knot of gum,  
it away into the darkness.

**VAUGHAN**

Let's get rid of that. I don't want  
you blowing it up my urethra.

**EXT. AIRPORT ROADS -- NIGHT**

roads James drives the Lincoln along the bizarrely lighted  
back that ring the airport. Vaughan and the whore are in the  
seat.

**INT. LINCOLN -- NIGHT**

into James adjusts the rear-view mirror so that he can see  
sex the rear seat. Vaughan is having strange, disconnected  
control with the whore. James realizes that he can almost  
the sexual act behind him by the way in which he drives  
the car.

properly, It is, in that sense, a sexual threesome -- or, more  
whore a foursome, because the sex between Vaughan and the  
dials, takes place in the hooded grottoes of the luminescent  
brooding surging needles and blinking lights of the black,  
Lincoln.

**INT. FILM STUDIO. JAMES'S OFFICE -- DAY**

at James and Renata sort through some storyboards together  
walks the architect's table. Renata takes a few cast-offs and  
quick past the window toward the filing cabinet. She takes a  
peek out the window on her way.

**RENATA**

Your friend's still out there.

Vaughan is  
Most of  
by one

James leaves the table and looks out the window.  
sitting in his car in the center of the parking-lot.  
the staff are leaving for home, taking their cars one  
from the slots around Vaughan's dusty limousine.

**RENATA**

What does he want from you?

**JAMES**

Hard to say.

**RENATA**

I'm going to leave now. Do you want  
a lift?

**JAMES**

No, thanks. I'll go with Vaughan.

**EXT. FILM STUDIO. PARKING-LOT -- DUSK**

find  
patrol

James walks out into the nearly deserted parking-lot to  
two cars parked in front of Vaughan's Lincoln: a police  
car and Catherine's white sports car.

through the  
other

One policeman is inspecting the Lincoln, peering  
dusty windows, with Vaughan fidgeting beside him. The  
stands beside Catherine's car, questioning her.

to

James slows guiltily as both policemen begin to talk to  
Vaughan. Catherine spots James and walks crisply over  
him.

**CATHERINE**

They're questioning Vaughan about an  
accident near the airport. Some  
pedestrian... they think he was run  
over intentionally.

**JAMES**

Vaughan isn't interested in  
pedestrians.

back to

As if taking their cue from this, the policemen walk

their car. Vaughan watches them go, head raised like a periscope.

**CATHERINE**

You'd better drive him. He's a bit shaky. I'll follow in my car. Where is yours?

**JAMES**

At home. I couldn't face all this traffic.

**CATHERINE**

I'd better come with you, then. Are you sure you can drive?

As Catherine and James walk toward Vaughan, he reaches into the rear seat of his car and pulls out a white sweatshirt. As he takes off his denim jacket, the falling light picks out the scars on his naked abdomen and chest, a constellation of white chips that circle his body from the left armpit down to his crotch.

**EXT. JAMMED MOTORWAY -- NIGHT**

The Lincoln has entered an immense traffic jam, and brake-lights flare in the evening air. Vaughan sits with one arm out the passenger window. He slaps the door impatiently, pounding the panel with his fist.

A police car speeds down the descent lane of a flyover, headlights and roof-lamps flashing. Ahead, two policemen steer the traffic from the nearside curb. Warning tripods set up on the pavement flash a rhythmic 'Slow... Slow... Accident... Accident...'

Eventually, they begin to edge past the accident site, which is lit by a circle of police spotlights. Three vehicles -- a

collided  
gathered  
spans the

taxi, a limousine and a small sports sedan -- have  
where an on-ramp joins the main roadway. A crowd has  
on the sidewalks and on the pedestrian bridge that  
road.

blankets  
the  
fender  
blood.

Beside the taxi, its three passengers lie in a group,  
swathing their chests and legs. First-aid men work on  
driver, an elderly man who sits upright against the  
of his car, face and clothes speckled with drops of

of  
internal

The limousine's passengers still sit in the deep cabin  
their car, their identities sealed behind the starred  
window.

**INT. VAUGHAN'S CAR -- NIGHT**

seat.  
battle

Catherine has half hidden herself behind the passenger  
Her steady eyes follow the skid marks and loops of  
bloodstained oil that cross the familiar macadam like a  
diagram.

ready  
in  
from

Vaughan, by contrast, leans out the window, both arms  
as if about to seize one of the bodies. In some recess  
the back seat he has found a camera, which now swings  
his neck.

oncoming  
slows  
ambulance to

Siren whining, a third ambulance drives down the  
lane. A police motorcyclist cuts in front of James and  
to a halt, signalling him to wait and allow the  
pass. James stops the car.

of  
it.

Ten yards from them is the crushed limousine, the body  
the young chauffeur still lying on the ground beside

hydraulic

pull

the

wearing

anemic

seat.

their

man's

woman's

holds

for

at

forwards.

sight

hands.

car,

metal

runs

the

Three engineers work with surreal hand-tools and cutting and prying equipment at the rear doors of the limousine. They sever the jammed door mechanism and pull back the door to expose the passengers trapped inside the compartment.

The two passengers, a pink-faced man in his fifties wearing a black overcoat, and a younger woman with a pale, anemic skin, still sit upright, staring blankly, in the rear seat.

A policeman pulls away the traveling rug that covers their legs and waists. The woman's legs are bare, the older man's feet splayed, apparently broken at the ankles. The woman's skirt has ridden up around her waist, and her left hand holds the window strap.

As the older man turns to the woman, one hand searching for her, he slips sideways off the seat, his ankles kicking at the clutter of leather valises and broken glass.

The traffic stream moves on. James eases the car forwards. Vaughan raises the camera to his eye, lowering it from sight when an ambulance attendant tries to knock it from his hands.

The pedestrian bridge passes overhead. Half out of the car, Vaughan peers at the scores of legs pressed against the metal railings, then opens the door and dives out.

**EXT. MOTORWAY VERGE -- NIGHT**

As James pulls the Lincoln on to the verge, Vaughan runs back to the pedestrian bridge, darting in and out of the cars. James and Catherine get out of the car.

one  
the  
and  
realizes  
accident

As James closes the door, he notices that the blood of  
of the accident victims has somehow been splashed on to  
door handle, and that some of it is now on his hand.  
He finds a section of newspaper at the side of the road  
wipes the blood off his hand. When he looks up, he  
that Catherine has followed Vaughan back to the  
site.

**EXT. JAMMED MOTORWAY -- NIGHT**

the  
scarred  
aspect

James walks back alone, eventually spotting them among  
throng of spectators, Catherine watching Vaughan's  
face intently, provocatively, as he photographs every  
of the accident.

the air  
as  
sedan,  
the

There is a calmly festive and pervasive sexuality in  
among the onlookers, and even a congregational feeling  
one group of engineers works on the crushed sports  
prying at the metal roof which has been flattened on to  
heads of the occupants.

Catherine  
were

And now Vaughan poses an only slightly reluctant  
against the backdrop of the stricken taxi as though she  
one of the shaken survivors of the accident.

hair of  
though  
it's  
tangled,

When the roof of the sports sedan is levered up, the  
the driver, its only passenger, comes off with it as  
scalped, stuck to the roofliner with drying blood. But  
soon apparent that it's not hair, but rather a cheap,  
platinum blond wig.

the  
road-  
him,  
Vaughan makes his way over to the sedan, intrigued by  
dangling 'scalp', which is almost phosphorescent in the  
rescue work lights. Catherine trails obediently behind  
like a harshly disciplined puppy.

the  
dead  
hair is  
huge,  
body  
suede  
When the body of the driver is exposed to the lights,  
effect is doubly grotesque, for not only is the driver  
and partially crushed, but he is also a cross-dresser:  
Seagrave, in Jayne Mansfield drag. His long, greasy  
tied up in a knot on his head, he is unshaven, his  
fake bosom is bloody and askew; his bloated, muscular  
strains against the pink 60s skirt and jacket, the blue  
boots with high heels.

with  
until  
rigor  
There is also a dead Chihuahua bitch inside the car  
Seagrave, which Vaughan manages to move with his foot  
a cop, outraged, shoos him away. The dog is stiff with  
mortis, obviously dead long before the crash.

him,  
An excited Vaughan has spotted James and now approaches  
breathless.

**VAUGHAN**

It's Seagrave. He was worried that  
we would never do Jayne Mansfield's  
crash, now that the police were  
cracking down. So he did it himself.

Vaughan turns back to look at the wreck again, almost  
reverent. This is Seagrave's own solitary work of art.

**VAUGHAN**

(shakes his head)

The dog -- God, the dog is brilliant,  
perfect. I wonder where he got it?

incandescent  
with joy.  
Now Vaughan turns to James, his face flushed,

**VAUGHAN**

Come with me, James. I have to document it.

Vaughan lopes off toward the Seagrave wreck.

the  
dead  
face,  
rear

But James hangs back, watching, as the passengers from taxi are carried on stretchers to an ambulance. The chauffeur of the limousine lies with a blanket over his face, while a doctor and two ambulance men climb into the rear compartment.

possible  
Chihuahua.

Beyond them, Vaughan begins to snap away at every aspect of Seagrave's wreck, beginning with the dead

**EXT. MOTORWAY VERGE -- NIGHT**

begins  
shows  
back

Some time later, as the crowd disperses and the traffic to flow normally, James kneels beside the Lincoln and shows Vaughan the blood on his door. Catherine sits in the back seat.

**JAMES**

We must have driven through a pool of blood. If the police stop you again, they may impound the car while they have the blood analyzed.

blood.

Vaughan kneels beside him and inspects the smears of

**VAUGHAN**

You're right, Ballard. There's an all-night car-wash in the airport service area.

sits  
car  
rear

Vaughan rises and holds the door open for James, who sits behind the wheel, expecting Vaughan to walk around the car and sit beside him. Instead, Vaughan pulls open the rear

door and climbs in beside Catherine.

As they set off, Vaughan's camera lands on the front seat.

**INT. VAUGHAN'S CAR -- NIGHT**

As they drive, James watches Catherine in the rear-view mirror. She sits in the center of the back seat, elbows forward on her knees, looking over his shoulder at the speeding lights of the expressway. At the first traffic light, she smiles at James reassuringly.

Vaughan sits like a bored gangster beside her, his left knee leaning against her thigh. One hand rubs his groin absent-mindedly. He stares at the nape of her neck, running his eyes along the profiles of her cheek and shoulder.

**EXT. CAR-WASH -- NIGHT**

Near the airport, the Lincoln joins a line of cars waiting their turn to pass through the automatic car-wash. In the darkness, the three nylon rollers drum against the sides and soap roof of a taxi parked in the washing station, water and solution jetting from the metal gantries.

Fifty yards away, the two night attendants sit in their glass cubicle beside the deserted fuel pumps, reading their comic books and playing a radio.

**INT. VAUGHAN'S CAR -- NIGHT**

The car ahead advances a few yards, its brake-lights illuminating the interior of the Lincoln, covering the trio with a pink sheen. Through the rear-view mirror James sees that Catherine is leaning against the back seat, her shoulder pressed tightly into Vaughan's. Her eyes are fixed on Vaughan's chest, on the scars around his injured nipples,

shining like points of light.

turns  
right  
Catherine's  
breast  
fascinated

James edges the Lincoln forward a few feet. When he  
around, he sees that Vaughan is holding in his cupped  
hand his wife's bare breast.

James fumbles for change as Vaughan caresses  
nipple in the back seat. Catherine looks down at this  
with rapt eyes, as if seeing it for the first time,  
by its unique geometry.

**EXT. CAR-WASH -- NIGHT**

out.  
wet  
the

Their car is alone in the washing bay. A voice rings  
Cigarette in hand, one of the attendants stands in the  
darkness, beckoning to James, who inserts his coins in  
pay slot and closes the window.

shutting

Water jets on to the car, clouding the windows and  
the trio into the interior.

**INT. VAUGHAN'S CAR -- NIGHT**

across the  
around  
solution  
of the

Within their blue grotto, Vaughan lies diagonally  
back seat. Catherine kneels across him, skirt rolled  
her waist. The light refracted through the soap  
jetting across the windows covers their bodies with a  
luminescent glow, like two semi-metallic human beings  
future making love in a chromium bower.

across  
windshield,  
Catherine  
the

The gantry engine begins to drum. The rollers pound  
the hood of the Lincoln and roar forward to the  
driving the soap solution into a whirlwind of froth.  
settles over Vaughan, and as the rollers drum against

almost roof and doors, Vaughan drives his pelvis upwards,  
lifting his buttocks off the seat.

rock In the mounting roar of the rollers, she and Vaughan  
palms together, Vaughan holding her breasts together with his  
his as if trying to force them into a single globe. When  
marks hands move away to her buttocks, James can see that her  
breasts have been bruised by Vaughan's fingers, the  
forming a pattern like crash injuries.

in an At just this moment, Catherine looks into James's eyes  
irony instant of complete lucidity. Her expression shows both  
both and affection, an acceptance of a sexual logic they  
recognize and have prepared themselves for.

sluices James sits quietly in the front seat as the white soap  
cries across the roof and doors like liquid lace. Catherine  
across out, a gasp of pain cut off by Vaughan's strong hand  
clamped her mouth. He sits back with her legs across his hips,  
slapping her with his free hand. His sweaty face is  
in an expression of anger and distress. The blows raise  
blunted weals on Catherine's arm and hips.

**EXT. DESERTED MOTORWAY -- NIGHT**

motorway. James drives the Lincoln home along a deserted

**INT. VAUGHAN'S CAR -- NIGHT**

the The street-lamps illuminate Vaughan's sleeping face in  
child's rear of the car, scarred mouth lying open like a  
against the sweat-soaked seat.

She Catherine sits forward, freeing herself from Vaughan.  
affection. touches James's shoulder in a gesture of domestic

neck,  
In the mirror, James can see the weals on her cheek and  
the bruised mouth that deforms her nervous smile.

**EXT. BALLARD APT. BUILDING -- NIGHT**

building.  
The Lincoln pulls up at the Ballards' apartment  
beside  
James and Catherine get out and stand in the darkness  
in the  
the now-immaculate black car. Vaughan is still asleep  
holding her  
back. James takes Catherine's arm to steady her,  
bag in his hand.

climbs  
As they walk toward the entrance, Vaughan gets up and  
back  
unsteadily behind the steering wheel. Without looking  
quietly  
at James and Catherine, he starts the engine and  
drives off.

**INT. BALLARD APT. BUILDING. ELEVATOR -- NIGHT**

lovingly.  
In the elevator, James holds Catherine closely,

**INT. BALLARD APT. BEDROOM -- NIGHT**

diagonally  
That night, James kneels over Catherine as she lies  
one  
across the bed, her small feet resting on his pillow,  
hand over her right breast.

his  
She watches him with a calm and affectionate gaze as he  
raw  
explores her body and bruises, feeling them gently with  
her  
fingers, lips and cheeks, tracing and interpreting the  
symbols that Vaughan's hands and mouth have left across  
skin.

**INT. AIRPORT CONVENTION CENTER. AUTO SHOW -- DAY**

show,  
James and the crippled Gabrielle visit the annual auto  
convention  
which occupies the immense halls of the airport

on center. He watches appreciatively as she swings herself  
on her shackled legs among the hundreds of cars displayed  
their stands.

pivoting Gabrielle approaches the imposing Mercedes stand and,  
these about on her heels, seems to take immense pleasure from  
an immaculate vehicles, placing her scarred hands on their  
paintwork, rolling her injured hips against them like  
unpleasant cat.

tries She soon draws the attention of a young salesman, who  
hard not to notice her scars and braces.

**SALESMAN**

Is there something here that interests  
you?

**GABRIELLE**

The white sports model. Could you  
help me into it, please? I'd like to  
see if I can fit into a car designed  
for a normal body.

discomfort as Both James and Gabrielle enjoy the salesman's  
he helps her into the Mercedes sports car.

snagging She does her best to make it difficult, deliberately  
side her leg brace clips on the soft leather of the driver's  
deformed armrest, forcing him to unhook her and to touch her  
thighs and knees while manipulating her legs into the  
footwell.

**EXT. AIRPORT CONVENTION CENTER. PARKING-LOT -- LATE DAY**

small James makes love to Gabrielle in the front seat of her  
controls invalid car, deliberately involving the complex hand  
in the mechanics of their sex.

collides As he slips his hand around her right breast, he

wheel. A  
pivot  
floor-  
vertical  
driver's

with the strange geometry of the car's interior.  
Unexpected controls jut from beneath the steering  
cluster of chromium treadles is fastened to a steel  
clamped to the steering column. An extension on the  
mounted gear lever rises laterally, giving way to a  
wing of chromium metal moulded into the reverse of a  
palm.

the  
planes of  
declensions

Amid this small forest of machinery, James explores  
Gabrielle's new and strange body, feeling his way among  
braces and straps of her underwear, the unfamiliar  
her hips and legs, the unique culs-de-sac, odd  
of skin and musculature.

the leg  
her  
reddened  
James  
along the

Gabrielle lies back. She lifts her left foot so that  
brace rests against his knee. In the inner surface of  
thigh the straps form marked depressions, troughs of  
skin hollowed out in the forms of buckles and clasps.  
unshackles the left leg brace and runs his fingers  
hot, corrugated skin of the deep buckle groove.

the  
afternoon  
east --  
across  
small  
instrument  
her  
abdomen.

The exposed portions of her body are joined together by  
loosened braces and straps. Through the fading  
light the airplanes move across their heads along the  
west runways of the airport. Gabrielle's hand moves  
his chest, opening his shirt, her fingers finding the  
scars below his collarbone, the imprint of the  
binnacle of his own crashed car. She runs the tip of  
tongue into each of the wound-scars on his chest and

which  
hand

James exposes her breasts, feeling for the wound areas surround them. As he tries to enter her, she puts her hand over his mouth.

**GABRIELLE**

Don't. Not there.

like  
this

She spreads her left leg and exposes a deep, trench-wound-scar in her inner thigh. She directs his hand to neo-sex organ.

**GABRIELLE**

Do it there. And then after that, do it here.

wounds of  
mouth  
tongue

Gabrielle rotates over him so that he can see the her right hip. James turns her back, pulls her thigh in between his own thighs and enters her scar. With his fastened on the scar beneath her left breast, his exploring its sickle-shaped trough, he comes almost immediately.

**INT. FILM STUDIO -- NIGHT**

automobile  
contains  
small

We float through the studio past a one-story-high battery. Its six cells are transparent and each one something submerged in the bubbly water that represents battery acid: a two-man submarine, a scuba diver, a shark...

lighting is

James stands pacing as the dolly shot is reset, adjusted. An AD brings him a cellular phone.

**AD**

Somebody named Vaughan. Do you want it?

the

James nods. The AD presses the TALK button and hands phone to James.

**JAMES**

Hello? Ballard.

**INT. TATTOO PARLOR -- NIGHT**

We are close on Vaughan's scarred mouth.

**VAUGHAN**

I need to see you, Ballard. I need to talk to you about the project.

**JAMES**

(phone)

Where are you?

**EXT. MALL. TATTOO PARLOR -- NIGHT**

James drives up to the tattoo parlor, which is located in a small mall. It is next to a small, private medical clinic, and has the same antiseptic, untextured look of the ear, nose and throat suite next door.

**INT. TATTOO PARLOR -- NIGHT**

James enters to discover Vaughan getting a wound tattoo on his abdomen, one that looks as though it could have been made by the fluted lower edge of a plastic steering wheel.

The woman giving Vaughan the tattoo is sexless and professional. She could be a nurse or a hospital dietician.

James sits next to them, barely acknowledged by the woman.

Vaughan has messy papers spread out in front of him that include stylized sketches of famous crash wounds, photos of Andy Warhol's scars, automotive styling-detail drawings from a 50s Detroit design studio.

**VAUGHAN**

(to tattooist)

You're making it too clean.

**TATTOOIST**

Medical tattoos are supposed to be clean.

**VAUGHAN**

This isn't a medical tattoo. This is a prophetic tattoo. Prophecy is dirty and ragged. Make it dirty and ragged.

**TATTOOIST**

(a hint of sarcasm)

Prophetic? Is this personal prophecy or global prophecy?

**VAUGHAN**

There's no difference. James -- I want you to let her give you this one.

it  
sketched  
Lincoln's

Vaughan spreads out a stained scrap of paper as though were a sacred piece of parchment. On it is a fiercely wound that looks as though it were made by the hood ornament.

**JAMES**

Where do you think that one should go?

and

Vaughan spreads his legs in a mechanical, unsexual way and grabs the right inner thigh of his greasy jeans.

**VAUGHAN**

It should go here.

**INT. VAUGHAN'S CAR -- NIGHT**

thigh. It  
real  
around

We are close on the fresh tattoo on James's inner thigh. It looks more like a cartoon version of a wound than a real wound. We can see it because James's trousers are down around his knees.

tattoo.  
mouth,

Vaughan's face comes into frame. He gently kisses the tattoo. James lifts Vaughan's face to his own and kisses his mouth,

Vaughan's

touches his tongue to each of the scars around  
mouth.

**EXT. UNDERPASS NEAR AUTO-WRECKER'S YARD -- NIGHT**

underpass  
looking  
hulks  
chain-

We see that the Lincoln sits in the shadow of an  
at the edge of an abandoned auto-wrecker's yard,  
quite comfortable next to the stacks of crushed auto  
and piles of wheels and bumpers visible through the  
link fence.

**INT. VAUGHAN'S CAR -- NIGHT**

exposing  
injury  
of  
hanging

James and Vaughan show their wounds to each other,  
the scars on their chests and hands to the beckoning  
sites on the interior of the car, to the pointed sills  
the chromium ashtrays, to the curtain of wheel covers  
on a web of twisted wire just outside the car window.  
They touch, embrace, kiss.

**EXT. UNDERPASS NEAR AUTO-WRECKER'S YARD -- NIGHT**

roadway,  
reaching

James steps unsteadily from the Lincoln into the  
followed for an instant by Vaughan's uncertain arm  
for him.

the

He moves away from the car, along the palisade to the  
overgrown entrance of the wrecker's yard. Above him,  
cars on the motorway move like motorized wrecks.

**EXT. AUTO-WRECKER'S YARD -- NIGHT**

wreck,  
opens  
fragmented

Just outside the fence of the auto-wrecker's yard, a  
its engine and wheels removed, sits on its axles. James  
the door on its rusting hinges. A confetti of  
glass covers the front passenger seat.

over the  
against  
comforting  
get

James gets in and sits there for a moment, crouched mudstreaked instrument panel, his knees tightened his chest wall. A moment or two of this strangely foetal security, and then James unfolds and begins to back out of the car.

the  
where  
tires  
packs in  
him.

An engine starts with a roar. As James steps back into roadway he is briefly aware of a heavy black vehicle accelerating toward him from the shadow of the overpass he and Vaughan embraced together. Its white-walled tear through the broken beer bottles and cigarette the gutter, mount the narrow curb and hurtle on toward him.

James  
swerves  
wheel

Knowing that Vaughan will not stop, will kill him, presses himself against the concrete wall. The Lincoln after him, its right-hand fender striking the rear housing of the car James has just left. It swings away, ripping the open passenger door from its hinges.

into the  
Lincoln  
a

A column of exploding dust and torn newspaper rises air as it slides sideways across the access road. The remounts the curb on the far side of the road, crushing a ten-yard section of the wooden palisade.

eyes  
him.  
surface

James can see Vaughan flicking a look back, his hard calculating whether or not he can make a second pass at The rear wheels regain their traction on the road and the car swings away on to the motorway above.

the

James leans against the roof of the abandoned car. The passenger door has been crushed into the front fender, deformed metal welded together by the impact.

James retches suddenly and emptily.

Shreds of torn paper eddy through the air around him,  
pasting  
panel  
themselves at various points against the crushed door  
and radiator hood.

**EXT. BALLARD APT. BALCONY -- DAY**

James sits on the balcony of his apartment, watching  
the  
motorway, a  
ceaseless  
sky. A single-engined airplane floats above the  
glass dragonfly carried by the sun. It seems to hang  
motionless, the propeller rotating slowly like a toy  
aircraft's. The light pours from its wings in a  
fountain.

Below it, the traffic moves sluggishly along the  
crowded  
continuous  
concrete lanes, the roofs of the vehicles forming a  
carapace of polished cellulose.

Suddenly, Catherine is behind him. She puts her hands  
on his  
gestures  
shoulders and he turns to her as though in a dream,  
toward the airplane.

**JAMES**

I thought that was you, up there.

**CATHERINE**

My last lesson's next week.

(pause)

James... my car...

James can see now that Catherine is frightened. He  
takes her  
hand.

**JAMES**

What? Tell me.

**EXT. BALLARD APT. DRIVEWAY -- DAY**

Catherine's car sits in the driveway. The paintwork  
along

collision.

the left-hand side has been marked in some minor  
Catherine and James stand examining the mark soberly,  
archeologists faced with a problematic hieroglyph.

**CATHERINE**

I wasn't driving. I'd left the car  
in the parking-lot at the airport.  
Could it have been deliberate?

**JAMES**

One of your suitors?

**CATHERINE**

One of my suitors.

He kneels down to examine the assault on her car.  
He feels the abrasions on the left-hand door and body  
panels,  
full  
front  
bumper  
passenger  
explores with his hand the deep trench that runs the  
length of the car from the crushed tail-light to the  
headlamp. The imprint of the other car's heavy front  
is clearly marked on the rear wheel guard.  
James rises and takes Catherine's arm. He opens the  
door for her.

**JAMES**

It's Vaughan. He's courting you.  
Let's go find him.

**EXT. DESERTED MOTORWAY -- LATE DAY**

highway.  
Catherine's car hurtles along a deserted six-lane

**INT. CATHERINE'S CAR -- LATE DAY**

sits  
James is driving. He looks across at Catherine. She  
very still, pale, one hand on the window-sill.

**JAMES**

The traffic... where is everyone?  
They've all gone away.

**CATHERINE**

I'd like to go back. James...

**JAMES**

Not yet. It's only beginning.

**EXT. FAMILIAR STRETCHES OF ROAD -- LATE DAY INTO NIGHT**

the  
sites  
They drive past stretches of road we have seen before:  
underpass near the wrecker's yard, several accident  
and filling stations, etc.

**EXT. AIRPORT FILLING STATION -- NIGHT**

they  
cruise by it, they spot Vera Seagrave talking to a girl  
attendant at the pumps.

heavily  
leave  
James turns into the forecourt. Vera is dressed in a  
insulated leather jacket, as though she were about to  
on an Antarctic expedition.

James calls to her from the car.

**JAMES**

Vera! Vera Seagrave!

across  
her  
At first she fails to recognize him. Her firm eyes cut  
him to Catherine's elegant figure, as if suspicious of  
cross-legged posture.

points to  
the suitcases in the rear seat of Vera's car.

**JAMES**

Are you leaving, Vera? Listen, I'm  
trying to find Vaughan.

Catherine,  
steps into her car.

**VERA**

The police are after him. An American  
serviceman was killed on the Northolt

overpass.

on  
his  
James puts his hand on the windshield, but she switches  
the windshield wipers, almost cutting the knuckle of  
wrist.

**VERA**

I was with him in the car at the  
time.

exit  
Before James can stop her, she accelerates toward the  
and turns into the fast evening traffic.

James gets back into Catherine's car.

**JAMES**

I think he'll be waiting for us at  
the airport.

**CATHERINE**

James...

James turns the car into the traffic.

**EXT. AIRPORT ROADWAYS -- NIGHT**

makes  
the  
Vaughan is waiting for them at the airport flyover. He  
no attempt to hide himself, pushing his heavy car into  
passing traffic stream.

his  
forward  
rim  
fro  
Apparently uninterested in them, Vaughan lies against  
door sill, almost asleep at the wheel as he surges  
when the lights change. His left hand drums across the  
of the steering wheel as he swerves the Lincoln to and  
across the road surface.

of  
he  
allowing  
His face is fixed in a rigid mask as he cuts in and out  
the traffic lanes, surging ahead in the fast lane until  
is abreast of them and then sliding back behind them,

watchful

other cars to cut between them and then taking up a position in the slow lane.

battered

rear

from

hanging

touching

James can see that Vaughan's car has become even more than it was before, scarred with many impact points, a window broken, cracked headlamps, a body panel detached the off-side rear wheel housing, the front bumper from the chassis pinion, its rusting lower curvature touching the ground as Vaughan corners.

makes his

across

of

car,

When they slow down for a line of tankers, Vaughan move. He pulls up beside them and then cuts viciously three lanes of traffic to hit them broadside. The nose of the Lincoln just nicks the tail of the light sports car, which spins down the road.

into

tanker

already

car

lanes.

The Lincoln keeps on going, its vast momentum taking it the guard rails of the exit ramp, and then over them. Catherine and James slam spinning into the tail of a which has all but stopped. The traffic behind them has been slowing and thus easily avoids hitting the sports car when it comes bouncing to a halt across two traffic lanes.

and

cut

immediately

doggedly

Catherine lies back, sprawled in her seat, eyes wide staring with fright, body rigid, bleeding from a small on her cheekbone. James jumps out of the car, then slows with a limp. He continues, working his way through the motionless cars to the edge of the ramp.

Lincoln

When he looks over the edge, James sees that Vaughan's

running  
the  
other

has plunged into the top of an airline coach which was on the roadway below. With the Lincoln now inside it, coach then slewed sideways and crashed into several vehicles.

Wreckage, flames and blood are everywhere.

excitement.

James's eyes are wide: not with horror, but with

**EXT. POLICE POUND -- NIGHT**

police  
sharp-

Catherine and James stand at the gatehouse of the pound, collecting the gate key from the mustachioed, eyed young officer there.

street-

They then walk down the lines of seized and abandoned vehicles. The pound is in darkness, lit only by the lights reflected in the dented chromium.

wrench  
both

They soon find Vaughan's crashed Lincoln, massive and charismatic even here, even in death. James manages to open the passenger-side rear door enough to allow them to get inside.

**INT. VAUGHAN'S CAR -- NIGHT**

James  
his

Sitting in the rear seat of the Lincoln, Catherine and make brief, ritual love, her buttocks held tightly in hands as she sits across his waist.

**EXT. POLICE POUND -- NIGHT**

small  
stopped  
windshield,

Afterwards, they walk among the cars. The beams of headlamps cut across their knees. An open car has beside the gatehouse. Two women sit behind the windshield, peering into the darkness.

turning  
the  
briefly  
driver  
and  
strange  
one  
that  
make  
the  
embrace.

A pause, and then the car moves forward, its driver the wheel until the headlamps illuminate the remains of dismembered vehicle in which Vaughan died.

The woman in the passenger seat steps out and pauses by the gates. It is Helen Remington. When she helps the out of the car, James and Catherine see that it is the crippled Gabrielle, her leg shackles clacking as she Helen begin to walk toward Vaughan's car.

They stroll haltingly, arms around each other, like lovers in a cemetery visiting a favorite mausoleum. At point, Helen kisses Gabrielle's hand, and it is obvious that they have become lovers.

James and Catherine circle away from the couple and their way back to the gatehouse.

In the depths of the pound, Helen helps Gabrielle into Lincoln. In the darkness of the back seat, they

**EXT. POLICE POUND. GATEHOUSE -- NIGHT**

window,  
fingers

James stands talking to the officer at the gatehouse holding Catherine's arm around his waist, pressing her against the muscles of his stomach.

**JAMES**

I'd like to register a claim for the black 1963 Lincoln, the one that came in a couple of days ago. Is there a form I can fill out?

**POUND OFFICER**

There certainly is, but you'll have to come back between 7:30 and 4:30 to get one. What's your attachment to that thing?

**JAMES**

A close friend owned it.

**POUND OFFICER**

Well, it's got to be a total write-off. I don't see what you could possibly do with it.

**EXT. CROWDED RAIN-STREAKED ROADWAY -- SUNSET**

Vaughan's  
wanted  
with  
and  
cracked,  
badly

We are close on the huge, battle-scarred grill of Lincoln, now brought back to swaying, bellowing life. The restoration of the Lincoln is as Vaughan would have it: just enough to get it running and nothing more, ugly brown primer slapped on to the replaced panels, whatever was cracked, scraped and crumpled still scraped and crumpled -- a mobile accident rolling on misaligned wheels.

**INT. VAUGHAN'S LINCOLN -- SUNSET**

alert --  
living  
traffic,  
holes  
recklessness  
what

We pull back to see James alone in the car. The road is crowded and manic; James is intense, hard, exhilarated, a hunter. The car is full of junk, pop cans, styrofoam containers, all suggesting that he has basically been in the car for some time. James is searching for something among the lanes of threading the immense car in and out of the shifting that appear and disappear, driving with a fluid that is recognizably Vaughan's style. Suddenly, James becomes tense, focused: he has spotted he has been looking for.

**EXT. CROWDED RAIN-STREAKED ROADWAY -- SUNSET**

windshield we

Through the Lincoln's insect- and oil-smear-

sports  
braids

can see the unmistakable shape of Catherine's white car, itself winding its way aggressively through the of vehicles.

and  
concrete  
corner of

The Lincoln lurches out on to the narrow emergency lane takes off after Catherine's car, scraping the low wall as it wallows from side to side, clipping the a truck that has made the lane too narrow.

**INT. CATHERINE'S SPORTS CAR -- SUNSET**

toward  
react.

In her mirrors, Catherine spots the Lincoln charging her along the emergency lane. Her demeanor is just as predatory as James's, and she does not hesitate to

dives  
a

Catherine cranks the steering wheel to the right and across two lanes of startled vehicles to fishtail down a little-used utility access road.

follows

Behind her, and closing rapidly, the lumbering Lincoln suit.

**EXT. UTILITY ROAD -- SUNSET**

the  
between it  
V-8  
it is

Around the decreasing-radius curve of the utility road, more nimble sports car stretches out the distance and the Lincoln, but once the road uncurls, the booming allows the American car to gobble up the ground until nose to tail with Catherine's car.

breaking  
which  
get

James begins to bump the tail of the sports car, off the accelerator for a beat to let the white car -- looks especially fragile and delicate by comparison -- away a bit, then charging back until it makes contact.

enters  
The  
comes  
rolls  
shedding  
its

Now the road ahead curves again, and just as Catherine the curve, James gives her a seriously violent jolt. rear of her car slews off on to the grass verge, almost back, then loses traction completely. Catherine's car spins backwards off the road, then unceremoniously, almost gently, down a small grade, bits and pieces, until it finally flops to a halt on side in front of a cement culvert.

**INT. VAUGHAN'S LINCOLN -- SUNSET**

Catherine  
into  
protest,

Momentum has carried James past the point where has left the road. James stands on the brakes until the Lincoln shudders to a halt. He jams the shift lever reverse and backs up, tires squealing and smoking in to where he saw her go over the edge.

**EXT. UTILITY ROAD -- SUNSET**

edge  
below  
black  
as  
hill  
move,  
awakening  
wet,  
and

James jumps out of the car and stands for a beat at the of the road on the wet grass, savoring the tableau him. Catherine lies sprawled, half out of the car, her tight dress hiked up over her hips, one arm across her face though shielding her eyes from the sight of her ruined, lightly smoking sports car. James eagerly makes his way down the wet grass of the toward Catherine. As he approaches her, she begins to stretching her arms behind her head, as though from a deep sleep. He can now see that her dress is soaked by the dirty water trickling out of the culvert

now dammed up by her torso.

James kneels close to Catherine.

**JAMES**

Catherine. Are you all right? Are you hurt?

as  
beginning  
the  
Catherine's eyes flutter open. Her mascara is smeared,  
though she has been crying, and there is wetness at the  
corners of her eyes. Her upper lip is bruised and  
to purple, and there is blood on her forehead and at  
corner of her mouth.

**CATHERINE**

James, I... I don't know... I think I'm all right...

around  
shoe  
hip,  
her,  
soak  
neck, he  
James slips her panties down her legs, leaving them  
her left ankle when they snag on the one high-heeled  
she still has on. He gently rotates her on to her right  
undoes his fly, then lies down on the concrete with  
ignoring the light, muddy stream which now begins to  
the thigh of his trousers. Kissing the back of her  
enters her from behind.

**JAMES**

Maybe the next one, darling... Maybe the next one...

we  
and  
lanes of  
We pull up and away from the couple on the ground until  
lose them behind the overturned sports car, then rise  
pivot until we are once again watching the frantic  
traffic hurtling by obliviously only a few meters away.

**THE END**