

"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 herself. As we get closer we see that her jacket is pulled 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

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.

curtains

Karen, Catherine's secretary, a moody, unsmiling girl,

is

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 propaganda, 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 raised shoulder, possibly to hide the bruise
right cheekbone.

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

thinking.
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

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.

turns
James's
her
the
husband.

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 husband. As she raises her head she sees James through glassless windshield frame, sitting behind the deformed steering wheel among the dried bloodstains of her husband.

hand
damage to
anything,
and

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

to
progress.

She gestures toward the damaged vehicles, then speaks 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-
cameras to check their placement, and chats off-mike
the pair of cameramen with hand-held cameras. He seems
more the director of the event, possibly the
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,
his hand and gets into a replica of Turnupseed's two-
black-and-white 1950 Ford sedan. He starts up the Ford,
smokes badly, and drives it up the hill about 100

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 are about thirty yards apart, the Ford wanders over the line. As the Porsche approaches it, it seems to move into its own lane, but then suddenly swerves again as making a left turn.

American
into
wad of
into
The Porsche, in its turn, swerves to avoid the big car but they collide, the immense chrome grill punching the side of the fragile race car, crumpling it like a tin foil and shunting it unceremoniously off the road 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 on his seat and then throw himself out of the car, over what's left of the front hood on to the ground. Seagrave remains slumped in the driver's seat. Vaughan lies where he lands, a few feet ahead of the crumpled nose race car.

begins
crowd,
The door of the Ford opens and Trask stumbles out. He 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
Helen's
schoolgirl.

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

EXT. SEAGRAVE'S GARAGE -- NIGHT

garage
better
unwashed
1930s

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.
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.

through
the

INT. SEAGRAVE APT. -- NIGHT

featuring
living-
television
young
Vera,
shaky

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

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.

pull

the

wearing

anemic

seat.

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

their

man's

woman's

holds

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

for

at

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

forwards.

sight

hands.

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

car,

metal

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

EXT. MOTORWAY VERGE -- NIGHT

runs

the

As James pulls the Lincoln on to the verge, Vaughn back to the pedestrian bridge, darting in and out of 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
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