

Executive Producer: Justin Spitzer
Executive Producer: Aaron Kaplan



AMERICAN AUTO

“Pilot”

Written by:
Justin Spitzer

Network Draft 2
12/26/2019



© 2019 Universal Television LLC

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. NOT TO BE DUPLICATED WITHOUT PERMISSION.

This material is the property of Universal Television LLC and is intended solely for use by its personnel. The sale, copying, reproduction or exploitation of this material, in any form is prohibited. Distribution or disclosure of this material to unauthorized persons is also prohibited.

COLD OPEN

FADE IN:

EST. PAYNE MOTORS CORPORATE HEADQUARTERS - DAY (D-1)

Under a shot of a tall building on the expansive Detroit headquarters of the Payne Motors campus: *

KATHERINE (V.O.)
I'm just not sure I like the name
"Ponderosa" for a car. *

CUT TO:

INT. BOARDROOM - DAY (D-1)

An executive meeting, including new company CEO KATHERINE (mid-40s), Chief Communications Officer SADIE (early-30s), Chief Product Designer CYRUS (mid-30s), Chief Sales Officer ELLIOT (mid-40s), Katherine's assistant DORI (mid-50s), and descendent-of-the-company-founder WESLEY PAYNE. *

ELLIOT
It tested well. People thought it evoked feelings of nature and strength. *

KATHERINE
It sounds like "ponderous" to me, like "dull", like a dull, ponderous car. *

ELLIOT
It comes from the Ponderosa pine tree. *

KATHERINE
Do people want to drive a tree? *

ELLIOT
Um...

SADIE
Not a literal tree, it's just the vibe. *

Cyrus looks up from his phone, where he's been looking it up. *

CYRUS
There's a Ponderosa lemon. *

KATHERINE
Isn't a lemon literally how people refer to a bad car? Might as well name it the Payne Clunker. *

WESLEY

It sounds dirty to me. Like pon sounds like poon, which means vagina, and de rosa means "of pink", so it's like we're saying it's a big pink vagina.

SADIE

No wonder it tested well.

KATHERINE

Wasn't there some car name that meant something bad in Spanish?

ELLIOT

A bunch of them. The Chevy Nova, the Mazda LaPuta, the Mitsubishi Pajero.

SADIE

You'd think multibillion dollar companies would hire at least one guy who spoke Spanish.

KATHERINE

Does anyone here speak Spanish?

There's silence.

SADIE

Jesus, people.

DORI

I'll look it up.

She types on her laptop, while Cyrus reads from his phone:

CYRUS

Ponderosa is also a species of snail.

KATHERINE

So there's the Mustang, the Jaguar, the Thunderbird, and now we've got the Snail?

ELLIOT

Seems pretty stupid to me.

DORI

Okay, it says Ponderosa means "powerful" in Spanish.

SADIE

There you go.

DORI

Although it means "weighty" in Basque.

CYRUS *
Who cares what it means in Basque?

WESLEY
Oh, I don't know, maybe about 2 million
proud Basquianis. Do you know how
ignorant you sound?

DORI *
And in Urdu, ponderosa means "subsidized".

KATHERINE
Urdu?

SADIE *
Pakistan.

ELLIOT
Oh, you do not want to piss them off.
(then)
I mean because of the size of the market,
not...
(*explosion sound*)

He makes a gesture of a suicide vest exploding.

WESLEY
"Who cares what it means in Basque?" Say
that in Bilbao, why don't you?

KATHERINE *
Are we overthinking this? *

SADIE *
Ummm..... *

DORI *
In Greek, "po nde rosa" means "I'm
sharing ducks". *

SADIE *
I think we might be, yeah. *

KATHERINE *
Okay fine, let's stick with Ponderosa. *
Now, if we were going to design a car *
called the Ponderosa, what might that *
look like? *

The group sits in silence, thinking, for a long beat, as we... *

CUT TO:

MAIN TITLES

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

INT. EXECUTIVE SNACK AREA - DAY (D-2)

On a different day, Cyrus, Elliot, Wesley, and Dori get coffee, as they watch Katherine talking to Sadie in Katherine's office.

WESLEY

My great-great-grandfather would be rolling over in his grave if he saw that woman running the company he founded.

ELLIOT

Because he hated women?

DORI

I thought he hated communists.

CYRUS

He hated Irishmen.

WESLEY

No! Because Paynes have been running Payne Motors for over a hundred years. And then in just six weeks, this rando starts changing everything we love about this place.

He picks up some paper straws.

WESLEY (CONT'D)

You see this? Farewell plastic straws.

CYRUS

We haven't had plastic straws for like two years.

WESLEY

Really? I never use them.

ELLIOT

She was pretty successful at that drug company.

WESLEY

Cars aren't drugs. You can't get a bunch of grandmas addicted to cars and then go:
(closes eyes, hands over ears)
I don't see anything wrong going on, Nana must just keep dropping her pills down the drain, I guess.

DORI

I've gotta step up my game. With a male boss, you can skate by with a little flirting, or a low-cut top. You can't flirt with a woman.

(then, considers)

Well, I guess you can, technically.

(quietly, like it's gossip)

My niece, we're like 95% sure.

ELLIOT

You'll be fine. If she fires anyone, it'll probably be me.

CYRUS

Or me.

ELLIOT

Well it should be you.

Cyrus reacts, offended.

CUT TO:

INT. KATHERINE'S OFFICE - SAME TIME (D-2)

Sadie sits across from Katherine in her new, very large office, which she's still in the process of moving into. Katherine is looking over some index cards of a speech.

KATHERINE

"The car boasts an electric hybrid engine and a lightweight aluminum..."

(shows card to Sadie)

How do you pronounce this? Chassis? Chass-ees?

(throat-sound)

Chass-ees?

SADIE

Chassis.

KATHERINE

Chassis. Chassis. Chassis.

(making a mnemonic)

"I put on my glasses to see the chassis."

SADIE

The reporters are getting here at 5:00, so I figured we could test drive the prototype before it starts.

KATHERINE

And they don't know the car is self-driving yet?

SADIE

No, the invite just said it would be a "revolution in transportation". So this is gonna be a very big deal.

(then)

I was also thinking that, since it's your first big press event as CEO, you could say a few words about how excited you are to be here, what you love about cars.

KATHERINE

Honestly, I'm not really a "car person". If anything, I think it's a little weird how much some people fetishize basic transportation.

SADIE

Oh, so...you don't even like cars?

KATHERINE

You don't need to "like" something to sell it. I bet the guy who sells manure doesn't "like" shit. I bet he doesn't subscribe to Shit Magazine, and restore classic shits with his friends.

(then)

Sorry, you're not one of those crazy car people, are you?

Sadie obviously is very much a car person, but struggles not to say so, sweating under Katherine's stare.

SADIE

No, no, not really. I mean, define car person, right? Do I appreciate cars? Sure. Do I love cars? Define love. I mean, define cars, for that matter--

KATHERINE

Who's that?

Sadie turns to see JACK, a good-looking assembly line worker, mid to late 20s, has entered the bullpen, looking around for someone. Sadie quickly turns back so Jack doesn't see her.

SADIE

No idea. He looks like an assembly line guy or something, maybe he's lost.

(struggling to move on)

So if you want to come down to the test track later, we can take you through--

KATHERINE

Why's he in your office?

Sadie sees that Jack is standing in her office, waiting.

SADIE
Huh. Yeah. Weird. Let me go deal with...
whoever the heck that is, and we will
continue this... on the B-side.

She exits. Katherine looks back at her cards.

KATHERINE
"I found the car chassis in a bowl of
molasses."

CUT TO:

INT. PAYNE MOTORS - EXECUTIVE BULLPEN - CONTINUOUS

Elliot and Cyrus are in the middle of an argument about which
of them should be fired.

ELLIOT
...because you're the one who was
responsible for a little disaster called
the Payne Python.

CYRUS
Me? You're the one who said to design a
sports car with "a phallic look"!

ELLIOT
Phallic! Conveying the idea of phallicism.
Not a fucking dildo on wheels!

CYRUS
It was not a dildo on wheels!

Sadie is walking quickly through.

CYRUS (CONT'D)
Sadie, did the Python look like a dildo?

SADIE
(without stopping)
You could practically see the vein
running down the shaft. *

CYRUS
That was the exhaust pipe!

CUT TO:

INT. SADIE'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER (D-2) *

Sadie ducks into her office and quickly shuts the door,
glancing around to make sure no one is looking at them. *

SADIE
Hey, you shouldn't be up here. *

JACK
Sorry. I would've called, but the
employee directory just had the same
number for all the executives, so I
figured that's just like a general office
number, unless you're all roommates-- *

SADIE
Look, I'm sorry, last week was fun, but
it was a mistake. *

JACK
Yeah, no, you told me-- *

SADIE
It's nothing personal, you're obviously
extremely good looking, your biceps in
particular-- *

JACK
Thank you. *

SADIE
It's just, especially now that we have
this new CEO, it would look really bad
for me to be involved with a guy from the
factory. Not just the factory, anyone who
works at the company. We'd be having this
same conversation if you were an
accountant-- *

JACK
Did you ask to have me transferred to the
truck plant in Midland? *

SADIE
Huh? No. Nope, uh-uh. *

JACK
My supervisor said it came from up here.
And I thought maybe if you were feeling
weird about having me around after, you
know, and you were trying to find a way
to get rid of me... *

SADIE
(pretending to remember)
Oh yeah, no, what happened was, we got a
call saying they needed a day shift
operator up there, and I heard you're the
best. *

JACK
Who'd you hear that from?

SADIE
...Everybody. Everybody's saying it. But
it's a good opportunity for you, right?
Big promotion. Big.

JACK
(skeptical)
Uh-huh.

SADIE
So, um, congratulations on this... step
forward in your career.

CUT TO:

INT. OUTSIDE KATHERINE'S OFFICE - DAY (D-2)

Wesley is talking to Dori at her desk.

WESLEY
Maybe I should've just taken the CEO job.

DORI
Did they offer it to you?

WESLEY
Well, not technically, but only because
they already knew I'd say no.

DORI
Oh. So, how did they--

But they're interrupted when Katherine walks out of her
office.

KATHERINE
Hey Dori, if anyone calls, I'll be taking
a look at the car prototype.

DORI
Got it.

KATHERINE
Oh, and I need you to be in charge of
whatever A/V stuff we need for the press
thing later, okay?

DORI
(pouts)
Me? The most technology I know how to use
is my hair curler and my vibrator.

She giggles, almost flirtatiously, then realizes Katherine is just staring at her - this stuff doesn't work on her.

DORI (CONT'D)
(suddenly serious, professional)
But I will figure it out.

Katherine exits. Wesley continues his conversation with Dori. *

WESLEY
If anything, I'm able to be more
effective as a consultant, because a
consultant wears so many hats. *

CUT TO:

EXT. TESTING GROUNDS - DAY (D-2) *

We're at an outdoor testing area, set up to simulate a city block. There are building exteriors, traffic lights, and decoys of animals and pedestrians that cross intersections. Sadie sits in the drivers seat of the prototype car, with Katherine beside her and Cyrus and Elliot in back. The engine is running, but it's in park. Cyrus proudly begins a speech. *

CYRUS
Ever since Nicolas-Joseph Cugnot built
the first road vehicle in 1769, cars have
been driven by one thing: people. In
1808, François Isaac de--

KATHERINE
Press is coming in six hours, maybe we
could we do without the whole intro?

CYRUS
Got it, I'll save these for another time.

He sadly puts his index cards away. Sadie searches around for a gear shift.

SADIE
So how do I put this in drive?

CYRUS
It's voice-controlled.
(to car)
"Oh Baby: Drive us around the block."

As the car starts to drive, the others react to "Baby".

SADIE
You're calling it "Baby"?

ELLIOT

Bit misogynistic, don't you think?

CYRUS

How is that misogynistic?

ELLIOT

You can't call a woman "baby".

CYRUS

It's not a woman, it's a car.

ELLIOT

Cars are always women. "She's a beauty."
"Let's take her for a spin."

CYRUS

Well this car's a man, okay?!

KATHERINE

Figures -- first car that does the
driving, and it's a man.

On the road in front of them, cutouts of a smiling pedestrian family are crossing the road. Sadie tries to apply the brake:

SADIE

Hey Cyrus, where's the brake?

CYRUS

You don't need one. Watch.

The car automatically slows to a stop. The pedestrians cross, and the car starts moving again. Katherine looks impressed.

KATHERINE

Wow, that's pretty neat.

CYRUS

(proudly)

Yeah, the car creates a map of its environment by emitting rapid pulses of laser light and then measuring the time it takes for the light to reflect back...

Katherine yawns, and a disappointed Cyrus trails off.

ANGLE ON: Wesley is standing on the sidewalk, staring at Katherine in annoyance. Jack is passing by.

WESLEY

You see our new overlord? "Katherine".
Sounds like someone who uses a catheter.

JACK

Sick burn.

WESLEY

I bet she only got the job cause she's a woman, which is like winning the friggin' genital lottery these days. If things go bad, do I have your loyalty?

*
*
*

JACK

I just work here, man, I don't really want to get into a whole thing.

WESLEY

Well if you change your mind, a resistance is forming. Ewell Payne would not have wanted that woman running his company.

*
*

JACK

Why, is she Jewish?

Wesley reacts, exasperated.

ANGLE ON: Back in the car, Elliot is talking to Katherine.

ELLIOT

Always mention fuel economy. Even if it's bad, most consumers never actually do the math. They just assume a car is green because it was mentioned at all.

Sadie spots Jack crossing the street in front of her.

SADIE

Cyrus? There's someone...

CYRUS

Don't worry, we'll stop.

But they're still bearing down on him.

SADIE

Okay, but we're not stopping.

KATHERINE

Turn the wheel.

SADIE

There is no wheel!

*

CYRUS

You don't need to do anything.

SADIE
Cyrus, stop the car! It's not stopping! Stop the car!

CYRUS (CONT'D)
It's gonna stop, it'll stop, it's gonna stop-- SHIT!

They all realize it's not stopping, and all start screaming.

KATHERINE / SADIE / ELLIOT
STOP THE CAR! / BRAKE FUCKING BRAKE! / IT'S NOT STOPPING!

CYRUS (CONT'D)
BABY, STOP! BABY, BABY, STOP, BABY, STOP!

The car starts to brake, but not quick enough, and they hit Jack (hard enough to knock him over, but not enough to seriously injure him). As the group reacts...

ELLIOT
I'm sorry, "baby" is just really stupid.
I can't get past that.

[NOTE: For the time being, this assumes the actor playing Jack is black or otherwise diverse, for reasons that will be apparent in the next scene. If we cast a white actor, this section would be tweaked so that they would hit one of our other characters or an ND employee.]

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

EXT. TESTING GROUNDS - A LITTLE LATER - DAY (D-2)

*

The group is gathered around Jack, who is sitting on the ground. He's bruised but basically okay.

JACK

I'm fine. You didn't hit me that hard.

KATHERINE

Are you sure we even hit you? It looked like you might have fallen on your own right before the car seemed to hit you.

She looks to the group for support, like "play along".

ELLIOT

Yep, that's the way it looked to me.

JACK

Don't worry, I'm not gonna sue.

*

KATHERINE

Ha ha ha, can we get that in writing? Ha, I'm just kidding. But we could write it down, though, just as a goof.

ANGLE ON: Cyrus is with a group of engineers who are examining the car, parked a little ways away. They finish conversing and Cyrus jogs over to the rest of the group.

CYRUS

We think we know what caused the accident.

KATHERINE

Alleged accident.

SADIE

He may have fallen on his own in an almost shockingly coincidental confluence of events.

CYRUS

Okay, well, you know how I was saying the car measures the time it takes for lasers to reflect off objects? Well, darker colors reflect less light, which is tricking the sensors into thinking darker objects are farther away than they actually are.

SADIE

And by "darker objects", you mean...?

CYRUS

Like a black cat, or a dark blue car, or...
(reluctant to say it)
Darker... brown... skin.

There's a beat as the group considers this. Until finally:

JACK

So you made a car that hits black people?

CYRUS

No! No! No! ... Not intentionally.

The group reacts: "Holy god!" "Wow!" "Unbelievable!"

ELLIOT

What is wrong with you?!

WESLEY

What would Ewell Paine have said if he saw we'd designed a car that runs over black people?

SADIE

"Well done", probably.

CYRUS

It doesn't "run over black people", it just doesn't see them as well. It would hit Indian people too.

ELLIOT

Oh good, I was worried we'd designed a car that wouldn't hit Indian people.

KATHERINE

How are you only figuring this out now? In the pharmaceutical industry, we would test our products before announcing them.

WESLEY

Didn't stop all those babies from being born without heads.

KATHERINE

They had heads, they were just small.

CYRUS

We tested it! But the dummies we tested it on were all white. I don't think they even make black crash test dummies!

JACK

Just when I thought we were so close to the mountaintop.

SADIE

So can you fix it by this afternoon?

CYRUS

We have to completely overhaul the mapping technology, it'll take months.

Sadie sighs and starts typing on her BlackBerry.

SADIE

I'll cancel the press conference.

KATHERINE

No, wait! It's my first big press event. If we cancel at the last minute, the press is gonna ask questions, Wall Street'll start getting nervous - it's gonna look like I don't know what I'm doing.

*
*
*
*
*
*

WESLEY

(barely suppressing a smile)
Oh no, that'd be terrible.

*

SADIE

So you'd rather have your legacy as CEO be the introduction of the world's first racist car?

*
*
*
*

ELLIOT

Maybe we could just market it in Canada, where it's less of an issue.

*

WESLEY

What if we painted it black?

CYRUS

How would that help?

WESLEY

Just seems like, optics-wise, a white car that hits black people looks worse than a black car that hits black people.

*

KATHERINE

The press doesn't know it's supposed to be a self-driving car, right? We could just take that part out of it.

*
*
*
*

SADIE

The invitation said it would be a "revolution in transportation". I'm not sure a generic white car with no special features qualifies as a revolution.

*

WESLEY

What about a generic black car with no special features?

KATHERINE

Okay, then why don't we come up with some special features.

*

*

People react: "What?!" "How?!"

CYRUS

We can't just design a whole new car in six hours.

*

KATHERINE

Well, maybe we won't be able to come up with anything as advanced as your Klanmobile over there...

(Cyrus reacts)

But it's hard for me to believe that this group of very highly-paid professionals can't come up with a few ideas? Is that something you believe?

*

*

*

*

Not wanting to concede any weakness to the boss, they all adlib: "No", "I mean, we can do it," "Sure"...

*

*

ELLIOT

That's certainly not something I, for one, believe.

*

*

*

CYRUS

But it's not just thinking of an idea. I don't know how to weld a car together.

JACK

I do.

KATHERINE

Great, done!

Sadie's eyes go wide, not wanting Jack to be involved.

SADIE

I'm not sure that's a good idea. He should go to the hospital.

SADIE (CONT'D)

But then I had a few more, and I start talking to this guy from the factory with this whole Bruce Springsteen vibe - like he literally had a baseball cap tucked into the back pocket of his jeans, why would you keep it there, it can't be comfortable.

*
*
*
*
*
*
*

CYRUS

I think it's a blue-collar thing. Their butts are harder so they don't feel it.

*
*
*

SADIE

I've never flirted with anyone I work with, I've never had a one-night stand, and then I slip up one time, and I run over the guy with a car. Why couldn't I just get HPV like a normal person?

*
*
*
*
*
*

CYRUS

Look, Katherine's never gonna know. There's like 15,000 people who work here. After today, she'll probably never even see this guy again, much less have a conversation about which chicks from the 14th floor he's boned.

*
*
*
*
*
*

SADIE

I hope so. I'd like her to think of me as a competent professional, not some weird car-loving sex-crazed cougar who prowls the factory floor looking for a nice set of arms.

*
*
*
*
*
*

CYRUS

He does have nice arms.

*
*

SADIE

Holy god, it's like someone stamped him out of sheet metal.

*
*
*

CUT TO:

*

INT. BOARDROOM - DAY (D-2)

*

The group has gathered. Dori again takes notes on a laptop.

KATHERINE

Okay, we need a feature that's a "revolution in transportation", and we have five-and-a-half hours to do it. Go!
(there's silence)

Guys, there are no bad ideas. Tear up the old rule book.

*
*

(MORE)

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

This is your chance to free your minds.
This is your chance to dream!

*
*

ELLIOT

(beat, then)
Maybe some kind of safety feature?

WESLEY

So boring!

DORI

(typing)
"Safety feature."

CYRUS

You can't just say safety feature. "The all new Payne, featuring... a 'safety feature'."

*

ELLIOT

Okay, how 'bout we give it two giant testicles at the base, does that work better for you?

CYRUS

The Python didn't look like a dildo!

WESLEY

Motor Trend called it "Payne's Boner". And given that my last name is Payne, it felt like they were talking about my boner. And I don't like the media commenting on my boners.

SADIE

Then don't wear those pants to the press conference.

KATHERINE

Maybe we should step back and start with figuring out what people want. What do people like?

DORI

(reading off computer)
Online it says the top things people like are *Game of Thrones*, The Beatles, puppies, pornography, Jesus Christ, Netflix, and Ellen DeGeneres.

JACK

I think we cracked it.

ELLIOT

It doesn't matter what we want, the biggest emerging market is China. What does the Chinese driver want?

WESLEY

Chopstick holder.

(explaining)

In China, they use chopsticks instead of forks.

SADIE

But American cars don't have fork holders.

JACK

Anything can be a fork holder, if you put a fork in it.

*

WESLEY

Exactly, thank you!

*

*

KATHERINE

I mean, what do people like about driving? I truly don't get it.

CYRUS

You don't like cars?

KATHERINE

They're fine. Sometimes I'll be in a place, and I'll want to go to another place, and cars help me do that.

Wesley, still trying to defend himself, picks up a plastic fork someone left on the table and starts putting it in things - a pencil holder, a coffee mug, etc.

WESLEY

Boom, fork holder. Boom, fork holder. Stick it in my pocket, now my pocket's a fork holder.

CYRUS

Cars are where form meets function. Name one other thing that's utilitarian while at the same time a fashion accessory, a status symbol, and a work of art.

KATHLEEN

I don't know, a wristwatch?

CYRUS

...Uh-huh. That would be another one.

DORI

It's about freedom. When you have a car, you can go anywhere you want. Nothing is off-limits.

SADIE

You've literally never left Detroit in your entire life.

DORI

Why would I want to leave Detroit? *

WESLEY

For me, it's genetic. Cars are in my blood. So is hemophilia, unfortunately. Several of my ancestors married cousins in order to keep the family fortune intact. *

ELLIOT

It's about identity. Tell me what someone drives, and I can tell you 37 distinct personality traits about them.

CYRUS

That is so not true.

ELLIOT

Spoken like a true BMW 6-series.

JACK

Cars are just fun. They go fast, they're cool. I don't get why anyone would ever want a self-driving car. Driving's not a means to an end, driving is the end. *

KATHERINE

Whoa, someone's a little cuckoo for car-nuts.

Katherine glances to Sadie, like "can you believe this bozo?" And Sadie, still wanting to prove that she's not some crazy car nut, jumps in to agree. *

SADIE

I know, right? Let's all just relax, they're cars, they're not that big a deal.

JACK

Okay says the lady with Ferraris all over her bedsheets and a shower head shaped like a fuel nozzle--

SADIE
(eyes widening)
Shut up, shut up, shut up!!

*

But it's too late, and everyone reacts: "Whoa!", "Uh-oh!".

KATHERINE
How do you know what her shower head
looks like?

JACK
(realizing he overshared)
Um...

DORI
Looks like someone's been taking her work
home with her.

ELLIOT
Anyone here order a "lube job"?

WESLEY
"Sexy Sadie" - that's your new nickname!
Boom!

Sadie covers her face, embarrassed. Jack looks chastened for
having brought it up. Cyrus jumps in to change the subject.

CYRUS
Back to the car: what if instead of a new
feature, we just did something new to the
look of it?

KATHERINE
Do we have time for that?

CYRUS
We don't have time for any of this! But
maybe we could make a tiny tweak or two,
as long as we don't go too crazy.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. DESIGN STUDIO - DAY (D-2)

*

WESLEY
Let's make it into a dragon!!

The group stands around a clay model of the car. It's chaos,
as everyone offers suggestions and Cyrus tries to keep things
under control.

*

CYRUS
What?! We can't just--

ELLIOT

Dragons are very big right now.

WESLEY

Right? We could give it those doors that open upwards like wings. And then the headlights could be like eyes, and we could put horns on the roof.

CYRUS

We're designing a car, not a parade float!

DORI

It could breathe fire out of the exhaust pipe.

CYRUS

The exhaust pipe's in the rear. So it would be farting fire.

DORI

Well, we don't know what end the fire actually came out of, historically.

ANGLE ON: Sadie is off to the side, typing on her laptop. Jack approaches her. He takes in the chaos.

JACK

So... this is what you guys do up here all day. I always wondered. *

Sadie, still annoyed, doesn't acknowledge him.

JACK (CONT'D)

Yeah, um... in retrospect, I think talking about what your bedsheets looked like might have been a mistake. *

SADIE

Now that you say it, it wasn't ideal. *

JACK

I'm really sorry about that.

He's genuine. She softens.

SADIE

S'okay.

Katherine's had enough of the chaos and walks over to Sadie.

KATHERINE

Maybe write up a press release, in the event that we might have to cancel.

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

I/E. PAYNE MOTORS - VARIOUS (D-2)

*

In a montage, we intercut between scenes:

The group walks through the rows of cars in the parking lot, deciding which parts of which cars to take, and working together to strip them off the vehicles.

Katherine, holding a screwdriver, inspects a car's side mirror, trying to figure out how to remove it.

KATHERINE

So is there a screw someplace, or like a bolt, or...?

Sadie wordlessly grabs the side mirror, rips it off the car, and tosses it to Katherine.

*

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

...Okay.

ANGLE ON: Jack, in a work area, welds parts of the car.

*

ELLIOT

Need any help?

JACK

Yeah. Would you hand me the angle grinder?

Jack points to an array of tools off to the side. Elliot looks at them, clearly having no idea which one is an angle grinder. So he just turns and walks away. Jack reacts.

*

ANGLE ON: The auditorium where the press event will be held. Workers are setting up chairs, etc. Dori reads from a manual, trying to figure out how to set up a laser projector.

DORI

"Connect the 3G-SDI cable to the HDMI Port 1.2 Input." Okay...

ANGLE ON: Cyrus has just managed to pry the door off a car. Wesley pulls a RED LEATHER JACKET, in a dry cleaning bag, from the inside.

WESLEY

Ooh, this is cool.

CYRUS

Dude, don't take their dry-cleaning.

WESLEY

(defensive)

I wasn't, I'm just looking.

Wesley turns and pretends to put it back, then looks to make sure Cyrus isn't watching, and keeps it.

ANGLE ON: A FLUMMOXED EMPLOYEE comes upon Katherine taking away pieces of his car.

FLUMMOXED EMPLOYEE

What are you doing?

KATHERINE

I'm taking your hubcaps.

(then, off his reaction)

It's okay, I'm the CEO.

ANGLE ON: Dori, at the projector, speaks on her cell phone.

DORI

Patty, does your grandson still sell ecstasy at raves?

(then)

Oh good. I need the phone number of whoever's in charge of the laser projectors there.

ANGLE ON: Jack and Sadie, both wearing respirators, paint the car with a spray gun. Jack sprays her with a bit of paint.

SADIE

Hey!

JACK

Oops, sorry.

He turns back to the work. She looks over at him, then decides to loosen up, and sprays him back. He turns to her.

SADIE

Slippery suckers.

We see from their eyes that they're both smiling.

CUT TO:

INT. AUDITORIUM - LATER - DAY (D-2)

*

The auditorium is full of press. Wesley, now wearing the red leather jacket he stole, stands up front, giving a speech.

WESLEY

I've been asked to introduce our new female CEO to you. At York Pharmaceuticals, Katherine Hastings was responsible for record profits. As well as record class action lawsuits and record fines from the FDA. I'm kidding. But it's true - look it up.

*
*
*
*

ANGLE ON: Cyrus is seated beside Elliot in the audience. On Cyrus's other side, a JOURNALIST leans over and whispers:

JOURNALIST

Were you the one who designed the Python?

CYRUS

(sighs, annoyed)

I was told to design something phallic--

JOURNALIST

I loved the styling. The lines, the form - I wrote a great review about it.

Cyrus smiles, looking over to Elliot with a smug look.

CYRUS

Thank you. Not everyone understood it. What do you write for?

JOURNALIST

EroticaMaleFetish.com.

Cyrus looks chastened. Elliot beams smugly as he takes out his phone to find the site, while Cyrus turns back to stage, trying not to make eye contact with him, mumbling:

CYRUS

So we just let any blogger into these things now?

ELLIOT

(re: phone)

Oh, this is extremely graphic.

ANGLE ON: Dori's at the projector with her laptop, whispering frantically on the phone. She's on the verge of tears.

DORI

Now it says "choose a de-gamma curve", but I don't know what that is.

(beat, then)

I'm sorry, it's hard to hear you over the bass music.

She starts to leave, then turns back to them.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

Oh, it should go without saying, but
don't bang in here, okay?

Jack and Sadie react.

SADIE

No, I wouldn't--

JACK

We weren't going--

KATHERINE

You can bang in here later, if you want.
Just, we're really short on time, so
don't bang now. Thanks.

She exits, leaving a disconcerted Jack and Sadie.

ANGLE ON: Wesley is finishing up his speech.

WESLEY

Now a number of you might be wondering:
why did the board put this woman in
charge, when Paynes have been leading
Payne Motors so successfully for over a
hundred years?

(then)

Thank you.

Wesley walks off. There are a few awkward, scattered claps as
Katherine takes the stage.

KATHERINE

Thank you. I am so so, so excited to be
here at Payne Motors. Because... I love
cars. All types of cars. Two-doors. Four-
doors. SUVs. Convertibles. Big cars.
Small cars...

ANGLE ON: Dori still frantically trying to program the
projector. Wesley now stands beside her. He leans over:

WESLEY

Not a natural speaker, is she?

ANGLE ON: Sadie gestures to Jack.

SADIE

C'mon, we've gotta go!

Jack is kneeling in back of the car, scraping off a bumper
sticker that reads "I'm Catholic, I'm a Nudist, and I Vote!"

*

JACK

I don't even know what this means.

SADIE

It's good enough. Let's go.

Jack gives up and takes a seat behind the wheel while Sadie runs to signal Katherine, who's still speaking.

KATHERINE

I love them when they're old. I love them when they're new. I love them when they're red, I love them when they're blue...

(realizing)

That might have been Dr. Seuss.

She sees Sadie giving her the thumbs up.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

I could go on and on. But that's not what you came here for. So ladies and gentlemen, I give you: this!

*
*
*

Dori holds her breath and presses a button - here goes nothing. But it works: there's fast, high-energy techno music and an impressive laser light display, as Jack drives the car onto the stage. And we see the car for the first time...

It's a bizarre-looking, Frankensteined hodgepodge of different parts that don't belong together. And the weirdness of it is only heightened by the impressive A/V display. The press murmurs as they take in the terrible car.

Dori, who is now looking proud of herself, turns off the music and lasers. Katherine tries to figure out what to say about this horrendous vehicle. She looks around for help.

*

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

So, uh, Cyrus, can you help explain your vision to everyone?

*
*

Cyrus, sitting in shock, mortified, just shakes his head.

CYRUS

Mm-mm.

*
*

KATHERINE

No? Okay. Maybe Sadie, could you...?

Sadie tentatively walks to the front, trying to bullshit something.

*

SADIE

Yes, so, this was inspired by the...
platypus, which is a beautiful and, uh,
regal creature - I think it's endangered,
maybe. And while the different parts of
the car may seem like they don't go
together, that's the point. Because...
what we all love about cars is different.

*
*
*
*
*
*
*

As she speaks, she glances around at our other characters,
calling back their discussion.

*
*

SADIE (CONT'D)

For some of us, they're just
transportation. For others, they're art.
Or self-expression. Or freedom. Or
they're just really f-ing fun.

*
*
*
*
*

KATHERINE

Which is why we designed the first fully
modular, customizable vehicle. You choose
the parts and you plug them into the
(mispronounces, throat-clearing)
chassis yourself. It's up to you. Ladies
and gentlemen, on behalf of Payne Motors:
welcome to the revolution!

*
*
*
*
*
*
*

Our employees nod, like "that's pretty good". Sadie looks at
Katherine, impressed. Katherine smiles, feeling she nailed
it. Then a SKEPTICAL-LOOKING REPORTER speaks up:

*

REPORTER

So you're saying the "revolution in
transportation" is just... whatever
people want?

*

The rest of the reporters are similarly unenthused. Katherine
immediately switches tactics.

KATHERINE

Well, I've only been here six weeks, this
was a concept I inherited from the
previous administration. I'm not a fan of
it either, we probably won't even do it.
Anyway, thank you all for coming.

*
*

Katherine walks off-stage, as Dori once again turns on the
high energy techno music and laser light show.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARKING LOT - LATER THAT NIGHT (N-2)

*

Employees are leaving work for the night. The flummoxed employee from earlier stares at his stripped car. He talks on his cell to his wife.

FLUMMOXED EMPLOYEE

Baby, I need you to come pick me up.

The automated car, responding to "Baby", pulls up in front of him, driverless. He reacts.

CUT TO:

INT. BOARDROOM - SAME TIME (N-2)

*

The group (not including Jack) sits around having drinks. There's a moment of silence, then:

ELLIOT

Well, the good news is, we got a lot of press attention.

WESLEY

(starting a chant)

Re-sign, re-sign, re-sign. I'm just kidding.

He's not kidding.

KATHERINE

Maybe I'm rationalizing, but I thought that went pretty well.

SADIE

Really? What would it have looked like if it'd gone poorly?

KATHERINE

Look, if everyone had loved it, there'd be nowhere to go but down. In Pharma, we had an expression: You don't start with boner pills. You start with hypertension, and then work your way up to boners.

ELLIOT

That's a beautiful sentiment.

Cyrus, who's been erasing specs and drawings for the old car off a giant whiteboard, turns to Katherine.

*

CYRUS

Well, the next car I design will be a whole lot better.

KATHERINE
(in all seriousness)
It better.

Cyrus reacts - the pressure is on - as he turns back to the blank board, trying to think of what's next.

Sadie spots Jack, holding a big file box of his stuff, walking from the elevators towards her office. She jumps up.

SADIE
Excuse me.

She exits to go talk to him.

Dori takes a drink, then giggles, puts her hand flirtatiously on Katherine's arm.

DORI
Better not let me drink too much. Who knows what a gal might do?

Katherine gives her a weird look. Dori drops her smile.

CUT TO:

INT. EXECUTIVE BULLPEN - CONTINUOUS (N-2)

*

Sadie walks up to Jack.

*

JACK
Hey.

SADIE
Hey. What's in the box?

JACK
I just cleaned out my locker. Do you want a Dale Earnhardt Funko Pop?

*

*

SADIE
(considers him, then)
You don't have to do that.

*

JACK
It's fine, I have three of them.

*

SADIE
I mean, don't go to the Midland plant. If you don't want to. You should stay.

JACK
(smiles)
Scared you'd miss me?

SADIE

Please. There's like 15,000 people who work here. How often would we even ever see each other? Like, barely...

Jack looks up to Katherine, who's approaching them.

JACK

Hey. Which desk should I take?

KATHERINE

Oh, whatever's open.

SADIE

Wait, what? What's happening?

KATHERINE

I'm bumping Jack up to the 14th floor. Feels like we could use a bit of blue-collar perspective around this place. And I believe in rewarding loyalty.

(to Jack)

Speaking of loyalty...

JACK

(hands her signed form)

I was never hit by a car. I wasn't even there at the time that the car didn't hit me.

KATHERINE

Thank you.

Sadie looks stunned. Katherine's phone buzzes.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

Oh, that's my Uber.

(then, explaining)

I don't know how to drive.

She exits. Jack looks back to Sadie, smiles.

JACK

Maybe a little more often than once a year. This is gonna be fun.

As Jack moves off to set his stuff on an empty desk, Sadie looks on in shock, processing that he's far from being out of her life.

FADE OUT.

END OF SHOW