

STAND BY YOUR CAR

A short play
by

Juliet Johnson

“Stand By Your Car”

CAST: **ALLY**, 20’s-30’s, a girl attached to her car
 PETER, 20’s-40’s, a guy unattached to his car
 KEVIN, 20’s-30’s, Ally’s sweet little car
 JOSIE, 20’s-40’s, Peter’s childhood cat
 RAOUL, 40’s-50’s, Peter’s beat-up used car

SETTING: Ally’s apartment, night
 Present day

(DARK. Inside Ally’s Apartment. ALLY, stumbles in with PETER following behind, holding their coats.)

ALLY

Wait, wait, can you get the lights?

PETER

Umm –

ALLY

Oh, wait, that’s right, you don’t live here. Wait.

(She hits the LIGHTS UP. She wavers a little bit by the light switch)

ALLY

Wow, that’s bright.

PETER

Yeah.

ALLY

Make yourself comfortable – would you like a drink or –

PETER

I think I've had enough of those.

ALLY

Yeah. I hope that guy wasn't mad you threw up in his cab.

PETER

Better throw up in a cab than kill someone driving my own car.

(Ally laughs too much. Peter looks a little embarrassed. She contains herself.)

ALLY

Sorry. Vodka makes me –

PETER

...Drunk?

ALLY

Yeah! Drunk!

(She looks at him sort of desiringly. He shifts.)

PETER

I could use some water, actually.

ALLY

Oh! Sure. Right. Okay. *(Turns to go. Turns back)* I'll be right back.

PETER

I'll be right here.

ALLY

Okay Paul.

PETER

Peter.

ALLY

PETER! Right! *(Slaps herself in the head.)* Peter. I'm ---

PETER

You're Ally.

ALLY

Ally! Right. I must've told you.

PETER

I remembered.

(She goes into the kitchen. Opens the fridge. Against the wall sits KEVIN, 20's, blonde, tall, cute. He watches her. He's wearing sunglasses. He stretches his legs out.

Ally turns around and trips on his legs. Falls over. Looks at Kevin. Squints at him.)

KEVIN

Be beep.

ALLY

(stares; slowly recognizing, amazed) ...No.

KEVIN

Yup. *(She hesitantly reaches out and prods his arm)* It's me.

ALLY

No WAY.

KEVIN

Way. *(smiles)*

ALLY

....Kevin?

KEVIN

(motioning out to Peter/ living room) So this is nice. Real classy.

ALLY

How – did you get IN here? *(still stunned)*

KEVIN

It's not that hard to get in. Who's the guy?

ALLY

I can't believe you're just sitting in here in the dark..

KEVIN

Have you thought about this guy?

ALLY

Thought about what? Look, we're not having this discussion. You and I are not having any discussion!

KEVIN

(pulls down his sunglasses, smirks) You did recognize me immediately, though, didn't you.

ALLY

I did!

KEVIN

Isn't that amazing.

(Ally hugs him. Sits on the floor.)

ALLY

I can't believe – do you like my house? Did you see any of it?

KEVIN

It's all great. It's not much different than us.

ALLY

I missed you, Kevin. I haven't thought of anything but you since...the accident.

KEVIN

Where'd you meet this guy?

ALLY

Paul?

KEVIN

Peter.

ALLY

Peter. At a club. On Calvert Street.

KEVIN

How'd you get there.

ALLY

I went with Chris.

KEVIN

(scoffs) In that boat of a Chrysler?

ALLY

Yeah.

KEVIN

That car has a bloated sense of who she is.

ALLY

It's a she?

KEVIN

Fuck yeah. Car's never been out of Maryland, yet thinks it knows everything.

ALLY

Anyway, so I ditched Chris, or she ditched me, and then we didn't have a ride home, so we took a cab.

KEVIN

Slut.

ALLY

He seems nice.

KEVIN

He came home with you in a cab. He's at least as big a slut as you are.

(Ally gets up)

ALLY

I can't leave him out there.

KEVIN

(grabbing her sleeve) Ally, don't do this.

ALLY

Do what?

KEVIN

I don't want you to do anything with this guy. You're just running all wild. No one is fencing you in.

ALLY

Maybe I don't need to be fenced in.

KEVIN

I used to fence you in.

ALLY

No you didn't.

KEVIN

Yes I did. You liked it, too.

ALLY

You did everything I said.

KEVIN

Ally, I love you. Pay attention to me. *(Ally looks at him)* I don't want you doing this. Someone has to protect you. You trust me, don't you?

(Ally looks at him awhile.)

ALLY

Yeah.

(Peter walks in, flipping on the light. He looks down at them. Thrown off.)

PETER

What's going on?

ALLY

(looking from Kevin to Peter) Do you see him?

KEVIN & PETER

Yes.

ALLY

(to Peter) No, I meant YOU.

PETER

What's going on, here?

(Kevin smiles, stands up.)

KEVIN

Look, I'm taller than him. *(He jumps to be taller even)* Look, I'm taller, even!

ALLY

Paul, this is my car. Kevin.

(Peter stares at them.)

PETER

I'm sorry, your what?

My car. ALLY

Her CAR. KEVIN

Kevin. ALLY

I thought you just wrecked your car. PETER

I did wreck – ALLY

(bristling) Someone ran into US. KEVIN

It wasn't our fault. ALLY

We were just sitting in traffic! KEVIN

We were just sitting there. *(holds Kevin's hand)* It's okay, Kevin. ALLY

(confused, pointing) This is a guy. PETER

I look like a guy. KEVIN

He looks like a guy, but he's really my car. I guess he's come back to visit me. *(looking at him)* I thought you'd be blue, you're not blue. ALLY

People don't come in blue. No matching interiors either. KEVIN

I always felt blue. ALLY

You guys are psycho. PETER

KEVIN

I'm psycho? You drive a FIAT, man.

PETER

How do you know I drive a Fiat?

ALLY

You drive a Fiat?

KEVIN

You know what Fiat stands for? Fix It Again, Tony.

PETER

How do you know how to speak a language?

ALLY

I used to talk to him all the time. It's my fault, really, I treated Kevin better than I treated my family. I hated leaving him overnight at the shop when he'd get fixed, just because he belonged with me. It's been devastating to have him gone.

(She hugs Kevin. He kisses her head. He looks protectively from her to Peter.)

ALLY

Don't you have a good relationship with your car?

PETER

Not like this!

KEVIN

I can't believe you took her in a cab. Those things don't have seatbelts! Cabs are the whores of the car industry. They'll just take anyone into their doors, they have no discretion!

ALLY

Hey, it's good money.

KEVIN

I hope you didn't touch anything.

PETER

Things don't just appear like this, at my house.

KEVIN

Not even when you've been drinking?

PETER

Never. Never.

(A slinky WOMAN (JOSIE) appears in the doorway. She stretches slightly, her arms up over her head. Peter looks stunned, backs up.)

PETER

Josie!

JOSIE

(rubs against him) Hi Petey.

PETER

You're dead. You're dead.

JOSIE

I'm hardly dead.

PETER

That's my cat. My childhood cat.

JOSIE

(stroking his crotch as she passes) You've grown.

(She walks past Kevin and Ally, looks around. Bats at Ally's head suddenly. Ally ducks.)

JOSIE

Who's this?

PETER

I met her in a bar.

KEVIN

Ally –

JOSIE

Alley cat. Hmmm. You're hideous.

(She bats at Ally again.)

PETER

Josie!

KEVIN

Don't make me hurt you.

(Josie gets on the counter, bored. Flicks her hands around. Knocks stuff off the counters.)

JOSIE

You haven't changed, Petey. Still ghastly taste in women.

PETER

I don't think I understand this.

(Ally hands him his water. He slumps to the table.)

ALLY

I don't really either. But you should've known Kevin. He was a great car.

KEVIN

You made me great. Took good care of me. I hated leaving you there in the intersection.

ALLY

A truck just mashed us from behind.

KEVIN

I was sitting there, my ass all bashed in and bleeding. My windows burst out, I was just shattered, I could no longer hold us all together.

ALLY

I cried.

KEVIN

I was sort of above it all. I saw you go away in an ambulance. You were really angry at the other driver. It was like he had bashed right into you, your own legs and arms. *(Ally nods)* So I get to make sure that you treat yourself right. For the rest of your life, I'm still going to be your car.

PETER

What?

KEVIN

(sitting down) I don't get to drive her anymore, but I still get to be there.

ALLY

What if I get another car?

PETER

She needs to get around.

KEVIN

It's all gonna be okay.

ALLY

I told Kevin everything. I even sang badly.

KEVIN

Everything you did in me was okay.

ALLY

I even performed lewd sexual acts.

KEVIN

I averted my mirrors. And besides, you got new seatcovers after that last one.

JOSIE

Horrifying!

ALLY

My car was the one place I was conscious late at night, talking to people I normally would not allow in my house. Kevin was safe because I could always make a getaway. I even thought awful things about people in my car. It was okay, though, because I was in transit. Things in transit are just temporary. So I had the freedom to think.

KEVIN

I'm going to watch over you for the rest of your life.

ALLY

(cheered, holding his hand) Did you like getting waxed?

KEVIN

I LOVED that.

ALLY

I tried not to use harsh detergents.

KEVIN

It didn't matter what you used. You belonged to me. Your ass fit in my seats like...like nobody else's. My whole ten year life, my seats molded to your ass, and your ass only. *(shakes his head firmly)* There will never be another, for me.

PETER

(looking at Ally and Kevin. Looks at Josie.) And I get *Josie??* *(Cries)* Why can't I get in a car accident?!

(Kevin looks at Peter crying, briefly. Touches his shoulder.)

KEVIN

You don't want to get in an accident.

PETER

I do. I do.

KEVIN

It wouldn't be the same...

PETER

Nobody cares about my ass...

(In bursts RAOUL, the Fiat. In tattered clothes)

RAOUL

Jesus fuckin Christ, I got ripped off out there!

PETER

(stunned) Shit!!

RAOUL

(slapping him on the head) What the fuck, leaving me in that lot, that fuckin' curry smokin' indian dude fell ASLEEP after midnight, that was no guarded lot! They fuckin ripped me off, you drivin' off in a taxi with some ditsy chick, and look at me, do I look well? NO! Broke my side windows – took the radio –

PETER

They took the radio?!

RAOUL

Not to mention the feeling violated. Do you care? NO! What you thinkin', leavin' me in the city! You drove me in there, you fuckin' drive me OUT of there!!

KEVIN

(smoothly) The Fiat

RAOUL

Yeah, how the fuck you doin? Raoul.

PETER

I never named him anything.

RAOUL

I still got a name, the last guy named me. He's a paraplegic now, he totalled me, but I got fixed and then your lame ass bought me off that lot in Vegas because that skinny bitch you were with thought it'd be cute to drive around in a convertible. Paid 600 bucks for me.

PETER

I've been paying ever since.

ALLY

Raoul. I bet you were red.

RAOUL

I was red.

PETER

Was?? Does that mean you're dead, too?

RAOUL

What do you think, they fix the cars up after they steal from them? No, man, they bashed the shit out of me! It's your fuckin' fault, too, because you're always abandoning me. You don't give a shit, and you're always – *(breaks down crying)*

KEVIN

I'm Kevin. This is Ally.

RAOUL

Fuckin Honda. I can smell your fuckin Honda-I'm-good-for-400-thousand-miles-without breaking-down breath.

ALLY

He *was* a Honda.

RAOUL

Fuckin' Honda.

JOSIE

I'm Josie. I'm not a car.

RAOUL

(lustily) Mmmm.

JOSIE

Come closer and I'll scratch you.

(They are all silent a minute.)

ALLY

This night is turning out differently than I expected.

KEVIN

Which brings me to why I am here – discretion, Ally.

ALLY
Why?

KEVIN
You're gonna have to start paying attention to where you are going, and why you are doing it. I can't keep track of you anymore.

ALLY
But I'd rather you did. I'm not good at it.

KEVIN
We can focus on our new relationship.

PETER
Which is what?? You're going to have a relationship with your ex-car?

KEVIN
I know everything about her.

PETER
I'm going to lose to a car??

KEVIN
Every bad smell, every fart. Every secret singing of Neil Diamond when no one was around. Every slow drive by past an old boyfriend's house to see if he still lives there.

ALLY
God, how embarrassing.

KEVIN
You can't hide from me. And why hide? Why not just be.
(Peter looks at Raoul, who looks tortured.)

PETER
God, I'm so sorry. Raoul.

RAOUL
Jesus, man! *(crying)*

PETER
I'm sorry.

RAOUL

We never had that, man!

(Peter tried to touch him, Raoul jerks away.)

RAOUL

You never even drove me through a car wash, man!

PETER

Well your roof always leaked.

RAOUL

How bout a hand towel? You could've washed me by hand, I would have loved that, bro!

ALLY

Yeah. *(looking at Kevin)* I always just washed him right in my yard.

KEVIN

In front of God and everyone.

ALLY

In the sparkling sunshine.

JOSIE

I'm going to throw up.

RAOUL

Why didn't you care about me, man? What am I doing here, you don't even deserve me –

(He starts to get up, Ally stops him)

ALLY

Raoul, Raoul, no, no, sit down. Come on, we all want you here. Right? Come on. Have some water. Would you like some water?

RAOUL

Runnin' on empty tanks all the time. I'm gaspin' out my gas fumes cause you can't stop on the way to work to give me a fuckin' 5 dollar fill up, so I gotta struggle up the BW Parkway when it could be so EASY. But we did have time to stop at the AM/PM to get your friggin coffee and donut which you spilled all over my insides...

PETER

Man, I'm sorry – I didn't know anyone was LOOKING –

RAOUL

And your music is like – why did you even get a radio, I mean, the shit that I had to listen to!! Toni Braxton!

(Kevin and Ally both groan. Peter looks embarrassed.)

PETER

She had Neil Diamond! And I kept my farts inside!

RAOUL

Bullshit! You farted up a storm! You saved them up from business meetings, and at the end of the day, as soon as you're in my interior, then whoop, there it is!! All the fuckin' way home, I'm dyin! Thank GOD my roof leaked! That's all I can say! You would've killed us both!!

(Peter leaps up)

PETER

(screaming) So I'm a failure! GREAT!! OKAY???! I can HEAR YOU NOW!!! I admit it, I'm a failure!!! I hate my job, I get paid shit, I have no flatulence control, I obviously can't score with the ladies, and now I find out my car hates me!! My car which has just been STOLEN!

RAOUL

I'm not stolen. I'm just missing. I can take you to where they dumped me.

KEVIN

(looking around) Except we don't have a ride. We're all dead.

ALLY

I'm not dead, am I?

PETER

I mean, was I ever good at anything?? Josie? *(Josie looks away; He looks stricken)* Not even to you?? I was twelve years old, surely I wasn't a failure all the way back at twelve years old.

JOSIE

(quietly) You gave good foot rubs.

PETER

(relieved, joyous) I did??

JOSIE

You did.

KEVIN

You gave your cat footrubs?

PETER

She liked it.

JOSIE

I did like it. We had four feet you know. That's twice as many sore feet as you.

RAOUL

I don't have any feet. I don't particularly like walkin' on these, they ain't filled with air. Once you walk on air, you never wanna walk on feet.

JOSIE

I cannot have a conversation with a car.

RAOUL

Oh, excuse ME.

JOSIE

Both my brothers were killed by cars like you. Road kill, as you like to call us. Let's splat the cat, you laugh and you yuck it up, but your air-filled feet smashed the brains out of some of my best friends and for that reason I will not have a conversation with a car, any car, at any time. You included.

RAOUL

I was a red car.

JOSIE

Car tires also smell like dog piss, another good reason to AVOID you. (*looking at him carefully*) I do like red, though.

RAOUL

(*looking down*) You know why is this called carpet? It has nothing to do with cars at all.

JOSIE

How did they get "car" out of "auto"? Did you ever think about that? (*They both chuckle.*)

RAOUL

That *is* weird.

(*Then Josie straightens up. Stalks out of the room.*)

JOSIE

Your car is here so you don't need me now. I only showed up because I thought someone should speak in your behalf. I'm gonna go spray somewhere.

(They sit there quietly.)

PETER

I was so busy getting ahead...

KEVIN

Discretion.

PETER

Gotta *get*, get the job, get the house, get the girl, get the car, get the family, make the money, have the career, travel, eat, drink, fuck –

KEVIN

Pay attention.

(Ally and Peter look at him)

KEVIN

That's all.

(Peter and Ally look at each other. The lights go BLACK. Pause)

(LIGHTS BACK UP and it's Peter sitting at the table alone. Ally brings him a glass of water. -- In the other room, Josie, Raoul and Kevin sit FROZEN together on the couch, out of the light. Pause.)

ALLY

It's okay. Throw up comes out of couches. I think.

PETER

I'm really sorry, though.

ALLY

It's okay.

PETER

No, it's embarrassing. I mean, I don't even know you. I'm not really a club person. I don't go to clubs.

ALLY

I don't really either.

PETER

(pause) I like your place.

(They sit there looking at each other. There is some humor in the situation)

PETER

I guess this is the part where I either make a move or I don't make a move.

ALLY

Well, this is my house. Technically, I get to make the move or start the motion to kick you out.

PETER

Oh. *(pause)* I was thinking, you know, maybe...you wouldn't mind doing something different. *(Ally raises an eyebrow)*

ALLY

Like...

PETER

Well, I left my car downtown, and...I'm kinda worried. I'd kind of like to go back and get it. I thought maybe we could...walk.

ALLY

Walk.

PETER

Yeah. And talk.

ALLY

Walk and talk.

PETER

Yeah. Sort of what we were doing in the bar, but without drinks in our hands. Out in fresh air, and nature.

ALLY

Oh. *(thinking)*

PETER

You think it's a bad idea.

ALLY

No.

PETER

I promise not to throw up toward you.

ALLY

(slowly starts to get up, laughs) Okay.

PETER

I think this might be a better start.

(They start to head out, passing Kevin, Raoul and Josie invisible on the couch, snuggled up. As soon as they're out, Kevin and Raoul start fighting over the remote control. Josie looks around)

JOSIE

I hope we don't end up living here.

RAOUL

C'mon, let's watch Cops.

JOSIE

Josie and the Pussycats!

KEVIN

Dukes of Hazzard has the best car chases on!

RAOUL

Okay, we'll compromise. CHiPs. *(switching channels)*
(BLACKOUT)