

Check Engine

by Mark Reep

"How's the Pinto running?" Sean says. It's been awhile. Maybe Darcy won't remember him.

She's emptying the trashcan at the coffee counter. She ties the bag's drawstring, straightens. "Fine, last I knew."

Sean likes the sound of that.

She tucks her hair behind her ear, looks at the register: "Pump Four? Twenty dollars?"

"Yeah."

She taps keys, tucks his twenty in the drawer.

He takes a shot. "Sorry things didn't work out."

She gives him a look, bangs the drawer shut. "Like it's any of your business."

Sean spreads his hands, sorry. "You're right. Just hoping."

"You mean fishing?"

"Yeah, I should've just asked. —So, you dumped Pinto Boy, huh? That been better?"

"Pinto Boy?" She might be amused.

"While I'm rollin'," Sean says, "would you like to go out sometime?"

She shakes her head. "I'm keeping to myself right now."

Sean's heard that before. "Sure," he says. "Well, good seein' you."

She nods. "I don't know your name."

"Sean," he says.

The backdoor opens, a blonde woman comes in. Drops a clipboard on the counter, rubs her hands together. "Dang it's cold. You wanna do the front pumps? I'll watch the register."

Darcy's pulling on a battered leather jacket.

"Hey, be good," Sean says.

She's dragging the garbagebag. "Can you hold the door?"

"Lemme," Sean says, and reaches for the bag.

"I got it." She's so close. Her hair smells good.

The blonde woman laughs a smoker's laugh. "A *gentleman*. Let him have it, girl."

Darcy lets go, straightens. "All yours."

"Whoa," Sean says. "Whatcha got in here, engine blocks?"

The blonde likes that too. Maybe he should ask *her* out.

Sean's in the truck digging for his keys when Darcy comes out with the clipboard. She crosses to the pumps— No, she's coming to the truck. Sean rolls down the window.

“Izzair a problem, Offisher?”

She smiles a little, shakes her head. Writes something, hands him a Quikfill coffee card. He turns it over. *Darcy*. A cell number.

“Thank you,” Sean says.

“For what, exactly?”

“For takin' a chance. You'll not regret it. My word.”

She studies him. She'd make a good poker player. A bat flits across the pumplights, there and gone.

“Okay,” she says. She steps up onto the island.

Sean finds the truck key. The starter grunts. The Check Engine light blinks. *Come on, start.*

