

A BROKEN AXLE

written by

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DARKNESS

OVER OPENING CREDITS - a young man stumbles through his words.

ASHTON (V.O.)
So, uh...yeah, if...if that's
alright with you, I'd like to,
uh...go see that on Friday. With
you.

1

INT. HALLWAY - HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

1

The face of ASHTON CROFT fills the screen. His eyes dart every which way, sweating a little...

ASHTON
So...how about it?

KIMBERLY - whose locker Ashton stands a little too close to
- remains as sincere as she can.

KIMBERLY
Aww, thanks for the offer,
but...I'm sorry, I have plans for
that Friday.

ASHTON
Oh. I see. Uhh - will next Monday
work?

Pause -

KIMBERLY
(short and sweet)
No.

She gathers her books and closes her locker.

KIMBERLY
Also - I'm not that big a Nicholas
Sparks fan. Sorry.

And with that, she exits scene. Ashton longingly looks after her - deflated inside.

2

INT. HALLWAY - HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

2

Ashton rambles to his friend KENNY, who's occupied admiring himself in his locker mirror.

ASHTON

- it doesn't make sense, dude. I gotta be doin' something wrong.

KENNY

Alright, let's probe this: where did you ask her out to?

ASHTON

The movies.

KENNY

Uh-huh, First Date 101. Was it a good movie?

Ashton fidgets a bit.

KENNY

...My God, it wasn't that new Nicholas Sparks flick, was it?

Ashton's silence confirms all.

KENNY

If you wanna come out of the closet, now would be the time.

ASHTON

Oh, alright! What would you have done?

KENNY

Probably asked her to see something more manly!

ASHTON

Oh? So lemme ask - was that copy of *The Notebook* a gift from your mother, then?

KENNY

That was a rental - it's Susie's Valentine's Day tradition!

Kenny drops his comb. He retrieves it and continues grooming his hair.

(CONTINUED)

KENNY

Okay, look; here's the point I'm trying to make -

Kenny closes his locker door. They walk and talk.

KENNY

- the problem's right in front of you: your approach needs to be different. Conceal your intentions, send out mixed signals. You dealt all your cards with your nervous little quirks, and that more than likely turned her off.

ASHTON

Quirks?

KENNY

...don't pretend like I wasn't watching.

ASHTON

Great - so I guess I'm a deadbeat romantic who loves chick flicks!

KENNY

I...wouldn't put it so harshly...

ASHTON

But I thought girls, like, had it in for shy, sensitive nice guys. Isn't that a common thing?

Kenny stops mid-walk.

KENNY

Hold up...*nice guys?*

Awkward silence.

KENNY

This was a more serious problem than I thought.

(pause)

Okay, look, I'll help you out. This girl I know recently broke up with her boyfriend. She'll need a strong shoulder to cry on; physical intimacy, the whole she-bang. That's where you come in. And I'll show you everything you need to do. By tonight, you and her will be

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

KENNY (cont'd)
snuggling up to Starbucks and
Hallmark.

ASHTON
You think this'll work?

KENNY
Guaranteed, bro. The door's wide
open and the mat says "welcome."
Look me in the eyes and tell me -
(beat)
- has the Love Doctor ever
prescribed you wrong?

Even more awkward silence.

ASHTON
...and you thought I was the gay
one?

KENNY
Which one of us here has the
girlfriend?

ASHTON
(put in his place)
Touché.

3 EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

3

Kenny and his girlfriend SUSIE sit in Kenny's car, looking
out the front windshield. Ashton sits in the backseat,
trying to contain his jitters.

ASHTON
So this is her place, huh?

KENNY
Yep.

ASHTON
Are you sure this is gonna work?

KENNY
Yep.

ASHTON
Really?

(CONTINUED)

KENNY

Yep.

ASHTON

What if this girl doesn't like -

KENNY

Yep.

ASHTON

You just agreed with me!

KENNY

...yep.

ASHTON

This is hopeless, this is hope -

KENNY

Ash! You're perspiring, bro!
Emergency deod!

Ashton reaches for a deodorant stick. He lifts up his shirt and fumbles while swiping his armpits.

KENNY

Better?

ASHTON

Probably shoulda got the spray-on stuff.

SUSIE

Ash, there's no need to worry. Aura is a really sweet girl.

KENNY

I mean...she may be a little off-putting at first, but she grows on you. And she's in a vulnerable place right now, so give her a chance.

SUSIE

Vulnerable? Didn't she call it off right after, like, breaking her ex's arm for finding him in bed with her best -

Kenny clears his throat obnoxiously loud as a distraction, just in time to see this girl come out the front door.

(CONTINUED)

KENNY

Okay - she's coming; everybody be cool! Ash - remember what I've taught you.

ASHTON

(hesitant)

Alright.

KENNY

Godpseed, young Padawan.

AURA knocks on the driver's side window. Kenny rolls it down.

AURA

Hey, guys.

KENNY

Hey, come on in!

SUSIE

Hi, Aura!

She climbs into the back seat, not noticing Ashton at first. She turns to see him. Her face is devoid of any expression.

AURA

This the friend you were talking about?

KENNY

Yes, ma'am; Aura Michaels, meet Ashton Croft.

Ash is running low on air supply. All he can manage is an awkward wave.

AURA

Cool.

KENNY

Alrighty, let's get goin'.

He drives off.

4

INT. CAR - NIGHT

4

Ash twiddles his thumbs, his eyes darting back and forth. Glistening beads dot his forehead.

AURA

So what are we doin' tonight?

(CONTINUED)

KENNY

Well, I figured we could catch some tickets to that Speed Demon flick that's playing at the Creedo. Ashton likes that superhero stuff - right, Ash?

Aura glances for confirmation. She gets none.

KENNY

You're a shy little flower, aren'tcha?

Ash aggressively clears his throat.

5

INT. THEATER LOBBY - NIGHT

5

Kenny finishes filling his and Susan's sodas. Ash storms up to him.

ASHTON

We need to talk.

KENNY

Can't it wait until intermission?

ASHTON

No, it can't! Why didn't you tell me she would give me the cold shoulder?

KENNY

Maybe I overstated her reaction, but remember, she just got dumped by her ex, so -

ASHTON

She broke her ex's arm! I don't know about you, but I value my arms, thank you.

KENNY

Ash, listen -

ASHTON

I'm just gonna walk home.

KENNY

Wait, wait! C'mon, don't tell me you're quitting. You're gonna give up, just like that?

(CONTINUED)

ASHTON

I can already see where this is headed, and it's not worth it.

KENNY

Don't go, man! C'mon, she'll warm up to you, I promise.

Ash has a conflicted look on his face.

MONTAGE: THE DOUBLE DATE

["Love is Strange" plays throughout the montage.]

Kenny, Susie and Aura tear up at a sad part in the film. Ash sits two seats away, hand on his chin, with a bored expression on his face.

Kenny, Susie and Aura grab some food at the court in the mall. Ash plays with his fries while the three talk excitedly.

The three walk the streets of town at night, chatting and pointing out sights. Ash follows close behind, relegated to carrying the girls' purses.

Kenny, Susie and Aura sit in a photo booth, taking silly pictures. Ash stands outside, collecting the pictures. He silently hands them to Kenny, as he and the girls schmooze over them. His expression has never left his face.

END MONTAGE

6

EXT. COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

6

Kenny stands outside, latte in hand. Ash marches up to him.

ASHTON

I'm sick of this. I'm done.

KENNY

What are you talking about?

ASHTON

You call this a double date? This ain't no double date?

KENNY

Yes it is, there's four of us here.

(CONTINUED)

ASHTON

Yeah - three of you -
 (gesturing to himself)
 - and the fourth wheel with a
 broken axle!

KENNY

Well, you certainly haven't been
 trying much on your end -

ASHTON

Trying?! I have watched you talk,
 followed you around, carried their
 purses, tried on over-sized clothes
 for your amusement, and bought you
 all coffees! Does that sound like a
 double date to you?!

KENNY

(quietly hissing)
 Shut up, man, everyone's staring!

ASHTON

No, screw you and screw her! I'm
 done with y'all!

And with that, he turns sharply and heads the other way down
 the street. Kenny stares after his, flabbergasted.

Susie and Aura make their way out.

SUSIE

Where's he going?

KENNY

He's in one of his moods.

Silence.

AURA

What was his name again?

7

EXT. SIDEWALK - DOWNTOWN - NIGHT

7

Ash moves along, mumbling angrily under his breath. He
 passes a girl sitting forlorn on the sidewalk outside the
 same theater he went to previously. He stops and makes his
 way back.

His nervous feelings set in as he tries to talk to her.

(CONTINUED)

ASHTON

Uh, hey.

HALEY looks up.

HALEY

Hey.

ASHTON

Are you - are you - are you alright? I couldn't help but notice you sitting there, and you don't look too good. Not that you're not pretty or anything, cuz, you are, but you just look a little sad. Not that I'm trying to butt into your business or anything, but I just hate seeing people sad, and...

He's grasping at straws at this point. But it brings a smile to Haley's face.

HALEY

No, no, you're perfectly fine. I guess I'm alright, it's just...my best friend's trying to hook me up with her cousin, but he got along so well with her boyfriend that the three of 'em just kinda melded together and left me on the sidelines. It's nothing, really.

A small semblance of a smile comes to Ash's face - the first time he's smiled throughout the whole film. [A miracle!]

ASHTON

No, I...I get where you're comin' from.

(pause)

Listen, at the risk of sounding presumptuous, but would you like to, uhh...maybe see, uh...a movie or something?

HALEY

There's that new Nicholas Sparks flick that's out that I've been dying to see. Are you okay with those kinda chick flicks?

Ash's grinning now. He holds out his hand to her.

(CONTINUED)

ASHTON

I think this is gonna be the start
of a beautiful relationship.

She giggles as she grabs her hand and pulls herself up.

HALEY

Uh, thanks! I like you, too!

They laugh with each other. They make their way into the
theater, already warming up to each other.

A beautiful relationship indeed.

THE END