

THE VALUE ENGINE

by
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EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

A small tractor slows to a stop behind an old farmhouse. The driver, TOM CULVER (56), with dark tanned arms and sinewy strength, takes off his ballcap and wipes his dirt covered brow.

INT. FARMHOUSE KITCHEN - DAY

Tom enters the simple kitchen and hangs his hat on a hook by the door. At the kitchen table his son, PATRICK CULVER (20), with a dark mop of rough combed hair and thrift store clothing, sits in front of a disassembled radio.

TOM
What are you doing?

Patrick's chin rests in his hands while he stares at the neatly arranged components. He doesn't look up.

Tom approaches him. Patrick grabs one of the parts and runs out of the room.

Tom places the remaining components into the empty shell of the radio.

TOM
You can't keep doing this.

Tom gathers the remaining pieces.

INT. UTILITY ROOM - DAY

Tom sets the radio onto a shelf next to the skeletal remains of a DVD player, digital clock, toaster oven, and a calculator.

INT. PATRICK'S ROOM - DAY

A light knock comes from the bedroom door and it opens. Tom leans in. Patrick's room is very plain with no decorations. His single bed has a faded super hero bed spread.

Next to the bed is a folding table covered with neatly arranged electronic components.

Patrick sits in a folding chair staring at them.

TOM
I don't understand this Patrick. I
really don't.

Patrick continues staring at the parts.

TOM
I didn't know you could use a
screwdriver, and one day I come in
and you've taken my alarm clock
apart.

Tom steps into the room and places a hand on his son's
shoulder.

TOM
You've got them arranged all nice.

Patrick moves one of the parts up against another.

TOM
You wanting to put them back
together?

Patrick looks up to him.

TOM
Yeah, I'll show you how. It's
supper time though. Come on.

Tom turns to leave and Patrick gets up.

INT. FARMHOUSE KITCHEN - NIGHT

Tom cooks spaghetti on the stove with his back to Patrick.
Patrick sits at the kitchen table with a soldering station in
front of him. He solders two of the pieces together.

TOM
You took to that pretty quick. I
used to repair the odd radio for
people, remember?

He turns to the boy.

TOM
I don't want you using that when
I'm not here, you understand?

He waits for a response that doesn't come and turns back to
his cooking.

TOM
Anyway. I like that you seem to
have a hobby now, but...

Tom stops and grips his side. He bends over a bit. Patrick looks up.

TOM
This damned kidney stone has got to
be the size of a Buick.

He straightens, winces.

TOM
I ever pass this thing, I'm going
to have it mounted.

Patrick focuses back on his soldering.

TOM
Your mother was good about helping
me watch the salt. I don't do as
well without her.

Tom returns to stirring his sauce. Patrick watches him.

INT. TOM'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Tom sits up in bed. A noise comes from somewhere in the house. He clicks on his bedside lamp.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Dim lamplight glows from behind the television which is pushed away from the wall. Tom stops at the entrance.

TOM
Patrick?

The top of Patrick's head rises above the old console TV. Tom flips the wall switch and the light comes on. Patrick places a hand on top of the television. He holds a screwdriver.

TOM
No. Absolutely not.

Patrick stares at him.

TOM
I mean it.

Patrick stands and walks past, not looking at him.

Tom walks over and rights the overturned lamp that Patrick was using. He straightens and picks up the screwdriver then looks up to his son's room.

INT. PATRICK'S ROOM - DAY

Tom opens the door. He is fully dressed.

TOM
Rise and shine.

Patrick rolls over to face his father.

TOM
We're goin' to town. Can't have
you destroying the TV.

Tom leaves the doorway.

INT. PICKUP TRUCK - DAY

Tom drives while Patrick leans his head against the passenger window and stares out at the passing scenery.

TOM
You still sore at me?

Patrick doesn't respond. Tom smiles.

EXT. HOBBY-MART - DAY

The pick-up truck pulls into the parking lot.

INT. PICKUP TRUCK - DAY

Tom opens the door and steps out.

TOM
Well, come on.

Patrick opens his door.

INT. HOBBY-MART - DAY

Tom holds the door open and Patrick walks in. Aisle upon aisle of electronics, parts, LED lights, transformers, capacitors, and circuit boards lay before him. He starts down the first aisle. Tom steps into the store, smiling.

SAM (O.S.)
Tom Culver?

Tom turns to see SAM (45), with greying hair and a bit of a belly, standing behind the low counter.

TOM
Hey there, Sam.

SAM
I thought that was you. Come over here and say hello.

Tom walks over to him.

INT. HOBBY-MART COUNTER - DAY

Tom checks out some trinkets at the counter as the two talk.

SAM
Haven't seen you in here in forever. You got a project?

TOM
Not me, it's Patrick. He's got a bug about something. Been salvaging bits of radios, toasters. All kinds of stuff.

SAM
No shortage of bits around here.

Patrick eyes a row of bins full of capacitors.

TOM
That's the idea.

SAM
Does he know what he looking for?

TOM
Sam, I don't know. He can read and I find books out of place. Repair manuals. Old encyclopedias.

SAM
Huh.

TOM
How much is that he's looking at?

Patrick holds up large component with copper coils wound around it.

SAM
I'd say forty.

TOM
Hmm.

SAM
You know. We have some stuff in the back, a whole bin we we're just going to throw out. If he wants to look through it.

TOM
Thanks Sam, I'm sure he'll get a kick out of it.

SAM
No problem.

Sam comes around the counter and leads Tom into an aisle.

SAM
I was really sorry to hear about your wife. My mother died of cancer, it's a damnable disease.

TOM
Yes. Yes it is.

They approach Patrick.

TOM
Sam is going to show us some stuff he has in the back.

Patrick looks up.

INT. HOBBY-MART BACK ROOM - DAY

Patrick, Tom and Sam enter the back room. FLYNN (24) sets a plastic bin down onto a shelf.

FLYNN
Hey boss.

SAM
Flynn, can you watch the front for a few minutes?

FLYNN
Sure.

Flynn eyes Tom and Patrick as he passes. He opens the door to the front.

SAM
I counted the register at lunch.

FLYNN
Oh. Okay. Sure.

Flynn walk out. Sam places his hands on a large bin of parts.

SAM
This is it.

TOM
Go ahead Patrick. Pick out whatever you need.

Patrick digs into the bin.

TOM
What was that about?

SAM
The register comment? Flynn's worthless. My sister's kid.

TOM
You find something?

Patrick holds a 10 key number pad.

INT. FARMHOUSE KITCHEN - NIGHT

Patrick finishes soldering the 10 key number pad to circuit board.

A half eaten bologna sandwich rests on a plate next to him.

Tom eats his own sandwich and watches. Patrick sets down the soldering iron.

TOM
Finished?

Patrick stands up and carries the piece to the doorway to the living room. He holds the part up to the door frame trying different placements.

TOM
You're not hanging that there.

Patrick turns to his father with a slight frown.

TOM
It has to be a door frame?

Patrick's frown disappears.

INT. FARMHOUSE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Tom pounds a nail into a free standing door frame in the center of the room as Patrick watches from the couch. He holds the number pad in his lap. The sparse furniture has been pushed back to the walls to clear space.

TOM
Will this work?

Patrick gets up from the couch. He holds the component up to the frame, again trying different placements.

TOM
I've got to get some sleep. Don't stay up all night, it'll still be there in the morning.

Tom grips his side.

TOM
Damned stone.

Tom walks out of the room holding his side, Patrick looks up to watch him leave.

SERIES OF SHOTS

Patrick assembling components.

Patrick attaching them.

Patrick attaching the key bag and connecting wires.

Patrick pressing the 1 and 0 keys over and over and over...

INT. FARMHOUSE LIVING ROOM - DAY

Tom comes back into the living room, dressed in his work clothes. The door frame is covered in electrical components linked together by wires.

Patrick lies asleep on the couch, still fully clothed from the night before.

Tom pulls a quilt up over the boy and smooths out his hair.

INT. FARMHOUSE KITCHEN - DAY

Tom enter. His clothes are dirty. He has no boots on and his white socks are stained with leather and sweat.

Patrick checks the contraption over. He looks up to his Tom, who massages his side.

TOM

I'm fine.

Tom slumps into the sofa. Patrick watches him.

TOM

I am.

Patrick picks up a three pronged electrical cord attached to the machine and takes a step towards the wall.

TOM

What do you think you're doing?

Patrick slows down, but keeps moving towards a wall power outlet. Tom stands up.

TOM

Don't.

Patrick closes in on the wall outlet. Tom tries to quickly stand, but grabs his side in pain. Patrick plugs the cord in and the contraption buzzes to life. Tom steps through it.

Tom takes Patrick's arm and they both freeze, then POP and the lights go out.

TOM

You tripped the breaker.

Tom pulls Patrick aside and unplugs the machine.

TOM

Stay here.

Tom leaves using the dim light filtering in from the windows.

TOM (O.S.)

You can't do that. What if something happened to you?

Patrick inspects the silent machine. He pulls at a part.

The lights return. Patrick holds a component with smoke wafting from it. Tom comes back in. His clothes are completely clean, the socks bright white. No dirt from earlier remains.

TOM

Do you hear me? I'll get rid of this thing. I can't have you...

Patrick looks down at his father's pants.

TOM

What?

Tom looks down at his now clean clothes.

TOM

What the?

He leans down for a closer look. He stands up, holds his side, instinctively. Grips it tighter, bends and twists.

TOM

The kidney stone. I'd swear it's gone.

Patrick holds up the broken part showing it to his father.. Smoke rises from it. Tom looks at the part then the machine.

TOM

I'll put in a heavier breaker and we'll go back to the store.

INT. HOBBY-MART - DAY

Tom and Patrick walk into the store. Sam turns the pages of a newspaper at the counter.

TOM

Go ahead, Patrick. Get whatever you want.

Patrick grabs a basket and heads into the isles.

SAM

Project going well?

Flynn looks up from the display case he was stocking.

TOM

Sam. You wouldn't believe me if I told you.

SAM
Customer built a GPS guided rocket
once. Just for fun. I'd believe
about anything.

TOM
This ain't a rocket, Sam.

Patrick walks past them with a half full basket.

SAM
Hey Tom. Some of that stuff is
pretty expensive.

TOM
I'll put it on a credit card.

SAM
What's going on, you okay?

TOM
I'm fine. I'm better than fine,
actually.

SAM
What are you talking about?

TOM
He's built something...

Tom looks over to Flynn, who looks back to his stocking.

SAM
Hey Flynn, why don't you go into
the back.

FLYNN
And do what?

SAM
I don't know. Clean something.

Flynn stands up and walks out the back. He eyes Patrick as
he walks out.

TOM
He's built a machine, that. Well,
it got rid of my kidney stones.
Took the dirt out my clothes.

SAM
You're not making any sense.

TOM

Because it doesn't make sense. You go through it and it's like it take out what's not needed.

SAM

That's impossible.

TOM

Yesterday, I would have agreed with you.

SAM

Can I see this thing?

TOM

I don't know. Patrick doesn't do well with company.

SAM

Tom. I got a blockage in my neck.

TOM

What?

SAM

Artery in my neck is all blocked.. They can't do nothing about it. Say trying to fix could cause a stroke.

TOM

Won't not fixing it cause a stroke.

SAM

They won't take the liability. Damn doctors.

Patrick walks up the counter with the basket full of parts. Tom and Sam look at one another.

SAM

You can take the stuff. Come on Tom.

TOM

Patrick, you get finished and Mr. Sam here's gonna stop by the house. Okay.

Patrick looks up at his father and sets the basket of parts on the counter in front of Sam.

TOM
Bag it up, Sam.

INT. FARMHOUSE LIVING ROOM - DAY

Patrick attaches the final components to the machine using light from the windows. The lights all come on. Tom enters the room.

TOM
I put the new breaker in. It'll
handle the current or burn the
house down.

Patrick continues his tinkering. Tom watches over his shoulder.

TOM
You about done? Can I help?

Patrick stops, his hands still on the machine. He doesn't move.

TOM
Okay then. I'm going to find
something to pass through it.

Tom leaves the room. Patrick resumes work.

INT. FARMHOUSE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Tom sets down a milk carton of junk; tarnished silverware, an old carburetor, .

Patrick takes a step back from the machine and looks it over.

TOM
Done?

Patrick plugs the chord into a power strip with a big red switch.

TOM
Hold on.

Tom walks into the kitchen and comes back with a flashlight and a small fire extinguisher. Patrick looks to him.

TOM
Just in case.

Patrick plugs in the machine. A sound not unlike that of a camera's flash charging fills the room. Small cooling fans spin up and lights blink as the sound peaks. The room lights dim, then the machine evens to a hum.

TOM
Well, the breaker's holding.

Tom sets the flashlight down and picks up the tray of tarnished silverware. He places it on the ground in front of the adorned door frame.

TOM
Here goes nothing.

He slides a brown tarnished spoon through it.

It emerges from the other side shining like new. Patrick picks up the spoon and inspects it.

Tom laughs deeply.

INT. FARMHOUSE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The entire pile of junk rests on the floor, all of it shined and cleaned.

The machine sits silent, its cord coiled up neatly beside it. Laughter drifts in from another room.

INT. FARMHOUSE KITCHEN - NIGHT

Tom and Patrick sit at the table eating grilled cheese sandwiches.

TOM
I thought you had blown yourself up for sure.

Tom laughs.

TOM
Do you realize what you've made in there? It could change the world. Cure diseases. It could cure cancer!

Tom puts down his sandwich.

TOM
Is that why do you did this?

Patrick looks down.

TOM

Patrick, it was just a kidney stone. I'm not going anywhere, buddy. Not for a long while.

Patrick puts down his sandwich and walks out of the room. Tom looks over to a family portrait on the wall of Tom, Patrick, and Norma.

TOM

I miss her too.

INT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Sam stands in from of the humming machine. Tom stand beside him. Patrick sits nearby on the couch looking over a piece of electronic gear.

SAM

You sure this is safe?

TOM

I think so.

SAM

You think so?

TOM

I went through it.

SAM

Why the fire extinguisher?

TOM

I'm over-drawing the breaker. Go before the blows.

Sam shuts his eyes tight and walks through the doorway. After Sam passes through, Tom flips the switch off on the power strip. The lights in the room come back up. Patrick look sup briefly, then turn back to the gear.

TOM

So?

SAM

I... I can't tell. Maybe I feel something. I don't know.

TOM
That's okay, Sam. You get checked
out by your doctor and you let me
know.

SAM
Sure, Tom.

Sam stared at the machine he just passed though. He touches
his neck.

INT. FARMHOUSE KITCHEN - MORNING

Tom pours himself a cup of coffee. Someone knocks at the
front door. Tom, startled, sets his coffee down on the
counter walks to the front door.

INT. FARMHOUSE LIVING ROOM - DAY

Tom opens the front door and finds Finney standing there.

TOM
Can I help you?

FLYNN
Yes, sir. I think you can.

TOM
Do I know you?

FLYNN
You come into my uncles shop
sometimes with your boy. Is he
around in there?

Flynn looks around Tom into the house.

TOM
He's sleeping. It's a little
early.

FLYNN
I'm sorry. I'm here about my
uncle. Can I come in? Kind of
important.

Tom open the door for Flynn, who steps in.

TOM
Is Sam okay?

FLYNN

Yes, sir. He's good. Fit as a fiddle actually. He'll be calling you shortly I imagine.

TOM

What now?

FLYNN

Can I see this machine your boy made?

TOM

What's this about?

FLYNN

My uncle, fat bastard, had a clog of lard in his neck and it seems to have disappeared because of your boy's machine. Is this it?

Flynn steps up to the electronic's adorned doorway.

TOM

I need you to leave.

Flynn pulls a pistol from his waistband and holds it at his side.

FLYNN

See, I'm not ready to leave yet. So, this is a problem.

Flynn looks the machine over.

TOM

Come on now. You've seen it.

FLYNN

Hey there partner.

Patrick stands in the opening to the hallway.

TOM

Patrick, go back to your room.

Flynn points the gun at Tom.

FLYNN

Why don't you stay right there, Patrick.

TOM

Please.

Flynn pulls the hammer back on the pistol.

FLYNN

So you made this all by yourself,
huh?

Patrick looks over to his father.

FLYNN

Look at me boy, I'm speaking to
you.

Patrick looks back to Flynn.

TOM

Patrick.

FLYNN

You say another damn word, this
boys going to be an orphan.

Flynn looks down the sights of his gun at Tom.

The phone rings... And rings... and rings.

A woman's voice comes on the answering machine.

PATRICK'S MOM

You've reached the Culver's. Leave
a message after the machine beeps
at you.

SAM (ANSWERING MACHINE)

Tom? You there? It's Sam. You
have to call me.

Patrick walks towards the power strip. Flynn points the
pistol at him.

TOM

Patrick!

Flynn point the gun back to Tom, to stop him from moving.

FLYNN

Easy.

SAM (ANSWERING MACHINE)

I went to the doctor. Tom. The
clot's gone. It's gone.

Patrick flicks on the power strip.

FLYNN
What are you doing?

SAM (ANSWERING MACHINE)
You have any idea what you have
there?

Flynn points the gun back at Patrick.

SAM (ANSWERING MACHINE)
Tom? My cholesterol's back to
normal too. Tom, you have...

The machine beeps. Flynn fires. The bullet flies through
the portal towards Patrick.

TOM
No!

Tom lunges for Flynn. Flynn appears shocked that he fired
the pistol. The bullet enters the portal, but doesn't travel
through. Tom knocks Flynn through the portal, but Flynn
disappears just as the bullet did. Only his clothes land on
the ground. The pistol is gone as well.

TOM
Patrick!

Patrick steps over Flynn's clothes and through the portal to
his father. Tom grabs him and checks him over.

TOM
You're okay.

Tom hugs Patrick and holds him.

TOM
You're okay. You're okay.

Patrick slowly raises his arms and hugs his father back.

FADE OUT.