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SYNOPSIS

"BREATHLESS"

Michel Poiccard, a young man, with no visible means of support, who obviously "takes Humphrey Bogart pills", brazenly steals a car in Marseilles, in broad daylight, and roars toward Paris. He drives, talking to himself. He wants to find a girl named Patricia and take her to Italy, and he wants to collect some money owed to him in Paris. His reckless driving brings out a swarm of motorcycle cops. Finally cornered, Michel shoots a cop with a pistol he has found in the glove compartment of the stolen car, and runs, leaving his jacket behind. Next morning, after hitchhiking to Paris, he lifts the key to Patricia Franchini's room. She is out, and he makes himself at home, washes up and rummages for money. He still can't afford breakfast. He barges in on a former mistress who is dressing to go to work in a TV commercial. While her dress is over her eyes, he empties her purse. Later, wearing a newly bought jacket, hat and dark glasses, he inquires for somebody at a travel agency. He is told to come back later. He goes to the New York Herald Tribune and asks for Patricia Franchini. He finds her on the Champs Elysees, selling newspapers. She is an American student, preparing to register at the Sorbonne and trying to break into the newspaper business. Recently they had had a brief affair on the Riviera. She has gotten under his skin, and she is attracted to him, but refuses to accompany him to Rome, which would interfere with her career.

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"BREATHLESS" (SYNOPSIS, 2)

However, she agrees to a date for that evening. Michel returns to the travel agency, passing a bloody accident which reminds him of the policeman he shot. He buys a paper. The policeman is dying, and the police have his jacket.

At the travel agency, Michel's friend gives him a check for the money owed him. It is post-dated. He must now find another friend, Berrouti, to cash it for him. He cannot reach Berrouti by phone. As he leaves the agency, two detectives enter and question his friend. They run out after Michel and into the subway, but evidently try the wrong train, because we next see Michel strolling unconcernedly out of another Metro station. He stops before a theater showing a Humphrey Bogart film, and stares intently for a long while at a blowup of Bogart's face.

Michel and Patricia keep their date. He excuses himself, and in a restaurant men's room, mugs a man and robs him. He catches up with Patricia walking on the avenue. She refuses to sleep with him that night. She has to meet with her boss on the newspaper. He is giving her a crack at a reporter's job. Michel casually steals a car and drives her to her date, cursing after her as she leaves him for her rendezvous. He spies on Patricia and the editor as they chat over coffee, and drive off together in a Jaguar convertible. Michel buys another paper. The police know all about him and are on his trail.

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The next morning Patricia returns to her pension. Her key is not in its place. Michel is sleeping in her bed. She is annoyed at his imposition, and he is contemptuous of her suspected affair with the editor. She denies having slept with the editor, which he doesn't accept. He woos her persistently, and she resists. Finally she softens and they make love. Later, he phones Berrouti, again unsuccessfully. Patricia tells Michel she thinks she is pregnant and that he is probably the father. He is not overly concerned, and attempts to return to the subject of love. She insists she does not want to be in love, and tries to enlist him in her enthusiasms, William Faulkner, modern music and impressionist painting. Later, he agrees to drive her to Orly Airport, where she is to interview a famous novelist. He steals a Thunderbird and drives her first to the Herald-Tribune building, where Michel is spotted by a bystander, who runs to inform a pair of gendarmes as the lovers drive off to Orly. While Patricia interviews the novelist, Michel tries to sell the Thunderbird to a crooked car dealer. The dealer, who has seen the newspaper stories about Michel's crime, which is now murder, the policeman having died, tries to take advantage of him and is beaten up. Back in town, Patricia is late meeting Michel, causing him to miss Berrouti again. She returns to the Herald Tribune, while he buys a paper across the street. Detectives grab her and question her about Michel. Frightened, she admits she's been seeing him and takes the police phone number. As she leaves, one of the detectives follows her, with Michel following them both. She escapes by climbing

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through the window of a movie theater ladies room, and rejoins Michel. They drive into a garage and switch their stolen car for a Cadillac convertible, and drive off to find Berrouti. They catch up with him in Montmartre. He promises to bring the money the next morning, to an apartment which Michel and Patricia borrow for the night. The following morning, Patricia goes out to buy milk, and calls the police and tells them where Michel is hiding out. She returns and tells Michel what she has done. Apparently, she has deliberately tried to betray him to prove to herself that she doesn't love him, while from her actions it is obvious that she does. He rants angrily at her stupidity, and she becomes more and more concerned, pleading with him to leave before he gets caught. Disgusted, he leaves the apartment, just as Berrouti drives up with a briefcase full of money for him. As he takes the money, the police arrive. Berrouti tosses him a gun. As he bends to pick it up, a policeman shoots. Michel begins to run, staggering, down the cobblestoned street, holding the small of his back, which is soaking with blood. Patricia runs after him and the pursuing police, desperately trying to reach him alive. He falls, and makes their private funny face at her. Then he calls her a crazy little bitch, affectionately. Because of her poor French, she misunderstands the affection, understands only the literal vituperation, and turns her back on him as he dies.