

# The Loaner Car



The tea kettle whistled. Linda poured herself a cup of tea and asked her husband, “But I thought you bought the car because it was supposed to be the most reliable model on the market? What’s wrong with it?”

It was true. Marvin had done extensive research before buying the car. The sedan may have been the plainest, maybe even the ugliest, car on the road. But it was rated to be the most reliable. And it offered more than reliability. It was comfortable to drive, employed all the latest safety features, had ample trunk space, and its gas mileage was terrific. It was practical. As far as cars went, it was nearly perfect.



Linda's question annoyed Marvin, and he replied gruffly, "There's nothing wrong with it."

"Then why are you taking it back to the dealer?" Linda asked.

"It's just a simple recall," Marvin said. "It's not serious. It's just the wiring for the under-seat heaters."



Linda squeezed lemon into her tea and commented, "A burned bottom sounds pretty serious to me. And besides, I thought the dealership was the most expensive place to take a car for a repair. Why not take it to our local garage?"

Marvin took a deep breath and swallowed his aggravation. He looked at his wife. She sat at the kitchen table wearing her fluffy, raspberry-colored robe and funny fur booties. From her look, you would never know it was the middle of summer.



Marvin chuckled. He gazed lovingly at his wife and explained, “Darling, a recall is different from a repair. All recalls are done at the dealership and don’t cost us a penny.”

“Well, why didn’t you say so, Marv!” Linda exclaimed. And she cupped her hands around her teacup for warmth and smiled at him.

As usual, the customer service at the car dealership was excellent. Marvin did not have to wait, and he was assured that the recall repair would be finished by the end of the day. Best of all, the attendant offered Marvin the use of a complimentary loaner car for the day. Marvin happily accepted the keys and followed the attendant into the parking lot.



But when Marvin saw the loaner car, his heart sank. It was a cherry red convertible, a sporty two-seater with the top already down.



The attendant proudly announced, “This car is something special. It’s a turbo.”

Marvin tried to hide his disapproval. He asked, “What’s the gas mileage?”

“Oh, you don’t need to worry about gas. You can bring it back empty. If you need to gas up, bring us the receipt.”

The attendant shook Marvin’s hand and left.



Marvin gritted his teeth. He didn’t care about paying for gas. Driving such a flashy, gas-guzzling sports car made his skin crawl. This car was the opposite of practical. But complaining to the attendant

also made him uncomfortable. Marvin hated making a fuss.

Marvin opened the car door and tried to get in. The driver's seat was so low that he practically fell behind the wheel.



Marvin turned the key in the ignition. He was embarrassed when the engine roared to life.



“A turbo,” Marvin muttered. “All that means is it guzzles gas and money faster than it should.”

Marvin looked at the dashboard console. It might as well have been written in Egyptian hieroglyphics. The multicolored dials, lights, buttons, and switches made no sense to him. He searched for a button that would close the convertible top. He did not want anybody to



see him behind the wheel of a flashy sports car. After ten minutes of pressing various buttons, he gave up.



Marvin pressed the gas pedal, and the car lurched forward wildly. Marvin slammed the brakes and looked around the parking lot. He hoped no one had seen him lose control of the car. He gently tapped the gas, and the car rolled forward, the engine purring loudly. Marvin was confident he would make it home. After all, it was just a short ride. He would go slow and hope no one spotted him.

Marvin's worst fears came true when he stopped at a red light. He was waiting with his body slunk down low in the seat when he heard a voice call to him. "Hey, is that the new turbo?"



Marvin turned to see a young man calling to him. Marvin was too embarrassed to speak, so he just smiled and nodded his head.



The young man's eyes widened in appreciation. He called, "People think they should have gone with a 2.0, but I love that they stayed true to the original 1.8. Give it a rev, man!"



Marvin had no idea what this young man was talking about, but he obliged with a rev of the engine. The roar brought a smile to the young man's face, and he gave Marvin a thumbs up. Marvin was politely (and sheepishly) returning the thumbs-up signal when he turned to see someone crossing the street right in front of him.

It was Vincent, Marvin's best friend from the garden club.

Vincent had stopped smack-dab in the middle of the crosswalk and was gaping at Marvin through the windshield.



“Marvin? Is that you?” Vincent called over the roar of the engine. And then Vincent began to laugh heartily, clutching at his belly. “You’re way too old for a mid-life crisis, Marv! I’ll see you later!” Vincent shuffled off to the other side of the street, laughing.

Marvin sat in the car, frozen with embarrassment. A loud beep from behind alerted him that the light was green. Marvin stepped on the gas, and the car sprang forward. How Marvin wished he had asked for a different loaner car.





Marvin pulled the red turbo convertible into his driveway. Linda was on the porch watering flowers. She turned to see what was making all the racket. Her eyes opened wide, and her jaw dropped.

Linda walked down the front porch steps. She walked around the car, eyes transfixed. Finally, she gasped, “Marvin?”

Marvin said, “Quick! I want to put it in the garage so nobody sees it in our driveway!”



But Linda hopped into the passenger seat and hugged Marvin’s arm, squealing with glee. “I can’t believe it! You know I always wanted a convertible! Can we take a ride? Please? To the beach? Oh, goodness, your head is red already from the sun. I’ll get us some hats and sunscreen and sunglasses. Oh, Marvin!”

Under Linda's loving eyes, Marvin softened. Maybe he could enjoy the car for just one day.



“It’s just a loaner. Just for the day,” Marvin reminded his wife.

Linda’s eyes twinkled. “Then we’d better get going!” she said.

**The End**