A Broken Dream - Restored

# Unit 10

My uncle had just died. I know that sounds like a **morbid** way to start a story. It doesn’t sound happy, but it kind of is. You see, Uncle Joe was my uncle, but he lived in Colorado and I lived in Pennsylvania, so I didn’t ever see him; therefore, I didn’t know him well at all. In fact, I hadn’t seen him in five years. He called me at least once each month, but I usually didn’t have time to talk—Call of Duty and Grand Theft Auto almost always held my attention when he called. He invited me to come visit every summer. He had promised to teach me all that he knew about cars. Uncle Joe was a master mechanic. I had planned to go…sometime. Sometime just never came. I wasn’t going to miss him; I’d never really gotten to know him.

My dad had never had much time for his brother either. My uncle didn’t have a family, and he’d relied more on his mom than my dad ever had. I think my dad, who had always been self-sufficient, viewed Uncle Joe as a **parasite**, living off of his mom, **shirking** responsibility for himself, instead of standing on his own two feet. In fact, Uncle Joe had been kind of **notorious** in the family for making the wrong choices and taking advantage of others.

You’re still probably wondering where the happy part comes in. My Uncle Joe had no living relatives except my dad--his brother, and my dad’s kid--me. That’s the happy part. My dad and I were the **beneficiaries** of Uncle Joe’s will. We were the ones to inherit all that he had.

I know I sound a little selfish, like inheriting something is more important to me than the loss of my uncle, but, I’ll say it again: I didn’t know him! Anyway, here’s the deal: My Uncle Joe did not own much, but he did own a 1965 Mustang—and not just any Mustang, but a Shelby GT. If you’re not into cars, just know that this is one of the most sought-after muscle cars ever made!

When my dad gave me the news that my uncle had died, I didn’t really know how to react. I mean, I couldn’t cry; I felt nothing. At first, I just starred rather blankly. Then I attempted to express my sorrow with words of sympathy that I’d heard others use when someone died.

“I’m so sorry to hear that, Dad. I feel terrible that you’ve lost your brother.”

He looked at me and immediately knew that my words and attitude were all a **farce**. I didn’t really feel terrible. It was just an act. He didn’t call me out, though. He simply nodded sadly. I think he was having trouble reacting appropriately also.

Then my dad broke into a little grin and told me about the car. I, being almost fifteen, **bellowed** out a guttural man-shout of joy and leaped into the air with my fist held high! My dad took this gleeful response in stride; he was looking forward to getting his hands on that car too.

In our excitement, we began preparations for our new car right away. As if of one mind, we both headed out to the garage to start clearing away the **clutter** to create a pristine **lair** for our new prize. We couldn’t allow anything in its new home to nick or injure our beautiful new gift. She would be **pampered**, treated as the royalty she was. We called transportation companies to find just the right one to transport our new car to its new home. We found one that specialized in classic cars. They would know how to care for our little baby. The car would be delivered in five days—Saturday afternoon.

Eliminating the clutter was not going to be easy. We had about thirteen years—that’s how long we’d lived in our backwoods home—of junk stacked in the corners, on the work bench, on the shelves. We had a **surplus** of nuts, bolts, car parts, Christmas decorations, yard tools, etc. We owned more of everything than we could ever use in our lifetime. We worked tirelessly for days—organizing, tossing, and cleaning the whole place. We even threw on a new coat of paint. Our new baby would have a home **hospitable** to its needs and stature, a home created just for the extra special treatment of a Shelby.

Five days passed slowly, even though we were so busy. We were so anxious for our car to arrive. We were going to call her Shelby; it seemed appropriate. We were ready to begin caring for all of her needs. We couldn’t wait to take her out for a spin. My dad had even started teaching me how to drive, so that I could drive her around on our back roads.

Saturday finally arrived. We even cleaned the house on Saturday morning in preparation for the arrival. We waited with our ears perked to all sounds throughout the day. At about 3:00 in the afternoon, we heard the sounds of a truck heading down the stoned road that leads to our home. Dad and I almost fought each other to be the first one out of the door. We stood on the porch with our eyes wide.

The transport truck was headed toward us. We could not wait to get a good look at our new car! The truck slowly rolled into the driveway, and we ran toward it. The car we saw . . . was not the car we were expecting. Uncle Joe’s beautiful, mint-condition ’65 Shelby Mustang was trashed. It looked as if it had been in an accident, sat in the rain and weather at the side of the road, and then been beaten with a sledge hammer. The tires were flat if they were there. The rims were missing. No spot was without a dent. The driver’s side door was missing. The hood was crushed. It was **dilapidated**—a mess.

I looked at Dad. At first, he appeared to be in even more shock than I was. Then he pulled it together, leaned over to pat me on the shoulder, and announced, “This is gonna be fun! This is what we’re all about, Buddy!”

I smiled in return. We could do this!

The driver pulled her into the garage, and we jumped right to the **grueling** work before us. It wasn’t going to be easy, but we could do this!

We worked all day Saturday and well into the night, until we were too exhausted to stand up. We fell into bed, but both of us were up before the crack of dawn ready to go at her again. We **dismantled** Shelby piece by piece, carefully marking and laying each piece in a safe place around our newly de-cluttered garage.

By the following week, Dad and I had begun the hard work—work on Shelby’s engine. The engines in the Shelby’s were racecar engines making them a specialty item, only a few were made like this one. We were both pretty good with cars, but not that good. Instead of **botching** the job ourselves, we decided to take her to the top mechanic in town, Wesley Moats. If anyone could fix that engine, it was Wesley.

We carted the engine pieces down to his shop, Moators ‘R’ Us. Wesley looked excited about tackling this amazing motor, but I thought I noted a hint of **timidity** in his eyes. Could Wesley Moats, motor master, actually be afraid of a classic motor? I shook off my concern, and we left it there, confident that our baby was in good hands. Wesley assured us that he would have our engine back to us by the end of the week.

We headed directly back to the garage to finish our work. I polished the exterior. My dad began reassembling the frame and the interior. We were working together as a well-oiled machine. Shelby was coming along nicely. We were thrilled. We worked in silence sometimes, belted out some country-western tunes sometimes, and hummed or whistled to ourselves sometimes. What we never did was discuss or, in my mind anyway, think about Uncle Joe. We were all about our new car.

When the call came from Moators ‘R’ Us, we raced right over to pick up our most important piece. We arrived at the shop to pick up the engine. Wesley’s assistant was waiting for us at the counter. We asked for Wesley, but were told he was out. We backed our pick-up to the garage door, and the assistant, whose nametag read “Mark,” used the mechanical claw to place the engine block into the bed of the truck. We loaded the other assorted parts in beside it and took off for home with an unbridled enthusiasm.

We were almost there. We finished up the reassembly. We inserted the engine. We hooked up all of the hoses and rods and cylinder heads. She was ready. She wasn’t beautiful yet, we still had some, okay, maybe a lot, of body work to do, but we were too anxious to get her running to wait a moment longer.

Dad jumped into the driver’s seat. I sat on the edge of the passenger seat. We each took a deep breath and smiles spread across our faces as he inserted the key into the ignition. Shelby was about to take her first ride with us. Dad turned the key and pressed the gas pedal . . . nothing. He tried again . . . again, nothing—not even a spark. Our faces fell. We were shocked. We knew we’d done everything right. We’d been meticulous about all of our work and repairs. Our first thoughts went to the engine and Wesley. What had he done? I remembered the flicker of uncertainty and **timidity** I’d seen. Plus, he hadn’t been around when we picked up the engine. Perhaps Wesley was not a Shelby engine master. Perhaps we had misjudged him.

We slowly emerged from the car and popped the hood. We looked more closely at Wesley’s work. Dad investigated all pieces and parts of the Shelby engine. At first it all looked fine, beautiful in fact. Then he saw the problem, although Wesley had polished and assembled the outside of the engine beautifully, the inside of the engine was corroded. It was ruined beyond repair. Wesley “Moator” Moats had **botched** the job.

All of our work had been **futile**. Uncle Joe’s car would never run with its original Shelby engine. We would not have the classic muscle car we had dreamed of. Dad and I were beyond disheartened; we were in a state of despair. We had spent countless hours over two weeks, and Dad had been **lavish** in the money he spent to refurbish the car. He never spent much money on anything, but these last two weeks, he’d spent more money than I’d ever seen him spend.

Dad and I sat in the house for the next two days in a morbid stupor. We didn’t even know where to turn. I thought to myself how our reaction to the death of our dream car differed so from our reaction to the death of Uncle Joe. But, then again, we loved that car. We, or I anyway, barely knew Uncle Joe.

Dad rose when he heard the mailman squeak the door of our mailbox. He grabbed the mail and returned to his chair, still in a zombie-like state. He flicked through the mail thoughtlessly. Then, suddenly, he stopped. He paused over a small envelope with a handwritten address. I approached and peered over his shoulder. The return address was from Colorado—Uncle Joe. Slowly, he opened the envelope, and we read the letter together.

*Dear Josh and Buddy,*

*If you are reading this letter, then I have gone to meet my maker. Bro, I will say hello to Mom for you. I know that will make her smile because she always liked you best.*

*I was just a big disappointment to her, never doing anything right in her eyes. You, on the other hand, were her pride and joy. You will never understand the stress produced living under your shadow.*

*I am not blaming that on you personally, but I do want you to know that I struggled with it my entire life. It would have help to have had someone to vent to, but the two people closest to me were the very ones causing the stress.*

*It also would have helped if you had found it in your heart to visit me on occasion. I would have loved to have gotten to know Buddy. I am sure he is a fine young man and that he and I could have found some common ground to build a relationship on.*

*Well, that didn’t happen and I feel a great loss because of it. Too late now, though.*

*As you would already know, I have left everything I owned to you and your family. And if I ever knew you at all you have already had my Shelby shipped to your home. I know how you have always coveted it. I imagine Buddy is cut from much the same cloth.*

*By now a huge disappointment has fallen on both or you. It is certainly not the same car you remember—is it Bro? Well, there is a reason for that. Actually, there are two reasons the car arrived in the condition it did.*

*You may hate me and you may disown me for my reasons, but in this case the end may very well justify the means. I know this may be very hard for both of you to hear, but, believe me, if you knew me at all, you would realize this has been much harder for me.*

*First, when I was informed that I only had a short time left; I became very angry. Angry that the one thing I had done right was going to be left to you. You were going to receive my pride and joy even though you had not taken one iota of interest in me or in my accomplishment. Oh, you liked the car alright, but that was the extent of your interest. I decided you should get the car in the same condition I had. Now how happy are you in receiving it?*

*The second reason is much more personal. I have come to you often in the same condition. I have needed help in reshaping and rebuilding my life. Every time I approached you, you rejected me. For some reason you didn’t’ have the time or the inclination to help. The few times you did attempt to assist me, you quit as soon as the going got a little thought.*

*I guess I wanted Buddy to see the real you. I knew that you would probably start to fix up the Shelby, but I also knew that as soon as you ran into a snag, you would give up. I hope I was wrong but I doubt it.*

*I just hope and pray, for Buddy’s sake, that a leopard can change its spots. Buddy needs to learn that real men do not run out on their families anymore than they would abandon their favorite car. Real love means sticking through the obstacles, the set-backs, the disappointments.*

*I truly hope that you find the strength to teach him these lessons.*

*Love in death,*

*Your brother, Joe*

After I wiped the tears from my eyes, I saw that Dad was also crying. All of a sudden, what I’d believed was the happy part of my uncle dying was shaming me to death. My dad would not look at me. I could see the shame was buckling his usually strong shoulders. I also realized that this was perhaps the first time I had ever seen my dad cry.

Without looking at each other, we both rose from the chairs we had been sitting in for the last couple of days. We headed out the door and directly for the garage that we had so recently cleaned in preparation for Shelby. Dad looked at the engine, and I looked at the body.

At this moment, Shelby had a totally different look about her—a look that showed more love and understanding than it had ever possessed. Dad and I both smiled and jumped right to the work of redeeming the life of this broken car, and more importantly, redeeming the life of my Uncle Joe.

**UNIT 10 VOCABULARY**

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| **WORD** | **DEFINITION in your own words from context clues** | **MEMORY TRIGGER** |
| morbid |  |  |
| parasite |  |  |
| shirk |  |  |
| notorious |  |  |
| beneficiary |  |  |
| farce |  |  |
| bellow |  |  |
| clutter |  |  |
| lair |  |  |
| pamper |  |  |
| surplus |  |  |
| hospitable |  |  |
| dilapidated |  |  |
| grueling |  |  |
| dismantle |  |  |
| botch |  |  |
| timidity |  |  |
| futile |  |  |
| lavish |  |  |