How I Learned to Drive Synopsis

*How I Learned to Drive* begins with Li’l Bit speaking to the audience as an adult. She introduces us to the opening scene which takes place in a parked car on a summer night in Maryland. In the front seat of the car Li’l Bit, age seventeen, sits with an older, married man nick-named Peck. As they sit together, Peck makes advances on Li’l Bit and asks to be rewarded for not drinking that week. She allows him to remove her bra before driving them home. Li’l Bit then moves back into the position of narrator as she explains the nickname given to her by her family and Peck is revealed to be her uncle.

The play continues, going back and forth in time. In the next scene Li’l Bit returns to her seventeen year old self and sits down to a family dinner with her mother, her grandfather, her grandmother, Aunt Mary, and Uncle Peck. During dinner she is antagonized by her grandfather as she expresses her desire to be judged by her intellect rather than her body. Frustrated, Li’l Bit storms off and Uncle Peck is sent after her. He gives her the keys to his car when she expresses a desire to drive and cool off. A grateful Li’l Bit promises Peck that they will have another chance to be alone together later that night. In their conversation, we find out that Peck is not a blood relative to Li’l Bit, but an in-law.

The scene shifts back a year to Peck and Li’l Bit enjoying dinner together at a restaurant. Peck encourages Li’l Bit to drink, but rather than take advantage of her, Peck takes her back to the car and explains that he is willing to wait until she is ready. We are then brought back to an earlier conversation in which Li’l Bit, her mother, and her grandmother discuss men, women and sex. The two older women attempt to educate Li’l Bit on how to deal with sex and love, but the two have very opposing opinions on the matter. In another driving lesson with her uncle, Li’l Bit seems to be much more flirtatious as Peck attempts to get her to focus on the rules of the road.

In the next few scenes we get a glimpse of Li’l Bit’s social experiences at school. The other students alienate and poke fun at her due to her body type. This leads into a photo-shoot with Peck and Li’l Bit. As he photographs her, Peck attempts to express to Li’l Bit the appreciation he has for her body. Then, in a scene from the previous Christmas, Li’l Bit makes a deal with Peck in which she agrees to spend more time with him if he stops drinking.

During Li’l Bit’s first year of college she receives a great deal of letters from Peck, all counting down to her eighteenth birthday. She does not reply, but eventually meets with him to tell him that she is no longer interested in pursuing any kind of relationship with him. An adult Li’l Bit tells us that he later drank himself to death, then she finally takes us back to the fateful driving lesson where she had her first physical experience with Peck.