

LICENSE TO DRIVE

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THIRD DRAFT
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"LICENSE TO DRIVE"

FADE IN:

EXT. COMMERCIAL SUBURBAN STREET - COLD FOGGY MORNING

No cars. Swirls of newspapers blow across the street. Suddenly, a YELLOW SCHOOL BUS BECOMES VISIBLE, rising over a hill. As it gets nearer, we feel the ROAR of the engine. The bus is a monster. As it rumbles by us we SEE "SUNNY MEADOWS HIGH SCHOOL" inscribed on the side.

INSIDE THE SCHOOL BUS

Grimy. Run down. School Bus Hell. Oppressed grey-faced HIGH SCHOOLERS sit round-shouldered, looking out into nowhere land.

WE DOLLY SLOWLY ALONG the floor TO REVEAL all the students' ankles SHACKLED and CHAINED to their seats. The faint rhythm of a FILE RUBBING AGAINST STEEL becomes louder and louder until the CAMERA STOPS ON a student's hands. Seconds away from filing through the lock on his shackle... FREEDOM.

The CAMERA TILTS UP TO REVEAL LES ANDERSON, sixteen, maybe seventeen. He's the only kid on the bus with a spark of life left in him.

As the bus stops at a RED LIGHT, something catches Les' eye.

LES' P.O.V. - THROUGH A GREASY WINDOW - A RED BLUR

He wipes the window, revealing a RED FERRARI 308 GTB parked beside the bus, outside a CORNER GROCERY STORE. The T-ROOF is off, and all we CAN SEE are the LONGEST, MOST BEAUTIFUL LEGS lounging in the passenger seat. A GUY walks away from the car into the store.

LES

looks to the back of the bus, to the REAR DOOR, clearly marked "FOR EMERGENCY USE ONLY." He teeters on the edge of his seat, about to make a move. He looks to the front of the bus, at the:

BUS DRIVER

A maniac: mid-40s, lousy toupee. He's been watching Les in his rearview mirror the entire time. They stare at each other, eye to eye. Les holds his ground. The driver thrusts the bus in gear and begins to pull away... away from the Ferrari.

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Les explodes from his seat, charging for the "emergency door." The kids come to life, watching and screaming with excitement. Les kicks at the door.

A RED WARNING LIGHT on the Driver's dash flashes. An ALARM sounds. The Driver looks back, angrily. Then pushes a button.

A STEEL BOLT slams across the door. Les slams through the 7 back window -- diving out of the bus onto the street. Les bounces out of a COMMANDO ROLL and runs up the street to the Ferrari.

The bus does a spectacular BOOTLEGGER'S turn. It's coming back.

LES LOOKS INTO THE FERRARI

Keys dangle from the ignition. In the passenger seat is the LEGGIEST BLONDE GIRL you've ever seen. The approaching bus builds speed. Les jumps into the car.

She smiles, seductively. He smiles back. They're in love.

The bus screams towards them. Les turns the ignition, pops the clutch, then squeals into a right turn slicing onto a:

QUIET TREE-LINED SUBURBAN STREET

The bus roars after them, barely making the turn, balancing on two wheels.

LES RACES DOWN THE STREET

Looks at his speedometer: 70... 75... 80... 85. Maple trees whip by like he's in a rocket ship. AWESOME! He looks up at his rearview mirror. It's all yellow. Miraculously, the bus is right on his tail. Suddenly:

A LITTLE BOY DELIVERING PAPERS

Hops the curb and bicycles across the street. Les, about to hit him, yanks the wheel left, practically tearing it off its column. The bus bombs by, slicing the front tire off the bike. The LITTLE BOY is left there on his seat, spinning around acrobatically on his back tire.

THE FERRARI

still trying to lose the bus, streaks down a street, then screeches into:

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NARROW BACK ALLEY

So narrow they spell it with one "l". The bus slams in, rocking and rebounding off the alley's walls. Dragging power cords and live wires, sparks shoot out from the bus' sides.

Les jams on his brakes, cuts and slides right onto a:

WIDE COMMERCIAL STREET

Les guns it! A laser beam. With one hand he downshifts to accelerate, with the other, he starts to light the girl's cigarette... She pulls his hand closer to her, looking into his eyes.

But WAIT! Up ahead, by a GAS STATION, there's a HUGE PUDDLE OF WATER. But it's not water. It's GAS! A tank pumps gas into a tanker fuel truck. GAS spews from a ruptured hose. Suddenly, we hear a BORING MONOTONE voice.

VOICE OVER

Remember. Be prepared and look ahead. The driver must see the BIG PICTURE...

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

A dark classroom. The sound of a projector. Flickering light. An instructional film is being shown to a class of DRIVER'S ED STUDENTS. The CAMERA MOVES THROUGH the room and stops in back where we FIND Les Anderson, head on his desk, fast asleep, resting on his DRIVER'S ED BOOKS.

VOICE OVER

...In heavier rain, your tires may begin to 'hydroplane,' ride on the water, rather than the pavement. Don't panic! And especially don't jam on the brakes. Ease your foot off the gas pedal.

INT. FERRARI - DAY

High speed. There's no avoiding the puddle. Les EASES HIS FOOT off the gas pedal. The Ferrari remains steady as a 15-foot spray of gas erupts on either side of the car. He finishes lighting the girl's cigarette, then casually tosses the match out the window.

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INSIDE THE BUS

The driver shifts gears with reckless abandon, charging for the puddle. Suddenly, the puddle ignites. There's a HUGE EXPLOSION. The bus driver JAMMMMS on his brakes. Headed straight for it.

INSIDE THE FERRARI

Les and the girl hear the explosion and turn around simultaneously. There's no bus, just a huge WALL OF FLAME. They smile at each other. They've made it... Les leans over to kiss her, but suddenly she's not smiling. Her mouth is open in shock. There's terror in her eyes. We hear the ROAR OF AN ENGINE. Les looks back at the road.

THE BUS IS HEADED STRAIGHT FOR THEM

about to smash into them. WE HEAR a LOUD HORN which becomes a SCHOOL BELL.

INSERT - SCHOOL BELL

INT. CLASSROOM - CLOSE ON LES - DAY

He wakes up, startled. He has sleep marks on one side of his face. He looks around, embarrassed. The bell stops.

Standing in front of him is the DRIVER'S ED TEACHER, MR. GASKET, the bus driver from the dream. The class is getting up from their desks, leaving. He motions for Les not to move.

Leaving the class, A VERY CUTE GIRL turns to Les' twin sister, NATALIE -- she's conservative, bookish.

CUTE GIRL

(low voice)

Does your brother have mono or something? He slept through the entire course.

NATALIE

No, he's just brain dead.

The class empties. Mr. Gasket stands ominously above Les.

MR. GASKET

(dead serious)

Mr. Anderson.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MR. GASKET (cont'd)

It's punks like you the paramedics
end up scraping off the roads at
four in the morning.

(beat)

For your own sake and the safety of
others, I hope you fail your
driver's exam.

Les gets up to leave. Gasket signals to stay, then throws
him a piece of chalk. Les rolls his eyes.

EXT. SUNNY MEADOWS HIGH - DAY (BEGIN CREDITS)

Kids load into YELLOW SCHOOL BUSES and fancy cars.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

LINES. Blackboards full of "I WILL DRIVE SAFELY. I WILL
DRIVE SAFELY..." Les finishes his last one and flies out of
class.

EXT. SUNNY MEADOWS HIGH - DAY

Buses and cars begin to pull away.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Deserted. Sprinting. Les slides to his locker and quickly
unlocks it. An avalanche of books and junk fall onto the
floor. He stuffs it back in.

EXT. SUNNY MEADOWS HIGH - DAY

A few kids here and there. Les bombs out of school, jamming
papers into his knapsack. He runs down the street after the
last departing school bus. He can't catch it. Natalie,
inside the bus, smiles at him. He stands in the middle of
the road, pissed. We hear a car racing towards him from
behind.

IT'S A RED FERRARI

The one from the dream. T-roof off. Music blares. MERCEDES
LANE, the leggy blonde girl from the dream, sits in the
passenger seat. PAOLO, her GQ Latin American boyfriend,
drives. They're in their own perfect world.

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CONTINUED:

Les jumps out of the way as it screams by him. He watches the Ferrari drive off.

We hear a bicycle tire SKIDDING along the pavement. He turns to see:

A "nut case" on a ten speed stop his thirty foot skid a hair away from Les' sneaker. This is DEAN, Les' best friend. He has charm and mischief with a capital M written all over his face.

They both look back at the Ferrari.

LES

You know, Dean, I can't help wondering whether it'll ever get that good for me.

DEAN

Anderson, the only difference between you and that greaseball, is that he has a license and you don't. In two days we open a whole new chapter.

(motioning to his handle bars)

Get in. I'll drive you home.

Les looks at Dean's BEAT TO SHIT death trap bike.

LES

Unh, unh. Too much is at stake. They'll never let me take my driver's exam in traction.

DEAN

Les, your license is as important to me as it is to you. I'll take it easy. I promise.

EXT. SUBURBAN MIDDLE CLASS NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

White knuckles. Les hangs on as a sadistic Dean speeds along the sidewalk. About to collide with a JOGGER, Dean cuts onto:

THE STREET

zigzagging in and out of TRAFFIC. A HONK here, a honk there. Dean JOLTS the bike back up on the SIDEWALK.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Les tries to absorb the shock. Dean laughs, pedals faster. He whips Les through:

LOW HANGING BRANCHES

They flap against Les' face. Dean's having a riot. Les wants to start one. The torturous branches give way to:

LES' P.O.V. - A FEROCIOUS DOG CHAINED ON A PORCH

Dean has the bike headed straight for it. Its mouth salivates. As Dean swerves Les by it, the dog runs and pulls his chain taut, swinging out against an imaginary wall.

EXT. ANDERSON HOUSE - DEAN TURNS INTO THE DRIVEWAY

making sure to run Les through a SPRINKLER. This is Les' house; large and colonial, its landscaping perfectly groomed. Ahead of them, in front of the garage, there's an Audi 5000 Turbo. It's surrounded by mounds of dusty boxes and garage junk. Dean slaloms through it.

EXT. ANDERSON HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - A 1972 CADILLAC SEDAN DEVILLE

sits parked at an angle, barely squeezing in. Sky blue. Gleaming chrome. It's in mint condition. Dean and Les ride in. Dean jams on the brakes. Les slides painfully off the handlebars. He gives Dean a dirty look. END OF CREDITS.

DEAN

Just a painful reminder of what you're leaving behind.

(beat)

Whose Caddie?

LES

My grandfather's. Can you believe it's sixteen years old? It only has twenty thousand miles on it.

Dean gets off his bike and lets it crash to the ground.

DEAN

(examining it)

It's intense. What's it doing here?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LES

He's afraid to take it on long trips so he borrowed my dad's car for a week.

DEAN

(opening the door)

I gotta tell you, Les, this boat would kick-ass up at Archie's. Do you think we can get it for Saturday night?

DAD

(o.s.)

Not a chance in hell, Dean.

They turn. It's Les' DAD -- good-looking, early forties, he wears grimy work clothes. He walks into the garage, removes Dean's hand from the door, and buffs the chrome.

DAD

You have a better chance of winning the Nobel Prize for physics than you do of getting in this car.

Les looks at Dean as if to say "Does that answer your question?"

LES

Hi Dad.

DAD

(to the boys)

How 'bout a hand helping me move this junk?

DEAN

(picking up his bike)

I'd really love to, Mr. Anderson,
(a fake cough)
but I'm sort of allergic to dust and cardboard boxes.

He coughs again. Dad doesn't even bother. Dean gets on his bike.

DEAN

(driving off)

See you tonight.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LES

Dad? Do you think you could tell me for sure if I can use Mom's car Saturday night?

DAD

(shoving a dusty box at him)

Do me a favor, will ya, Les? Just pass your driver's exam. And then we'll talk.

INT. KITCHEN DINING AREA - NIGHT

Dad, Les, Natalie and Rudy sit at the table. Rudy is the cute, ten year old brother you can only find in the movies. As they munch away at their dinner, one by one they look up in awe...

THEIR P.O.V. - MOM

Looking more like nine years pregnant, rather than nine months, she carries the most humongous plate of mashed potatoes, spotted with mini-pickles, chocolate chips and potato chips. Instead of putting it in the center of the table, she plops it down in front of her table setting.

With the family still looking on disgustedly, she picks up the ketchup bottle, and starts squirting it out on her food (HAPPY FACE)...

MOM

For your information, this is exactly what I ate when I was pregnant with all of you.

She downs her first bite. It scares them back to their meals.

LES

Dad?

DAD

Unh, unh.

LES

Did you get a chance to look at those brochures?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAD
(pulling a crumpled
brochure from his back
pocket)
Sure did.

LES
Well? What do you think?

DAD
(flipping through it)
A twenty-three thousand dollar BMW
for a sixteen year old kid who's
never had a job in his life? I
think it's a great idea.

Les is humiliated.

DAD
Les, you only completed your
driver's ed course two hours ago.
You don't even have a license yet.

LES
But Dad, it wouldn't be just for
me. It would be for Natalie too.

NATALIE
Don't include me in your obsession.

LES
Excuse me, Miss Mature. Is there
anything wrong with being American?

NATALIE
A BMW at sixteen? It's more like
spoiled. Karl says...

Everyone stops what they're doing ala E. F. Hutton.

NATALIE
Can you people please be serious
for once in your life?
(beat)
Karl says that in America the
people are misled to believe that a
car represents freedom and
individuality, when, in essence, it
is more oppressive than anything
else, burdening the individual with
materialistic costs, such as
insurance, gas and repairs.

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CONTINUED:

LES

Who cares what your Commie boyfriend thinks? I think we'd all prefer to be burdened with the cost of an automobile, than with bread lines and two year waiting lists for a washing machine.

RUDY

I agree.

Mother starts to boil.

NATALIE

You two are so simple, it's frightening.

LES

Why are you even getting your license?

NATALIE

(upset and getting up from the table)
I'm not hungry.

MOM

Natalie, if you prefer to eat standing up, that's fine with me. But nobody leaves the table until we finish eating.

NATALIE

This is the most oppressive environment a child could be subjected to.

Natalie sits down. We hear a loud HONK-HONK! Les stands up.

LES

(wiping his mouth)
That's for me.

MOM

You heard me Les. Whoever it is will have to wait a few minutes.

LES

(still standing)
But, Maaa.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MOM

Les? Do you want to use my car
Saturday night?

Les sits down like he's playing musical chairs! The family eats in silence. We hear another HONK, and then a couple of quick HONKS, and then a HONNNKKK... The family tries to ignore it, but it's more than annoying. It starts again:

EXT. ANDERSON HOUSE - INSIDE A RUSTED TWO-DOOR 48 DATSUN B-210 - NIGHT

Hanging over, from the back to the front seat, leaning on the horn is Dean. Dean's MOM and his LITTLE SISTER ride in front. They're used to this behavior.

BACK IN THE DINING ROOM

The obnoxious HONKING continues. Everyone except Les has stopped eating. Cheery, he munches away as if nothing is going on. Mom and Dad boil. Dad has had it.

DAD

Les, if you're not out of this house in five seconds, there's a good chance you'll never drive anything but a golf ball.

A victorious Les calmly excuses himself from the table.

EXT. MANSION - NIGHT

Now this is a party. Loud music. Sixteen-year-old kids all over the place. ALL THE GORGEOUS GIRLS AND GUYS huddle around expensive SLICK DRIVING MACHINES, and competing car stereos. If you happen to be a male without a car, you may as well be at home with a Playboy.

The Datsun makes its way down the street.

INT. DEAN'S MOTHER'S DATSUN - NIGHT

An uncomfortable backseat, filled with junk. Les and Dean sit squished together, practically eating their knees. The front seat is pushed all the way back. Dean's little munchkin sister sits comfortably in the passenger seat.

They approach the party. Dean's mom slows down. Embarrassed, Dean and Les duck.

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CONTINUED:

DEAN'S MOM

Is there something wrong with the car, Dean?

DEAN

It's not the car, Ma. It's you, you're driving. Just drop us off around the corner.

EXT./INT. CAR - AROUND THE CORNER - NIGHT

As Dean and Les pull themselves out of the car, a GLOSSY BLACK GTO, with a confederate flag attached to its antenna, slows down across the street. Inside the GTO are THREE of the scariest and rowdiest looking HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUTS you've ever seen. They're laughing at the boys being dropped off by mom.

THE DRIVER

Hey boys, does Mommy drive you to the little boys' room, also?

Les and Dean are crushed. As the derelicts drive away laughing, we hear their crazy horn. The Funeral March... "DUM, DUM, DaDUM... DUM, DaDUM, DaDUM, DaDUM."

DEAN

(to his mother)

Sorry, I didn't introduce you, Ma.

She laughs.

DEAN

See you at twelve?

DEAN'S MOM

I'll be right here at eleven.

DEAN

I'll call.

DEAN'S MOM

It's a school night, Dean. If you're not standing here between eleven and eleven o' two, I'm changing the locks.

The Datsun drives off. Composed, they strut around the corner. Ahead of them, in front of the estate and all the kids, a HONDA pulls up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHARLES

jumps out and WAVES GOOD-BYE TO HIS MOTHER. Older looking, but by no means better looking than Les and Dean, he wears glasses and isn't ashamed of being dropped off by his mother. He waves to Dean and Les. They turn into the party, ignoring him.

EXT. MANSION - NIGHT

Les, Dean, and Charles sip fruit punch. They sit alone on the front steps gawking at the hoards of cute girls surrounding the guys and their cars. Impressive, but sickening.

DEAN

I know exactly what you're thinking, Les. I'm thinking the same thing. I'm not sure about Charles.

(beat)

Why am I so alone here? I'm good looking, I've got a great sense of humor, and yet there's not one single female within twenty yards of me? Can you find one of them who isn't within arms reach of a car?

LES

They've even monopolized the fifteen year olds.

CHARLES

You guys are pathetic. Life does exist outside a V-Eight.

LES

Not in this country, it doesn't.

DEAN

And do you know what the beauty of it all is? The beauty of it all, Les, is that Saturday afternoon, less than forty-eight hours away, the people at the DMV are going to be handing you your license... our future.

Les' eyes glitter. He's in a trance.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEAN

You can say good-bye to the humiliation of public transportation, and not being able to date someone who isn't conveniently close to a bus stop. You're going to be free, Les. One of them.

(beat)

And on Saturday night, when we pull into Archie's Atomic in your mom's Audi 5000 TURBO, all this is going to be at our fingertips. In fact, Archie's makes this place look like Sesame Street.

CHARLES

To you Archie's makes the Playboy Channel look like Sesame Street.

DEAN

Archie's is the joint. I swear it. My brother used to go there every weekend. He says the ratio of girls to guys is five to one. And we're not talkin' dogs, we're talkin' bunnies. The place is a paradise.

(beat)

I'm telling you, Les. The secret to your happiness, and ultimately our happiness, as long as we live in this country, is a driver's license.

CHARLES

You can't possibly believe that bullshit, can you?

DEAN

(looking around at all the cars, girls and happiness)

Charles. Seeing is believing.

You gotta believe him.

INT. ESTATE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Soft lighting. Kids sitting, standing, talking, necking. Les, Dean, and Charles slump by the punch bowl observing the decadence.

DEAN

Do you ever wonder what kind of car would be most appropriate for some of these wenches to lose their virginity in?

CHARLES

You never cease to amaze me, Deano.

DEAN

Seriously. Look at Cheryl Lieberman.

THE BOYS' P.O.V. - CHERYL LIEBERMAN

A sixteen-year-old JAP. They laugh.

CHARLES

A Camaro.

LES

Cheryl Lieberman? A Trans Am.

DEAN

Beth Maclaine.

BETH MACLAINE

Pristine. Conservative Anglo Saxon.

LES

A Volvo. Maybe a station wagon.

DEAN

Bonnie Dupa.

THE BOYS' P.O.V. - BONNIE DUPA

We CAN ONLY SEE her face as someone is sitting in front of her. She's sleaze to the max.

CHARLES

(o.s.)

A van.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEAN
(o.s.)
Nah, a Harley.

LES
(o.s.; reverent tone)
Mercedes.

DEAN AND CHARLES
(o.s.; shocked)
A Mercedes?

THE BOYS

They turn to Les only to see him gaping, mouth open. Dean and Charles look up and become entranced, as well.

THE BOYS' P.O.V. - A VISION - MERCEDES LANE

Standing, framed, in the doorway, backlit, the light shining through her dress, exposing the silhouette of her long legs. At seventeen she looks twenty. She's an untouchable.

THE BOYS

LES
(still reverent)
Mercedes Lane.

DEAN
What more can be said?

LES
I've bumped into her a million times, and she's never once bumped into me.

Mercedes heads for them, arguing with her older looking boyfriend, PAOLO. He looks very out of place.

MERCEDES
You don't own me, I can do whatever I like. Women have rights in this country. Not like Chile or Argentina, where they worship their men.

They barge through the boys as if they were a string of beads. Les "quivers" beside Mercedes as she pours herself some punch.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAOLO

It has nothing to do with worship,
it has to do with going to parties
with... with kids.

MERCEDES

I happen to go to school with these
kids. I have friends here.

PAOLO

Friends? These children can do
nothing for you.

MERCEDES

(cold)

Can we just stop this discussion?
There are some things you and I
will never agree on.

PAOLO

(flustered)

Mercedes. I'm beginning to
perspire. You know I hate to
perspire.

(turning to go)

Are you coming?

MERCEDES

I think I can find my own way home,
thank you.

He walks away.

MERCEDES

And Paolo? If you're wondering
about Saturday night, I just
remembered...

PAOLO

(turning back)

Don't do this to me, Mercedes.
You'll regret it.

MERCEDES

I've made other plans. I already
have a date.

PAOLO

With who?

MERCEDES

With him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Mercedes turns to a shocked Les.

PAOLO

Him?

MERCEDES

(to Les)

Didn't we make arrangements?

LES

(hesitant)

I... I believe so. But, nothing was final.

MERCEDES

Well now they're final.

PAOLO

You'll pay for this, Mercedes.

Paolo storms away. Les watches, afraid to speak. Mercedes downs her punch. She fills her glass again, and downs it. Les who? WE PUSH IN ON Les. He's in a daze.

EXT. SUNNY MEADOWS HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Kids pile out of class.

EXT. SCHOOL BUS - DAY

Dean and Charles get on the bus. Les stands on the curb. The bus starts its engine. Fancy cars pull away.

DEAN

I cannot believe you, Les. You're blowing the greatest night of your life for a girl who probably doesn't even know you have a pulse.

LES

Dean, believe it!

DEAN

(betrayed)

That's pathetic. After all these years we finally get a chance to go to Archie's, and now you're telling me it's off?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LES

If Mercedes pulls through, you bet.

CHARLES

Why don't you just ask her, to make sure?

LES

I'd love to Charles, but I can't talk to something I can't see. Last night was the closest any of us have ever been to her.

DEAN

Well you're in luck, loverboy, 'cause she's sittin' down right behind you.

Dean backs away. The bus doors slam closed in Les' face. He turns around:

Mercedes sits on a bench about twenty-five feet away, reading an ELLE magazine, sipping some apple juice.

Les turns back to the bus. It's pulling away.

DEAN

(leaning out)

Go on, ask her. If you're lucky, she'll bite.

Les turns back to Mercedes.

She's more beautiful than ever. He walks towards her. Her blonde hair flutters in the wind. He stands beside her. Some apple juice dribbles off her bottom lip. She tongues her lips dry. It's the sexiest thing he's ever seen. He can't even talk.

She glances up. Not recognizing him, she goes back to her magazine. We hear a LOUD HONK! HONK!!!! It scares Mercedes.

Les turns, shocked to see his father in the Cadillac, pulling up in front of them. He HONKS again. It's the loudest horn in the world. Les, embarrassed, ignores his father.

DAD

(rolling down the window)

Les?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The height of embarrassment. Les coolly walks by Mercedes. Then, instead of getting into the car, he walks in front of it, across the street. Dad rolls down the window, HONKING again.

DAD

Les. It's me, your father.

Cringe. He tries to get out of her sight. Mercedes doesn't even notice. Dad follows beside him, like the secret service.

DAD

What's going on, here, Les? Don't you recognize me?

Still no answer. He turns the corner. So does Dad. Finally, out of her sight, Les gets in.

INT./EXT. CADILLAC - DAY

A WHITE INTERIOR, impeccably clean. The immensity of the car dwarfs Les. We SEE BAGS OF PAMPERS in the back seat.

DAD

Is there something wrong with having a father, these days?

LES

Dad, what are you doing here?

DAD

I ran some errands for your mom, and I thought I'd come by and take you driving. I figured if you could handle this cruiser you could handle anything.

LES

But what about Grandpa?

DAD

Don't worry about Grandpa. Who knows what he's doing with my car?

LES

(excited)

Okay.

Dad slides over. Les climbs into the driver's seat, moving it way up close.

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CONTINUED:

He checks his mirrors then takes a deep breath. He puts his flicker on, then pulls out, very slowly... cautiously. Immediately, the car screeches to a halt fifteen feet before a stop sign.

Dad rubs his neck.

LES
Sorry. The brakes are a little sensitive.

EXT. STREETS - DAY

Les smoothly turns the Cadillac off a busy street into a residential neighborhood.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT./INT. CADILLAC - DAY

Les, driving for a while now, begins to get the hang of it. He stops smoothly at a stop sign. Suddenly, he stares wide-eyed, frozen.

DAD
That's a long enough stop. Make a right here.

LES
I can't.

DAD
What's the matter?

Up the block, Les sees Mercedes Lane.

LES
I have to ask you a favor. You can say no, but I'll never ask you another one as long as I live.

DAD
Les, you know that's a lie.

LES
You see that girl up ahead? Her name is Mercedes Lane. To put it simply, if she asked me to marry her tomorrow, I'd definitely say yes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAD
(excited)
So. Let's drive by her.

LES
Dad, she just asked me out last night. If I drive by with you in the car, she'll never look at me again. Even if I were standing on her chest.

DAD
You're asking me to let you drive this car, alone? Without a license? Are you insane?

LES
I'll just drive by, say hello and circle back. It'll take two minutes.

Dad, sizing up the situation, looks at Les, then at Mercedes who walks farther up the block.

LES
(earnestly)
I just want to see if she was serious.

DAD
(with a big heart)
Sure.

LES
And Dad...
(looking at groceries)
Would you mind?

What can Dad say? He gets out, with the Pampers, then watches Les pull away.

LES' P.O.V. - APPROACHING MERCEDES

He rolls down the window and honks. She turns, gives him a dirty look, and keeps walking. He shadows her.

LES
Mercedes?

She stops and looks inside, puzzled.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LES

Les Anderson, from the party last night.

MERCEDES

Oh, you scared me. I didn't recognize you. Some jerk honked at me a little while ago in a car just like this.

LES

You live around here, don't you?

MERCEDES

Unh, unh. Just up the street.

LES

Hop in, I'll give you a lift?

MERCEDES

Sure, that'd be fun.

As she's about to open the front door:

LES

Wait a second.

Les jumps out of the car, runs around the passenger side, and insists she get in the back seat. Charmed, she does.

DAD

down the road, shakes his head in disbelief.

INT. CAR - DAY

Adjusting the rearview mirror, Les momentarily holds on her chest, then up to her face. He smiles. He sees Dad, in the mirror, holding the bags.

LES

Which house is yours?

MERCEDES

It's right down the block.

He drives up half a block.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LES
(about to pull into the
driveway)
Okaaaayyy.

MERCEDES
But... I'm not going home.

LES
(stunned)
Where are you going?

MERCEDES
Into Cedarbrook, to a friend's
place. You don't mind, do you?

Les is stunned, caught completely off guard. He looks at his:

REARVIEW MIRROR

His father, still holding the bags, stands alone.

LES
(weakly)
No, not at all.

EXT. STREETS - DAY

Dad, with the bags beside him on the sidewalk, is livid.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CEDARBROOK ESTATE - LATER

Mercedes walks away from the Cadillac.

LES
(calling out)
Mercedes?

MERCEDES
(coming back)
Unh, unh.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LES

(courageous)

Last night at the party, you mentioned something about you and I going out Saturday night. I was just curious... Are we still on?

She doesn't have the heart.

MERCEDES

Sure... Call me, tomorrow.

LES

(pulling out a pen)

Great, let me give you my number in case something comes up. You never know.

MERCEDES

(handing him her Elle magazine)

Here, write it on this.

He excitedly writes his number on the front cover, then hands it back to her.

MERCEDES

Thanks again for the lift, Les.

LES

No problem.

INT./EXT. CADILLAC - LATER

Les coasts down the street like a cop on surveillance. Suddenly, he spots Dad a block ahead, carrying the huge grocery bags. His jacket is off and his shirt is soaked in sweat.

As Les pulls up, Dad glares at him. If looks could kill.

INT. LIVING ROOM AND DEN - DAY

Les sits stiffly, in a chair. Dad disheveled, his shirt soaked with sweat, circles Les like a shark.

DAD

(angry)

How could you do it, Les?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAD (cont'd)

You gave me your word and you used up your last favor? Do you realize where this leaves you?

LES

Not in good shape, but just let me explain. I admit I should never have let her in the car, but she lived three houses down. I thought I was taking her home.

(looking at Mom)

Mom, I'm sure there were many similar romantic gestures when Dad was dating you.

Mom lies on her side in the den wearing a workout outfit, doing scissor-kick exercises, to a pregnancy video. If Moby Dick were a pregnant woman living in America, she'd look like this.

MOM

(thinking)

I don't know. There must have been. We're married.

Mom smiles. Dad looks at her as if to say, "Thanks a lot."

DAD

Why didn't you just tell her the truth?

LES

Tell Mercedes Lane I don't have a license? And risk her having a heart attack from laughing so hard? Put yourself in my shoes.

Dad looks at Les. Then to Mom for help. Forget it, Dad, you're on your own.

DAD

(giving in)

Well, consider yourself lucky that I didn't have a heart attack walking home.

INT. LES' ROOM - NIGHT

Stereo, TV, CD, boyhood Americana. Posters of cars cover the walls. We faintly hear classical music seeping through the walls. The boys are over. While Les cuts Mercedes' picture out of the high school yearbook, Dean gives him a hard time.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEAN

Do you know what happens if you get caught driving without a license? They make you wait two years before you can take the test again. Two years, Les. Twenty-four months. That's a lot of bus rides.

LES

Relax, I didn't get caught.
(pinning the picture over his desk)
And you'd do the same.
(beat)
Now did you guys come over to ask me some questions? Because if you didn't, then I have some studying to do.

A tense silence. Les hands Charles the Driver's Ed book. Through the walls, the classical music builds in intensity.

CHARLES

All right. How can you identify a blind pedestrian to whom you must yield the right of way?

DEAN

You're not serious.

LES

By their white cane, or guard dog.

DEAN

This is a complete waste of time. You know your stuff, Les. You've been a passenger in a car for sixteen years. It's not like you're from Bedrock or something. You've lived and breathed this theory bullshit.

The music booms through the walls, building to a crescendo.

DEAN

(disturbed by the music)
What is that shit?

INT. NATALIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Tchaikovsky!!! Bookish Natalie sits at her desk studying her Driver's Ed manual, taking notes, trying to memorize. As she studies, her body responds to the music with great intensity. And then relaxes when the music becomes quiet... Suddenly, from an INTERCOM above her desk, we hear Dean's obnoxious voice.

DEAN

(voice over)

Hey, Naaaatalie! If you were in a car traveling at the speed of fifty-five miles per hour, and you collided with a runaway train, would that create any improvements in your face?

Her pencil snaps. A total disruption of concentration. Silence. And now we hear the loudest and most disgusting BURP of all time. And then wails of laughter... And then Dean, again.

DEAN

(voice over)

Good luck on your exam tomorrow, Einstein!

INT. D.M.V. TESTING ROOM DAY

A SEA OF APPLICANTS, mostly kids, some older. They sit in front of their computer screens and keyboards, ready to begin. Les and Natalie sit beside each other. MISS HELLMAN, an older BLUE-HAIRED WOMAN stands at the front of the room.

MISS HELLMAN

Good afternoon, children. In the next fifteen minutes you will be given thirty questions. Any more than five mistakes will be considered a failing grade. We'll begin at the sound of the bell.

She looks up at the clock, a second away from one o'clock. The bell RINGS. The students begin. Les is off:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LES' P.O.V. - THE SCREEN

Question #1. What should you do if you miss your exit from an expressway? A-Jam on the breaks and back up. B-Make a quick U-turn. C-Go on to the next one.

LES CHUCKLES TO HIMSELF

He taps C. Correct. One for one.

Question #2. The screen shows a stretch of freeway with three lanes, marked A, B, C. (C being the right lane) "Which is usually the smoothest lane of traffic? A, B, or C."

LES
(to himself)
Why don't they just give licenses
away?

He presses C. WRONG.

LES
(shocked)
What?

He looks over at Natalie. She's just tapping away and smiling. He looks back at his screen. The next question. He looks at it and looks at it. He decides. He winces. Wrong again. Beads of sweat begin to gather on his forehead.

AROUND THE ROOM - NERVOUS STUDENTS' HANDS.

1. A GIRL'S bangled hand plays with her hair.
2. A GUY nervously bites his nails.
3. A GIRL'S jappy fingernails clack away on the desk.
4. A DUMB JOCK cracks his knuckles.

LES

scratches his scalp, and taps his foot nervously. He looks around, takes a deep breath, presses a key, then waits for a response. A sigh of relief. Natalie cooks.

NATALIE'S P.O.V. - HER SCREEN

Question number 24. What actions should you take if another vehicle passes you on the left? A-Speed up and don't let him in. B-Take down his license number. C-Slow down. She presses C. Correct. 24 for 24.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LES AND NATALIE

A picture of opposites. Natalie, effervescent, full of life. Les, a wreck. We see in his face that it's coming down to the wire.

LES'S SCREEN

It reads: WARNING!!! ONE MORE INCORRECT ANSWER AND YOU FAIL!!

NATALIE

(o.s.)

Finished.

Natalie bounces past him. She's all smiles. He hates her.

BACK AT THE SCREEN

Question number 26. At 55 m.p.h. you come upon a large puddle of water. Do you A-pump your brakes. B-gently ease your foot off the gas pedal. C-Accelerate. Les' finger goes from A to B and then to the side. He pauses toiling. He presses A. WRONG! You have failed.

His hands begin to shake. His eyes freeze on the screen. It's the end of the world. Out of frustration he:

WHACKS THE COMPUTER

with both hands on either side. The screen blips off and stays off. He looks up and around. All the students in his row have their hands up. What has he done?

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Les, nervously, waits at a counter with a crowd of people. Miss Hellman returns.

MISS HELLMAN

Mr. Anderson, you'll have to thank your sister for this one.

LES

What do you mean?

MISS HELLMAN

At the present moment, the Department of Motor Vehicles' computers are down, so we can't get your test results.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MISS HELLMAN (cont'd)
 However, considering your sister
 received a perfect score, we're
 going to pass you, and allow you to
 take your road test.

(beat)
 How different can you and your twin
 sister actually be?

Les smiles. His lips crack, he's so happy.

EXT. LES' ROAD TEST CAR - DAY

Cheery and full of life, Les opens the door and peers in.

INSIDE THE CAR

sits MR. KELLY. Hair slicked back, wearing dark aviator
 sunglasses, he's the-sickest, most maligned, frightening-
 looking human being you've ever seen. Les' stomach drops.

INT. NATALIE'S CAR - DAY

A stick shift. A typical road test car. A little nervous,
 she doesn't seem to have the grit she usually has. She's
 having trouble adjusting her seatbelt. MR. NICE GUY, her laid-
 back driving instructor, observes and looks over his
 checklist.

MR. NICE GUY
 Let me help you with that.

NATALIE
 I think I can get it.

She struggles. He leans over, mashing his body up against
 hers, fixing the belt and holding it for a few Mississippi
 too long.

NATALIE
 Thanks.

MR. NICE GUY
 There's nothing to be nervous
 about, Natalie. You'll have your
 license before you know it. Take
 your time.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

INSIDE LES' CAR

Les, anxious to roll, listens to some last minute warnings from Mr. Kelly. A full steaming cup of coffee sits on the dash.

MR. KELLY

Anderson. I want you to take a long hard look at that cup of coffee. Now I love my coffee. It may be the only thing I truly cherish on this god forsaken mudball we call earth. What I'm trying to say is that most inspectors use a checklist.

(holding up the clipboard)

I don't believe in them.

(he throws it out the window)

What I do believe in, is my cup of coffee. You see, that coffee is hot, filled right to the brim. If it spills on me it'll probably burn me. And no one likes to get burned. So, if you burn me, you fail. If you don't, you pass. It's as simple as that.

(beat)

Whenever you're ready.

INSIDE NATALIE'S CAR

Natalie puts her flicker on, checks her blind spot, then pulls out in first gear. A very ROCKY, JERKY, start.

NATALIE

I'm sorry.

MR. NICE GUY

No need to apologize, it happens to everyone.

INSIDE LES' CAR

He gently slips the car into gear, balancing the clutch and the gas like James Bond diffusing a bomb. He perspires. One eye on the road the other on the cup. As he pulls away:

THE COFFEE

swishes, just barely hitting the rim. He's made it. Kelly takes a sip, and then puts it back.

EXT. D.M.V.

WE CRANE UP ABOVE THE LOT as Les' car follows Natalie's car out of the lot.

MR. KELLY
(o.s., drill sergeant)
Make a left at the intersection,
Anderson.

MR. NICE GUY
(o.s., imitating the Pope)
Natalie, can you please make a
right at the corner.

Les' car, cutting across traffic, makes a left into the hectic city. Natalie's car makes a right into quiet suburbia.

EXT. QUIET HILLY SIDE STREET - DAY

Natalie's car runs smoothly down a residential street.

EXT. NOISY MAIN STREET - DAY

Les' car is in the thick of Saturday morning traffic. An AMBULANCE is behind them, siren wailing!

AMUBLANCE
MOVE TO THE RIGHT! EMERGENCY!
MOVE TO THE RIGHT!

EXT./INT. NATALIE'S CAR - DAY

A ritzy quiet neighborhood. The car is set on a small hill, more like a bump. Inside the car, an air of tranquility.

MR. NICE GUY
Let's see how you can handle the
clutch on a hill.

It's a joke. Smoother than smooth.

EXT./INT. LES' CAR - DAY

In traffic, at the top of what most skiers consider the PEAK. An ANTIQUE CAR pulls within three inches of his back bumper.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Les checks his rearview mirror.

LES' P.O.V. - THE ANTIQUE CAR

practically in his trunk. The coffee angles against the cup, a hair away from the rim.

The light turns green. The guy HONKS. The coffee vibrates. Droplets of sweat appear on his forehead. He releases the clutch and smoothly pulls away. The cup is fine.

INT. NATALIE'S CAR - DAY

Not a moving car in sight. Birds chirp. All is well.

MR. NICE GUY

Stop just up ahead of this car on the right. I 'd like you to parallel park.

Natalie stops, signals right, then shifts into reverse. The spot is big enough to park a 747. She handles it easily.

EXT. HECTIC TWO WAY TRAFFIC - DAY

Les, stopped, has his right flicker on. Traffic backs up behind him. He's to parallel park in a spot a stroller would have trouble fitting in. He does a textbook parking job.

INT. D.M.V. PICTURE ROOM - LATER

Natalie. Her typical sour expression. The flash pops.

INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

Natalie, at a bureau counter, waits for her license.

ATTENDANT

Congratulations. Drive safely.

NATALIE

Thank you.

EXT. D.M.V. - DAY

Natalie walks through the parking lot on her way home. We SEE Les, across the street, his left flicker on, waiting for a gap in the traffic.

EXT. D. M. V. PARKING LOT - DAY

As Natalie walks out of the parking lot, on her way home, Les pulls in.

We FOLLOW Les' car as he's about to park.

INT/EXT. LES' CAR

The coffee cup balances on the dash. Les is home free. BUT, SUDDENLY, A GIRL runs out in front of the car waving her new license at a friend.

GIRL

I got it. I got it.

Les JAMS ON THE BRAKES to avoid hitting her.

THE CUP ON THE DASH FLIES INTO KELLY'S LAP. Les looks at Kelly, pleading, afraid. Kelly calmly picks the cup up then turns it over.

MR. KELLY

You're in luck, Anderson. The cup was empty. See you on the battlefield sometime.

Les, grateful, would love to hug Mr. Kelly.

INT. PICTURE ROOM - DAY

CLOSE ON LES, a million dollar smile. The camera flashes.

INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

Les, exploding with anticipation, waits in line to pick up his license. The Attendant signals him.

He looks at it: The Holy Grail, The Ark of The Covenant. He can't walk. As he's about to step away, the attendant stops him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ATTENDANT

(looking at a list)

Mr. Anderson. Hold on, one second.
Someone wants to speak with you.

Holding his license, he watches as the attendant, with list, walks over to Miss Hellman. His heart skips a beat.

Large beads of perspiration. Miss Hellman walks toward him. BOOM-BOOM, BOOM-BOOM, goes his heart. His future passes before him. We hear voices in DEEP REVERB.

DAD

(voice over)

Just pass your driver's exam, and then we'll talk.

MERCEDES

(voice over)

Sure. Call me

CHARLES

(voice over)

Life does exist outside a V-8.

DEAN

(voice over)

You're going to be free, Les. One of them... one of them... one of them.

MISS HELLMAN

Well, well, Mr. Anderson. Mr. Anderson.

Les snaps out of it.

LES

(squeaking)

Yes?

INSERT - TEST PRINTOUT ON PRINTER

MISS HELLMAN AND HER VICIOUS SMILE

His eyes begin to water.

MISS HELLMAN

We were able to retrieve your test results from the computer, Mr. Anderson. And, as I suppose you already know, you failed.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MISS HELLMAN (cont'd)
 (handing him his test
 results with one hand)
 God giveth...
 (taking the license with
 the other)
 ...and God taketh away. Don't mess
 with the Department of Motor
 Vehicles!

As she rips up his license, the IMAGE BLURS.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - DAY

Devastated. Walking sluggishly, staring at his failed exam. It's the end of the world. He crams the test in back pocket. The edge of it sticks out.

A convertible VW Rabbit whips by, music blaring. Sixteen year old girls and guys rock to the music. Probably the happiest day of their lives.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Les enters. The house is quiet. There's no one home. Head down, he treks upstairs to his room.

INT. LES' ROOM - LES - DAY

deeply depressed, walks into his room. His door is plastered with telephone messages, all from Charles and Dean; "Pick me up." "Congratulations, you made it." ...Deeper depression.

On his desk, a GIFT WRAPPED BOX. There's a card on top. It reads, "Good Driving. Love, Mom and Dad." He tears the wrapping off and looks in. He pulls out a CHAUFFEUR'S CAP! Even deeper depression.

Dazed, he stares at Mercedes' picture. She never looked better. He never looked worse. We hear someone come into the house.

MOM AND DAD

(o.s.)
 Hellooooooooo. Hellooooooooo...
 We're home.

Horror. He has to face his parents.

INT. BABY ROOM - DAY

A newly decorated baby room. Moby Mom and Dad remove a CRIB from a box. Les slouched over, walks in.

DAD
Hey, sport. What's the good news?

LES
(dejected)
Mom, Dad, I have something to tell you.

DAD
(playing)
You already dented the car.

MOM
What is it?

Mom and Dad look at him, eagerly. Les looks them in the eye. What's he gonna do??? Could this be it???

Suddenly, his frown becomes the biggest smile. He looks genuinely excited. He starts to sing and dance around the room.

LES
(to the tune of Soul Man)
I'm a free man. Dodo, dodo, dodo,
dodo. I'm a free man, yaaahhh.

MOM
Congratulations.

LES
Thank youuuuuuuuu...

DAD
Was it a breeze?

LES
Like taking candy from a baby.

DAD
(laughing)
I filled mom's car up this
afternoon, if you feel like taking
it for a drive.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LES

(stopped in his tracks)
No thanks, Dad. I think I'm gonna go to my room and lie down. I'm exhausted.

Mom and Dad are puzzled.

MOM

Is there something wrong, Les?

LES

Wrong? Are you kidding me? This is the greatest day of my life. Sixteen-years-old with a license in my wallet. I couldn't ask for more.

MOM

So why don't you want to take the car for a drive and celebrate a little, get it out of your system?

LES

I don't know if you guys remember... sixteen years of waiting and dreaming is a lot of pressure. It's a very powerful moment, and I'm not sure sitting behind the wheel is the place for me to be right now.

MOM

Can we at least see your license?

LES

Mom, the picture is so ugly, I'm even afraid to look at it. It smells.

DAD

We're your parents, Les. We changed your diapers, remember? I'm quite sure we could handle it.

LES

(leaving the room)
Sorry, Dad. It's worse than dirty diapers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAD
 (to Mom)
 How can anything be worse than
 dirty diapers?

INT. HOUSE STAIRWAY - DAY

Les realizes what he just backed himself into, and he kind of likes it. Rudy comes barging in the front door, excited as hell, looking for his brother. Les is in full stride... Rudy runs to him and slaps him "high five."

RUDY
 Awwrighhhhht.
 (beat)
 When can we go for a drive?

LES
 Later, later. Let me just make a
 few phone calls.

Rudy buys it, another one sold. The phone rings. Les picks it up.

INT. LES' BEDROOM - DAY

Les dances in, whistling, he's a new man. He opens his phone book and turns to the name "Mercedes," beside a Mercedes Benz symbol. He dials the number and waits... it's BUSY. Just as he puts it down, it RINGS. He picks it up.

INT. DEAN'S BASEMENT BEDROOM - DAY

Tiny. Water pipes abound. A pigsty a pig wouldn't live in. Dean holds the telephone up to the speaker. Charles hits play on the tape deck and suddenly the sounds of A ROCK CONCERT CROWD CHEERING AND SCREAMING blasts out of the speakers. Intercut Les and Dean.

Les listens... He loves it. It finally fades out.

DEAN
 You're the king, Les. You did it,
 man. How does it feel?

LES
 Deano baby! Hang on a second, I'm
 looking for my keys. Wait!
 (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LES (cont'd)
Here they are. Right beside my AAA
card.

They laugh. Another one sold.

INT. SHOWER - NIGHT

Les is in seventh heaven, singing and whistling.

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM - NIGHT

Mom flicks on the washer, then leaves the room with an empty
laundry basket balancing on her stomach.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Mom pokes her head in, while Les is still in the shower. She
grabs his dirty underwear, socks and jeans. As she plops
them into her basket, we SEE the corner of Les' test results
edging out of his back pocket.

Les turns the shower off. Dad pops his head into the
bathroom.

DAD
I wanna see you in the den in a few
minutes, chief.

LES
(on top of the world)
I'm there.

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM - NIGHT

Standing by the washer Mom empties everyone's pockets; Dad's,
Rudy's, Les' jeans... Without realizing what it is, she
places Les' failed exam on the counter. As it sits there it
partially unfolds. Mom loads the washer.

INT. DEN - NIGHT

Dad sits with Natalie, waiting for Les. Behind Dad, Rudy
sits in front of a GIANT SCREEN TV, with the sound off. He's
watching "THE FRENCH CONNECTION."

DAD
(frustrated)
Where's Les?

INT. LES' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Wearing a bathrobe, he's on the phone. Still busy.
Confused, he leaves the room.

INT. MERCEDES' ROOM - NIGHT

Outfits scattered about. Mercedes is on the phone.

GIRL

(voice over)

Mercedes, you could have any guy
you'd like. Forget Paolo. He's
old enough to be your mother's
younger brother.

MERCEDES

But why hasn't he called? He's
going to the club tonight, I know
it.

INT. DEN - NIGHT

Les, full of life, sits beside Natalie. As Dad talks, the
famous chase scene from "THE FRENCH CONNECTION" unfolds.

DAD

With Mom expecting any day now,
it's extremely important that there
is always one car at home. I
cannot make that any clearer. Am I
understood?

NATALIE

(sour)

Yes.

LES

Absolutely, hundred percent. Is
that all?

DAD

Les... We don't want Mom going into
labor without a car here to drive
her to the hospital. Taxis are
unreliable, and you both know how
slow buses can be. If I'm out, one
of you must be here.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAD (cont'd)
The same goes for me when the both
of you are out. The overriding
consideration now is your mother.

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM - EARLY EVENING

As Mom sorts the laundry, she watches TV: A "Pregnancy
Period" home video guide. A WOMAN speaks. Beside Mom,
resting on top of Les' still partially-folded test, is a bowl
of PICKLED PIG'S FEET with CHOCOLATE SYRUP on it.

WOMAN
(on TV)
...as long as you aren't
experiencing any dizzy spells, and
as long as you can still fit behind
the wheel, you can safely drive
short distances up to delivery day.
Don't, however, try to drive
yourself to the hospital while in
labor.

INT. DEN NIGHT

Dad continues. In the chase scene, behind him, Popeye Doyle
swerves away, avoiding a baby in a stroller.

DAD
Now, I've put together a list of
the rules of the road that I think
we should go over.

Dad pulls out some NOTES and hands a copy to Les and Natalie.

LES
Dad...

DAD
This way you'll never be able to
say you don't remember hearing
them. Take a minute to look them
over. They may end up saving your
life.

They flip through them. They can't believe it.

INT. LES' ROOM - NIGHT

Les walks into his room and without giving it a thought
pitches Dad's rules and regulations into the garbage can.

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM - NIGHT

While gathering everyone's loose change and pocket contents, Mom notices Les' test results. She unfolds the test sheet. It's obvious he failed!

INT. LES' ROOM - CLOSE ON A TAPE DECK - NIGHT

Rock and roll. A tape records. Needles bounce. "MERCEDES FAST" is scrawled on the label. PULL BACK... We SEE Rudy wearing the chauffeur's cap, standing by the rockin' stereo. Les dials the phone. It's ringing, finally. He signals Rudy to turn it down. Silence. Joy on Les' face.

MERCEDES
(voice over; sexy)
Hello...

Suddenly!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

THE DOOR BURSTS OPEN

The boys look up. It's Dad, carrying a BOTTLE OF CHAMPAGNE and TWO GLASSES. Les, receiver in hand, is stunned. He can't talk with his Dad in the room. As he hangs up the phone, WE HEAR:

MERCEDES
(on the phone)
Paolo? Is that you?

DAD
Rudy. Go downstairs. Les, my boy, we're drinking a toast to you.

Rudy exits.

LES
Dad, that's very thoughtful of you, but you know I shouldn't be drinking and driving.

DAD
(popping open the bottle)
Les. You just saved me \$26,000.

LES
How did I do that?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAD
(pouring him a glass)
First raise your glass.
(toasting)
To saving me 26,000 buckaroonies.

LES
(taking a sip)
I don't get it.

DAD
Twenty-three thousand for the BMW,
and three thousand for the
insurance.

LES
(excited)
How did I do that?

Dad whips out the test.

DAD
With this.

Les is shattered.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Mom has just told Rudy and Natalie about Les.

RUDY AND NATALIE
He failed?!!!!!!

INT. LES' ROOM - NIGHT (SAME LOCATION - DIFFERENT DIALOGUE)

Les sits on his bed, head down. Dad kneels in front of him.

DAD
Les, did it ever occur to you that
you could've told your mom and me.
We're your parents, not the police.

LES
(ashamed)
I just figured that I could get
through the weekend and take the
test over Monday.

DAD
I know what you figured...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Les looks out into nowhere land.

DAD
Come on, Les. It's not the end of
the world.

LES
It feels like it.

DAD
(putting his arm around
Les)
You'll recover. The great ones
always do.

The doorbell rings.

INT. FRONT HALL - NIGHT

Mom opens the door. It's KARL, Natalie's boyfriend. Workers
of the world unite!!! He wears HORN-RIMMED GLASSES.

KARL
Good evening, Mrs. Anderson. Is
Natascha home?

MOM
She'll be down in a second.

KARL
How are you feeling?

MOM
Fine, Karl. Thank you.

KARL
I admire you for having the courage
to bring a child into this
oppressive world.

MOM
(calling for help)
NATALIEEEEEEE...

INT. LES' ROOM NIGHT

On his bed, staring at the ceiling. PAN TO the clock OVER
his bed. It reads 8:50.

EXT./INT. KARL'S BEAT-UP CITROEN - NIGHT

Pulling out of the Anderson driveway. It huffs and it puffs and it BACKFIRES. It sounds like shit!!

NATALIE

Are you sure you don't want to take my mother's Audi? This car's never going to make it to the rally.

KARL

(proud)

Natascha, don't let this old warrior's heartbeat deceive you. It has more than a lifetime worth of travel left in it.

INT. MERCEDES' ROOM - NIGHT

Mercedes lies on the floor, beside the phone, with her feet up on a chair. She looks sad and very alone. She rolls over and grabs the ELLE magazine off of her bed. Leafing through it, something on the front cover catches her eye... Les' number.

INT. LES' ROOM - THE CLOCK - IT NOW READS 11:15 - NIGHT

PAN BACK TO Les in the same position. He hasn't moved. The phone rings, and rings, and rings. He picks it up. Intercut Les and Mercedes.

LES

(picking it up)

Hello.

MERCEDES

Is Les Anderson in, please?

LES

(confused)

This is Les.

MERCEDES

Les? This is Mercedes Lane. Do you remember me?

This can't be.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LES
(trying to be cool)
Remember you?... Ah... I'm not
sure. Of course, Mercedes. How
are you?

MERCEDES
A little lonely, actually.

Les' eyes pop out.

MERCEDES
I thought we had a date this
evening. I figured I'd call you,
since you hadn't called yet.

LES
I'm sorry. Actually, I just got
in. I was out... deep sea fishing
all day.

He cringes at the sound of his feeble lie.

MERCEDES
You haven't changed your mind about
tonight, have you?

LES
Tonight? Now? No.

MERCEDES
So you can pick me up in twenty
minutes?
(no response)
He looks at the clock and sees the
time.

LES
Hang on.

Les puts the phone down and looks out his window at Mom's
AUDI 5000 parked in the driveway. He bolts out of the room.

INT. HALLWAY - OUTSIDE PARENTS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Les gently opens their door and peers in. The TV is on. Mom
and Dad are asleep. The keys to the Audi are on the night
table beside Dad. He closes the door and takes a deep
breath.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LES
 (to himself)
 An innocent girl, a harmless drive.
 What could possibly go wrong?

BACK IN HIS ROOM

He slides in and picks up the phone.

LES
 (with confidence)
 Mercedes? I'll be there in half an
 hour.

MERCEDES
 Great. And Les?... Can you bring
 some liquor?

LES
 (unbelieving)
 Liquor? You mean alcohol?

A long pause.

MERCEDES
 Les?

LES
 Unh, unh.

MERCEDES
 Vodka makes me crazy.

He must be dreaming.

INT. PARENTS' BEDROOM - LES - NIGHT

tiptoes to Dad's night table. Les reaches for the keys, but just as he's about to snatch them, Dad rolls over, stretching out, plopping his hand down on top of them. It's no use. Les walks out, turning the TV up even louder.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Les searches the drawers of a desk. He pulls out a box of spare keys... nothing. He checks other drawers... nothing. He doesn't know what to do... or does he?

INT. GARAGE - NIGHT

Les walks-in and takes a long hard look at the Cadillac.
It's radiant. He looks in and sees the keys in the ignition.

LES
(to himself)
Anderson, you should be castrated.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A locked liquor cabinet. Les feels around back and pulls out a SMALL MAGNETIC TIN BOX. A HIDE-A-KEY. He opens the cabinet and pulls out a full bottle of vodka.

INT. GARAGE - NIGHT

Les walks into the garage, carrying a cooler and a flask. He lays them down beside the trunk. As he opens the car door, the CAR ALARM sounds. It's LOUD AS HELL! He lunges into the car and turns it off. He listens for his parents.

INT. PARENTS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

They're still asleep.

EXT. GARAGE - NIGHT

The garage door inches up.

INSIDE THE CAR

He turns the ignition part way, unlocking the steering, then shifts the car into neutral. The car doesn't budge.

He gets out of the car and begins to push it. It starts to... ROLL SLOWLY, then pick up speed. He shuffles alongside, trying to open the door. It rolls onto the FRONT LAWN, headed straight for the SIX-FOOT-HIGH PERFECTLY-MANICURED FRONT HEDGES.

Les holds his breath as the Cadillac plows through Picasso's hedges, onto the street, thumping to a stop against the curb.

Les can't believe his eyes: the seven foot gap in the hedges, and tire tracks in the lawn. As best he can, he props the bushes up, and stomps on the tire tracks. He runs to:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THE GARAGE

where he unscrews the light bulbs and hits the automatic door control. He runs back to the Caddie.

As he pulls away in one direction:

THE CITROEN - BANGING AND POPPING

on its last leg, pulls into THE DRIVEWAY from the other.

NATALIE

If you're not convinced this car's about to die, maybe we should wait until it catches fire and cremates itself.

KARL

Need you be so cruel, Natascha.

NATALIE

(rolling her eyes)
Let me just get the keys to my mother's Audi.

She walks into the house. A defeated Karl waits.

INT. PARENTS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Dad and Mom are fast asleep, wrapped in covers. Natalie searches for the keys. She finally spots them under Dad's hand. Unlike Les, she picks up Dad's hand, and removes the Audi key.

Dad wakes up and looks at her. She holds out the key. He smiles and falls back to sleep.

INT. GARAGE - NIGHT

EMPTY! No Cadillac. We hear the Audi start up and pull away. No cars at home!!

INT. PARENTS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

As we hear the car drive away. Pregnant Mom bolts in pain, grabbing her stomach. She turns on the light and waits for the pain to subside. She's okay. She turns the light off.

EXT. MERCEDES' FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Les rings and waits. Mercedes opens the door. She looks stunning.

LES
You look great.

MERCEDES
Thanks, Les. You look cute.

He smiles. Where's the nearest justice of the peace?

INT. CADDIE - NIGHT

Les' tape is a hit. Loud. Heaven. Mercedes is having a great time.

LES
So where do you feel like going?

MERCEDES
I know the perfect place. You'll love it.

Mercedes cranks the volume even louder. As she does, a COP CAR squeezes by the Caddie giving Les a hard look. For the first time, we see in Les' face the fear of what he's about to get himself into.

EXT. EL RAY'S - NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

A popular nightclub set in an UNSAFE NEIGHBORHOOD. The Caddie is on a line for valet parking.

INSIDE THE CADILLAC

A ton of decibels. Mercedes sips on the flask, rocking to the music. A neurotic Les watches the PARKERS manhandle the cars ahead of him. Cars fishtail, leaving a cloud of blue smoke.

The VALET reaches for Les' door. Les hits the automatic lock switch.

MERCEDES
Open the door, Les.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LES

I can't.

MERCEDES

What do you mean, you can't?

LES

(pulling out)

They'll destroy the gears. If I let them touch this car, they'll turn it into a manual transmission. I'll park it myself.

EXT. DARK ALLEY - NIGHT

An alley lined with cars with smashed windows and missing bumpers. Les backs into the only remotely safe-looking spot. The Caddie lights shut off. We hear a SHRIEK. A GUNSHOT. BROKEN GLASS! The Caddie lights turn back on. The car peels out.

EXT. CADILLAC - NIGHT

They drive by the club, again, still looking, but now they're on the other side of the street.

MERCEDES

(pointing to a spot)

There's one.

Les looks. It's perfect. Huge under a street lamp. He pulls in.

LES

(noticing a parking sign)

I can't park here.

MERCEDES

Why not?

LES

It's a tow zone.

MERCEDES

On a Saturday night? Les, nobody tows cars on a weekend. Look at all the cars behind us. You think they're worried?

Les is.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MERCEDES

(Cont'd)

Relax. You're acting like it's the first time you've ever driven.

She struck a nerve. She gets out.

EXT. EL RAY'S ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Les follows Mercedes as she approaches the LARGE CROWD of people waiting to get in. The DOORMAN recognizes Mercedes, waves her in, but stops Les dead in his tracks.

LES

Hey, come on, I'm with her.

DOORMAN

(snobbish)

Riiiiight. You wouldn't be with her if she were your Siamese twin. Now, run on before someone steals your tricycle, Mikie.

Forget it, Les.

INT. EL RAY'S - BAR/FOYER NIGHT

Before Mercedes realizes Les isn't with her, she spots PAOLO. To get up her nerve, Mercedes grabs some GUY's glass of champagne off the bar, and downs it. The guy looks on, confused. Mercedes is a tad flushed. This may have been her first drink.

She approaches Paolo. He sees her.

PAOLO

(feigned charm)

Mercedes, what a lovely surprise. Where is your high school 'throb heart?

Mercedes realizes Les isn't there. A beautiful SEXY WOMAN slithers up beside Paolo, and nibbles on his ear. Mercedes is repulsed.

OUTSIDE EL RAY'S

Les, unable to weasel by the Doorman, hustles up to a window where he watches MERCEDES confront Paolo.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Behind him, at the Caddie, we see a TOW TRUCK attaching its clamps and clips to the Cadillac's frame.

BACK INSIDE EL RAY'S FOYER

Mercedes is very upset.

PAOLO
(pouring champagne)
Please, Mercedes. Sit down and
join us for something to drink.

MERCEDES
No thanks, but here's something to
go with it.

OUTSIDE EL RAY'S

LES

watches Mercedes wind up and slap Paolo. Les smirks, as Paolo stands stunned.

INSIDE EL RAY'S

Mercedes storms away. On the way out of the club, she grabs the guy's MAGNUM OF CHAMPAGNE from the bucket of ice.

OUTSIDE EL RAY'S

Les waits for Mercedes. She stomps by him, back to the car, swigging the near-full bottle of champagne. Les turns to see...

THE TOW TRUCK, about to pull away with the Caddie. Blindly, Les, runs across the street. Cars screech and swerve. He stands in front of the truck. The DRIVER is an overweight REDNECK covered in grease.

REDNECK DRIVER
Get out the way, boy.

LES
(jumping on the truck's
hood)
You can't do this to my car.

REDNECK DRIVER
(rolling out)
Boy, I've driven with deers,
antelopes, even with bears strapped
to my bumper.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

REDNECK DRIVER (cont'd)
A sixty-five pound sack a fly shit
like you ain't gonna shake me a
hell of difference.

LES
Please, I'll do anything. I can
pay you. I'll give you everything
I have.

He jams on the breaks. Les flies over the front hood.
Mercedes can't believe it.

EXT. TOW TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

Les count out his money in front of the driver. The driver
snatches the money, and walks around to the side of the
truck.

LES
Be gentle. Please.

REDNECK DRIVER
For eighty dollars?

He hits a switch. The Cadillac CRASHES DOWN. Les is
mortified. The redneck driver jumps into his truck,
laughing. As he drives away, Mercedes approaches a
distraught Les. After another huge swig from the magnum, she
offers him some champagne.

MERCEDES
This might help.

LES
(harking back to his Dad's
champagne toast)
No, thanks, I already had some
tonight.

MERCEDES
I'm really sorry about this, I feel
like it was all my fault.

LES
Nah, I should've given the car to
the valet.
(quiet)
It's too bad about your friend.

MERCEDES
He was a jerk anyway. I don't know
why I even hung around with him.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MERCEDES (cont'd)

(beat)

Why don't we get out of here?

LES

And go where? With the amount of money I have left in my pocket, we have two choices. Sit at a parking meter for twenty minutes, or go buy ourselves a paper.

Mercedes laughs. It really isn't funny.

MERCEDES

I know a quiet spot, with plenty of free parking.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

A dense forest. Cadillac Brougham hell. We can barely SEE the beams of the Cadillac's headlights.

INT. CADILLAC - NIGHT

The car bounces along on a steep, narrow dirt mountain road more suited for a horse or a 4x4.

Whatever it is, it's not good for the car. Mercedes has moved beside Les. The radio is off. Les concentrates. Quiet. We hear the pounding of the shocks and the occasional branch scraping the car. And then a Mercedes HICCUP and a giggly "excuse me."

THEIR POV - STRAIGHT AHEAD

Bit by bit, the trees vanish. There's nothing but stars. The entire city sits below us, glowing like an expensive broach. It's a glorious sight. Les stops the car.

They get out. Mercedes, clutching her now three quarters empty bottle of champagne, stares up at the stars. Mercedes is more than light headed. She's drunk. Les checks the condition of the car. It looks fine.

Les gazes at Mercedes and the surroundings. It's a fantasy come true. An awkward silence.

LES

This is unbelievable up here. How did you find this place?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MERCEDES

Someone I know used to take me here.

(Les is shattered)

Not a boyfriend. My father used to bring me here to show me how pretty the world could be if you could step away and see it from a distance.

Les doesn't know what to say.

MERCEDES

(Cont'd)

I haven't been here in a long time.

She's about to sit in front of the car.

LES

(diving between her)

Wait, wait one second. I have a blanket. It'll be more comfortable.

MERCEDES

You sure come prepared.

LES

(under his breath)

Like a Boy Scout.

Les leans into the car and releases the trunk lock.

THE TRUNK FLIPS OPEN

revealing an expensive set of GOLF CLUBS. Les searches the bag and pulls out a BLANKET.

He races to the front of the car and spreads it out on the front hood.

MERCEDES

(in between swigs)

All we're missing is some soft romantic music.

Les grins and whips into the car.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

INSIDE THE CADDIE

He flips over his "MERCEDES" tape to the "SLOW" side. He waits for it to begin. It's the perfect song for the perfect moment. He smiles and adjusts the volume.

BUT, just as he's about to slide out, the sound garbles and dies. He ejects the tape. It's destroyed. He flips on the radio. The reception sucks. HE shuts it off and looks out at Mercedes filling her glass up. He needs music. He opens the GLOVE COMPARTMENT.

LES' P.O.V. - A ROW OF CASSETTES

Grandfather's top ten: Como, Bennett, Torme, Sinatra, and Humperdinck. He grabs "Greatest Hits of the 40's" and loads it into the deck. "Strangers in the Night."

Nestled in the woods, above the city, it's beautiful. I wish it were me. Mercedes, deep in thought and alcohol, gulps away. An awkward moment for Les. He looks out at the spectacular view.

SINATRA

"Strangers in the night, exchanging glances, wondering in the night, what were the chances, we'd be sharing love, before the night was through."

MERCEDES

Do you want to dance?

LES

To this? Where?

MERCEDES

(getting up on the hood
with her stiletto heels)
Right up here. You couldn't pray
for a more romantic setting.

Her heels on the hood are killing him, but he doesn't want to upset the momentum. He hops up. They get close. She's taller. It's awkward.

SINATRA

'Love was just a glance away, a warm embracing dance away.'

MERCEDES

Maybe I should take my shoes off?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Les looks to the sky as if to say, "Thank you, God." They resume dancing. As Frankie sings on, they get closer and closer, until Mercedes attaches her mouth to Les'. Within moments they've eased themselves down onto the hood, and now they're really going at it. Passion!

SINATRA

'It turned out so right, for
strangers in the night.'

As Frankie gets into his "doobee doobee doos," the song fades and we hear a THUMP.

CLOSE ON LES

His eyes dart open. ANOTHER THUMP. It's the hood of the Cadillac caving in. He can't even kiss her now. ANOTHER THUMP! He pulls himself away, panicked.

LES

Get up. Get off the hood.

MERCEDES

What's the matter?

LES

The hood is caving in. Quick, get off.

SINATRA

(the next song)

'That's life, that's what people
say.'

Les is destroyed. There's a huge deep dent in the hood.

LES

Oh my God. I'll be making repair
payments from Siberia.
(packing up to go)
We have to get this fixed.

MERCEDES

(plastered -- drink in
hand)

What's the rush, Les? I love this
song.

LES

(more to himself)

Unfortunately, so does my
grandfather.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Les leaps into the car. Mercedes falls in. He tries ejecting the cassette, but it's jammed. He tries to get it out. Forget it. He lowers the volume. She won't let him start the car, she's all over him. She starts kissing his neck, unbuttoning his shirt, kissing his chest.

MERCEDES

(sexy)

You have such baby soft skin.

He can't resist her. He begins to smile. Suddenly her head drops into his lap. He winces... and then we hear some SNORING... He looks down. She's fast asleep.

INT. DEAN'S PARENTS' GARAGE - NIGHT

Cluttered with spare parts, bikes, tools, you name it. The Cadillac is parked beside the Datsun. The hood is up. Dean pounds the dent out from the inside. Charles, with a pocket camera hung around his neck, watches. Les paces nervously.

DEAN

You have balls, Les. You definitely have balls for snatching this car. I'm impressed.

CHARLES

Let's see the license.

LES

Forget it. It's ugly.

DEAN

Of course it is. Big deal.

LES

Nope.

CHARLES

(holding up his camera)

Come on. Let me take a picture of it.

LES

Okay.

Dean turns around. Charles readies his camera. Les whips his open wallet by their noses. The camera FLASHES. Forget it. Radar couldn't have picked it up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LES
(rubbing his eyes from the
flash)
Happy, now?

DEAN
(turning to the hood)
Take a look.

Dean puts the mallet down and gently drops the hood. Les crouches down to check. Dean stands, confident.

LES
Excellent work, Dean. Really
spectacular. You saved me.

DEAN
So I guess we can go to Archie's
now?

LES
Dean, I promise next weekend, but
not tonight. Mercedes doesn't have
to be home for a couple of hours.

DEAN
Les, take a look at something.

Dean walks Les to the passenger side of the car. Mercedes is out cold, her face squished up against the glass.

DEAN
Unless you're into some intense
kinky shit, and you never know
after tonight, this Mercedes has a
dead battery.

Les is depressed. Dean's rolling.

DEAN
We're talking about Archie's
Atomic, Les. It's in the middle of
nowhere. You can't get there
without a license. No buses, no
trains, no planes. Only the
slickest driving machines you've
ever seen.

Dean pulls a crumpled piece of paper out of his pocket and hands it to Les.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEAN

Here are the directions my brother gave me.

Les glances at it.

CHARLES

How do you know it's any good? You've never even been there.

DEAN

Charles, do I tell you what kind of dictionaries to buy?

LES

(looking for an out)
I dunno, Dean. I'm a little tired, I don't feel like driving on the highway.

DEAN

Are you shittin' me? You got your license twelve hours ago and you're already tired of driving? My mother makes ridiculous statements like that.

LES

Forget it, Dean. I just can't.

DEAN

Can't?

Dean grabs the mallet and walks over to the hood. He lifts the mallet high into the air, assuming the executioner's position.

DEAN

Fine. But as precise and delicate a task as it may have appeared, fixing those dents... I could easily put them all back.

LES

(nowhere to go)
This place better be worth it.

DEAN

The drive alone will be worth it.

EXT. DEAN'S HOUSE - A HIGH ANGLE - NIGHT

Backing out onto the street.

LES

(o.s.)

Did you wipe your feet, Dean?

DEAN

(o.s.; like a baby)

Yes, I wiped the concrete off my feet.

(sounding great)

Two seconds in the car and I can already feel the change. This is too much. Charles, push in the lighter, I have a surprise for everyone.

INSIDE THE CADDIE

Dean holds out three cigars. Behind him, we SEE Mercedes out cold. Charles still has his camera around his neck.

LES

No way, Dean. Not in here.

DEAN

Les, this is a car, not an oxygen tent.

LES

Forget it. If there's even the slightest evidence to suggest that I took this car, my dad will slaughter first and ask questions later.

Dean bounces back into his seat, shaking his head. Quiet. Dean smirks... and then the loudest FART you've ever heard. They crack up.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREETS - NIGHT

Sparsely crowded, the Caddie crawls along in the middle lane at a tortoise's pace, being passed by cars, left and right.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

INSIDE THE CAR

Sheer boredom. Charles takes it in stride. Dean watches incredulously as a JOGGER passes them on the right and a STREET SWEEPER passes them on the left.

DEAN

Les, how about taking the car out of neutral and putting it in gear? A bath is more exciting than this.

Les takes it like a man.

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

Stopped at a red light.

INSIDE THE CAR

Dean has given up. We hear The Funeral March horn... "DUM, DUM, DaDUM... DUM, DaDUM, DaDUM, DaDUM."

THE GLOSSY BLACK GTO

with the THREE DEMENTED HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUTS, pulls up beside them REVVVVVVING its engine.

INSIDE THE CADDIE

The makings of a drag. This is what Dean has been waiting for. The stares. The challenge. Charles and Dean smirk at the DRIVER. Les revs his engine. Charles and Dean smile at Les... The light turns GREEN!

Sorry boys. Les pulls away slowly, while the GTO screeches away leaving them in a cloud of burnt rubber.

DEAN

What? Les are you sixteen, or are you sixty? You could've given that gear head a run for his money.

LES

Dean, this is my grandfather's car. Get me a car that I'm not genetically related to, and I assure you things will change.

DEAN

Les. No one's asking you to break the sound barrier.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEAN (cont'd)

It just feels like we're on some sort of kiddie ride, that's all.

CHARLES

Give him a break, Dean. He just got his license.

DEAN

His tractor license. I mean what's the point? What's the damn point of driving a car if you're not going to take advantage of it?

LES

Whatever happened to your beliefs about cars representing freedom in America?

DEAN

At twenty miles per hour?

CHARLES

What's the difference? Twenty, eighty, you're in a car.

DEAN

There's a big difference, Charles. Freedom at eighty miles per hour is America. Freedom at twenty miles per hour is communism.

End of round one. The fighters return to their corners.

INT. PARENTS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lights out. Windows open. Curtains blowing. Mom has the blankets off. Dad is wrapped in them.

MOM

Honey?
(shoving him)
Honey?

Dad grunts.

MOM

Is it hot in here or is it just me?

DAD

It's you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MOM

Oh, it feels like a sauna in here.

DAD

Would you like me to go down to the garage and turn on the air conditioning?

MOM

No, it's okay. I could lose a few pounds.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

Dad walking like a zombie opens the door to the garage.

DAD'S P.O.V. - THE GARAGE

Pitch black. Can't see a thing. He tries flicking on the light. No luck, Les unscrewed them. He leaves the garage.

IN THE BEDROOM

Mom is back under the covers. The TV is on.

IN THE KITCHEN

Dad opens a drawer, pulls out a flashlight and tests it.

DAD AT THE DOOR TO THE GARAGE

About to open it, flashlight on. Suddenly... the INTERCOM booms on, startling Dad.

MOM

(intercom)

Richard? Richard?

DAD

Yes.

MOM

I changed my mind. I'm not hot any longer, I'm under the covers now. I'm hungry. Can you make me a herring and mayonnaise sandwich?

(beat)

With extra bacon bits?

Dad suddenly feels ill.

EXT. HIGHWAY - THE CADILLAC - NIGHT

motors down the highway, being passed by everyone.

INSIDE THE CADILLAC

They're still in their corners, hanging onto their pride. Mercedes, asleep or unconscious, is huddled in the backseat. Les inches up to fifty-four miles per hour, then locks in the cruise control. He tries ejecting the cassette. It's still jammed. He turns it on. Frankie... This is Cadillac cruising at its finest.

MERCEDES

shifts positions, cuddling up against Dean. Guess who's smiling now?

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The Cadillac glides along.

INT. CADILLAC - LES - NIGHT

Frankie sets the mood. We HEAR a click. A camera flash fills the car.

CHARLES AND LES TURN AROUND

Mercedes lies on the backseat with her top few buttons undone. A bit of her bra is exposed.

LES

You asshole! Button up her shirt!
Now!

DEAN

Forget it, Les. Look at us.
(gently)
At the present moment we're three
wild animals bombing down the
highway in a Cadillac with the
cruise control set on fifty-five.

LES

Well, excuse me, that's the speed
limit. I don't need a ticket my
first night out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEAN

A ticket? Look at your windshield.
We're moving so slowly the flies
have time to get out of the way.

LES

Very funny.

DEAN

Not only that. Listen to this
crap. My parents don't even listen
to this.

CHARLES

Dean, you need a doctor.

Dean clicks off another picture.

LES

(reaching back)
Gimme the camera, Dean.

Dean ignores him, snaps another. Les lunges back, one eye on the road. He grabs the camera. They struggle. The Caddie starts to swerve. Charles tries to break them up. In the commotion the camera FLASH goes off right in Les' eyes.

LES

Shit!

Les is blinded. The car swerves, recklessly. Dean laughs, hysterically. Charles braces himself.

LES' P.O.V. - THE HIGHWAY AS JIMI HENDRIX WOULD SEE IT

A purple haze. An EXIT RAMP.

EXT. RAMP A SIGN SAYS "REDUCE SPEED TO TWENTY" - NIGHT

The car bombs uncontrollably down the ramp headed straight for a BUSY INTERSECTION. But just ahead, a HUGE PUDDLE, the one Les slept through in class, the one he got wrong on the exam.

He jams on the brakes!!!! What an idiot. Hitting the water, the Caddie SPINS OUT OF CONTROL, and slides through the intersection BACKWARDS, just narrowly missing traffic.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LES

whips the car back around. But it doesn't matter, the windshield's a blur, covered in water. A terrified Les feels for the windshield wipers. Got 'em. Instant vision:

TRUCK'S HEADLIGHTS - HEADED STRAIGHT FOR THEM

He SCREAMS, yanking the car left, across traffic, through a PLYWOOD FENCE, then off:

A VERY STEEP INCLINE

They're airborne. Dean howls like a cowboy.

THE CADDIE GLIDES THROUGH THE AIR

landing on a muddy hill, cushioning the fall. Temporary relief. Very temporary. Terrified faces, as the car races through high grass, and suddenly explodes into:

THE PARKING LOT OF A SHAKEY'S

slamming to a stop in a parking space, pulling in perfectly, next to an OLDER JAPANESE TOURIST COUPLE in a Dodge station wagon. They pull out as if nothing happened.

INSIDE THE CADDIE - ON LES

Inhaling and exhaling. Glad to be intact, he looks ahead, his hands locked to the steering wheel.

In the backseat, Mercedes, still out cold, is mashed on top of Dean. Her lips glisten, a millimeter away from his. Grinning, he stretches to meet Mercedes' lips. We SEE some sign of life in Mercedes. She's waking up. She doesn't look well.

Dean's lips are almost there. Stretching... almost... lips puckered...

MERCEDES
(ill sounding)
I have to throw up.

LES SPINS AROUND

LES
Open the door. Get her out!

DEAN
I can't. I'm trapped. Help me!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Mercedes moans. Les jumps out, rips open the back door.

LES
Not in the car, please.

Les tears a barely conscious Mercedes off Dean.

MERCEDES' P.O.V. - ROMEO

He holds her in his arms. She closes her eyes.

LES

practically drops her on the pavement, more worried about the car. Charles staggers out of the car, moving as if all his bones are broken. Dean bounces out.

DEAN
I apologize for everything, Bro.
That was definitely worth the price
of admission. In fact, that ride
made up for a whole life of
boredom.

Les surveys THE CAR. Other than the fact that it's covered in grime and dirt, it looks okay.

CHARLES
Where the hell are we?

Dean sees something across the street and walks towards it, mesmerized.

DEAN'S P.O.V. - "SICK SAM'S 24 HOUR RENT A CAR"

A slimy fourth rate organization. It sounds incredible, but up on a very steep ramp, high above the lot, lit with spotlights, under a sign that says, "ONLY \$180.00 A WEEK," is a:

1972 CADILLAC - AN EXACT REPLICA

of the one they're driving. Walking closer, it's the same color, same wheels, same everything. Shiny clean, like new. We hear a faint CHORUS OF ANGELS.

BACK AT THE CAR

Les is still rattled. Charles is better.

CHARLES
I think the muck saved the paint.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LES

We need a car wash, and then we're going home.

DEAN

(no sympathy)

Les, we're almost at Archie's. We can't turn back now.

LES

(dead serious)

We're getting the car washed, and then we're going home.

Mercedes, lying half dead on the ground, MOANS.

DEAN

I don't think you want her in your car, Les. I think she's about to blow.

CHARLES

(looking back)

He's right. It wouldn't hurt to get her a soda or something.

DEAN

Look, Les.

(pointing out a hose
coiled against a wall)

There's a hose right over here. While we hose the car down, Charles can go in here with Mercedes and get her something to drink.

LES

Charles?

CHARLES

(somewhat reluctant)

Sure.

Charles gathers up Mercedes and carries her in the side entrance.

MERCEDES

(a gonna')

You have such baby soft skin.

Charles blushes. Dean grabs Les by the arm, to walk him over to the sidewalk.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEAN

I want you to see something.
(motioning to the Caddie
on the ramp)
Look up there and tell me what's on
your mind.

LES

Death.

DEAN

Not you. The car. Does anything
strike you as odd?

LES

It's a Cadillac.

DEAN

Not only is it a Cadillac, but it's
this one's clone. Exactly the same
year, color, wheels, everything.

LES

So.

DEAN

I just want you to think about it.

LES

Dean.

DEAN

Fine. But just promise me you'll
think about it.

LES

Can we hose the car down, now?

They walk back to their Caddie.

INT. SHAKEY'S - NIGHT

Charles and Mercedes in a booth. Slumped over on the table,
Mercedes looks dead. A WAITRESS walking by, gives Charles a
disdainful look.

EXT. SHAKEY'S - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Hosed down, the car looks like new again. Les is relieved.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEAN

Have you been thinking about the car?

LES

What's this all about, Dean?

DEAN

Just listen to what I have to say and don't interrupt me until I'm through. Okay?

LES

Fine.

INT. SHAKEY'S - NIGHT

We hear Les' reaction echo through the restaurant.

LES

(o.s.)

ARE YOU OUT OF YOUR FUCKING MIND?!?!?

Everyone looks up.

OUTSIDE IN THE PARKING LOT

LES

(outraged)

I will not do that! I will not switch cars! You're a nut!

DEAN

(pleading)

You'll never get an opportunity like this again, as long as you live.

(beat)

We'll cruise up to Archie's without worrying about scratching the paint, dirtying the interior, or smashing the car. Look at the car, Les. Not a scratch.

(beat)

If you ask me, it's a sign from the Mr. Goodwrench in the sky.

LES

I don't believe in Mr. Goodwrench.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEAN

There's still time to convert.

EXT. OUTSIDE SICK SAM'S - NIGHT

Les and Dean stand below the Cadillac ramp. Les' eyes are getting wider.

DEAN

You worked real hard for that license you have in your wallet. You've had sixteen years of humiliation, begging for lifts from people who couldn't give a shit about your image. That wasn't easy. I know. You had to stand and watch as all the pretty girls in our grade drove away smiling in some older jerk's car, and grin and bear it when the girl of your dreams asked you what kind of car you drove. But that's all over now.

(beat)

That thing in your wallet is not just an ordinary piece of paper, Les. It's a license, an automobile license. But it's not even just an automobile license, it's a license to live. Did you hear me, Les? A license to live, to be free, to go wherever you want, whenever you want, with whoever you choose. That license in your pocket is the single most liberating document you'll come across in your whole life. I would die to have one.

Les looks ahead. I think he's sold.

DEAN

Les, to live in fear, is not to live at all.

LES

What about getting the car back?

DEAN

A breeze. If the attendant's awake, we use Charles as a decoy. He looks old enough.

EXT. OFFICE BOOTH - NIGHT

Tiny and sleazy. Les and Dean's reflection CAN BE SEEN in the window. A radio plays some easy listening music. An old-timer with a single strand of hair slicked back lounges in his chair, fast asleep. His name tag reads, SICK SAM. A REVOLVER sits in a half open desk drawer. Les and Dean don't see it.

The CADILLAC KEY is clearly marked, on the board above him. Opposite the board, there is a hole for people to talk through. Dean tries the door. It's locked. He looks at Les as if to say, "At least we tried." Les signals for him to wait a second.

EXT. GRANDPA'S CADILLAC - CLOSE ON THE TRUNK - NIGHT

as it lifts open. The blanket, and cooler, and the golf clubs. Les reaches into the golf bag and pulls out a BALL FETCHER.

EXT. THE OFFICE BOOTH - NIGHT

The ball fetcher extends through the hole, barely grasping the Cadillac key. As Les gently pulls it back, the keys fall and land on Sick Sam's shoulder. They sit there like bird shit.

Les maneuvers the ball fetcher like a fine surgeon, lifting the keys off Sick Sam's shoulder. He pulls them out. A big sigh. Dean reaches into the office and turns up the radio.

LES RUNS UP THE RAMP

and gets inside the car. The interior is so white, it's eerie. He slips the Caddie into neutral, and carefully rolls it down the ramp, backwards. Dean pushes him out of the lot.

INT. SHAKEY'S - NIGHT

A bored Charles, a couple of cokes, and Sleeping Beauty.

EXT. ROLLER COASTER RAMP - NIGHT

Grandfather's Cadillac rests on the ramp just as the other one did. Only this one has a front license plate that reads GRANDPA.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AT THE OFFICE BOOTH

Les switches the rental key with Grandpa's key, and then attaches it to the ball fetcher. He reinserts it in through the hole, and places it back up on the hook.

EXT. RENTAL CADDIE - NIGHT

Les and Dean, all smiles, quietly get into the Caddie. They drive across the street.

INT./EXT. SHAKEY'S - NIGHT

Leaving. Les carries a green Mercedes. Dean holds a steaming hot slice of pizza. A perplexed Charles carries the cokes.

EXT. CADILLAC - CLOSE ON THE TRUNK - NIGHT

It flips open.

LES

(o.s.)

I don't know if this is a good idea.

Les holds Mercedes. Charles and Dean remove the clubs and the cooler.

DEAN

What are you talking about? In a half hour there's gonna be babes all over us. She'll kill it for us.

As Les places her down in the trunk, she opens her eyes.

MERCEDES' P.O.V. - LES

Holding her. He smiles. Looks like Gene Kelly. He lays her down gently, and then covers her with the blanket. She may as well be in her own bed. She's in another world.

DEAN

In all your life, did you ever imagine you'd see a Mercedes fit in the trunk of a Cadillac?

LES

I feel bad.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEAN

For her? That trunk is bigger than
my bedroom.

Les gently lowers the trunk.

MERCEDES

(sweet)

Turn the light off, Daddy.

The trunk closes. The SCREEN BECOMES BLACK.

EXT. TWO LANE HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Factories, plants, warehouses... The Caddie speeds along.

INSIDE THE CADILLAC

Pepsi cups on the dash. ROCK on the RADIO. Les is a new man. Charles is very confused. Dean, wearing funky sunglasses and a corny golf visor, is stretched out in the backseat between the golf clubs and the cooler. He stuffs his face with pizza.

CHARLES

The radio works.

LES

I fixed it.

DEAN

Whoops, I just dropped some pizza
on the seat.

LES

Leave it, Deano. I'll get it
later.

CHARLES

What's going on? An hour ago you
were afraid one of us would fart in
here, and now you don't even flinch
when Dean drops tomato sauce on the
seats. Don't you care about what
happens to the car?

LES

(a la Dean)

Sure I care. But, there's
something special about tonight,
Charles...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LES (cont'd)
 about Mercedes, about the car
 surviving the spinout without even
 a scratch, about us, being in a
 car, alone, without any parents.

(beat)

Charles, we've been waiting for
 this night for sixteen years. If I
 have to worry about farts and
 tomato sauce now, when I'm twenty-
 five I'll be living in a room with
 rubber walls.

Dean leans over, CRANKS THE VOLUME UP, HOWLS with excitement.

DEAN

RELAX, CHARLES!!! THERE'S NOTHING
 TO WORRY ABOUT!!!

INT. SICK SAM'S OFFICE BOOTH - NIGHT

Sick Sam, snoring now, leaning way back in his chair,
 flinches and sends his chair tipping over backwards. He
 wakes up, startled.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mom, wide awake, finishes her herring and mayonnaise
 sandwich. Dad tries to sleep. Late night news is on TV. A
 FEMALE CORRESPONDENT stands in a CROWD OF PROTESTERS. They
 circle peacefully with placards, rhythmically chanting: "WE
 ARE ONE WITH THE INFINITE SUN, FOREVER AND EVER AND EVER..."

ANCHORWOMAN

I'm standing outside the gates of
 Allied Technologies, where a group
 of peaceful protesters have
 gathered to demonstrate against the
 late night transportation of
 military hardware through our city
 streets...

EXT. DEMONSTRATION - NIGHT

Outside the gates of ALLIED TECHNOLOGIES. Dozen of
 PROTESTERS hold hands and chant. Several POLICE CARS pull
 up. Police step out and disperse. Natalie looks on
 nervously. Karl chants.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATALIE

Karl, I don't have a good feeling about this. Can we go home?

KARL

Go home? Natascha, we can't be patsies to the military industrial complex. The survival of the planet is in our hands.

She isn't sold.

EXT. DESERTED TWO LANE HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The Cadillac zips by, on its way to:

ARCHIE'S ATOMIC BROILER

High tech fifties, it's more fantastic than Dean described. It's the most spectacular curb service hangout on the planet. Rock and Roll blasts through the sound system. Beautiful people dance, mingle, and lean up against their stylish, squeaky clean cars, sipping cokes and eating ice cream sundaes.

INT./EXT. CADILLAC - THE BOYS

pull to a stop on the lip of its entrance, their faces aglow, their mouths hang open. We HOLD AT A DISTANCE as the Caddie pulls into Archie's and parks beside a WHITE STUDEBAKER that's pulling out. They get out to order.

WITH THE BOYS - WALKING UP TO ORDER

Chrome glistens. You can see your reflection on every surface, it's more than immaculate. And the women... More than any man can handle, even Dean. Busty, curvaceous "TARTS" on roller skates, their hair flowing in the wind, whisk in between and around the cars.

Dean spots THREE SUGAR SWEET GIRLS staring at them.

DEAN

(to Les and Charles)
Order for me, I'll get dessert.

Dean veers off. The girls smile at him when they see him coming. Les and Charles get on line to order.

EXT. ARCHIE'S COUNTER - MOMENTS LATER

TWO TRAYS slide out, overflowing with golden french fries, juicy burgers, and bubbly cokes... a carbonated mist.

Charles and Les step away from the counter with their trays. They walk back to the Caddie and attach the trays to the windows. They get:

INTO THE CADDIE

Dean jumps in, all smiles.

DEAN

It's all set, they'll be here in a couple of minutes. One for each of us.

A BLACK CAR pulls in beside them, while Les passes out the fries and the cokes, placing his and Charles' on the dash.

CHARLES

I'll never doubt you again, Dean.

LES

My dreams never get this good.

DEAN

My fantasies never get this good.
And this is only the beginning.

As Charles reaches for the burgers, the SALT SHAKER goes flying. Dazed and starving, Charles swings open the door... CHINK as the door slams open against the car they're parked beside. They turn:

IT'S THE BLACK GTO

Charles stands there looking silly. The INSANE DRIVER and his TWO CRAZY FRIENDS, swigging on bottles of whiskey, get out of the GTO and surround Charles. He wilts back into the Caddie, slamming the door behind him. Some of the food falls off.

INSIDE THE CADDIE

Dean can't believe what's happened.

LES

Jesus. It's those maniacs from the party.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHARLES
 (panicking)
 Roll up the windows! Quick! Roll
 them up!

As the window zips up, Dean reaches for a burger, and just barely grasps one. The window closes on his hand and the burger.

DEAN
 Charles, you spasticated idiot.

The window zips down and up. Dean pulls his hand in and drops the burger. The burgers and sundaes are still on the trays. They watch like kittens as the three DROPOUTS inspect:

THE DAMAGE - CLOSE ON THE GTO DOOR

There's definitely A PAINT CHIP. Nothing major, but enough for three homicidal maniacs to slaughter three innocent kids over.

While the two buddies stare maniacally at Charles, the driver reaches into the car and pulls out the baddest looking TIRE IRON you've ever seen. He signals with his index finger for the boys to get out of the car.

INSIDE THE CADDIE

LES
 (starting the car)
 Oh my God.

DEAN
 What the hell are you doing, Les?
 You can't back away from these
 motherfuckers, they're just toying
 with you.

CHARLES
 Dean, those motherfuckers are
MOTHERFUCKERS. I wouldn't mess
 with them or anyone related to
 them.

The Driver, swinging the tire iron, jumps up on the front hood. At the same time the THREE SWEET GIRLS Dean picked up approach the Caddie. Dean ducks. Les pops the car into reverse and fishtails out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Driver holds on as long as he can. Then he goes flying off the hood. The food goes flying off the trays. The French fries and cokes on the dash jerk back on the seats.

The two crazy friends laugh as the Caddie retreats with the trays attached to the windows like toy wings. The Driver gets up, angrier than hell. The buddies shiver in their boots. The Driver jumps into the car. They're coming after Les.

INSIDE THE CADDIE

Les races away. Dean wants to cry. He turns. The girls stand confused. Archie's fades in the distance. Charles spots the dropouts getting into their car.

CHARLES

Shit! They're coming after us.

Les floors it. Cutting right across the path of a cop CAR pulling into the parking lot.

THE GTO DRIVER

revs his engine, then squeals back, without looking... SMASH. Direct hit into the CAR. They're not going anywhere. PUSH IN ON the GTO Driver. He looks back at the GTO's damage, then watches as the Cadillac speeds away, cutting down a side street. He wants blood. The driver of the smashed car looks at the damage on his car then at the GTO driver. Sparks.

EXT. DESERTED AREA OF TOWN - NIGHT

The Caddie bombs down the street like a terrified cat.

EXT. DESERTED INDUSTRIAL FACTORY AREA - NIGHT

Lost. The Caddie sits at a fork in the road. The light inside the car is on.

INT./EXT. CADDIE - NIGHT

Dean looks over the directions his brother gave him.

DEAN

Shoot me. Hang me. What can I say? The directions were for getting there, not for running away.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LES
 (tired of Dean's attitude)
 Well, it really doesn't matter at
 this point, does it? Which way
 should we go?

Left. DEAN Right. CHARLES

Les shakes his head.

We WATCH as the car veers to the right, and follow it as it
 goes down the street and stops at a corner.

INSIDE THE CADDIE

Les looks ahead, curiously.

LES' P.O.V. - A PROCESSION OF TOW TRUCKS

travel in front of him, from right to left. Each one tows a
 car: pickup trucks, Volkswagen Beetles, old tired-looking
 American cars, all with faded paint. And then a showroom AUDI
 5000 TURBO, just like Les' mom's.

LES
 (o.s.)
 That AUDI looks just like my
 mother's.

We HOLD ON it, then turn right, against the procession.
 Ahead, we SEE a CROWD OF PEOPLE, a TV CREW, and some POLICE
 CARS.

CHARLES
 (o.s.)
 What the hell is going on here?

EXT. DEMONSTRATION - NIGHT

The fervor grows in intensity. A sense of anticipation.

VOICES IN THE CROWD
 Here they come! Here they come!

COP
 (on a bullhorn)
 PLEASE DISPERSE THE AREA!
 PLEASE...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Karl and a frightened Natalie join hands with the others, all looking up the road.

THE CROWD'S P.O.V. - THE CADILLAC

leads a huge-convoy of:

MILITARY HALF TRACKS

Five of them. Massive. The length of two football fields. The hose from a Titan missile sticks out from a camouflaged tarp, almost extending over the Cadillac.

INSIDE THE CADDIE - WITH THE BOYS

Fear and confusion. Ahead, some ANGRY PROTESTERS lie on the road, blocking their way, while others run towards the Caddie.

EXT. DEMONSTRATION - NIGHT

The Caddie trudges along, as protesters swarm the car and convoy.

COP
(on a bullhorn)
PLEASE DISPERSE THE AREA,
IMMEDIATELY!

Karl, dragging Natalie, runs with the crowd.

INT./EXT. CADDIE - NIGHT

The car rocks. The guys hang on for their lives.

LES' P.O.V. - HANDS SLAPPING THE WINDOWS

Angry faces. One of them is Karl.

LES
I know that guy. He's my sister's
...

He sees his sister. She doesn't see him.

LES
(blown away)
Oh shit! My sister!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEAN

Where?

LES

Duck! If she sees us, I'm finished.

Natalie is beside Karl, as he bangs on the hood like a maniac.

Les peeks up. Karl's face is pressed against the driver's side window.

Natalie sees Les. He sees her. She's in shock. Les pleads through the glass, mouthing everything, making sure she'll understand.

LES

Please! I beg of you! Don't tell Daddy! I'll do anything! I promise!

Natalie tries to get Karl to stop. In the b.g. we SEE Les pleading, mouthing, "Please..."

NATALIE

Les! What are you doing?!!! You don't even have a...

INSIDE THE CADDIE

we SEE her mouth "license," but we don't hear it.

THE CADILLAC

inches by Natalie. She looks at Les in an almost envious manner, wishing she were there instead of here. We hear POLICE SIRENS.

INT. PARENTS' BEDROOM - ON THE TV

Live. Behind the reporter, the Cadillac crawls o.s.

REPORTER

As you can see behind me, what started as a peaceful protest, has now mushroomed into a substantial demonstration.

Mom and Dad sleep soundly.

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

The Cadillac speeds away from the demonstration.

INSIDE THE CADILLAC

LES

(panicked)

You don't know my sister, Dean.
She's been waiting for this moment
her entire life. When I was seven,
she woke my parents out of a deep
sleep to tell them I said the word
'fuck.' I've gotta get home.

DEAN

How is getting home going to change
anything? She saw you.

(beat)

Does an escaped convict turn
himself in when he knows he's going
to be executed?

LES

If his mother is pregnant and
expecting any minute? YES! There
are no cars at home. My dad will
reinvent the guillotine if he finds
out.

EXT. DEMONSTRATION - NIGHT

Cops arrest protesters left and right. Karl drags Natalie in
front of the Half Tracks. He pulls her down to the road,
joining others to block the convoy.

KARL

(lying down)

Natascha, can we please forget the
Cadillac and your brother? There
are far more significant issues in
this world.

NATALIE

(sitting up)

I don't consider my family an
insignificant issue. I've gotta
get home.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATALIE (cont'd)
 With my mother pregnant, there's no possible way my father will let him out with the second car.

Suddenly, COPS grab Karl and a shocked Natalie, and yank them o.s.

INT. PARENTS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

The news coverage continues. Dad, half asleep, blindly aims the remote control, trying to turn the TV off. He doesn't notice Karl and a frightened Natalie being led into a PADDY WAGON. The TV CLICKS off.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

The Caddie coasts along. Up ahead...

AN OFFICER

waves cars over randomly with his flashlight. He signals the Caddie. It's a DRUNK DRIVING ROADBLOCK.

INSIDE THE CADDIE

Les is white. They pull in behind a CAR with its TRUNK FLIPPED OPEN. While the PLASTERED DRIVER leans up against the car, A COP examines his license under a flashlight.

LES
 This is great. This is really classic.

DEAN
 What are you sweating for Les? A license is like a credit card. Sooner or later, you gotta break 'em in.

Les is stung. A HUGE COP walks to the car, shines his flashlight in Les' eyes, leans in, and inhales deeply. The cop pauses... All of a sudden, we hear a HICCUP. The boys look at each other. It's Mercedes. The cop holds his look. More hiccups. Dean and Charles pretend it's them.

HUGE COP
 (suspicious)
 License and registration.

Les doesn't move.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HUGE COP
License and registration, son.

CHARLES
What's the matter, Les? Give it to him.

LES
(shaking)
I left my license at home, Sir.

Charles and Dean look on in disbelief.

HUGE COP
Then give me the registration and a piece of I.D.

Pulling out his wallet, he hands the cop a SCHOOL I.D. CARD.

LES
This is all I have, Sir. I'm afraid the registration is with my license.

HUGE COP
Alright. Sit tight.

The cop jots down the Caddie's license plate number and then returns to his car, where he picks up the radio mouthpiece.

CHARLES
Why didn't you give him your license, Les? What was that you flashed in front of us before?

LES
My school I.D.

DEAN
How could you forget your license your first night out?

Les can't hide it any longer...

LES
I didn't.
(cleansing himself)
I failed my exam.

CHARLES AND DEAN
You what?!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LES
I failed. I got six wrong.

DEAN
You mean to tell me you've been driving around all night without a license?

Les nods. Dean laughs like a mad man.

CHARLES
At least you did one smart thing tonight. You stole the car from a family member. They're less likely to press charges.

Les and Dean look at each other. Charles knows something's up.

CHARLES
What's going on?

INT. COP CAR - NIGHT

Two cops. The huge cop holds Les' I.D.

HUGE COP
Jesus Christ! This punk doesn't even have a license!

The RADIO chatters: Something big is going on.

RADIO
We have a full emergency situation at Allied Tech. A possible four-fifteen, riot group... Stand by for instructions.

INT. CADILLAC - NIGHT

CHARLES
(raging)
You traded cars? You traded cars? Are you guys lunatics? People go to prison for lesser crimes. We have a future ahead of us... transcripts, applications, resumes. This'll go on our records. We're scarred for life.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LES
 Nobody's going to jail, Charles.
 We're juveniles.

CHARLES
 Speak for yourselves.

DEAN
 Charles? Will you take a pill, or
 something. Nothing's gonna happen.

CUT TO:

EXT. CADILLAC - NIGHT

The boys, SPREAD-EAGLED against the car. They're being frisked. Charles gives Dean a look.

HUGE COP
 (to Les)
 Would you mind opening the trunk
 for me?

The boys swallow at the same time. Les takes the key from the ignition, and walks slowly, very slowly, to the trunk.

LES' HAND

shakes as he tries to fit the key in the key hole.

INSIDE THE COP CAR

The radio is loud and clear.

RADIO
 Emergency fifty-four zero five!!!
 Fifty-four zero five! Maximum
 assistance is required.

BACK AT THE CADILLAC TRUNK

Les slips the key in. He's about to turn it... Suddenly, we hear a VERY LOUD SIREN. They look up.

THE COP

leaps from his car, siren wailing, screaming and motioning for his partner.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COP

Let's go! Fifty-four zero five in progress!!!

The huge cop takes off. As the cop car speeds away, Les doesn't know whether to smile or to cry.

DEAN

Piece of cake, Les. Let's go get the car.

INT. SICK SAM'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Sam tidies up. He pulls out the REVOLVER, checks it, and puts it in his shoulder holster. He then takes the CASH from the register and puts it in a CASH BOX. Humming a happy tune, he reaches along the wall to click a switch. He looks at the lot's sign:

SAM'S P.O.V. - SICK SAM'S 24 HOUR RENT-A-CAR

The lights behind "24 HOUR" go off. It now reads: "Sick Sam's Rent a Car."

INT. CADILLAC - NIGHT

Les is parked down the street from the car lot. They can just see the "Grandpa" Caddie up on its "throne."

LES

Now remember, Charles, make it sound like you've got a lot of money to spend, but insist on a test drive. Without one, you're not interested. Can you handle that?

CHARLES

(nervous)

Do I have a choice?

They both look at him.

LES

Whenever you're ready.

Charles hesitates, then gets out of the car. But before he can take two steps, he stops dead in his tracks. In plain sight THE CADILLAC IS BEING BACKED DOWN THE RAMP. Les squeaks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LES
I am dead. I am so dead, they're
gonna have to bury me twice.

INSIDE GRANDPA'S CADDIE

rolling down the ramp. The cash box sits beside Sick Sam.

INT. CADILLAC - NIGHT

Silence. They watch the Cadillac squeal out of the lot.

CHARLES
Now what?

LES
(jamming the car in gear)
We don't have any choice. We
follow him.

CHARLES
How do you know where he's going
and when he'll stop?

LES
He's got to live somewhere around
here.

EXT. DESERTED HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Les travels a few car lengths behind Sam.

INSIDE LES' CADDIE

6.1 on the nerve scale. The GAS RESERVE LIGHT flashes.
They're running out of gas.

CHARLES
(whimpering)
Why couldn't've you have stolen a
Honda or a diesel Rabbit, something
with better highway mileage?

DEAN
Charles, I know it's uncomfortable
sitting in wet diapers, but can you
just quit crying for a minute?
(back to business)
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEAN (cont'd)
 Les, I'd say at the most, you have
 thirty miles in the reserve tank,
 at the least, you have ten.

LES ZEROES OUT THE TRIP MILEAGE RECORDER

INT. SAM'S CADDIE - NIGHT

Sam fiddles with the radio. Sinatra:

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Sam passing through a burnt-out slum neighborhood, signals to
 turn off. Les follows:

EXT. BOMBED OUT NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Deserted streets. A ghost town. Scarier and scarier. You
 wouldn't want to run out of gas here, even in an armored car.

INSIDE LES' CADDIE

The mileage recorder reads twelve. Les follows a block
 behind.

LES' P.O.V. - SICK SAM

cuts down a NARROW ALLEY. Les waits a moment, then follows,
 turning off his lights.

EXT. DARK ALLEY - NIGHT

Sam drives very slowly. At the end of the alley, we SEE a
 NEON BAR SIGN flickering. Sam drives out of the alley and
 parks in front of the bar.

INSIDE LES' CADDIE

Les coasts to the lip of the alley and puts the car in park.

DEAN
 I've heard of being hard up for a
 drink, but this is ridiculous.

CHARLES
 I don't think I'd want to go in
 there.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LES
I don't think the Terminator would
want to go in there.

INSIDE SAM'S CADDIE

Sam places the cash box on the floor of the passenger side,
under the dash. He gets out and lumbers into the bar.

INSIDE THE CADILLAC

Dean leans in between Les and Charles. They're strategizing.

LES
(to Dean)
As soon as you see me turn the
lights on, pull in behind me. And
leave his key in the ignition.
It's the least we can do.

CHARLES
What about the hide-a-key? What
happens if it's not there?

LES
It better be there.
(beat)
Are you ready?

DEAN
Les, I was born ready.

Les gets out of the car, sprints down the alley and across
the street. Dean jumps over into the driver's seat.

EXT. BAR - NIGHT

Les, down on his hands and knees, feels under the back bumper
of Grandpa's Caddie... Nothing! He runs to the front bumper.
We hear the familiar sound of a REVVED ENGINE. And then we
hear "DUM, DUM, DaDUM... DUM, DaDUM, DaDUM, DaDUM."

Les lays down as flat as possible, rolling beneath the
Caddie.

LES' P.O.V. - FRONT UNDERNEATH THE CAR

The tires of the GTO approach just as Les spots the HIDE-A-
KEY BOX. He opens it up. The key sparkles.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

INSIDE THE CADDIE - CHARLES AND DEAN

watch as the black GTO, scratched and dented from their duel, pulls up behind the Caddie.

DEAN

Holy shit!

INSIDE THE GTO

Revenge. You can smell it.

DRIVER

Hey, that's the Caddie that fucked us up. Let's thrash it, man.

They open their doors.

LES' P.O.V. - BOOTS WALK TOWARDS HIM

Cowboy boots, construction boots, the tip of a TIRE IRON, and a SLEDGEHAMMER. All of a sudden he hears the shattering of glass.

ONE OF THE DROPOUTS

kicks in the headlights with his cowboy boot. The driver pounds the bumper with a sledgehammer. The third guy hacks off the side mirrors, hubcaps, and the windshield wipers with a tire iron.

LES

cringes with each blow. He can't take it any more. With a burst of confidence he pops up from beneath the Caddie.

Shocked, the dropouts stop their destruction. Les checks out the damage. Takes charge.

LES

Hey. Hey! What the hell do you think you're doing, man?

(motioning to the driver
holding the sledgehammer)

Gimme that.

The driver doesn't move. He's too stunned.

LES

Come on! What are you, attached to it? Gimme it!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LES (cont'd)
 (grabbing it out of the
 driver's hand)
 You think you geniuses know how to
 wreck a car? I'll show you turkeys
 how to fuck one up.

Les grabs the sledgehammer and as convincingly as possible winds up, rolls his eyes, looks for help from God, and smashes the front bumper. To everyone's surprise the bumper falls off, crashing to the ground. Les can't believe it.

LES
 That's how you fuck one up.
 (pointing to the dislodged
 side mirror)
 None if this pansy side mirror
 shit. My grandmother could knock
 that off with a walking stick.
 (throwing the sledgehammer
 back to the driver)
 Here's your Teddy Bear back.

The dropouts are blown away by Les' performance.

INSIDE THE CADDIE

Charles and Dean watch, unbelieving, as the dropouts start to close in on Les. Les shuffles backwards, toward the bar.

DEAN
 We gotta do something.

OUTSIDE THE BAR

Les continues his act. They're looking meaner.

LES
 Now, I'm gonna walk inside this
 shit hole, plant my bad ass down at
 the bar, and get messed up. And
 when I walk outta here in about
 twenty minutes you candy-assed
 faggots better not be playing with
 my ride.
 (pointing to the GTO)
 Otherwise I'm gonna have to show
 you dudes how a one-man wrecking
 crew acts when he feels like
 throwing a party.

Les turns, walks away, checking over his shoulder to see their reaction. They don't buy it. They follow him in.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BACK AT THE CADDIE

Dean and Charles slip out of the Cadillac.

LES WALKS INTO THE BAR

He just went from the frying pan into the fire.

LES' P.O.V. - AS HE KICKS OPEN THE DOORS TO THE BAR

This is where death hangs out. Everything stops. The music, the "patrons", even the rats. They all stare. There's not a guy in the bar that hasn't belted his girlfriend in the last twenty-four hours. Sick Sam sits in the back corner with DOG WOMAN.

LES

walks to the bar, like the town's new sheriff. The floorboards creak beneath his white Reeboks. The dropouts stay back, cautiously. Les may as well be tarred and feathered.

TWO BEASTS with their "DEBUTANTE" GIRLFRIENDS make room for Les at the bar. THE BARTENDER, a cross between Ivan the Terrible and Ivan the Worst, leans over; nose to nose with Les.

BARTENDER

(rough sadistic voice)

We just ran out of Kool-Aid.

Les chuckles, confidently, trying not to look intimidated.

LES

(dead serious)

Bourbon. Straight up.

Les turns around to look at all his dead relatives. Nobody in the bar has flinched or said a word. We SEE Dean and Charles looking in from outside. Les turns back to the bar. The SHOT GLASS is there, overflowing with bourbon.

This is a kid who's never had a drink in his life. He picks it up, checks it against the light, then downs it... It may as well have been Drano. He can't swallow... He SPITS IT OUT across the bar, trying to look macho. Before there can be any reactions from the peanut gallery...

He leans over, an inch from the Bartender.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LES
 (imitating the Bartender's
 voice)
 I thought you said you ran out of
 Kool-Aid.

The Bartender's confused. Everyone's confused. What's up?

LES
 How 'bout something with a little
 body... something with some heat on
 it.

Challenged, the Bartender reaches under the bar, and pulls up a three quarter's full bottle of the Devil's mouth wash. There's no label on it, only a FIVE-INCH WORM rests on the bottom. The Bartender pours him a glass. Everyone gathers around him, the dropouts as well.

Beads of sweat dot Les' forehead. Sixteen years, all coming down to this moment. Coolly, he pushes the glass aside. CONFUSION. He grabs the bottle. The crowd GASPS! Oddly, he pours the alcohol into his hand, through his fingers. It spills onto the bar, until he's left holding THE WORM in the palm of his hand.

He takes the worm between his thumb and index finger, tilts his head back, and in one motion drops it into his mouth and swallows. INSTANT RESPECT. A ROAR OF APPROVAL. Within seconds the music is back on and the place returns to "normal."

Proudly, Les spins to look out at all his new friends, only to see the DROPOUTS menacingly surround him.

THE DRIVER
 Step outside, worm, we've got a job
 to finish.

Les looks around for help. Forget it. In a joint like this you have to do more than swallow a worm. He grabs THE BEAST'S beer from the bar behind him.

LES
 (shoving The Driver)
 Back off, man. Don't crowd me.

DRIVER
 (stepping towards him to
 kill him)
 Why you...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

But before the driver can do anything, Les whips the beer over his own shoulder, drenching the Beast behind him. And then he tosses the empty glass at the driver, who, of course, catches it. Les steps aside. The Beast whirls around... and who does he see holding the glass? The driver with his two buddies on either side of him.

The Beast winds up and nails the driver, sending the three dropouts flying onto a table full of beers. As a MACK TRUCK at the table is about to hit one of the dropouts, A DEVILISH BAR GUY POPS UP IN FRONT OF THE CAMERA, screaming:

BAR GUY
 (excited -- a la John
 Belushi in "Animal
 House")
 BAR FIGHHHHHT!!!!

From out of nowhere, the biggest fist you've ever seen punches through the Bar Guy like a drill press. KNOCK OUT!!!

Suddenly WW III erupts. Les, dodging heavy artillery, heads for the exit.

OUTSIDE THE BAR

Charles and Dean run back to the Caddie. Les jumps into Grandpa's Caddie, starts her up, and takes off.

Dean and Charles shoot into the vacant parking space in Sam's Caddie. They bail out with the golf clubs and cooler.

INSIDE THE BAR

Sam nonchalantly weaves his way through the fight. He approaches the CIGARETTE MACHINE by the front window. Checking his change, he hears a SCREECH outside the bar. He looks out.

SAM'S P.O.V. - HIS SHINY CADILLAC

As if nothing happened.

INT. GRANDPA'S CADILLAC - BACK WITH LES AND THE BOYS

Bombing down the street. Jubilation. Laughter. Dean, now in the front seat, has discovered the cash box.

Suddenly, Les HITS THE BRAKES. A FORTY FOOT SKID! Les is white as a ghost.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEAN

What?

LES

(shifts into reverse)

Mercedes.

CHARLES AND DEAN

Ohhhhhh shittttt!!!!

LES TURNS AROUND - LOOKING BACK AT A BAD DREAM

Sam's Cadillac is a few blocks away. He steps on it, squealing backwards, until he's right beside it.

DEAN AND LES JUMP OUT

Dean reaches into Sam's Caddie, grabs the key, and opens the trunk. Les pulls Mercedes out. Dean puts the key back. Charles throws the cash box into Sam's backseat.

MERCEDES' P.O.V. - LES - AS SHE OPENS HER EYES

Cradling her again. Gary Cooper smiles. She wraps her arms around him, cuddling, and closes her eyes.

Les throws her into the backseat.

INSIDE THE BAR

Sam turns away from the Bartender with the proper change. Through the window, he sees his open trunk. HE SEES LES getting into the Caddie. AND:

LES SEES HIM!!!

Les' biggest nightmare. He dives into the car and bullets away.

INSIDE LES' CADDIE

Howls. Hoots. They've never been so happy and relieved.

SAM

flies out of the bar, GUN DRAWN. Aiming at the Caddie racing away, he cocks his gun...

INSIDE THE CADDIE

More howls and hoots. There's joy in Mudville.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHARLES

We did it! Man, we did it!

DEAN

Awesome, Les. That was hall of
fame material.

BOOM!!! A GUN SHOT blows out the back window. Les looks up in his mirror, and sees Sam standing back in the distance. Les makes a quick left...

EXT. STREETS - NIGHT

Sweeping through the turn, Les clips his back end against a pile of garbage cans and a lamp post. His BACK BUMPER GOES FLYING.

EXT./INT. SAM'S CADDIE

Sam, getting into his shiny Caddie, notices the cash box. He relaxes. There's no reason to chase the boys.

INSIDE LES' CADDIE

Mercedes begins to come around. She opens her eyes and speaks.

MERCEDES' P.O.V. - LES' SMILE

as he drives with intensity

MERCEDES

(o.s.; feeling the
effects)

I'm sorry. I must have dozed off.

Dean leans over, two inches from her face.

DEAN

You didn't miss a thing.

She closes her eyes. They laugh like hyenas.

INT. PARENT'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mom lying on top of the covers, WINCES AND GRABS FOR HER STOMACH. She lets the contraction subside. She turns on the light, looks at her watch, then looks over at sleeping Dad.

INT. JAIL HOLDING CELL - NIGHT

Natalie sirs alone, concerned. Karl chants with a group of protesters. An AGED HIPPIE sings, "Where Have All The Flowers Gone?"

EXT. DEAN'S HOUSE - DAWN

Charles and Dean slip out of the car. Charles gently closes the door.

Les looks at a sleeping Mercedes. Dean and Charles look in. They whisper to each other.

DEAN

License or no license, Mario, that was one intense display of driving.

CHARLES

You could be the only sixteen-year-old in the country to open a stunt driving school without a license.

Les smiles.

DEAN

And as far as a first night out with a car goes, you've set the standard. It's gonna be a tough one to top.

LES

Thank God you don't get your license for a few months.

DEAN

What are you gonna tell Sleeping Beauty?

LES

I don't know. I may not...

Mercedes groans, moves around. Les signals silence. The boys freeze. They wave good-byes. Les pulls away.

INT. PARENTS' BEDROOM - DAWN

The light is still on. Mom winces and grabs her stomach again. She checks her watch. Another wince. Dad sleeps.

EXT. MERCEDES' HOUSE - DAWN

Signs of the sun. Les carries Mercedes to her front door. She groggily relates her perception of the evening to Les.

MERCEDES

The dream was so bizarre, Les. As if I was trapped inside the trunk of a car. And then suddenly the trunk flipped open and there you were, rescuing me. It was so weird.

LES

It sounds kinda crazy.

MERCEDES

It was, I know it sounds unbelievable. But somehow you were always there, Les, to hold me, like you are right now. I felt so safe and...

(touching his cheek)

...so warm.

Les, too in love to speak, stands her up on her doorstep.

MERCEDES

I'm sorry I was such a sleepyhead tonight.

(embarrassed)

You must have been so bored.

LES

Don't be silly. For me it was non-stop action.

Charmed, she moves closer to him.

MERCEDES

When can we go out again?

LES

Right now would be great, actually.

She laughs.

LES

Honestly? Tonight may be the last time anyone sees me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MERCEDES
(concerned)
Why? What happened?

LES
It's a long complicated story. I'm
not sure you'd want to hear it,
Mercedes.

MERCEDES
Does it have a happy ending?

LES
(smiling)
It has, so far.

She smiles at his allusive compliment and moves even closer.

LES
Hopefully one day I'll get to tell
you how it ends... if I live.

MERCEDES
Well, I'll be waiting, Les.

She loves him. He loves her. She gives him the softest
sweetest kiss a kid going to the electric chair would ever
want. He returns the favor with the most passionate kiss
she'd ever want... the kind you break out of prison for.

INT. PARENTS' BEDROOM - DAWN

Lights on. Mom breathes heavily.

MOM
Richard.

Dad grunts. She pushes him.

MOM
Richard, wake up. This is it.

EXT. STREET CORNER - DAWN

Les, on a deserted corner, waits for the light to turn green.

INT. BEDROOM - DAWN

Dad, half-dressed, ties Mom's shoes up. She winces.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAD
The baby?

MOM
No. The laces are too tight.

EXT. STOPLIGHT - DAWN

Still waiting for the light. Waiting, waiting, it's green.

INT. ANDERSON HOUSE - DAWN

Dad, shirt hanging out, helps Mom out of the room.

EXT. ANDERSON GARAGE - DAWN

Les approaches the house.

INT. ANDERSON STAIRWAY - DAWN

Dad helps Mom down the stairs.

DAD
Relax. Just try and breathe
naturally. We'll be in the car in
two seconds.

INT. GARAGE - DAWN

Sorry, Dad, no car in sight. The garage door inches open.

INT. HOUSE - DAWN

Dad helps Mom along, TWO STEPS AWAY FROM THE GARAGE. She looks better. He's the crazy one.

DAD
One more second, we're almost
there.

He swings the garage door open, without looking inside. Behind him, it's empty. He's about to swing her around, BUT...

MOM
I'm okay.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAD

What do you mean, you're okay?

MOM

It must have been gas. False alarm. I feel fine now. I'm sorry.

As Dad talks, we SEE the Cadillac coast in behind him.

DAD

Gas? Are you sure? The car's right here.

Dad glances into the garage.

MOM

I'm positive. It must have been the herring.
(feeling guilty)
I feel terrible.

Dad, about to close the door, notices something.

MOM

What's the matter?

INSIDE THE GARAGE

Even with the emergence of daylight, it's still too dark to notice the condition of the Caddie.

DAD

Why is the garage door open?

MOM

Maybe Natalie left it open?

DAD

Why would she? She took the Audi.

DAD'S P.O.V. - OUTSIDE THE FRONT OF THE HOUSE

He sees the Audi is not back. Then he notices the hedges... Looking around, he spots the tire tracks. Shock.

MOM

stands at the lip of the garage, watches. Suddenly... she doubles over in pain.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MOM
(gasping)
Richard.

Forget it. He's in a trance.

MOM
Richard!

Dad turns and sees her hunched over. He runs to her aid.

DAD
(walking her to the car)
Okay, honey. Just try and breathe normally. We'll be at the hospital in a few...

Everything stops; his feet, his voice, his heart... As he walks around the car we can hear his blood boiling.

The bumpers. The hubcaps. THE BACK WINDOW! Dad puts his hand through it, unbelieving. He examines the severed antenna, the mutilated wipers, then looks into the car.

DAD'S P.O.V. - LES LYING ON THE FLOOR

hiding, looking him straight in the eye. A frightened puppy.

DAD

Ready to explode. Les slithers out the opposite door, away from Dad, beside Mom.

DAD
Is there something wrong with your bed, Les?

Les can't speak. Dad walks around the car. Les goes the other way. They circle. Mom stands in between them, leaning against the car. She doesn't look well, but there's no stopping Dad.

DAD
Would you mind explaining to me what size shark was responsible for this?

LES
I... ah...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAD

Les, I don't want to know. I don't want to know. Save it for the judge.

(beat)

Do you have any notion of what you've done this evening? What this means to your future in this house and on this planet?

Dad stops. They're still on opposite sides. Rudy appears at the garage door to the house, wearing his pajamas.

LES

I have a feeling.

DAD

Les, you couldn't even begin to imagine what's in store for you. We had a college fund set aside for you.

(glancing at the Caddie)

That's gone. You had free room and board, two trusting parents, and a social life. That's gone. You had a TV, a stereo, a baseball glove, a tennis racket, a skateboard, a bicycle. That's all gone. You even had sunlight and a window in your room. That's history. I'm boarding the window up tomorrow. And communication with the outside world? You can forget about that. It's all gone.

MOM

(weak)

Richard.

DAD

Frankly, Les, I don't see what's left... other than school and two bus rides a day.

MOM

(stronger)

Richard.

DAD

And don't even think about a license.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LES

Never?

DAD

Les, as long as I'm alive and you and I share the same last name... you will never, not ever, sit behind a steering wheel. The only time you'll get close to one will be on a bus and in your dreams.

(beat)

All I can say, buddy boy, is that you are damn lucky your mother didn't go into labor tonight!

MOM

(hunching over the car)

Richard! I am in labor!

DAD

(running to her)

Are you sure?

MOM

Yes. My water just broke.

Dad comforts Mom. Loads her into the backseat. She is in great pain. Dad tries to close the door. Mom grabs it.

MOM

Stay here. I want you to be with me.

DAD

In the backseat? Who's gonna drive?

MOM

Les can.

DAD

(shocked)

Les? Les who? Not this Les. No way. Les is staying here. Rudy, get back with your Mom.

MOM

Richard, please! It's been nine months. That's long enough. Now let's go.

Dad looks at Mom, then Les. Eye to eye to eye to eye...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LES

(from the heart)

I know I let you down, Dad. And I'm as sorry as I can ever be that I disappointed you, but as hard as you try, you can't imagine what I've learned tonight.

(beat)

Please let me drive, Dad. I can do it.

Dad thinks about it... He hands Les the keys, gripping his hand tight.

DAD

(right up to his face)

All right, but try and drive like you have a license.

Dad lets go of Les' hand and jumps in the back with Mom. Rudy rides shotgun. Les buckles in.

THE MANGLED CADDIE

backs out of the garage, stops on the street, then squeals away.

INSIDE THE CADDIE

Mom is in pain. Dad holds her. Les grins.

INT. ANDERSON HOUSE - DAY

The phone RINGS AND RINGS...

INT. POLICE PHONE BOOTH - DAY

Natalie, on the phone. Curious, she hangs up. Karl stands beside her, full of life. He doesn't care about her problems.

KARL

Don't you feel invigorated? This is just the beginning. There are many wars still to wage. You and I, Natascha. Together we will bring the running dog imperialists to their knees.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATALIE
 (blunter than blunt)
 Screw off, Karl! And by the way,
 the name is Natalie, not Natascha!

She walks away, leaving a stunned, and at last, speechless Karl.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Full speed ahead. NOT A SINGLE CAR IN SIGHT. The light turns yellow, then a quick red. The Caddie's wheels lock. A lonnnnnng skid. Burnt rubber, as it screeches to a stop.

INSIDE THE CADDIE

Rudy, Mom, and Dad, REBOUND from the sudden stop.

DAD
 (pissed off)
 Les? What the hell are you doing?
 There's not a damn car in sight.

LES
 It's a red light.

DAD
 Les. We're rushing your mother to
 the hospital, not a bridge game.
 Go through it! Just get us there.

Les smiles, looks both ways, then tries to take off... Only one problem: the engine is revving, but the Caddie's not moving.

DAD
 What happened?

LES
 I don't know. I'm pressing on the
 gas, but it won't go anywhere.

DAD
 It sounds like the transmission.
 (frustrated)
 Try the other gears.

Les tries them all. Nothing. Shifting into park, the car JOLTS BACKWARDS as he passes REVERSE.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LES
 (looking at Dad)
 Only reverse works.

Dad doesn't like it. Mom is in more pain. She winces and groans. Dad feels for her.

DAD
 Alright, alright. But take it
 easy.

Les loves it. He shifts into reverse, turns to look through the back window, braces his arm behind the seat, and takes off.

OUTSIDE THE CADDIE

Popeye Doyle screeches the car around and peels away.

EXT. STREETS - DAY

The Caddie, in reverse, bombs down the street, its right turn signal on. In the left lane is a long WEDDING PROCESSION.

INSIDE THE CADDIE

Mom is in great pain. Les has to make the turn. He zips up to the front of the line, then makes a sweeping left turn from the middle lane, and because an OLD BLIND WOMAN is shuffling across the street, Les is forced to go up on:

THE SIDEWALK

Boxed in by parked cars, the Caddie bombs through Sunday papers and Sunday morning brunch tables. A WAITER putting a RED tablecloth down on a table dives out of the way, like a Matador teasing a bull. The Caddie flies through the tablecloth.

A MOTORCYCLE COP ACROSS THE STREET

writing out a parking ticket, drops his pencil when he sees the Caddie crash down off the sidewalk onto the street joining the traffic. The Cop jumps on his motorcycle, switches on his siren, and rockets away.

WITH THE CADDIE

weaving in and out of traffic: left turns, right turns, it's incredible. We hear the SIREN. The Cop pulls up beside Les, waving for him to pull over.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dad tries to signal to the Cop that Mom's pregnant. The Cop realizes what's going on. He waves for Les to "follow him," but he hasn't been looking ahead. Suddenly, his front tire hits the back bumper of an ANTIQUE CONVERTIBLE. The Cop somersaults over his handle bars into the car's front seat.

The DRIVER, a red-nosed Irishman, does a double-take, takes a look at the flask he's been nipping on, smiles, and takes another swig.

BACK WITH THE CADDIE

bulleting down the street. The hospital is in sight. Les has to catch a yellow light. A WATER MAIN has burst. There's a HUGE PUDDLE. IN REVERSE, Les rockets through the light. Here comes the puddle... Has he learned his lesson?

INSIDE THE CADDIE

Les eases his foot off the brake and coasts through. Spray shoots out on either side, and SPLASHES through the back window, soaking Mom and Dad. Rudy loves it. Dad alternates between caring for Mom and fearing for his life.

EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Down the street from the hospital. Natalie leaves the precinct. She does a triple-take when she sees her family flash by backwards. She runs after them.

SUDDENLY!!!

A HUGE TRUCK backs out of a SKYSCRAPER CONSTRUCTION SITE. A TOWERING CRANE attempts to lift a HEAVY LOAD OF STEEL GIRDERS from the truck's flatbed. The girders hang out onto the street...

The Caddie's headed straight for them. We hear a SCREECH!

EXT. CADILLAC - CLOSE ON THEIR FACES IN THE BACK WINDOW

Horror, as there's nothing they can do, except pray... ten feet, five feet, a foot... Les swoops the car safely around the girders and then screeches to a stop in a tow zone, in front of the hospital. The emergency driveway is clogged. Natalie runs to the car.

TWO ORDERLIES dash out to the car with a WHEELCHAIR. Dad helps Mom out. Rudy and Natalie watch. Les stays in the car. They rush Mom up the walk into the hospital. Dad looks back. Les is standing by the destroyed Caddie, ashamed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAD
(stern)
Come here, Les.

Les looks down.

DAD
Les. Come here!

Les sheepishly makes his way over. Dad puts his arm around him.

DAD
Where did you learn to drive like that?

LES
(relieved)
I don't know, Dad. I guess last night.

DAD
It must have been some crash course.

Les laughs. Dad squeezes him, affectionately. The CAMERA CRANES UP TO a bird's-eye view, high above the scene. Dad, with his arm around his son, disappears into the hospital.

DAD
(voice over)
Maybe we can fix the car before Grandfather gets home. He'll never notice.

Suddenly, CONSTRUCTION WORKERS begin shouting, and then running for cover, scattering like ants. From the sky:

THE WHOLE BUNCH OF GIRDERS

CRASH down on Grandfather's Cadillac, DEMOLISHING it.

As the dust settles, the CAMERA CRAWLS its way into the heap of junk until we CAN BARELY MAKE OUT the radio-tape deck. We hear a click-click. The tape starts to play... Sinatra "That's Life..."

FADE OUT

THE END