

November 20, 1989

DAYS OF THUNDER

by

Robert Towne

First Draft

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#2-0

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Hollywood, CA 90038

FADE IN: A SERIES OF BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOGRAPHS

1

starting with a thirty-four Ford. The copper stills in mountain mists; lean and hungry men and boys loading Mason Jars and gallon tin drums of liquor into cars in cowpastures; the cars speeding up, down and around the mountains, pursued by relentless revenuers.

LONE VOICE

(singing)

Let me tell the story
I can tell it all
About the mountain boy who ran
illegal alcohol.

Daddy made the whiskey
Son, he drove the load
And when his engine roared
They called the highway Thunder Road.

Silence. Only the photo of the '34 Ford remains.
A crawl:

'Wherever they drove they discovered
the automobile did more than help them
make a living. It gave them a reason
to live.'

FADE: The silence is SHATTERED by the sound of rolling thunder, rolling and growing, growing until it's an earsplitting, toothrattling, earthquaking all engulfing wave of thunder times forty:

EXT DAYTONA SPEEDWAY (DAY)

2

Forty stock cars in a blaze of sound and color have started their engines. Begin CREDITS. The engines' roar gives way to a throbbing score and CAMERA races through the riot and pageantry of the Daytona 500. Green, black, red, yellow, white and checkered - all the flags that rule the thunder wave past, the gold of Miller High Life, the bullseye-day-glo-orange of Tide, the black bandit of Goodwrench, these cars fly past, the snaky pit lizards with their pick-me-up-and-fuck-me boots, the cooler carrying good old boys totin' more beer and more pussy and more babies, the pit crews immaculately uniformed in Folger's Red and Quaker State green, the drivers sliding into uniforms and cars, their dashboards with XEREX-VALVOLINE-COORS crests, each driver a King in his commercial fiefdom, about to risk it all in roaring battle, the wives holding their babies, anxiously watching, spotters on the phones, ESPN crews going crazy before a bank of tv monitors of all the above, the drivers seated on folding chairs their heads bent in prayer and the slogan under the Reverend, "with God you're always a winner," the prowling pit Nazis of NASCAR, the battalions of reporters, and more Miss Darlings and frizzy headed honey legged blondes, the banks of suites behind windows where money and power watch the pageantry below, all this in the few seconds before -

BOB JENKINS

This is it, welcome to Daytona and another year of Winston Cup racing, as forty of the top drivers in the country begin their annual quest, a furious assault on the most coveted prize in auto racing, the Winston Cup -

Shots of the cup and past winners.

NED JARRETT

- thirty races at 16 tracks in a grueling season that runs from February to November, from short half-mile high banked tracks like Bristol, where you feel like you're running around the inside of a cereal bowl, to the 2.66 miles of the Talladega International Speedway -

Quick shots - featuring the bunched, bee-buzzing of Martinsville and Bristol - and the long sweeping speed of Daytona and Talladega - where a car does get airborne and crashes through the guard rail.

BOB JENKINS

- the longest race is 600 miles, the shortest 218. Depending on the race, the winner will take home anywhere from fifty to two hundred thousand dollars and at the end, when the last flag is thrown, all the victories and all the points added up, the Winston Champion takes home the Cup, a check for a million dollars and the appreciation of over 3,000,000 fans, the largest attendance for any motor sport in America -

NED JARRETT

- but today, Bob Jenkins, these drivers have only one thing on their mind, the crown jewel, the superbowl of racing - the Daytona 500.

Old black and white shots of Daytona beaches, cars racing and spinning and spitting sand, to early black and whites of the newly completed Daytona and legendary drivers like Fireball Roberts and legendary glamor queens like Linda Vaughan -

NED JARRETT V.O.

It was here on the beaches that
big Bill France first saw the
future, and out of the sands built
this 2.33 mile monument to
super-speed, the Daytona
International Speedway -

A SOFT SOUTHERN VOICE

(genteel and discreet)

- scuse me, Tim. But I got some
guy from a construction company
out there -

INT CITY CHEVROLET (DAY)

3

TIM DALAND the youthful owner of City Chevrolet has just been
torn away from the television in his customer's lounge by
Junior Byrd, his manager.

JUNIOR

(pointing toward showroom)

- wants to buy some vehicles.

Tim nods slowly, eyes drifting back toward the t.v.

JUNIOR

- a number of vehicles. Trucks,
cars...

Tim nods, watching the race coverage.

JUNIOR

(patiently going on)

- six short wheel based pick-ups,
a couple of long wheels, a pair of
full sized Caprice's...

Tim looks grudgingly to Junior, impressed.

JUNIOR

(an added feature)

Lotta cars, Tim - plus he doedn't
have a thing to trade. Naturally
he wants to talk to the dealer.

Tim nods.

DALAND

Won't be but a minute -

JUNIOR

Race startin?

Tim nods helplessly.

JUNIOR

Hell, then. I'll tell him to
forget the whole deal.

Tim glances up at Junior who smiles, indicates he will take care of the customer somehow. Tim turns back to the set.

ON THE T.V. - NED JARRETT AND BENNY PARSONS

4

continue with their coverage showing Waltrip, Bodine, Earnhardt behind the mesh in their cars with photo inserts of their faces. Then Rowdy Burns being interviewed by his Exxon Chevy Lumina:

NED JARRETT

- of course last year's winner here, Rowdy Burns, is settin' out there on the pole, with the fastest qualifying run, a blistering 196.71 miles an hour.

BENNY PARSONS

Well if Rowdy's there for the last lap I wouldn't want to bet against him.

NED JARRETT

Nossir. But it does remind me, Benny, that as stiff as the competition is, in one sense Daytona is going to be a little easier for all the drivers this year. Perhaps we should take this moment to remember two men who won't be here, the fabled Buddy Bretherton and his equally legendary crew chief, Harry Hogge.

Capsule bio of Harry Hogge and Buddy Bretherton: moving from black and white to color, they win race after race at track after track.

NED JARRETT V.O.

- one year ago today, here at Daytona, tragedy struck. After an uncharacteristic pre-race dispute between the two men, Buddy Bretherton died, hitting the wall at over 195 miles an hour. Then, late in the year NASCAR president Bill France announced he'd received a communication from Harry Hogge, announcing "my decision to withdraw, 'finally and irrevocably' from the Winston Cup Series." So it's proven a double loss for racing, Bob.

The film parallels the narrative, culminating in Bretherton's crash, funeral, and photo insert of Hogge, along with a superimposed quote from Harry's Dear Bill letter.

Jan 12 1990.

5.

BOB JENKINS

Yes indeed, Ned. But the race goes on - pace car is on the track.

EXT DAYTONA

5

Forty cars, engines rumbling with controlled rage, patrol the straightaway. They are immaculate, their colors shiny in this last glorious moment before battle. Pit men are poised, the crowds surge, the flag is up. Then:

SPOTTER'S VOICE

(excited, through radio static)

- pace car's off, pace car's off -

The pace car has swung into pit lane. Then as it waves:

ANOTHER SPOTTER'S VOICE

- green flag! green flag!
GO!GO!GO!

His voice is lost as the car colors blur into sound and fury and blinding speed.

FADE:

REAR ANGLE CAR MOVING

EXT. HARRY HOGGE'S FARM

6

with City Chevrolet on the frame surrounding the North Carolina license plates. It plods up a road - two red ruts with weeds between them - toward a corrugated metal barn like structure set in a cow pasture.

TIM DALAND

gets out of his car. Next to the barn is a Chevy truck with City Chevrolet on its license frame. Despite threatening weather, Daland is perspiring in his suit and tie. It's eerily quiet. The only signs of life are cows grazing by the crumpled and rusty frames of a couple of race cars, bones in an elephant graveyard. The barn door is ajar. Tim looks in.

INT HARRY HOGGE'S GARAGE

7

immaculate as a laboratory. Trophies and tools, and memorabilia are on benches and shelves; calendars of fine southern ladies adorn the walls. The hull of one racing car sits alone on the otherwise barren garage floor.

Tim hears the sound of a piece of machinery kicking over in the distance, then a louder THWACK.

EXT MEADOW HARRY HOGGE ON A TRACTOR

8*

is pattering along, whirly-birding a fine mist of chemical fertilizer. Harry's coon dog is barking like crazy but Harry doesn't hear it over the havoc he's wreaking.

*
*

Jan 12 1990.

6.

He finally notices the dog is upset. He turns and sees Daland clearing the rise in a meadow and approaching, coat slung over shoulder, tie loosened.

Harry looks, then continues on with his tractor.

Daland arrives and allows himself to be ignored. He watches Harry plow through the fence.

DALAND
(shouting)
Looks like you're enjoying the
easy life, Harry.

HARRY
Well I don't mind spreading a
little fertilizer around now
and then- gettin' the grass to
grow. There's worse things.

DALAND
How's the truck runnin?

HARRY
Runs good.

DALAND
(shouting)
I want you to build me a car.

HARRY
You sell me a truck, I build
you a car, is that the deal?

DALAND
Sounds good to me.

Harry turns off the tractor. There's the sound of wind through trees.

HARRY
Now Tim, everybody knows some
downtown car dealer can't afford a
race team.. no driver worth a damn
is gonna sign with you. They
wreck one car, you can't afford to
build 'em another, and they're
outta the deal you know? No car's
gonna win without a driver, not
even mine.

Harry turns the tractor back on.

DALAND
(shouting)
If you built the car, I'd get a
damn driver.

Jan 12 1990

7.

There's surprising force coming from Daland. Harry turns the tractor off again. He looks at Daland, sees the man is desperate.

*
*
*

HARRY

What kinda driver you gonna get after the season's started? Some ol' boy that's washed up and wasn't worth a shit to begin with.

DALAND

You could work with him. You can build a driver like you build a car, Harry.

HARRY

Tim, take a look at that hound - he's the best coon dog I ever seen or heard about, and I didn't teach him a damn thing.

*

DALAND

Well I got somebody.

This interests Harry, in spite of himself.

HARRY

Who?

DALAND

Take a look at him.

HARRY

Anybody I got to take a look at ain't nobody.

DALAND

Then take a look at nobody.

Harry slumps a little for the first time.

HARRY

Tim..I give up racin'. You gotta know that.

DALAND

You didn't give up racing, Harry. You quit to avoid an investigation into Buddy's crash at Daytona.

HARRY

I didn't avoid any goddam investigation!

*
*

DALAND

(going right on)

- anyway I talked to NASCAR and if you come back in there won't be any investigaton.

*
*

Jan 12 1990

7A.

Harry straightens back up. He's suspicious.

HARRY
How in the hell did you sell 'em
on that deal?

Jan 12 1990.

8.

DALAND
(right back)
I'm a hell of a salesman.
(then a smile)
- plus my wife's sister-in-law is
married to the Reverend Emery
Cantrell who happens to be the
Lieutenant Governor's preacher.

Harry shakes his head. He's stuck somewhere between
irritation and admiration.

HARRY
You're a hell of a salesman.

With that Harry starts up the tractor and takes off
leaving Daland wondering how good a salesman he really is. *
*

DONNA (DAY) EXT. CHARLOTTE MOTOR SPEEDWAY 9

A young woman sits in a deck chair. She looks as though she
might be sunning herself but for the clipboard, the stopwatch
and the offscreen roar on the Charlotte Motor Speedway.

WIDE ANGLE CHARLOTTE MOTOR SPEEDWAY (DAY)

From the infield

Tim Daland, Harry Hogge, and Rowdy Burns' pit crew along with
interested spectators follow the progress of a single car,
the familiar dark menace, Rowdy Burns' Exxon Chevy. It cuts
a perfect line into the third turn.

HARRY
(to Daland)
Now that's a race car driver.

WADDELL, Rowdy Burns' pit crew chief, moves his head phones
and leans into Harry.

WADDELL
When do you want the track?

HARRY
When you're done.

WADDELL
We're about there. When's your
driver due?

They move toward Donna to check the time as Rowdy makes the
tunnel turn and crosses the stripe:

WADDELL
Harry says your guy runs those
Indy type deals -

Dec 9 1989.

8A.

(13)

DALAND

Sprints mainly, two World of Outlaw
Championships, three all star wins,
seven straight feature wins, and he's
been driving ARS -

*
*
*
*

WADDELL

(his eyes glaze)
Uh huh.
(quietly to Harry)
Got yourself a real statistician. He
know anything about drivers?

*
*
*
*
*

HARRY

We'll see.

*
*

WADDELL bends over Donna to get the time.

*

(9)

(B)

*

INSERT

The watch reads 31.70

ON THE TRACK

Rowdy Burns' pit crew chief is excited as are the spectators. He's on the radio eagerly telling Rowdy to come on in. Daland and others glance down at the clipboard to catch the numbers. Donna holds it up for them to see. She's converted the 31:70 to 171.937 mph. Daland like everyone else is impressed.

WADDELL
(relieved and gracious)
So Harry. Where'd you say your driver's from?

Harry looks to Daland.

DALAND
Oh - Eagle Rock.

Waddell thinks for a moment.

WADDELL
That's up around Wilkesboro, isn't it?

DALAND
No. Round Glendale - California.

Rowdy Burns' crew pause and look to their boss, Waddell. Waddell looks to Harry. Harry looks to Daland.

HARRY
He's a Yankee.

DALAND
- uhh - not exactly. If you're from California you're not a Yankee..you're not really anything.

HARRY
You said it -

Rowdy has purred up pit lane and arrived. He crawls out to congratulations and it's clear he's pleased.

ROWDY

(to Waddell)

- shocks are right, we're dialed
in buddy, don't change a thing -

He spots Harry and gives him a poke.

ROWDY

- hey you ain't buried in
horsemanure after all, you're
lookin' pretty good -

HARRY

- you're the one's lookin' good -

Rowdy leans up against his car with a sigh of relief.

ROWDY

- it hasn't been easy, Harry, I'll
guaran-damn-tee-ya. But -
(he winks and taps the car)
- this bitch is ready to run.

As he says this he happens to catch Daland's eye who is
eagerly listening and feels somehow a response is called for.

DALAND

I can't tell you how much we all
appreciate you letting us use the
car, Mr. Burns.

The remark is ill timed. Rowdy freezes. His face loses all
expression and his eyes shine like a snake's.

WADDELL

(quickly)

Now I told you about this Rowdy.
Harry's got some new driver and
needs a car just to turn a coupla
laps. I told you it was Harry
Hogge who asked us - personally as
a favor.

Rowdy turns, very slowly, to Harry.

ROWDY

Who is this driver?

(to crew)

Turn her off.

The engine's turned off. But the sound continues unabated -
as though it has been disconnected from the car and magically
tossed over to the track entrance - two dark tunnels, one for
entering, one for exiting. Everyone - Harry, Rowdy Burns and
his crew, Daland, paramedics, firemen, a couple of other
drivers working on their cars - turn to look.

THE TUNNELS

20

like the twin barrels of a gigantic shotgun. The growing roar sounds not unlike echoing gunfire.

Materializing out of the right tunnel on a gleaming piss-elegant Harley-Davidson, hair Calvin Klein model-coiffed, wearing designer shades, Armani slacks and shirt, and with one of those fashionable formless Japanese designer overcoats flapping like a silk flag in the breeze behind him, is COLE TRICKLE. He rides straight down the track toward camera and an astonished crew.

HARRY
(quietly)
Oh, Lord.

Daland looks like he wants to disappear into the 100 degree asphalt surface of the track.

WITH HARRY, COLE AND DALAND

- GARAGE AREA 11

as a growing crescent of interested onlookers surround them.

HARRY
(politely)
Tim tells me you been running open wheels.

*

COLE
That's right.

HARRY
Now you just wanna up and drive NASCAR.

COLE
That's right.

Harry nods, trying to ignore the way Cole is dressed, Rowdy's glare, and what is starting to look like a circus and a potentially spectacular display of incompetence.

HARRY
What do you know about stock car racing?

*

*

COLE
Well, I've watched it on television of course.

*

*

HARRY
You've watched it on television.

*

He looks murderously to Tim.

*

Dec 9 1989.

12. (B)

&
Dec 10 1989.

COLE

ESPN. The coverage is excellent,
some of the best sports coverage
in the country as a matter of fact.
You'd be surprised at how much you
can pick up -

*
*
*
*
*

HARRY

(cutting him off)

I'm sure I would. Look, this may
not be the best time for you to
run this car.

*
*
*
*

COLE

When do I get to drive? Is there
some problem?

*
*

Dead silence. Everyone looks to Rowdy Burns.

ROWDY

Nossir. Y'all go right ahead.
But if you bend this bitch the
least little bit I'm gonna tear
your balls off.

Rowdy goes over, sits on Cole's bike and waits.

Cole takes off his Japanese overcoat and turns to Donna, the
timer.

COLE

Miss would you mind very much if I
hang this off your chair?

Harry and Daland watch Cole unzip his bag and take out his
driving gloves.

*
*

HARRY

(quietly, to Tim)

Didn't he hear what that man said?

*
*
*

DALAND

-Uhhhh-

*
*

HARRY
Don't you think we oughta talk?

COLE
(neatly pulling his gear out)
-about how I'm gonna run, sure.

HARRY
(quietly)
About how you've managed to live
as long as you have. I ain't
gonna let you race this car.

Cole stops what he's doing. He takes a careful look at Harry, then just as neatly begins to put his racing gear back in the bag.

DALAND
Whats going on?

COLE
(putting away his gear)
He's had second thoughts.

DALAND
(furious)
You said you'd look at him.

HARRY
I've looked at him.

DALAND
I've paid twenty-five hundred
dollars to use this track today,
Harry.

COLE
(cooly)
Forget it. He needs a brand name
like EXXON or Richard Petty.

HARRY
(stung)
I know a damn race driver when I
see one.

WADDELL
(calling out)
- What's going on, Harry? Is this
happening or what?

Harry's on the spot.

DALAND
Do us all a favor Harry. Let him
drive.

Cole turns to Harry. Suddenly:

*

*

*

*

Dec 14 1989

12B.

COLE

Let me do it. I won't make a
fool out of you.

*

Cole's intensity actually shocks Harry. He takes a moment
then:

Dec 12 1989

13.

(Pink)

HARRY

(to Cole)

- that tunnel turns real tricky -
 whether it's hot or cold it gets
 slick as a button and you'll slip
 and slide and slam yourself into
 the wall before you know it. So
 just take her easy. When I think
 you're ready to drop the hammer,
 I'll let you know. Any questions?

*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*

Cole shakes his head. Then:

COLE

- what's this?

He points to the dash. Painted on it are four words:

'ROOF - PUSH
 DOOR - LOOSE'

HARRY

It's for racing - when you pit,
 you point to the roof if the front
 end's tight and you can't control
 it, or to the door if the rear's
 loose and you can't control it -
 doesn't mean anything to you.

COLE

You're right. I don't care which
 end of a car goes around a corner
 first -

COLE IN THE EXXON CAR

- TRACK

12

moves onto the track and heads toward the Winston sign at the
 first turn.

Harry with Daland watches anxiously. The car makes its way
 through the one-two turn. It purrs at what appears to be a
 leisurely pace down the backstretch. It continues on into
 the third turn.

Harry and Daland begin to relax a little.

- GARAGE AREA

13

AT THE TUNNEL TURN

- TRACK

14

heat shimmers off the high-banked thermal-ridged asphalt.
 Because we are close the car whips through the turn with much
 more speed and force than had appeared from the infield.

Nov 20 1989.

14.

HARRY AND DALAND - GARAGE AREA 15

still holding their breath watching the Exxon Chevy moving off the dangerous turn toward the finish line. At this distance it seems like a leisurely pace once more.

WITH COLE - INT. CAR 16

who yawns. He pushes the radio button.

WITH HARRY ON THE HEADSET - GARAGE AREA 17

and:

COLE'S VOICE
I'm goin' on the stripe.

HARRY
(vehemently)
No you're not.

BAROOOM

EXXON CHEVY - TRACK 18

crosses the stripe- the noise explodes from the purring engine like a thunderclap. Cole is off like a shot.

- GARAGE AREA 19
The watching spectators come alive. Rowdy rises straight off the motorcycle seat. All eyes are glued to Cole and the car.

INT COCKPIT OVER COLE - INT. CAR 20

The Winston sign approaches at high speed. It seems the car is going head-on into the wall. Cole makes the turn.

HARRY AND DALAND - GARAGE AREA 21

watch as Cole moves smoothly through the second turn and into the backstretch.

BACK ON THE INFIELD

Harry and Daland view Cole with growing relief. Waddell leans over:

WADDELL
(to Harry)
- not a bad line -

THE TUNNEL TURN - TRACK 22

again at track level. This time the car flies into frame, spewing smoke, rubber and blinding speed. As Cole nears the stripe Harry turns to Donna who is mesmerized. He grabs her watch hand. The watch is not running.

DONNA
Oh - I forgot.

HARRY
Get him now.

Cole crosses the stripe. Donna punches the watch. The little digits - down to the thousandths - fly.

WITH COLE - TRACK 23

The Winston sign rushes towards us at speeds that make everything previous look fluid and leisurely - the speed looks like a series of speed-of-light still photographs. The sound seems like it will shred the cockpit.

FROM THE INFIELD POV - GARAGE AREA 24

Cole completes one-two and flies down the backstretch. There's a growing buzz of excitement from the spectators. Harry is struck dumb.

WADDELL
- I don't believe this -

Daland is starting to smile. Even Rowdy Burns' crew is getting a kick out of it. Rowdy is not amused.

AT THE TUNNEL TURN - TRACK 25

again. This time the car explodes into frame broadside, sideways, all four tires burning and smoking rubber. EXXON looks wildly out of control, as though it's going to smash into the wall.

HARRY AND DALAND - GARAGE AREA 26

wince. Donna rises out of her deck chair.

WITH COLE - INT. CAR 27

The track hurtles into the cockpit. Engine revs are deafening. The sight and sound and burnt rubber smell of speed is ramming itself down Cole's throat. Cole is blissful. MUTE engine enough to hear his half-hum, half-moan of pleasure like a kid eating his favorite dessert.

DOWN THE TRACK - TRACK 28

Suddenly, the Exxon Chevy is through the turn, perfectly controlled and speeding on a plumbline toward the camera and the finish line.

AT THE STRIPE

Cole zooms across it. There is a surge of spectators from the infield to the track to get a better look at this driver.

Dec 14 1989.

16.

(P1.4)

HARRY

- GARAGE AREA

29

stares at the digital watch read-out that is at the end of Donna's limp hand. It reads '31.68' - two hundredths of a second faster than Rowdy's. Waddell reads it and nearly chokes on whatever he's eating.

WADDELL

It's under Rowdy's time.

Waddell glances uneasily at the figure frozen on his bike.

HARRY

Might a been better if he cracked up the car.

ON THE TRACK

- GARAGE AREA

30

Exxon Chevy has stopped. Rowdy Burns' crew are all over it. BUCK who has come with Harry, helps Cole out the window.

BUCK

(earnestly)

- that was fast -

COLE

(taking off helmet)

- yeah?

DALAND comes up holding a stop watch.

*

DALAND

Fast enough to take the pole in the last race here.

*

*

(There should be someone that pulls him out of the scene.)

*

BUCK

Hell I thought this was gonna be a joke. You never drove a stock car before?

*

COLE

Sprints mainly. What's your name?

BUCK

Buck Bretherton. What's yours?

COLE

Cole Trickle. Damn nice to meet you, Buck.

BUCK

Damn nice to meet you too, Cole.

Harry and Daland have reached the car and Cole.

HARRY WITH COLE

Dec 14 1989

16A.

Pinh

walking back towards Cole's bike.

HARRY

- you were one lucky son of a
bitch in that tunnel turn. The
car was way out of shape -

COLE

If you think it was luck, let's do it again -

He promptly turns to head back to the car - but Rowdy stops them both.

ROWDY

(to Cole)

You run good.

COLE

Thank you.

ROWDY

Now, go get your own car and we'll see how you do in a crowd.

He's said this evenly, even pleasantly. But it's an unmistakable threat. Rowdy walks on - Cole turns to Harry.

COLE

Well, do we get to see?

Harry eyes Cole suspiciously.

HARRY

So how come you don't want to stick to open wheels?

COLE

Lost my ride.

*

HARRY

After two championships and seven straight wins - you got fired?

*

*

COLE

(very coldly)

I lost my ride.

(then)

- didn't matter. Ida quit regardless.

I?

*

*

*

*

*

HARRY

Why's that?

*

*

*

COLE

Wasn't going anywhere.

*

HARRY

Where do you want to go?

*

COLE
Indianapolis, but you can't win
at Indy without a great car and
my name's not Andretti or Unser.
On the other hand stock cars
are stock cars. They're pretty
much the same -

HARRY
(furious)
There's nothin' stock about a stock
car.

COLE
(pausing)
- look, I'm not trying to insult
you. I'm just saying stock cars
are built to run equal, isn't that
right?

HARRY
So the rulebooks say.

COLE
So I don't have to worry about
getting beat by another car.

Cole climbs out of his suit.

HARRY
(acidly)
In other words all you have to
worry about is getting beat by
other drivers.

COLE
Yeah.

Harry is speechless.

Cole unzips his bag, once again begins to neatly put away his
equipment.

COLE
- build me a stock car and I can
win Daytona next year.. then I'll
have the name I need to get the
car I need to win Indianapolis.

DALAND
How you two makin' out?

HARRY
Well Cole here's just passin' thru
but as near as I can tell he's
agreed to hang around long enough
to take the Winston Cup.

DALAND
Sounds good to me.

Harry nods, and then spits, impressed, incredulous, and disgusted.

INT HARRY'S GARAGE (EARLY MORN)

Harry comes in and turns on the light. He looks up at the silver scythe hovering over his head and in a fuller view it can be seen as the dreaded template, the profile of the car he must now build.

Henry looks to the roll-cage and suspension, bare bones, and the only thing on the floor beneath it.

Sunlight flashes through the window and hits the roll cage. It seems to set off the welding and pounding and grinding of shiny steel, the precision cutting and buffing and fitting of fiberglass moldings as Harry furiously works with at least half a dozen men. DISSOLVE through as CAMERA moves around the rollcage and it becomes progressively encased in its silver skin - the car becoming slowly recognizable.

Periodically the template is lowered and men painstakingly check to see the car fits into the template silhouette and swear when it's off a few millimeters. A mock engine is mounted to provide clearance for the hood differentials and gear-boxes fill the air, the pictures of fine southern ladies on the calendars change as the weeks go by and the work progresses. DISSOLVE THROUGH. The car is being painted a day-glo green and yellow with City Chevrolet painted in the primary sponsor's spot across the hood. This entire process of the car's creation should be impressionistic, like time-lapse photography - as though we're looking at organic growth, the birth of a living thing, the opening of a flower.

DISSOLVE THROUGH. Harry lies on the floor looking up through the open hood to the engine being lowered toward him and the CAMERA, until it fills the frame and it goes black.

THE PACE CAR'S LIGHT BAR

- EXT. PHOENIX RACEWAY

32

is flashing wildly. Pull back to reveal it and the field of forty cars rolling behind it scuffing tires as they go.

BOB JENKINS

(V.O. during the above)

- the pace car's completing its final warm-up lap before the start of the Checker 500 here at the Phoenix International Raceway.

NED JARRETT V.O.

Well Bob Jenkins it's not a short track lending itself to a 'frammin' and bammin'' type race which favors the aggressive hard chargers like Dale Earnhardt and Rowdy Burns -

During this, isolated camera shots of Earnhardt and Burns' cars with photo inserts of the men themselves.

NED JARRETT V.O.

(continuing)

- however the surprise could be a rookie, young Cole Trickle whose earlier career was built on roadcourses and who has taken the pole in his first Winston Cup appearance -

CAMERA isolates Cole's City Chevrolet car in first position behind the pace car on the track, with insert shots of Cole as well.

NED JARRETT V.O.

(continuing)

- qualifying at 121.47 mph in the new Tim Daland Harry Hogge City Chevrolet, this is a driver and team looking for a sponsor and they're certainly off to a fine start.

Unlike the other cars Cole has no sponsor on the hood or trunk or sponsor decals that cover the other cars like combat ribbons. The shiny green and yellow car with it's number 46 looks pristine, nude. There are shots of Harry and his crew looking alert and very nervous in their spot on pit lane.

INT CAR COLE (MOVING)

33

by contrast looks relaxed. He's out for a Sunday drive. Spots a couple of great looking girls in the grandstand.

He smiles.

HARRY'S VOICE
(on radio)
- get some heat in that thing
before it goes green -

Cole continues to watch the girls.

HARRY'S VOICE
- green flag! green flag!

There is a roar around Cole. He floors it a fraction late. Earnhardt in the number two lane has shot in front of Cole for the lead.

- TRACK 34
Furious, Cole tries to move to the outside but suddenly finds himself surrounded front back and side by cars going 120 miles an hour just inches from his front, rear and right door-handle as they race into the first turn.

DOWN THE STRAIGHTAWAY

Rowdy from behind gives Cole - clearly trying to adjust to the heavy traffic at high speeds - a little nudge.

INT COLE'S CAR 35

Cole is jarred and suprised.

EXT TRACK 36

Cole ricochets off the cars on either side of him, banging the side panel on his left and the rear fender on his right as they go into the 2nd turn.

He hits them much more forcefully than Rowdy had nudged him - sending one car fishtailing and smoking into the infield grass, the other into the wall where it bends another fender, not before it caroms off a couple of other cars, however, causing them in turn to bump other cars.

NED JARRETT V.O.
Oh my, Trickle seems a little
tentative out there -

Everyone recovers but it's a mess, leaving drivers furious. Cole's shiny new car has a dented fender and creased door panel.

EXT TRUCK TOP DALAND - PARKING AREA 37

moans and lowers binoculars.

ON PIT ROAD HARRY 38

spits into his cup.

INT CAR COLE

39

shaken.

COLE
(on radio)
- the son of a bitch slammed into
me!

WITH HARRY

- PITS

40

HARRY
- he didn't slam into you, he
didn't bump you, he didn't nudge
you, he rubbed you. And
rubbin' son, is racin'.

FULL SHOT TRACK

41

Cole is lost in a crowd.

ON THE TURN

His car can be seen - filthy, splattered with oil, and so
full of dents it looks like the fans have been throwing rocks
at him.

THROUGH A GRIMY COCKPIT COLE'S POV

- INT. CAR

42

The car in front of him loses a tire, smoke and burning
rubber fill the air. Cole jerks the wheel.

EXT TRACK

43

Cole bangs into a couple of other cars going around the car
with the flat tire and he gets a flat.

THE YELLOW FLAG

44

is waved. The pace car moves onto the track. The cars slow
down.

BENNY PARSONS V.O.
Well it's certainly a busy day for
the pace car, Ned. That's the
fourteenth caution this afternoon.
What's the record at Phoenix, do
you recall?

NED JARRETT V.O.
I don't know, Benny. But I
believe we'll find out what it is
by the end of the race.

ON PIT ROW

45

the signs are out for the incoming drivers. Cole Trickle's
battered Chevrolet limps in on two flats.

His over-the-wall gang goes into action jacking up the car, changing tires and gas.

Harry dives through the passenger window. He confronts Cole who is drenched with sweat and dirt, his shoes smoking from the heat coming up from the floorboard.

HARRY

All right, while we're still under a caution I want you to go back out on that track and hit the pace car. Hit the pace car.

COLE

What for?

HARRY

You've hit every other goddam thing out there, I want you to be perfect!

The jackman drops the car. The tires hit the road. Cole is dumbstruck.

HARRY

Go on, go, go, go!

He jumps back out, grumbling and cussing and doesn't even bother to see Cole shoved back into the fray.

HELICOPTER SHOT

- EXT. TALLADEGA SPEEDWAY

46

high above the race track, with endless miles of traffic as fans make their way to a beautiful speedway.

NED JARRETT V.O.

Welcome racing fans to Talladega, the home of the famed Alabama International Motor Speedway for the start of the Winston 500 -

IN MID RACE

- INT. CAR

47

Cole with his car in fairly good condition, tries to take Rowdy on the outside.

HARRY'S VOICE

(on radio)

- you're goin' too high, stay in the groove -

- TRACK

48

On the turn Rowdy nudges Cole. Cole promptly careens up into the wall hitting it front and back. He spins to a stop with four flat tires. Harry turns and kicks a gas can across the pit.

AT THE FINISH LINE (ANOTHER RACE) - EXT. CHARLOTTE RACEWAY 49
the checkered flag is dropped.

BOB JENKINS V.O.
- and Rowdy Burns has just won the
Coca Cola here at the Charlotte
Motor Speedway -

IN PIT LANE 50

It's after the race. The crew goes over Cole's - once again - completely battered car. Cole, pretty beat up himself, watches one of the crew members spot a side panel that isn't damaged.

BUCK
How about that? We got a side we
don't have to work out.

Harry promptly kicks in the side panel.

HARRY
I don't want you spoiled, Benny.

Harry spits at Cole's feet and walks off. Cole is furious.

FROM PIT TO PIT - EXT. MICHIGAN TRACK 51

Harry and his over-the-wall gang watch one calamity after another. Daland is there on occasion to share their mounting misery:

1. At Michigan the field of forty sits becalmed under a red flag. Cole looks thoroughly disgusted, but he's near the front of the pack.

HARRY'S VOICE
(on radio)
Now you're settin' pretty good -
but on the restart I want you go
get some heat in that engine
before they throw the green, you
copy?

On the restart other drivers are gunning their engines behind the pace car. Cole does not. The green flag drops. Cole guns it, surges to the front - and blows his engine right through the hood.

2. At Dover Cole hits the wall - of his own pit. His over-the-wall gang scatter and dive for safety. Harry looks up from behind the wall - fuming.
- EXT. DOVER 52

EXT RACE TRACK DAY - EXT. TRACK A - INT. CAR 53

Cole is running in the middle of the pack. He notices the gauges on the dash fluctuating. He pushes the button.

COLE

- I'm running hot. I gotta pit.

HARRY'S VOICE

- I don't think so. We're busy now.

COLE

You're what?

HARRY'S VOICE

We're eatin' ice cream -

Cole glances out his window and glimpses his crew.

EXT PIT ROAD DAY 54

Sure enough they're eating ice cream cones. Harry and the crew sit in the deck chairs and munch away. Harry waves to Cole as he goes past.

INT CAR COLE 55

can't believe what he's seen. He nearly hits another driver who swerves and gives him the finger.

HARRY'S VOICE

- now you're welcome to come on in and get one yourself, but I don't believe Nascar would think much of you trying to eat an ice cream cone out there. You have enough trouble ridin' around the track as it is -

EXT PIT ROAD COLE 56

zooms on into the lane and scrambles out of the car. He leaps the wall and goes after Harry, getting tangled up with deck chairs, smeared with ice cream, and being restrained by crew.

INT CITY CHEVROLET (DAY) 57

Daland, exceptionally well dressed in a dark suit, presides over his racing team's meeting which includes the entire pit crew. It's in a little coffee shop off the service area. Tensions are high. Harry and Cole are on opposite sides of the formica table, mustard and ketchup containers between them.

DALAND

We messed up big time on Sunday.
I had sponsors in the stands, I'm
huggin' and holdin' hands and
kissin' 'em in the ear and prayin'
for a good showing and what do we
do? We end up looking like a
monkey fucking a football out
there. Everybody out please!
except for you two.

The team leaves. Harry and Cole stay behind - silence.
Then:

DALAND

(almost casual)

I've got a question. What's the
one thing you absolutely need to
do to win a race?

Harry starts to answer.

DALAND

You keep quiet!

Daland turns to Cole.

DALAND

You need to finish the race.

COLE

(to Daland)

It would help to have a car that
didn't blow engines.

HARRY

(to Daland)

- if he wouldn't get excited and
over rev the sumbitch the engine
wouldn't blow!

(with elaborate sarcasm)

- now Cole when you shift the gear
and that little needle on the tac
goes into the red and reads 9000
rpm, that's bad.

COLE

(to Daland)

It's also my fault the tires
blow - if you ask this old fart.

HARRY

Hell yes it's your fault. There's
forty other vultures out there who
manage to finish the race on their
tires. You don't see Darryll
Waltrip usin' up his tires -

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COLE
(flaring)
There's nothin' I can't do with a
race car!

*
*
*

HARRY
Well that's the difference
between you and me. There's only
so much I can do.

*
*
*

DALAND
Harry he doesn't have to
appreciate your job to do his.

*
*

HARRY
He sure as hell does! how can he
expect to race if he don't know
what a race car can and can't do?

COLE
What is this shit? you want me to
work the pit and you drive? fine
we'll try that -

Cole storms out into the used car lot. Harry is a little too
worried to be altogether surly.

DALAND
So he's been trying too hard.
What would you prefer Harry?
That he not try hard enough?

*
*
*

Harry glances uneasily over at Daland.

*

HARRY
I can't talk to the sumbitch.

*

DALAND
Think he can drive?

Harry turns and paces angrily.

HARRY
Oh he can drive. He can drive
beyond the limits of the tires,
the engine, the car or anything
else -
(he supresses a belch)
- if the sumbitch'd listen to me,
we wouldn't hardly ever lose a
race.

Daland sighs, looks out the window to see his wife and
children waiting for him.

DALAND
I gotta get goin'. Lauren's about
to take my head off.

He doesn't move. He looks miserable.

HARRY

You know Tim, you sacrifice
everything for racing. You can
bite around the edges of it of
course, but if you're really gonna
be involved you gotta be ready
to give up everything and
maybey you're not ready to do
that.

*
*

DALAND

I'm not involved, Harry, I'm
committed.

HARRY

How's that?

DALAND

It's like the good old boy says.
If you sit down to breakfast
tomorrow to bacon and eggs the
chicken is involved, the pig is
committed. If we don't get us
a sponsor in the next coupla
races my ass is fried, I'm liable
to be out of the car business
altogether - and Harry. I know
you're great, you know your great
but if the guy in the car doesn't
trust you we'll never win a
single race.

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EXT CAR LOT (DAY)

58

Cole watches one of Tim's salesmen selling a truck. He's got
the hood up and is pointing out engine features to a serious
buyer. Harry into SHOT.

HARRY

We gotta talk.

COLE

All right Harry, talk -

HARRY

On the radio, during the race.
You wanna run right on the ragged
edge all the damn time, you gotta
tell me what's goin' on with the
car -

COLE

You just want to change the way I
drive it.

HARRY

Maybe.

COLE

Maybe you could set the car up
so I don't have to change.

HARRY

I'd be happy to -
(almost shouting)
- you just tell me how.

This gets to Cole.

COLE

What do you want to know?

HARRY

Hell, Cole, you're the driver. If you think she's runnin' loose or soft, tell us, we give a turn here, take some wedge out there, we'll win some races. That's all there is to it.

COLE

I can't do that.

HARRY

Why the hell not?

COLE

(turns to him)

Because I don't know what the fuck you're talking about.

HARRY

(puzzled)

How do you mean that?

Cole looks around. Harry looks around.

COLE

(lowering his voice)

- I don't know much about cars, okay?..

HARRY

(brightly)

Hey Cole, that don't make you a damn bit different from any driver I ever met.

COLE

(furious)

- I mean I really don't know. I don't know what you just said about turn here and wedge there. I don't know.

HARRY

(a moment, then:)

How'd that happen?

COLE

What the fuck's the difference, they just told me to get in the car and drive it and I could drive!.. the point is I'd like to help but I can't. I'm an idiot. I don't have the vocabulary.

Harry thinks this over.

HARRY

Then we'll just have to figure one out.

EXT LOCAL TRACK (DAY)

- GARAGE AREA

59

Cole in the car, crew members nearby. Harry leans in the window. His manner is confidential.

HARRY

- when you go to the doctor and tell him you have a headache what's he liable to say?

COLE

(puzzled)

I don't know. I guess it depends on the doctor.

HARRY

(impatiently)

I don't care who he is, he's gonna ask 'where does it hurt?' And you're probably gonna go, 'it hurts all over,' and he's gonna go, 'does it hurt over your right eye?' and you're gonna go, 'yeah, it hurts over my right eye' and -

COLE

(embarrassed and annoyed)

- all right, Harry I get it! you're the doctor.

ON THE TRACK

Cole speeds down a straightaway.

INT. CAR

60

HARRY'S VOICE

(on the radio)

Well? How's she feel?

COLE

I don't know...like she's looking around.

HARRY'S VOICE

- lookin' around where?

COLE

- everywhere.

- TRACK

61

Racing toward camera the car indeed is wandering a little from side to side.

WITH HARRY AND PIT CREW

- GARAGE AREA

62

HARRY
Sort of like she's huntin' for
somethin'.

COLE'S VOICE
(on radio)
- yeah, huntin'.

Harry smiles. He turns to the mechanic who holds a huge
print out check list.

HARRY
- castors gotta be laid back -

The mechanic checks it off.

COLE INTO TURN

- INT. CAR

63

the car nearly sideways, and out of control.

COLE
Whoa!..her ass is all over the
place - she's, she's bending in
the middle -

HARRY'S VOICE
- loose -

COLE
Big time loose -

But clearly Cole enjoys this more.

HARRY
You like loose better.

COLE
Yeah, how do you know?

HARRY'S VOICE
- you like to be fast and on the
edge of outta control, that's
loose -

COLE
- but not big time loose -

WITH HARRY

- GARAGE AREA

64

HARRY
(to mechanic)
- spring and shocks are soft -

FRONT OF CAR

- TRACK

65

racing toward camera not wavering - on a plumbline.

- INT. CAR

66

HARRY V.O.
- she huntin'?

COLE
Hell no. She's right on it.
She's trackin'.

INTO THE TURN

67

still pretty hairy.

HARRY
Pushy or loose?

COLE
(pleased)
- loose -

HARRY'S VOICE
But not big time loose.

COLE
Ten four.

He whips into another turn in a perfect groove. He zooms across the stripe. Harry is tickled.

BY THE CAR HARRY AND COLE

- GARAGE AREA

68

walk side by side on the track. Cole sips a gatorade. Harry's coon dog meanwhile has leapt out of the crew van and caught up to the two of them. It tries to get Harry to play. Harry finds a pebble and heaves it. The dog goes tearing off.

HARRY
- see before you come here you was
runnin' road courses where there's
this gentlemen's agreement nobody
gets too close to each other, cos
when open wheel tires so much as
touch, shit you go straight up in
the air and fly to New York. That
kind of racin's between the driver
and the road - in stock cars
it's between the drivers -
(he has to heave the rock for
the dog again)
In other words contact with other
drivers beats the car up enough.
You don't want to punish her
yourself.

This time Cole throws the rock for the coon dog. He finally seems relaxed.

HARRY

Now Cole, there's something else -
tires is what wins a race.

Cole regards Harry suspiciously.

HARRY

- if we can't figure a way to run
so you don't melt the damn tires,
we can't finish a race.

COLE

So what do you want?

HARRY

Run fifty laps any way you like
then - fifty laps like I want
you to - give me an honest run.
If you do I'm gonna beat you.

COLE

Don't change me.

HARRY

Think your driving can't improve?

COLE

I didn't say that. Look I'll take
your word for what a car can do
but I don't want to take
anybody's word for what I can do
because nobody knows. Nobody
knows, godammit!..that's what
racing's for, to find that out,
all right, all right, godammit
Harry, I'll try it!

He turns abruptly and heads back to the car. Harry watches
him a moment, then follows.

EXT TRACK (DAY)

- GARAGE AREA

69

The car zooms across the stripe as a timer hits the
stopwatch.

THE TIRES

blistered and smoking are pulled off by crew members wearing
heavy gloves. One of the tires rolls over a lucite
clipboard. The lucite sizzles and melts.

HARRY

All right this time you're gonna
come down on the throttle easy,
you're gonna drag up easy, and
you're gonna settle in the brakes,
and - and -

Cole is nodding like a browbeaten kid. Meanwhile crew members have finally replaced the tires and the car hits the road.

HARRY
(as it takes off)
- I don't want the ass hangin' out
from that car!

EXT CHARLOTTE CHEVROLET (DAY)

70

Harry's van pulls into the service area. He says something to Junior. In a moment Daland comes hurrying out.

A TIRE

rolls to Daland. It is blistered and shredded.

HARRY'S VOICE
- his way - my way..

Another tire rolls to Daland. It is worn but in remarkable shape by contrast. Tim looks down at the dramatic difference. Harry into SHOT. He holds a stopwatch.

HARRY
I was 6 seconds faster..buy me
some lunch at that highway joint,
Tim.

INT. HARRY'S VAN HARRY AND DALAND (MOVING)

71

Daland glances at the rear of the van. Cole and Harry's coon dog are completely crapped out in the back seats.

DALAND
- you ran, you showed him the
watch and he just went right to
sleep.

HARRY
Yawned and went to sleep, yessir.

DALAND
He wadn't suprised?

HARRY
Didn't appear to be.

DALAND
He didn't get mad your way was
faster?

HARRY
Nossir. Wasn't even curious.

DALAND

Well, Harry, what in the world
makes that damn Yankee tick? have
you any idea?

Harry glances into the rear view mirror.

HARRY

Tim, I want you to turn around and
look to your right.

Somewhat surprised, Daland does. Harry's coon dog has his
head out the right rear window, eyes closed, flews flapping,
nose in the air and twitching with all the wonderful smells
at seventy miles an hour.

HARRY

Now look to your left.

Daland does.

COLE

has his head hanging out the left rear window, eyes closed,
hair flying, nose in the air and blissful in the headlong
rush of wind. Daland looks to Harry. Harry smiles.

HARRY

Talent ain't real complicated.

EXT TRACK (DAY)

- EXT. POCONO RACEWAY

72

Dr. Jerry Punch stands quietly on the deserted front stretch
of Pocono, addressing camera:

PUNCH

- you might think I'm on the
landing strip of a major
metropolitan airport, but what
you're looking at is the longest
straightaway in NASCAR history,
three thousand seven hundred and
forty feet, where drivers exceed
speeds of 180 miles an hour here
at Pocono International Speedway,
a unique two and a half mile
tri-oval

(diagram superimposed on
screen)

many drivers consider one of the
very toughest -

DALE EARNHARDT

(insert)

Turn one and the tunnel turn is
where I've had my two worst
accidents in my career -

A fiery crash into boilerplate fencing.

ROWDY BURNS

(insert)

- broke collar bones and bruised
my heart and everything else, it's
been a rough race track for me -

Another car and another fiery crash.

TELEVISION SET IN CITY CHEVROLET SEMI

73

is carrying the coverage above. Cole, dressed in his racing
suit, passes it. Harry, Daland and other crew surround the
race car in pit lane below. No one is talking much.

COLE

What's wrong?

HARRY

We're trying to figure out what to
do.

COLE

About what?

DALAND

(exasperated)

- Rowdy took the pole in 59:70, we
run 62:10. We're two seconds off
the pace! we're looking for some
speed outta this thing -

He points contemptuously at the car, glaring at Harry.

DALAND

(his fear coming through)

- we're in trouble..

Cole pops the top on his Pepsi, sips at the froth.

COLE

- car's perfect, Harry.

He gives Harry an appreciative pat on the back, starts off
and stops abruptly:

COLE

- geez I'm hungry. Think I got
time for a hot dog?

Everyone is too astonished to respond. Finally:

BUCK

(a crew member)

I'll get you one, Cole.

COLE

Thanks. And Buck, just mustard,
okay? get 'em to hold the onions.

FULL SHOT RACE

- TRACK

74

Jarrett and Parsons keep up their running commentary which is intermittent and V.O. :

NED JARRETT

- we're just underway here at the
AC Spark Plug 500 - into turn one
again it is Rowdy Burns in the
Waddell Chilton/Exxon Chevrolet
lumina -

Jarrett names the 1st 10 cars. Cole is not one of them. Parsons speaks of turn one as one of the most terrifying corners in racing. Speeding at 180 miles an hour the cars four and five abreast have to enter the turn single file - we see this as Parsons tells us about it - there is room for one car at a time around the turn. Cole is the thirty-third car through the turn and can be seen subsequently on the straightaway passing other cars. He moves up rapidly.

HARRY

- PITS

75

in the pits and on the radio:

HARRY

Watch the damn tires. We got a
whole race to run, you know.

WITH COLE

- TRACK

76

He ducks into turn two barely getting in front of the fourth car he passes. As he does his left tire hits the grass and the car swerves kicking up dirt. Jarrett lets us know that this is not unusual in turn two, drivers have to put their left tire on the grass to get through it, it is so narrow and treacherous. As Cole exits Parsons points out that the cars have to hit this narrow ten foot patch or they're liable to hit the wall.

TOWARD TURN THREE

Cole glimpsed moving out and around two more cars.
Superimpose: Turn 3 banking: 6 degrees radius: 800 feet.

NED JARRETT V.O.

- the third turn is critical in
that if you don't get off it good
you aren't going down to the front
straightaway very fast which is
where you take the checkered
flag -

Ned and Benny agree that if you've got the lead on this track near the end of a race you're gonna have to be beaten in the straightaways - you can't pass on the turns without ending up in the wall or on the infield.

INT CAR COLE (MOVING)

77

roaring along smoothly in a pack of cars only inches from each other.

SPOTTER

(on radio)

- crash in turn one! crash in
turn one! it's gonna be comin' up
in the bottom of the track Cole!

- TRACK

78

Suddenly Cole rips into a thick cloud of smoke and sparks and cars twisting in front of his face. He jerks the wheel to the right, avoids the fiery pile-up - slides perilously close to the boilerplate wall through the turn.

INT. COLE

79

HARRY

(on radio)

- nice driving, good job -

But a loose wheel on fire has rolled from the infield grass back onto the track - just where Cole comes off the turn. The flames fan his fender.

HARRY'S VOICE

- you okay? you okay?

COLE

- just dodged another bullet.

HIGH ANGLE FIRST TURN

- TRACK/PITS

80

Three cars are out. Paramedics have rushed in. Jarrett and Parsons remind us of the track's dangers. Jerry Punch on pit road has a quick word with one of the drivers - hard luck Aldo Benedetti, the gifted engineer who's built his own car which is now in shards around him.

THE YELLOW FLAG IS FLYING

- PITS

81

Rowdy Burns swings onto pit road.

INT. COLE

82

HARRY'S VOICE

- leader has just taken the flag!

WITH COLE

COLE

(into radio)

Can I stay out?

HARRY'S VOICE

- better play monkey-see-
monkey do.

- PITS

83

Cole comes flying into pit road. The over-the-wall-gang leap into action. It's a classic pit stop - ballsy ballet, a controlled frenzy of flying bodies, gas hoses, jackhammers and tires - the car hits the road in less than 13 seconds. The time runs superimposed on the screen.

HARRY

Go! go! go!

HIGH ANGLE

- TRACK

84

Cole pulls back onto the track still under yellow. Jarrett comments on the remarkable pit stop of Trickle's City Chevrolet crew under Harry Hogge - it's allowed the young rookie to get back on the track in under 13 seconds and pick up several more positions on the field.

THE GREEN FLAG

at the stripe and cars roar across. Jarrett lets us know that Cole Trickle is now 15th having moved up twenty positions from 36th after ninety-six laps, nearly the half-way mark of the race.

BENNY PARSONS V.O.

- the rookie seems to be running a lot smoother today, Ned -

NED JARRETT V.O.

yes indeed, although he didn't qualify that good at the moment Cole Trickle appears to have one of the strongest cars on the track.

- PITS

85

At the pit with Harry stop watches are punched. The computer is read. Cole crosses the stripe.

WITH COLE (MOVING)

- INT. COLE

86

HARRY'S VOICE

61:12, leader is 61:32, keep it consistent.

THROUGH BINOCULARS

- DALAND'S TRUCK

87

Daland watches from the top of the truck. He sees Cole pick up another spot. Listens on his own phones:

HARRY'S VOICE

60:70, the leader's 61:10, you're picking up over half a second a lap now, back off or you're gonna burn up the damn tires, take it easy -

COLE'S VOICE
- I am taking it easy -

NED JARRETT
- moving into the number five spot
behind Harry Gant is Cole Trickle
in the 46 car -

DOWN THE STRAIGHTAWAY - TRACK 88

Cole passes Gant and Waltrip. He's now in third position.

HARRY'S VOICE
61:10 - leader's 61:40

Harry and the crew can't believe it -

NED JARRETT'S VOICE
- and there goes Cole Trickle
around Earnhardt -

Cole ducks in front of Mr. Goodwrench just before the turn -
barely making it. He's now in second position.

ROWDY BURNS - INT. ROWDY 89

spots green and yellow in his mirror. He smiles. Cole moves
to pass him on the outside. Rowdy cuts him off. Cole
appears to have the quicker car. He nudges Rowdy. Rowdy
can't believe it. He's shocked at the bump.

COLE - INT. COLE 90

breaks out of Rowdy's draft and moves to the outside. Nose
to nose, they roar into the deadly first turn.

NED JARRETT V.O.
- somebody's going to have to give
way here -

- TRACK 91
Rowdy returns the bump - sends Cole skittering to the wall.

BENNY PARSONS
- oh dear -

The car is sideways. It scrapes the wall.

AT THE PIT HARRY - PITS 92

is screaming into the phones to back off. He can't be heard
over the roar.

COLE - INT. ROWDY 93

comes through the turn right on Rowdy's ass. Rowdy is
surprised - and indignant when Cole nudges him again. He
momentarily looks back at Cole.

WADDELL'S VOICE

Rowdy there's a bunny rabbit on the track!

- TRACK

94

Rowdy looks - sure enough there's a rabbit paralyzed with terror on the straightaway dead ahead. Rowdy moves to the right. Cole dives to the inside, both men barely missing the rabbit - but now Cole has position on the inside going through the turn. He holds it. Burns tries to stay with him but can't. His car goes sideways and he nearly loses his rear end - when they come out of the turn:

BENNY PARSON'S VOICE

- now there's a good example of what you were talking about Ned, you just can't pass on the outside in turn three, the track is too flat, the tires won't stick - not even if you're Rowdy Burns.

NED JARRETT

- we have a new leader here at the AC Spark Plug 500 after 176 laps, Cole Trickle - if he can hold on for 24 more laps, he just could win his first Winston Cup race, how about that?

Harry and the pit crew are going nuts.

- PITS

95

DALAND

- DALAND'S TRUCK

96

climbs down from the truck and rushes to the pits.

BACK ON THE TRACK

- TRACK

97

Rowdy has inched up alongside Cole. He bumps him.

NED JARRETT V.O.

- well there they go tradin' paint again, Benny Parsons -

BENNY PARSONS

- it's door handle to door handle all right, but as we've pointed out Ned this is not a real forgivin' race track - I don't see how much longer they can keep this up without getting into trouble -

WITH HARRY

- PITS

98

He sees the two cars glued together like Siamese twins going into turn three - he's ready to jump out of his skin.

HARRY
(into radio)
All right, godammit that's enough!
Either pass him and stay ahead
or give to him - you can't play
with Rowdy like this - he's gonna
give you a real ass ripping -

Harry watches as the two cars zoom past.

COLE'S VOICE
- relax Harry, Rowdy's not gonna
last three more laps -

- TRACK 99

The cars approach turn one. The track narrows to one groove. Rowdy and Cole race to it - Cole gets there first but Rowdy's gone too far, he can't duck in. He goes high, spins and smacks the wall. Cole comes smoothly out of the turn.

COLE'S VOICE
- oops - one lap -

He plumblines down the straightaway as the caution flag comes out.

NED JARRETT V.O.
- the caution's out with just
under five laps to go, Cole
Trickle maintains the lead, and
Benny Parsons I believe he's gonna
win this race -

HARRY'S VOICE
- pit road's open, come on in and
get some tires -

- PITS/TRACK 100

Cole zooms into the pits. Other cars follow. The over-the-wall-gang come up, jack up the car - and the lug nuts stick. Then the air gun jams - and Cole is hoisted up in the air screaming.

The pit crew scrambles around for another air gun. In the other pits the drivers complete their stops and race back onto the track.

Cole's crew finally gets the tires changed. He charges back onto the track. He finds himself behind Earnhardt and Waltrip.

NED JARRETT'S VOICE
- well that's a shame. What do
you think the problem was Benny?

BENNY PARSON'S VOICE

Well it appears the lug nuts stuck
- but when you come this far, you
hate to have it cost you the
race - particularly after you run
as good as Trickle has -

Harry is trying to reach Cole.

- PITS

101

HARRY

Cole, Cole can you hear me? can
you hear me? say something.

COLE'S VOICE

- motherfucking-son-of-a-bitch-

HARRY

Now Cole -

WITH COLE

- INT. COLE

102

COLE

I come into the pits in first
place, I'm so far ahead huntin'
dogs couldn't find me and I come
out third with two laps to go.

TIM DALAND WITH HARRY

- PITS

103

listens and looks positively stricken

HARRY

Now you ain't beat. Not yet.

COLE'S VOICE

Well I'd like to know what the
hell I can do about it.

Daland wants to know too.

HARRY

Well first of all you don't want
to get excited, Cole. You're in
third place. That's a pretty
respectable position -

(Cole starts swearing again)
- okay what you do is this. When
they shut off over there for turn
three, you just keep your foot on
the gas and drive right by 'em -
uhh - on the outside.

WITH COLE

- INT. COLE

104

still under the caution behind the pace car. He's shocked.

COLE

Hell, I'm not that stupid.

HARRY
You'll be stupid if you don't.

COLE
Harry - you told me I couldn't
pass on turn three.

WITH HARRY

- PITS

105

HARRY
(calmly)
Well I'm telling you different
now. That car will take it on the
outside.

DALAND
(apoplectic)
You're gonna get him killed!

Harry looks up - the pace car's bar lights are blinking.

HARRY
(trying for calm)
Now Cole, the pace car's about
ready to duck on off, we don't
have a whole lot of time to talk
about this -

COLE
Well tell me how -

HARRY
- well it's cos we got a real good
set of matched tires on her -

COLE
What?

HARRY
(firmly)
- that's why I wanted you to pit
in the first place, we been
savin' 'em for just such an
occasion, those tires are matched
perfect and staggered special,
your pit crew's not dead in here,
we're thinking of you.

Daland looks at Harry interested himself.

COLE
- all right Harry when it comes to
the car, I'll take your word -

HARRY
- pace car's off the track, if you
go to the outside you can hold
it -

THE GREEN FLAG AND THE WHITE FLAG - TRACK 106

are waved simultaneously - Earnhardt, Waltrip and Cole cross the stripe and roar to full speed.

NED JARRETT

- here we are under green in the final lap of the AC Spark Plug 500 and going into the first turn it's Earnhardt, Waltrip and Trickle -

The cars go through the narrow turn nose to tail.

BENNY PARSONS

- it pretty much looks like that's the order of finish here Ned with one lap to go -

The cars head toward the tunnel turn nose-to-tail and move down the straightaway going into turn three with Earnhardt leading, Waltrip trying to break the draft and move outside, with Cole just behind Waltrip. They hit turn three. Waltrip is slightly outside Earnhardt and Cole is outside Waltrip.

INT CAR EARNHARDT 107

steps on the clutch and gears down.

INT CAR WALTRIP 108

steps on the clutch and gears down.

INT CAR COLE 109

steps on the gas and prays.

THE THREE CARS - TRACK 110

tear into the turn. Cole on the outside has all four tires smoking as he lays rubber and fishtails wildly into the loose stuff. His car goes completely sideways. Through the roar of the crowd Jarrett's incredulous reaction to Cole's move can be heard.

INT CAR COLE 111

continues to slide and fishtail toward the wall. He keeps his foot on the gas.

HARRY - PITS 112

turns away.

OFF THE TURN - TRACK 113

Earnhardt and Waltrip break into frame on the bottom of the track - but in FG a green and yellow blur fills the frame obliterating everything else.

ANGLE ON THE STRIPE

The three cars streak toward it - with the green nose of Cole's car just inches ahead of the other two. Cole takes the checkered flag.

BENNY PARSONS

(flabbergasted)

- Ned I should know better. Just when I say somethin' can't be done on a race track some rookie's gonna come along and make a liar outta me - he come off that last corner like he was tied to a string, didn't he?

COLE AT VICTORY LANE

114

is hauled out of the car by his riotous crew. Photographers and Dr. Jerry Punch (with ESPN mike) surround him. Cole grabs Harry, hugging him.

COLE

(affectionately)

- I owe it all to you, you son of a bitch.

HARRY

- oh hell -

PUNCH

Cole Trickle, did you have any idea you could go wide open on that last turn and make the car stick like that?

Cole is all smiles.

COLE

Knew it all along.

PUNCH

- how's that?

COLE

Special tires.

He points to the tires. Punch looks down at them, puzzled.

PUNCH

What's special about 'em?

HARRY

(reluctantly)

- nothin' particular..

COLE

(pulling Harry aside)

- but you told me -

HARRY

- well I lied, I had to tell you
somethin' to calm you down, you
 was acting like such a candy-ass
 after the air gun stuck, figured
 you'd never get back on a race
 track -

COLE

- you son of a bitch!

He goes after Harry, but Daland and the crew hit the would-be warriors with champagne spray and their hostility is drowned in bubbly. Both men laugh.

Photographs are taken - a rapid series of freeze frames as Cole goes through the victory ritual of doffing dozens of race sponsor hats. Daland interrupts the freeze frame flow:

DALAND

Try this on for size.

Cole and Harry look at the hat. It says Superflo. Daland puts it on Cole's head, another on Harry's head, one more on his own.

DALAND

We got us a sponsor!

More champagne over the three of them. Through the shower:

HARRY

- promise me somethin', boys.
 Whatever else we do from here - we
 win Daytona -

Before Cole can answer he is grabbed by the honey haired Miss Winston and surrounded by other beauty queens to have his picture taken. They hang all over him.

DALAND

(to Harry)

Look at that. He's actually shy.

HARRY

Oh, he'll get over it.

EXT HIGHWAY (DAY)

115

The City Chevrolet semi hums along the turnpike, with Harlan Hoogerhyde the gigantic gas-man on the pit crew manning the wheel. He's singing along with a raucous duet that comes from a speaker in his cab.

DUET

- I'm puttin' you in my rear view
 It sure has been a lot of fun, but
 now I'm comin' thru -

INT SEMI (MOVING)

116

Harry with other crew members and a gorgeous pit lizard is sprawled in the sitting room behind the cab, plucking lightly on a banjo, drinking beer, whiskey and a little moonshine and holding forth:

HARRY

- there was this coal mine I believed was gonna make me rich, it was sold to me so good all I could see was an assfull of money, racing, charity, hell I proceeded to go up in the mountains and get in on this coal mine. So I'm sitting there waitin' on this guy, here comes these trucks with big loads of coal going up the mountain, up that road. Dozens of 'em. It shoulda dawned on me I guess, but it didn't. Now what the hell are they doing hauling coal up the mountain - the coal is supposed to come down the mountain, don't you see? crystal clear, can't miss it, but I did...

Cole who is lying in a corner only half-listening has grown increasingly attentive. He chuckles. As Harry keeps talking, Cole laughs harder.

HARRY

(going on)

- these mountains had been worked out for fifty years but they'd show guys like me truckloads of coal they'd supposedly loaded that day, sell 'em thousands of dollars worth of useless mining stock, move off and they're never heard from again. They call that a dog and pony show, I had to learn that the hard way -

Cole is laughing even harder.

Harry breaks off. As far as he's concerned Cole has become an overappreciative audience. Harry goes over to Cole.

HARRY

- well it may be funny but it's not that funny when it happens to you -

Cole continues laughing.

COLE

- it happened to me...

Harry's dumbfounded. He sits.

HARRY

- what happened to you? You bought worthless mining stock?

COLE

(drinking a beer)

- I told you I lost my ride? That's how I lost it. The team owner was a con man..junk bonds, worthless companies, but mainly he sold stolen yachts. When I'd won enough races he even used my name to promote his sales. One day it caught up with him, he went to jail and I lost my ride - it was pretty humiliating actually.

Harry's affected by the story. He puts a hand on Cole's shoulder.

HARRY

Hell, Cole there's no need to be embarrassed by some low life piece of trash who'd put you in that kind of position.

COLE

Well Harry, that depends.

HARRY

On what?

COLE

On whether or not you're related to that low life piece of trash - it was my father.

Cole laughs again.

HARRY

When did this happen?

COLE

Five, six years ago.

HARRY

- you lost your ride five or six years ago?

COLE

- yeah. Haven't really been able to stick with anything since, Harry they don't trust me, I don't trust them, you know how it goes -

Harry nods, full of feeling. Cole can see Harry wants to say something comforting.

*
*

COLE

For instance you lied to me today. It was dumb luck I didn't end up crashed or dead. I oughta punch you out.

*

HARRY

- give it a try.

COLE

No - I don't want to get the shit kicked out of me by a sixty year old man -

That does it. Harry goes for Cole. The two begin tussling. Buck, a crew member, meanwhile is arm wrestling with a gorgeous pit lizard, DARLENE, six feet, formed with great tits, great ass and anabolic steroids and getting the better of Buck. Cole and Harry knock themselves to the floor - they're like a pair of cubs, playing rough and where the playing is going to end and the rough takes over neither one knows.

HARRY

(out of breath)

Cole, we was settin' in the money spot, I wouldn't a wrecked you for nothin' in the world...

BUCK

He wouldn't a wrecked that car for nothin' in the world -

HARRY

(pinning Cole)

It's a never never land out there, don't get me wrong and drivers just don't go to the outside like that - but I knew you could do it. I believed it in my heart.

(holding an empty mason jar)

- peach or cherry -

*
*
*
*

COLE

- cherry.

Cole flops back, through half-closed eyes sees the girl, Darlene, watching him while Buck talks.

BUCK

(quietly)

- there's calculatin' drivers and kamikaze drivers. Cole there's a kamikaze like my pappy.

Cole smiles a little.

COLE

Oh yeah? Who was that?

BUCK

Buddy Bretherton.

COLE

Buddy Bretherton was your Dad? He drove for Harry.

*
*
*

BUCK

- 17 years.

COLE

- died at Daytona didn't he?

BUCK

- just last year.

Cole sits up. Harry's come back with the moonshine but waits in the doorway. Cole doesn't see him.

COLE

How'd it happen? mind my asking?

BUCK

(reluctantly)

- hit the wall...

COLE

- which turn?

HARRY

(anxious to end the conversation)

- he was probably dead before he hit it. Coroner's report showed massive heart attack - probably why he hit it in the first place -

Harry comes back in.

COLE

Buck says we were alike -

HARRY

(remembering fondly despite himself)

- yeah, he'd push a car to the edge knowing it could break loose any minute and go ass over board and then he'd take it just a little bit more -

He hands Cole the cherry moonshine.

DARLENE

- You ever think about crashin', Cole?

Harry watches Cole for his answer. Cole laughs.

COLE

- no.
(the truth of this hits him)
- no, I don't.

DARLENE

Well I do.

BUCK

(surprised)

When do you think about it?

DARLENE

Right now, Buck.

She's got very little on an amazing bottom and the scantest t-shirt on top.

DARLENE

I'm bored -
(looking at Cole)
- anybody wants to come and get wrecked, I'll be just around the corner -

She walks down the steps into the other room. Buck looks to Cole.

BUCK

She can suck start a Harley at 30 below zero.

COLE

Go ahead, Buck. I been enough of a kamikaze for one day.

EXT HIGHWAY (DAY)

117

The sirens of two Highway Patrol cars are screaming as they pull up alongside the semi, signalling Harlan to pull over.

INT SEMI

118

as the door rudely opens and Darlene and Buck, hopelessly entwined nearly fall into the road. They try to scramble for some kind of cover.

HIGHWAY PATROL OFFICER
All right, everybody freeze.
You're under arrest.

Harry with Cole staggers into the doorway.

HARRY
What the hell for?

HIGHWAY PATROL OFFICER
It's right there in your hand.
Transportation of illegal alcohol
across state lines for the purpose
of distribution -

HARRY
I don't know what this looks like
to you officer, but this is not
distribution, this -
(displaying the empty Mason
jar)
- is consumption...

He staggers.

HIGHWAY PATROL OFFICER
That don't exactly make it legal.
Up against the wall.

COLE
What for?

HIGHWAY PATROL OFFICER
Up against the wall. Officers -

Other uniformed HP officers, two men and one woman move briskly through the truck and begin to pat down Harry, Cole and the others.

FEMALE OFFICER
(patting down Cole)
- well, looks like we've found
something -

HIGHWAY PATROL OFFICER
What's that?

FEMALE OFFICER
- concealed weapon -

COLE
(turning around, indignant)
- what!

The female officer promptly turns Cole back to the wall.

COLE
Where? just show me where.

FEMALE OFFICER
Right here -

With that she unzips Cole's fly and uses what she finds as a handle to turn him around.

FEMALE OFFICER
(facing a shocked Cole)
- now the only question is, will
he actually use it?

She tosses off her hat. Long blonde hair tumbles out. She plants a big kiss on Cole, and everyone's laughing. They're all in on the joke.

FEMALE OFFICER
- please don't be mad, Harry and
the boys thought you might like
me..

COLE
- Well, miss, as you know they're
all a bunch of dumb, crude,
drunken louts, especially Harry -
but - they could be right -

And with that he kisses her back, to applause and relief.

INT DALAND BEDROOM (NIGHT)

119

Lauren sits up in the dark.

LAUREN
Tim? Tim honey - somebody's
messin' around in the yard.

Daland reaches under the bed for a shotgun and a flashlight and staggers to the window. He gives a little grunt of surprise and sets the shotgun against the wall.

EXT DALAND HOUSE (NIGHT)

120

The floodlights go on revealing Cole, dead drunk. His Winston Cup trophy is precariously balanced on the edge of the water well into which he's dropping the cherries, one by one, the dregs from his otherwise empty Mason jar. He spots Tim in a bathrobe coming towards him.

DALAND

- got lost on the way home, did you?

COLE

- not really...thought I'd pay you a visit -

DALAND

(grabbing Cole before he falls)

- well that's real neighborly -

INT LIVING ROOM DALAND

121

sets up the sofa with sheets while Cole sways unsteadily, checking out some family photos on a piano, including some of Tim at his dealership.

COLE

..Tim did you always want to sell cars?

DALAND

Hell, yes, doesn't everybody? you're all set...

Cole staggers to the sofa, stares at his trophy on the coffee table. Daland touches the trophy.

DALAND

Truth is what I really wanted was to be a race car driver.

COLE

(pleased to hear it)
You drove?

DALAND

Oh yeah.

COLE

Were you good?

DALAND

Yeah.

COLE

Well what kept you from it?

DALAND

- guys like you. Some drivers, they're happy just doin' what they love, that kinda deal. I'm not that way. I gotta be the best - good night, buddy.

Daland gives Cole a pat and heads out.

COLE
You ever crash?

DALAND
- iddy bitty ones is all.

COLE
(sitting up)
Then how do you really know you
weren't good enough?

DALAND
(coming back, sitting on the
coffee table)
I guess I knew my limits without
having to test 'em...can't drive a
race car as good as I'd like, but
hells bells it's a thrill to watch
you drive, Cole. On top of that
you're gonna make us all rich.

COLE
- Harry told me I'd stick in the
third turn cos I had special
tires.

DALAND
(amused)
I heard him - only thing special
out there today was you.

COLE
Is that right? So..whatta you
think, Tim? Was I good or was I
lucky?

DALAND
- when you're real good you're
real lucky.

He gets up again.

COLE
How good and how lucky?

DALAND
(stopping again)
Well you just keep doin' it and
we'll find out.

COLE
- for how long? how long before
you find out if you're really good
or really lucky?

DALAND
(exasperated, laughing)
Cole that's like my five year old
when she asks, 'Daddy how long
before it's morning?'

COLE
What do you tell her?

DALAND
Go to sleep!..

Daland walks out of the living room.

COLE
Hey Tim -

Daland pokes his head back in the doorway, annoyed despite himself:

DALAND
- what?

COLE
How long before it's morning?

Cole chuckles wickedly and plunks his head down on the pillow. He's asleep almost instantly. Daland remains in the doorway, still smiling held by the afterglow of Cole's playfulness, amused but bemused as well by the troubling questions.

FADE

ALDO BENEDETTI

EXT. TRACK B

122

Goody's Headache Powder's hard luck hard charger, stands by his race car. His expression is grave. He addresses camera:

ALDO
I keep hoping for a race that
doesn't give me a headache, but as
long as these guys are runnin' -

First Rowdy in his racing suit walks by:

ROWDY
- good luck today, Aldo -

ALDO
Thanks Rowdy -

Cole Trickle in his racing togs saunters by:

COLE
- good luck out there, Aldo -

ALDO
Thanks Cole -
(to camera)
- the headaches keep comin'.

INT ALDO'S RACE CAR

123

Aldo screeches into a pit stop. The Gatorade cup flies in. Aldo desperately tears open a couple of Goody's Headache packages off his dashboard - where dozens more are taped. He downs the Goody's and zooms out of the pit.

IMPISH VOICE OVER
"Goody's" for those headaches that
just won't quit -

This last over two quick cuts - one of Rowdy, the other of Cole tearing down the track and passing Aldo whose car is stopped once again - as he's getting a traffic ticket.

BACK TO:

EXT RACE TRACK (DAYTONA) DAY

124

BOB JENKINS V.O.
- you're looking at the number 46
car of Cole Trickle who's leading
here at the Firecracker 400 in
Daytona, Florida - that Superflo
Chevy Lumina running out front is
an increasingly familiar sight,
isn't it Ned Jarrett?

NED JARRETT V.O.
- yes indeed, Bob Jenkins, since
his Pocono victory, Trickle has
gone on to win at Michigan, at
Watkins Glen, and how he's one car
away from lapping the entire field
146 laps into the race -

BENNY PARSONS V.O.
Lately he's been a headache for
Aldo Benedetti and about 39
other drivers -

During Jarrett's V.O. coverage include insert ESPN bites in all four corners of the screen - Cole winning Pocono, Cole winning Michigan, Cole winning Watkins Glen and in the fourth corner Cole in victory lane being interviewed, radiating confidence and poise - "our Superflo/Chevy Lumina did everything we asked out there" - since the night on Daland's sofa Cole has become a risen star, on the way to being larger than life.

- TRACK

125

BENNY PARSONS V.O.

- right now he's giving Rowdy
Burns more than a headache -

NED JARRETT V.O.

He's liable to get more than a
headache from Rowdy if they keep
this up -

This exchange because Cole has come up behind Burns who goes high and low to keep Cole from passing. Cole's response is a nudge on Rowdy's bumper. As they slam and bam back and forth and bother the cars around them:

NED JARRETT V.O.

- these sorts of rivalries, while
they may be fun for the fans, are
always dangerous - not only to
themselves but to the other
drivers -

Inserts of Cole and Rowdy in the corner of the screen - Rowdy responding to Nascar warnings that he and Cole have caused other drivers to crash and Cole denying that he's racing anyone in particular - 'you worry about one guy, you turn your back on the rest of 'em, and you can't afford to do that -'.

BENNY PARSONS V.O.

Well he says it but does he mean
it?

ON THE TRACK COLE

- TRACK

126

nudges Rowdy's bumper again, and loosens it.

INT ROWDY'S CAR

127

At 170 miles an hour he can hear the bumper rattling. He swears.

INT COLE'S CAR

128

HARRY'S VOICE

(on radio)

- stop messin' with him, he's
not gonna give to you -

COLE

- c'mon, just one more tap -

And he does it. Rowdy's bumper really rattles.

ROWDY

- INT. ROWDY

129

is practically foaming with fury.

WADDELL

(on radio)

- that bumper gets any looser,
Rowdy and they're gonna black flag
you - let him go by -

- TRACK 130

Rowdy signals to Cole to let him pass. Cole moves to the outside on the turn and Rowdy really slams him. Cole loses his rear end.

Cole spins, smoking, and looks like he's going right into the wall - but does a perfect 360 and barely scrapes it - he keeps on going and passes Rowdy.

The crowd goes wild. Rowdy is furious.

INT CAR

- INT. COLE 131

COLE

I don't know what you were so
worried about, Harry -

AT THE PIT HARRY

132

with Daland looks like he's nearly had a coronary. But both men look up to see Cole pass by and wave, obviously in complete control. They look at one another and shake their heads.

BENNY PARSONS V.O.

- well Ned Jarrett, that boy knows
something about race cars I sure
don't -

A FAN

- GRANDSTAND 133

twists the cap off a beer bottle and tosses it. It rolls through the fencing and onto the track at turn four.

- TRACK 134

Cole's car comes into the turn at over 180 miles an hour - hits the bottle cap. His right front tire is punctured.

In a flash Cole caroms off one car, gets sideways, and then backwards which sends him airborne at least fifteen to twenty feet over the track. He comes crashing down into and along the wall end over end at first and then endless barrel rolling, a whirling dervish of smoke and flames with exploding pieces of machinery spewing out. It looks as if nothing will be left of the car when the smoke clears. And when it does, it reveals little more than the roll cage.

CLOSE COLE

- INT. COLE 135

He stirs, swears and starts to answer Harry's frantic radio call. Then he looks up.

HIS POV

- TRACK 136

Coming down the track toward him at 180 miles an hour, the cars are three a breast. There's no way they can all avoid him.

ONE CAR

- TRACK 137

T-bones him brutally - sending him down the track, smoking and crumpled into the infield.

INT. ROWDY

138

Other cars meanwhile have piled up and wrecked - Rowdy avoided Cole but hit the car Cole caromed off - lost his bumper, causing cars behind him to lose control, rear end him and send him into the wall where he now hangs upside down over a guard rail. His helmet is off his head and he's badly bruised.

WADDELL'S VOICE

(on radio)

- pit and get four tires! pit and get four tires!

ROWDY

(into radio)

Waddell, I'm hanging upside down and they're gonna have to cut me out of this race car. Now what in the fuck are you talking about?

- TRACK 139

Harry and Daland rush toward the infield where Cole's car is a smoking ruin.

HARRY

(into radio as they're going)

Cole, can you hear me? do you copy? can you say something?

COLE'S VOICE

(on radio)

- let me catch my breath, okay?...I feel like I'm in one piece, but I'm really not sure -

HARRY

(stopping, with Daland)

What do you mean you're not sure?

COLE'S VOICE

Well, I can't see anything -

(a funny laugh)

- I'm blind...I feel okay, Harry but I'm blind -

Harry and Daland take off on a dead run.

IN ESPN TRUCK

140

The camera crew is going crazy with their video banks, from a replay of the crash, to isolated shots of Rowdy's crash, to isolated shots of Cole's crash, to crew reactions like Harry's and Daland's, to the inboard POV shot looking over Cole's shoulder as the car dips, hits another car, spins, gets airborne - and then on crashing into the wall, loses picture.

OMIT (141)

*

INT EMERGENCY ROOM (MOVING)

142

Cole, wheeled along in a a gurney, is swooped down on by nurses and doctors that make him seem like the object of a feeding frenzy.

COLE

- could you wait, could you wait,
could you tell me what's going on,
I can't see -

They're using scissors to cut away his uniform working up from the ankles and the wrists, putting leads on his chest, getting a cardiac monitor going, clamps on his finger for a pulse oximeter, oxygen mask, etc. Cole starts to struggle against the attention he can't see.

ROWDY

a serious bruise on his forehead, is the object of similar attention. He watches himself being hooked up to monitoring systems:

ROWDY

- I'm not a car battery, I don't
need rechargin' -

YOUNG DOCTOR

- this is standard procedure -

ROWDY

- go fuck yourself -

DR. CLAIRE LEWICKI, a young woman in surgical greens, bends over Rowdy.

DR. LEWICKI

- what was that, Mr. Burns?

She checks out the bruise on his forehead. Rowdy checks her out.

ROWDY
I wouldn't tell you to do that,
Doc.

DR. LEWICKI
We'll see -

WITH COLE

thrashing around now, panicked. His legs are taped to the table, sandbags on either side of his head.

COLE
- I'm blind, godammit somebody's
gotta tell me what's going on!

He manages to tear himself half off the table. Dr. Lewicki into SHOT. She puts her arm around his shoulder.

DR. LEWICKI
Okay, okay, what's your name?

COLE
Cole Trickle..

DR. LEWICKI
Cole, would you help us out and
lie down please?

INT CAT-SCAN COLE

143

in lead-lined room, Dr. Lewicki speaking to him from the outside as he's being readied for the MRI scan.

DR. LEWICKI
You've had a concussion, your
brain is bruised and like any
bruise it's going to swell. That
swelling is almost certainly
what's affecting your vision.

COLE
You mean this'll go away?

DR. LEWICKI
- if that's the problem, now we're
going to run some tests.

COLE
- what kind of tests?

DR. LEWICKI
- I just need to confirm what's
going on, I never pass up the
opportunity to see if a good
looking man has a brain in his
head -

She continues preparations to run the MRI.

COLE
You're a brain doctor?

DR. LEWICKI
- yes -

COLE
A good one?

DR. LEWICKI
(she smiles)
- so-so.

Cole is obviously frightened.

COLE
Look, when I'm driving I got a guy
who talks to me on the radio - I
can't see him but he talks to me -

Cole has made a dent in her professional demeanor and Claire
is touched.

DR. LEWICKI
I'll talk to you -

The machine whirrs and a section of Cole's brain is projected
on the screen.

CLOSE COLE

His eyes open.

COLE POV ROOM

Grainy movement of gray and blacks, like a negative being
formed. He can see shapes in the room. Then the color
bleeds in.

INT NEURO INTENSIVE CARE (DAY)

144

Cole is looking at Harry, who is crumpled up in a chair,
dozing, his spit cup in hand.

COLE
Harry you okay?

HARRY
(with a start)
Yeah, why?

Now his eyes open. He watches Cole hopefully.

COLE
You look all bent outta shape. Oh
hell, it's probably my eyes -

HARRY

- no, it's me. I been here all night - I'll get the doctor.

He scurries out.

INT WAITING ROOM

145

Haggard crew members watch a rerun of Cole's crash. Harry into SHOT background coming to a halt by the main desk across the hall.

HARRY

Where's Dr. Lewicki?

We can overhear the nurse saying that Dr. Lewicki's getting ready to go off duty.

INT NEURO INTENSIVE CARE COLE

146

smiles when he sees the crew coming in.

BUCK

Damn nice to see you, Cole -

COLE

Damn nice to see you, Buck -

A moment later Harry enters with Dr. Lewicki. She's out of surgical greens and in a white smock over street clothes. Her appearance is dramatic. She's young, she's tall, and she's striking.

HARRY

- you've met Dr. Lewicki, Cole -

Cole stares back without saying a word.

HARRY

- your doctor, Dr. Lewicki -

DR. LEWICKI

(to Harry, pleasantly)

- I don't think he's actually seen me -

COLE

(to Harry)

Oh, sure, Harry, Dr. Lewicki - hi, doctor, how are you?

Claire Lewicki smiles - walks across the room to greet Cole.

HARRY

(suddenly)

- no Cole, this really is Dr. Lewicki -

COLE
- absolutely -

DR. LEWICKI
- I was just about to go off
duty -

COLE
- and you want to look me over
before you go -

DR. LEWICKI
Well that's not a bad idea. You
feel your vision's restored?

HARRY
(vainly)
- Cole -

COLE
- Oh I think so -

DR. LEWICKI
- nothing's blurred, you're not
seeing double? no halos around
objects? no flashing lights?

She pulls out an ophthalmoscope.

COLE
What're you going to do with that?

DR. LEWICKI
- look into your eyes -

COLE
Now doctor, isn't this what you're
really looking for?

Cole takes Lewicki's hand and puts it under the covers, right over his crotch. Harry about faints. Lewicki's spins stiffens slightly. She keeps her hand on Cole's crotch, however. It's almost as though she is listening to it with a stethoscope:

DR. LEWICKI
Well it seems interesting enough
Mr. Trickle, but it's just not my
specialty -

She withdraws her hand and walks out of the room just as Daland enters. A moment of stunned silence.

COLE
- she's the real thing?

HARRY

I wouldn't play no joke on you in
a situation like this -

(Harry giggles)

sorry, Cole, I'm trying not to
smile -

INT HOSPITAL CORRIDOR (MOVING)

147

Rowdy Burns in civilian clothes and a wheelchair is pushed
briskly along by a no-nonsense nurse, preferably with a voice
like Eugene Palette's.

ROWDY

(furiously)

- I can walk, godammit!

NURSE

Not as long as you're in this
hospital you can't -

They're nearly blindsided by Cole - also in civilian clothes
and also pissed about being in a wheelchair. His Latino
orderly has nearly banged him into Rowdy. The two drivers
glare at one another, then continue down the corridor
wheelchair to wheelchair in an unintentional reprise of their
car race.

COLE

(whispering to his orderly)

- I don't wanna be next to this
clown, could you pick up the pace
a little?..

ORDERLY

(in heavily accented Spanish)

If you wan' drugs you gotta see
the nurse, buddy -

Cole swears. He grabs onto the wheels and whips them
forward. Rowdy takes only a moment to react. He too picks
up the pace staying even with Cole. The orderly and the
gravelly nurse hasten to stay up with the escalating pace.
The two nearly run into Dr. Lewicki. She's waiting outside a
main floor conference room with Harry nearby.

DR. LEWICKI

Good morning, gentlemen. Right
this way -

INT CONFERENCE ROOM

148

Several Nascar officials listen intently. Dr. Lewicki is
running tape of the computer generated CAT-scan. Like two
recalcitrant children Cole and Rowdy sit in their wheelchairs
watching, along with Harry, Daland and Waddell (Rowdy's crew
chief).

DR. LEWICKI
- neither Mr. Burns nor in this
case Mr. Trickle present any
significant intracranial injury -

LEN DORTORT, an imposing official:

DORTORT
Hold it, doc let's have that one
in English. Did they mess up
their squash or not?

DR. LEWICKI
Their brains are intact,
(a glance at Cole)
as much as they were before the
accident anyway.

DORTORT
You're willing to give em
clearance to get back on a race
track.

DR. LEWICKI
- well, I, that's obviously a
dangerous way to spend your time -

DORTORT
- that's a philosophical
objection, Doc. I'm lookin' for a
medical one. In you professional
opinion is there any reason these
two men should not be allowed to
return to racing?

Now Rowdy and Cole are hanging on Dr. Lewicki's tiniest
gesture and she sees it.

DR. LEWICKI
(uncomfortable)
- all the follow up scans have
been negative, but no one of
course can give you guarantees -

DORTORT
- young lady, we know you're an
accomplished physician - did you
happen to see these boys crash?

DR. LEWICKI
I've never seen a race. I am,
however, familiar with car
crashes.

DORTORT
At 180 miles an hour? We can show
it to you. Banjo -

One of the NASCAR officials pulls out a tape of his own. He starts to put it in the VCR:

ROWDY

- I ain't lookin' at that
sumbitch.

DR. LEWICKI

It isn't necessary. I'm not
inclined to give them clearance at
this time.

Both Rowdy and Cole start to protest.

DORTORT

Gentlemen, please - what would
you suggest then?

DR. LEWICKI

A re-evaluation in another week or
two.

Again they start to protest.

DORTORT

Thank you, doc - now we have a
little something to say to the
boys here. I don't think you
necessarily need to hear it -

She leaves. Rowdy and Cole look hatefully at one another.

DORTORT

Okay, it's Big John's turn.

BIG JOHN ENGLISH rises out of his chair and suddenly fills
the room. It's as though he sprouted out of the floor. He
towers over the two drivers in their wheelchairs.

BIG JOHN

- if you wanna turn yourselves
into a greasy spot on a country
road somewheres, go right ahead, I
don't give a shit and I don't
think anybody else does no matter
what they say to your face - but
you two monkeys are not gonna do
it on my racetrack!... Now y'all
heard about Japanese inspection?
Japanese inspection. Nobody here
know about Japanese inspection?
Well I'll tell you about it. When
the Japs get a load of lettuce
they're not so sure they want in
the country, why they just let it
set on the docks until they're
good and ready to look at it.

(MORE)

BIG JOHN (cont'd)

By that time it's all gone rotten and there ain't nothin' left to inspect. In other words - lettuce is a perishable item, like you two monkeys. You trade paint one more time, you so much as touch, I'll black flag the two of you and take apart your race cars for the next three hundred laps. Then, if you pass inspection and put your car back together, maybe I'll let you finish the race - now to show us there's no hard feelin's, we're all going out to dinner together -

COLE

I got other plans.

ROWDY

Yeah, so do I.

BIG JOHN

You'll have to change em. Not only that, you two'll drive to dinner together.

He drops car keys on the table between them.

INT HOSPITAL ROOM

149

a large closet off the corridor - coffee bar, coke machine, formica and cremora. Dr. Lewicki is having coffee and chatting with a good looking male colleague.

HARRY

Dr. Lewicki, I want to apologize for what happened with Cole when you come into the hospital room.

Lewicki and the male doctor exchange glances. He discreetly drifts on out.

DR. LEWICKI

(graciously)

Mr. Hogge, please, it's nothing to worry about and in any case it was hardly your doing.

HARRY

(a cough)

- that's just it. I believe it was.

Dr. Lewicki looks puzzled. Harry gets very red in the face. Then:

HARRY

- not too long ago after he won Pocono we played a trick on Cole, dressed up a pretty girl in a highway patrol uniform...anyway we told her to get real ornery with him and - she did.

DR. LEWICKI

By ornery you mean...

HARRY

(deeply embarrassed)

- real ornery.

DR. LEWICKI

Why would you want me to know about this?

HARRY

I don't want you to hold a bad opinion of Cole..I believe it scares him -

(a long pause)

- you're his doctor.

And Claire Lewicki sees Harry doesn't want his race car driver scared.

EXT HOSPITAL PARKING LOT (DAY) REAR ANGLE GREEN CHEVROLET 150

with its Florida license plate surrounded by a BUDGET RENT-A-CAR frame. Cole into SHOT. He tries one of the car doors. It's locked. He leans up against the car, waiting, eyes nearly closed. For the first time there's a sense of exhaustion and aftershock from the crash. Some image nevertheless makes an impression. He takes off.

DR. LEWICKI

is walking down a hospital ramp toward the parking lot, briefcase and car keys in hand. As she turns into the lot she sees Cole sprinting toward her. She stops.

COLE

Doctor!

DR. LEWICKI

- I heard you thought I was a highway patrol officer.

It's clearly a surprise to Cole that she knows about it. It's mixed relief.

COLE

- I also wanted to thank you for taking care of me.

DR. LEWICKI
(pleasantly)
That's my job.

COLE
Yeah, well it's my life.

Cole looks like he'll stand there all day. He either doesn't want to move away from her or doesn't know how to. Finally:

DR. LEWICKI
(gently teasing)
Well this time, let's shake hands..

She extends hers. Cole nearly jumps.

COLE
Of course.

DR. LEWICKI
Good luck, Cole.

She turns away.

COLE
Dr. Lewicki!

She turns back.

COLE
Could I see you?

DR. LEWICKI
Oh you will, I promise.

COLE
No I mean would you have dinner with me? catch a movie or -

DR. LEWICKI
Oh, that's very sweet, really - but it's not going to get you back on the track any faster.

COLE
No, it's not that -

She waves brightly, smiles crisply and turns away. Her back is not to be argued with and Cole sees it. Then something else catches his eye.

ROWDY

is walking toward the green Chevrolet.

COLE

now turns and walks toward the green Chevrolet.

FULL SHOT

It's a little like a gunfighter's shootout. Each step brings them closer to one another - until only the car's roof separates them. Rowdy has reached the driver's side, Cole the passenger side.

ROWDY

Now here's how I see this deal.
You ain't gonna want me to drive
to dinner and I ain't gonna want
you to driver to dinner so there's
only one way to settle this..

He looks down at the car's key chain and smiles again. He fingers the tag. It too says BUDGET RENT-A-CAR. Now Cole smiles.

EXT BUDGET RENT-A-CAR OFFICE (DAY)

151

The green Chevrolet is parked out front - next to an almost identical blue one. Cole and Rowdy exit the car office each carrying a set of keys. A pleasant matronish woman follows.

WOMAN

Have a nice day, and ya'll drive
careful now, hear?

COLE

Oh yes mam. We sure will.

Cole gets into the blue Chevrolet. Rowdy gets into the green Chevrolet. Cole leans out the window.

COLE

Charthouse Restaurant.

ROWDY

It's called the Chighthouse.

COLE

That the finish?

ROWDY

First one to hit valet parking
takes the checkered flag - how
about the start?

Cole looks down the road about a hundred and fifty yards.

COLE

The stop sign.

ROWDY

What else?

Cole turns over his engine. Rowdy turns over his.

Jan 18 1990.

72.

AT THE TABLE BIG JOHN

157*

Jan 18 1990

71.

ON THE ROAD (MOVING)

- EXT. STREET A 152

They travel side by side, scuffing their tires as though they're on the track. The stop sign looms closer. They hit it and roar through the four way intersection - sending cross traffic skittering all over the road and into ditches. The race is on. *

EXT COUNTRY ROAD AND CAUSEWAY (NIGHT)

153*

a picturesque bridge crosses an expanse of peaceful moonlit water. From out of the darkness comes the roar of two engines. *

The stream of headlights on the bridge begins to break up - horns honk, a fender crumples - the headlights on the bridge are pointed in every direction. *

INT. CHARTHOUSE RESTAURANT (NIGHT)

154*

Big John drums his fingers on the table and glares at a very uncomfortable Tim Daland. Big John checks his watch. *

BIG JOHN

Let me tell you somethin', Tim.
If you can't control your race
driver any bettern this, you might
consider stickin' to something you
can control, like used cars in
downtown Charlotte. *

EXT. CHARTHOUSE (NIGHT)

155*

The two renta-cars have arrived. Battered and bleeding hulks, spewing oil and water they are side by side in the valet-manned parking lot along with rows of shiny BMW's, Mercedes, Porsches. *

INT. ENTRANCE

156*

as Cole and Rowdy walk in. *

ROWDY

Too close to call? *

COLE

- yeah - *

She turns and spots Lewicki with the same good looking doctor she'd been with earlier.

SECTY

Dr. Lewicki would you please call
this gentleman back before I run
out of thumbtacks?

GOOD LOOKING DOCTOR

(eyeing messages)
Same gentleman?

Lewicki is politely dismissive.

DR. LEWICKI

It's a patient.

The phone rings again. The secretary turns to answer it.

WITH COLE AT HARRY'S

- INT. HARRY'S GARAGE 160

He's on the phone.

COLE

Tim, do you know anybody at
Daytona Memorial?

WITH TIM DALAND

- INT. TIM'S OFFICE 161

in his office at City Chevrolet.

DALAND

Chief of staff - why?

COLE'S VOICE

He a race fan?

DALAND

Is Florida in the South?

WITH COLE

- INT. HARRY'S GARAGE 162

HARRY

(into SHOT)

- Tim wants you to meet Russ
Wheeler, he's gonna be drivin' for
us till you get your medical
clearance -

Wheeler is a year or two younger than Cole, smooth,
ingratiating - a Southern yuppie.

RUSS

- real privilege to race your car,
Mr. Trickle -

COLE'S VOICE

- thanks for helping out -
(into phone)
- Tim, I need the home address of
a doctor -

RUSS

- just sorry I won't be able to
drive it near as good as you -

This last remark ruffles Cole's concentration momentarily.

EXT MARINA (EVENING) CLAIRE LEWICKI

163

returning from work walks up the stairs to her apartment overlooking the bay. She opens the door and gapes.

INT HARRY'S GARAGE

164

Harry and crew are working on the car, background, Cole is on the phone, laughing:

COLE

- I was desperate to get your
attention -

INT LEWICKI'S APARTMENT

165

with Claire on the phone, in a room absolutely filled with lush flowers and brightly colored balloons, a couple of which are attached to a large toy kangaroo dressed in a white smock wearing a stethoscope.

CLAIRE

(laughing herself)

- well you got it. I've walked
into a jungle!..no it's nicely
extravagant, but really I can't
I'm a doctor -

COLE

- and I'm a patient. You have to
re-examine Rowdy and me to clear
us. Come up here and do it. Take
you to a race -

CLAIRE

- come on! I don't want to watch
you fellas go round and round in
those noisy things chasing each
other like a pack of dogs on my
day off -

COLE

- well how about chasing me on
your day off?

CLAIRE

- I don't have a day off. I'm a resident. I'm on call 24 hours.

COLE

Okay, doctor, let's suppose you had a couple of days with nothing else to do, could I interest you in the North Carolina countryside?

There's a long pause.

CLAIRE

- speaking theoretically?

COLE

- speaking theoretically -

CLAIRE

(realizing it for herself)
- I suppose you could..

INT DALAND'S OFFICE

166

Daland picks up the phone.

COLE'S VOICE

Tim, how'd you like me cleared for the Charlotte Race?

EXT PIEDMONT AIRLINES 737 (DAY)

167

landing at Charlotte.

INT CAR COLE AND CLAIRE (MOVING) -EXT. CHARLOTTE STREET 168

through Charlotte.

CLAIRE

- we'd barely gotten off the phone and he rang -

COLE

What'd he say?

CLAIRE

' - doctor, you're going to complete your follow up work in the field. Fly to Charlotte and check those boys out.'

(she laughs)

- he's my boss, I'm stuck.

Cole smiles. Claire eyes him.

CLAIRE

Boy, you're quick.

COLE
You oughta see me drive.

EXT FIELD INFIRMARY (DAY)

169

at the Charlotte Motor Speedway. Claire emerges from the entrance. She's put on a white smock and is chatting with the field doctor.

Cole jogs back from a couple of drivers.

COLE
Rowdy's not here -

FIELD DOCTOR
(checking his watch)
- I told him to meet us at the infield by five.

CLAIRE
Well, we should probably go ahead with Cole -
(Cole looks startled)
- you do want your medical clearance?

INT EXAMINING ROOM (DAY)

170

Claire places a smock on the table.

CLAIRE
Put this on.

COLE
- right.

She leaves. He picks up the smock and it seems to fall apart - it's one of those tissue thin paper jobs with the embarrassing split down the back.

CLOSE MERCURY COLUMN

on blood pressure gauge. The column is pumped higher and higher.

COLE

is sitting bare legged on the table in his smock.

CLAIRE
- if this were your normal blood pressure, you'd have dropped dead twenty years ago, relax will you?

She stands between his legs while he remains seated on the table. She holds her hands out to either side.

CLAIRE

- now look at my nose and tell me
which finger's moving -

COLE

- little finger, index finger,
both fingers -

Her face is maddeningly close. Cole is having a hard time.
He starts to drift closer to her. Claire extends two fingers
on her right hand:

CLAIRE

Squeeze.

Cole squeezes. She extends two fingers on her left hand.

CLAIRE

Squeeze.

He squeezes.

CLAIRE USES THE REFLEX HAMMER

on Cole's knees, arms, ankles. He watches her tap by tap,
reflex by reflex, as she methodically goes over his body.
He's beginning to perspire. Claire's manner, if anything,
seems more detached, more clinical. It begins to annoy Cole.

SERIES OF SHOTS

Cole stands before Claire and touches his nose with his left
hand. She touches her nose with her right hand. He touches
his nose with his right hand. The exam becomes - a Kabuki
dance, semaphore signalling, courtship dance, children
playing Simon says.

CLAIRE (& CLAIRE'S VOICE)

Hands out - close your eyes -
palms up - open your eyes - follow
my finger - stand with your feet
together and close your eyes, walk
with one foot in front of the
other - back on the table -

COLE

Back on the table?

CLAIRE

Yes, back on the table -

Cole's anger is growing. He gets back on the table.

COLE

This is tough -

CLAIRE

Examinations always are -

COLE
Why is that?

CLAIRE
I'm looking you over and I might
not like what I see, that has to
worry you -

She turns off the light in the room, switches on the
ophthalmoscope. The white pinpoint flits around the room.

CLAIRE
Pick a spot on the wall and look
at it.

Cole does. Claire moves to him in the darkened room until
they're literally eye to eye. She looks through the
ophthalmoscope.

CLAIRE
(a little testy)
Please don't move!

COLE
I didn't move.

CLAIRE
- your eyes - just focus on one
spot.

She looks again.

COLE
What do you see?

CLAIRE
- the retina -

ECU RETINA

and its lush network of arteries and veins.

COLE'S VOICE
What's it look like?

CLAIRE
- pink, pulsating, very pretty
actually -

TWO SHOT CLAIRE AND COLE

Their faces move inches apart.

COLE
Seen enough?

CLAIRE
Just about.

She takes a part of the ophthalmoscope and runs it across the bottom of Cole's foot. Cole jumps.

COLE
What'd you do that for?

CLAIRE
- thought you might like it,
it's -

Cole grabs Claire and kisses her. She doesn't move and doesn't respond. Cole releases her.

CLAIRE
(going on)
- the Babinsky sign -

She runs the ophthalmoscope over the bottom of his foot again. His toe automatically points down.

CLAIRE
- if the toe goes up, you're in
trouble - you're fine. Put on
your clothes -

She turns on the wall switch and goes out the door. Cole sags, shakes his head. He does not look fine.

EXT HALLWAY

171

Claire leans against the wall, waiting. It's grown darker and quieter. Cole emerges. They walk side by side down the hall, Cole ashen:

COLE
- look I'm sorry, it drove me nuts
in there. How could you ignore me
like that?

They round the corner. She turns to Cole and pins him against the wall. She kisses him every bit as forcefully as he'd kissed her. Cole is shocked. The two of them slide down the wall to the floor.

CLAIRE
- I wasn't ignoring you.. I gave
you a very thorough physical -

After a moment the two kiss again - very slowly.

CLAIRE'S LEG

- INT. HOTEL ROOM 172

long and shapely lies on top of the covers. A neat row of 'Sweet & Low' packs line her leg above and below the knee.

COLE'S VOICE
- they did scientific studies on
this -

CLAIRE
(laughing)
On what?

INT HOTEL ROOM (MORNING)

173

Claire herself lies under the covers sipping coffee, room service tray and morning papers nearby. Cole in a towel sits cross-legged on the bed hovering over Claire's exposed leg.

COLE
Drafting -

He moves the 'Sweet & Low' packs as cars up her leg:

COLE
- when one car tucks in behind another two cars go faster than one can by itself. What they do is divide the air resistance between them, now here is where it gets complicated...
(he moves a 'Sweet & Low' pack higher on her thigh)
- the lead car has to floor it to hit 200 miles an hour, but the car tucked in behind -
(takes the second pack placing it right behind the first)
- doesn't. It can go just as fast and still have power in reserve so when these two cars come off the last turn -
(moving packs still higher on her thigh)
- the car in back can move out of the draft and beat the lead car to the finish line...

The 'Sweet & Low' pack is brought up short by the sheet which covers that point where Claire's thigh meets her groin. She thoughtfully regards the racing manoeuvres on her leg.

CLAIRE
...very interesting...

She suddenly bends her leg at the knee. The 'Sweet & Low' packs go flying. The gesture and her breathtaking leg have the impact of a multi-car crash on Cole. Staring at her leg:

COLE
- I'm never gonna live long enough -
(he jumps on Claire, kissing her)
- to do this enough -

CLAIRE

- is there anything else you ever wanted to do besides race?

This momentarily puzzles Cole.

COLE

- wouldn't know. I left school when I was 16. I found out I could make a living at racing about the same time I found out I had to make a living -

CLAIRE

- maybe you ought to go back to school -

(Cole gives her a look)

- wellit is dangerous and you're just running around in circles.

(Cole laughs)

- what do you love so much about it?

A long moment. Then very softly:

COLE

- the speed..I want to control it, I want to know it's not just dumb luck. I want to know that I can control something that, that's..

CLAIRE

- out of control.

With a sigh of relief.

COLE

- yeah. How'd you know?

Claire continues to regard Cole warily.

EXT COUNTRYSIDE (DAY)

174

Cole with Claire hanging onto his waist tools down the road on his motorcycle. He's moving at a leisurely pace, there are meadows and woods and pastures, picturesque barns and little towns that pass in the blink of an eye.

Cole turns off the road and into a hollow. Disappears.

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE HOLLOW

- EXT. LAKE HOUSE

175

men are at work baling hay. One of them turns and scowls when he hears the motorcycle. It is Rowdy. The scowl disappears. What replaces it almost passes for a smile. Cole and Claire ride into SHOT.

Rowdy helps Claire off the bike.

ROWDY

I'm surprised at a sensible gal
like you Doc, this guy can't
hardly drive to dinner without
crashin' everything on the road -

CLAIRE

What's he talking about?

Cole glares at Rowdy.

ROWDY

(backtracking hastily)
- naa, just seems every time we
get around each other he runs into
somethin' - he's done it at least
eight times in ten races -

COLE

Claire - you gotta know he's
lying. The man can't count past
five.

ROWDY

Y'all got a few minutes? I'll
show you around.

CLAIRE

(as they're walking)
- we're here to see you - this is
a house call, you didn't show up
for your physical -

This brings Rowdy up short.

ROWDY

Damn, I forgot.

COLE

You forgot?

ROWDY

You worried about me?

CLAIRE

Of course he is.

Rowdy laughs.

ROWDY

Now doc, if you didn't look the
way you do, I'd swear Cole got
you up here just to make sure he
gets back in his race car before
that new driver, Russ Wheeler,
takes it away from him -

Cole holds up his thumb.

COLE

Jump and I'll catch you, buddy.

ROWDY

He did run good the other day, you gotta admit - Come on there's Loretta and the kids, you can help em feed the fish. We got piranhas down there -

CLAIRE

- sure you do -

Rowdy points at a pond beneath where a young woman holding a baby waves. As they walk down the hill:

ROWDY

Funny thing about that Cole, I grew up and I hated farming, all I wanted was to work on race cars, then I got to racin' - run into Loretta -

(who hugs him)

- and now what I want is to make enough money so I can work on a farm!

CLAIRE

(to Loretta)

Very nice to meet you.

LORETTA

Nice to meet you, howdy Cole -

The older children are feeding the fish, background. Rowdy checks out his baby, kissing it and making noises. Claire is near the edge of the pond.

ROWDY

- don't get within a foot of the water, doc, them piranha can get out, jump up on the bank -

LORETTA

(to Claire)

- them're catfish -

ROWDY

- I seen 'em drag a goat in one day -

LORETTA

Rowdy you quit that -

ROWDY

Hey you oughta see them birds come flyin' in the lake trying to catch fish, first thing you know they're short legged -

LORETTA

Rowdy!

Rowdy laughs, as does everyone else. Claire throws her arm around Cole's waist. The two couples amble along the pond side by side. Catfish skitter in the water. The sun throws lengthening shadows on the meadow. Cricket sounds are in the air.

CLAIRE

(very happy)

- it is beautiful -

There's a splash. Claire and Cole look to see Rowdy has actually tripped and nearly fallen into the pond.

ROWDY

(a little sheepish)

- sorry honey, if I'm not on a racetrack I don't always pay attention to where I'm goin' -

LORETTA

Well, Rowdy, it's easier on a racetrack, all you gotta do is keep turnin' left.

EXT LAKE NORMAN (DAY)

176

Rowdy's kids skim and buck across the water on sea doo's (they look like sea-going motorcycles), racin' and runnin' around in circles.

Rowdy meanwhile propels his sleek scarab across the lake at seventy miles an hour - with Claire, Loretta, and Cole on board. They pass other speeding boats and water-skiers. Claire says something to Rowdy.

ROWDY

(above the engine roar)

- yep one way or another, we're always chasin' after speed -

EXT LAKE (TWILIGHT)

177

Mists are beginning to rise. Rowdy is puttering along, barely above an idle as he points out places along the shoreline:

ROWDY

- that there's our home on the lake, just beyond, top of that knoll we're gonna build our permanent home. I got an option on eight more acres that'll block it off from the highway -

COLE

- cost much to build up there?

ROWDY
About ten million dollars,
Loretta's doin' the buildin' -

As usual he's teasing. Then, proudly:

ROWDY
- she's designin' the house.

LORETTA
We just want a place where no
one's ever lived but us, idn't
that right -

She breaks off when she sees Rowdy's face. He's suddenly pale and clammy and his eyelids are fluttering. He presses his hands to his temples, like he's trying to squash his head.

LORETTA
- baby, what is it?

ROWDY
(reeling)
- think I'm seasick -

LORETTA
Rowdy you never been seasick in
your life -

Rowdy passes out. His head hits the gunwhale before Loretta can catch him.

INT LAKE HOUSE DEN (NIGHT)

178

*

ECU ROWDY'S RETINA

The network of veins are distended and throbbing, the pastel pinks and light hues of Cole's eye replaced by livid and stormy ones.

TWO SHOT CLAIRE AND ROWDY

(INT. LAKEHOUSE DEN EVE)

as Claire pulls away from Rowdy's eye and turns off the ophthalmoscope. Rowdy sits on the pool table - the room is full of sports equipment and Rowdy's racing trophies.

CLAIRE

(quietly)

You didn't forget about the physical, did you?

Rowdy smirks and shrugs, a gesture both defiant and pathetic.

ROWDY

- nobody in my family goes to a doctor unless they're dyin' - just cos you ain't feelin' good, shit -

CLAIRE

- all right, stand with you're feet together and close you eyes.

CLOSE COLE

in a doorway between door and living room, watching the dark reprise of his own examination, appalled.

WITH CLAIRE & ROWDY

Rowdy promptly topples to his left. Claire catches him. Rowdy's tongue is protruding, a little saliva runs down his chin. As he straightens up and wipes away the saliva, his hands are trembling:

CLAIRE

- we've got to get you back to Daytona for an interval assessment. Bill Wilhaire, head of neurosurgery is my boss and he's as good as -

a toilet flushes. Rowdy looks o.s. Claire follows his gaze:

COLE

- INT. LAKE HOUSE 179

emerges from the bathroom looking deathly pale. Rowdy points to Cole.

Jan 4 1990

86A.

ROWDY

- you get sick in there?
(a triumphant smile, to
Claire)

How about that? He got sick.
You are one hell of a candy
ass, Cole. I faint and you throw
up.

*
*
*

CLAIRE

Rowdy! it's imperative you get
to Daytona Memorial and see Dr.
Wilhaire. I can't be responsible
for what happens if you're not
seen right away..

*
*
*
*
*

TELEVISION SCREEN

BOB JENKINS

- I'm Bob Jenkins and welcome to Speedweek - Tim Daland the City Chevrolet dealer with the uncanny eye for racing talent will take the unusual step of running a second car. He has attracted another major sponsor in Hardee's, his new driver will be Russ Wheeler who stood in so impressively for Cole Trickle after his Daytona crash, and his new crew chief, Waddell Slutes, idle now since Rowdy Burns has been unable to come back from that same Daytona crash.

SHOTS of Cole and Harry and Daland celebrating past triumphs in victory lane, of Wheeler getting out of the Trickle car and being congratulated. Jarrett interviewing Waddell and Wheeler and Daland who are gathered around a spanking new Hardee/Chevrolet Lumina.

REACTION COLE AND HARRY

- GARAGE

180

at Harry's garage. Cole is on the phone, Harry has been supervising work on the car. Both are watching the set.

COLE

(into phone)

- hey, he won't return my calls either.

WITH CLAIRE AT DAYTONA MEMORIAL

- INT.

181

CLAIRE

(into phone)

Well somebody better talk him into coming down here. He's almost certainly hemorrhaging, the longer he ignores it the more damage'll be done to his brain -

COLE

(acutely uncomfortable)

He doesn't want to see me!..as long as nobody looks at him again, he can call it just a headache..

HARRY

Listen to that horseshit -

Cole glances back to the screen. Daland is talking in response to a Ned Jarrett question.

DALAND

- of course I believe it's possible to maintain the integrity and independence of these two race teams or I wouldn't do it, Ned.

WITH CLAIRE

CLAIRE

- he's your friend, Cole -

WITH COLE

COLE

We've spent most of our friendship trying to knock each other off, we're not that close!...I'm sorry, honey I'll do what I -

There's a click. She's obviously hung up on him. Cole stares at Russ Wheeler on the t.v.

RUSS

I am as big a fan as ever of Cole Trickle's, no driver's accomplished so much in such a short time and -

(turning to CAMERA)

I'll continue to root for you, Cole in every race to come on in in second place -

HARRY

(disgusted, to the set)

Who'll you be rootin' for come Sunday, Tim?

(to Cole)

I don't like this. If we're not real careful they're gonna form a coop against us.

COLE

The word is coup, Harry.

(looks at Harry)

coo - not everything involves cars, you know.

Cole turns back to the set and flips the channel, leaving Harry more than a little surprised. He waits for more but Cole is glued to the set. He's flipped to a Barbary Coast movie, set in a lush gambling establishment. The croupier at a roulette wheel urges everyone to place their bets, then spins the white ball. It goes round and round in its groove on the slowly spinning wheel like a car around a track. Cole is captured by the image, watching intently as camera moves in on the wheel and the spinning ball and the voice, 'round and round she goes and where she stops - '

CLOSE COLE

fascinated.

CROUPIER'S VOICE

- nobody knows..

EXT RACE TRACK (DAY)

EXT. TRACK C

182

The Cole Trickle car speeds along the oval. There are no other cars immediately in sight.

COLE'S VOICE

- these new tires are terrible,
you shoulda put on scuffs -

HARRY'S VOICE

You're doin' good, Cole, you're a
straightaway ahead of everybody
else -

COLE'S VOICE

- feels like I'm gonna spin out -

HARRY IN THE PITS

- PITS

183

shakes his head. He doesn't like what he's hearing.

RUSS WHEELER

- TRACK

184

in his car breaks through the pack.

HARRY'S VOICE

- Wheeler's got by the nine car,
he's comin' up on your inside..

INT COLE'S CAR REAR MIRROR

185

He looks and spots Wheeler's car filling the frame.

HARRY'S VOICE

- if he wants past, let him go.
It's too early in the race to
fight for it...

COLE

- sure. If he wants past, let him
go -

There's just enough room on the inside for Wheeler to
squeeze through. He starts. Cole closes it just a hair.
Wheeler scrapes up nearly even but can't quite get through.
Cole inches back ahead.

WIDER ANGLE TRACK

186

Cole and Russ Wheeler are side-by-side, running wheel to
wheel.

NED JARRETT V.O.

- this is one of those gruelling
door-handle to door-handle lap
after lap duels that neither
driver seems able to win. Trickle
gets ahead in the turns and
Wheeler catches up on the
straightaway -

BENNY PARSONS

- doesn't make a bit of sense to
me, Ned. To fight like this with
three hundred laps to go - it's
the kind of duel that nobody
wins -

Harry spits into the radio:

HARRY

- you ease up right now, hear?
What the hell's wrong with you?

INT CAR COLE

187

in a sweat. He's blinking and shaking his head. Mute and
distort sound. Wheeler's car seems about to break through
Cole's passenger window. The wall looms up ahead. Harry's
voice coming through the radio sounds like gibberish. Cole
can't stand it. He pops in the clutch and floors it.

THE TACHOMETER

zooms into and through the redline.

ENGINE PARTS

burst and whine, oil spews and hits the road.

EXT PITS

188

Harry hurries up to Cole who limps in with his smoking
machine.

HARRY

- what happened?

COLE

- the engine blew -

HARRY

(obviously)

- how?

COLE

- I'm not a fucking mechanic,
Harry!

Cole storms out of the pits.

Nov 20 1989.

91.

REACTION DALAND

- PITS

189

lowering binoculars, looking grim.

NED JARRETT V.O.

- well that's the third time in as many weeks the Cole Trickle car is not going to finish a race, awful lot of bad luck, Benny Parsons -

INT CAR HARRY

190

pushes a button on the tachometer. The readout shows the car red-lined at 10,200 rpm. Harry quickly pushes another button and erases the read-out.

INT SUPER FLO SEMI TRUCK SITTING AREA (DAY)

191

Cole is on the phone still in his racing suit. He's surrounded by crew members changing into street clothes.

COLE

(into phone)

- yeah well I'm in Georgia today and he's in North Carolina, Claire..

(more softly)

..I need to see you too..

REACTION HARRY

outside the doorway, watching.

DALAND

(heading into room)

Cole in there?

Harry stops him.

HARRY

He could use a little privacy.

DALAND

(worried)

What's wrong with him?

HARRY

He's on the phone.

Several crew members come out of the sitting room. Obviously Cole's phone conversation is not completely private.

DALAND

(angry)

I'm not gonna repeat the question, Harry. What's wrong with him?

HARRY

Nothin'. It was the engine -
crawled up.

DALAND

Last week it was the chassis -

HARRY

I'll tell you what's wrong in this
deal. It's you, Tim. You are a
victim of your own goddam
creation -

(right into him)

Two race teams. That's one too
many roosters in the hen house.

DALAND

Doedn't seem to bother Russ
Wheeler.

HARRY

Hell no. Ever since that Daytona
crash Cole's been called a
troublemaker, Wheeler figures he
can bump and bam Cole all he
wants.

DALAND

I don't see Russ doing anything
like that. NASCAR don't see Russ
doing anything like that.

HARRY

Oh, then I guess it ain't
happening. Not under the watchful
eyes of experts like you and
NASCAR.

DALAND

(furious)

I'll tell you what is happening.
Cole's not runnin' good, he's not
lookin' good - and now he's got
sponsor trouble.

HARRY

(just as angry)

But you don't, is that it?

Daland has gone further than he intended.

DALAND

- as far as that goes, no I don't.
But I want to keep the sponsor
and Cole - he's the one that
really made this happen for us,
and I haven't forgotten, Harry -

Daland turns abruptly and leaves.

Harry looks back in on Cole who is simply sitting and staring at the phone.

HARRY
(tentatively)
You were on with the doc?
(Cole nods)
- fightin'?

COLE
(miserable)
I'm not. She says she's too
busy to see me. She probably is.
Face it, she's a serious person.
She's got a serious job -

Cole abruptly rises and walks out of the sitting room, leaving Harry staring at the phone.

EXT RACE TRACK (DAY) - ATLANTA 192

Claire Lewicki is being driven through the arriving crowds, in all their astonishing variety and number.

BOB JENKINS V.O.
- once again, welcome to Winston
Cup racing and the Atlanta Journal
500, the last race of the year and
one that will see the crowning of
this year's Winston Cup Champion -

EXT PIT LANE (DAY) 193

Buck Bretherton leads Claire who is now pinned with all her pit road credentials, to Harry by the truck.

HARRY
- thanks for comin' doc, Cole's
been waitin' on you all day -

CLAIRE
Where is he?

HARRY
Driver's meetin'.

He walks Claire toward the roof of an open building where Cole and the other drivers are getting their last minute instructions. Cole appears tense as he listens, Russ Wheeler makes a point of yawning where Cole can catch it, see Wheeler pointedly stretching and relaxed.

CLAIRE
(quietly)
Has Cole seen Rowdy yet?

HARRY

(whispering)

- it's like I tole you on the phone, Cole's no different from these other guys. They don't like to be reminded what can happen to 'em in a race car.

(quietly pointing)

- see that fellow? His daddy Buddy Bretherton was the king of stock cars. Hero to these drivers. He was also the only driver at his funeral. You get a driver to a funeral before he's actually dead and you've made history, doc -

CLAIRE

- we're not talking about a funeral, if anything we're talking about preventing one -

NASCAR OFFICIAL

(finishing up)

-potential sponsors are in the stands, so let's keep it clean -

Cole has spotted Claire as the meeting breaks up. He hurries over and is so happy to see her he doesn't quite know what to do.

CLAIRE

Is it bad luck to kiss somebody before a race?

HARRY

(regretfully)

- yeah it is, I better handle this, Cole -

Harry starts to put his arms around Claire. Cole grabs Claire and plants a big kiss on her as Harry cackles and other passing drivers shout cheers of encouragement and approval.

Wheeler meanwhile sees that Cole is suddenly relaxed. He's not thrilled.

CLAIRE

(to both men)

- this is my first race.

COLE

We'll make it a good one.

THE YELLOW FLAG

194

is waving. Shots of the action below:

NED JARRETT V.O.

- we're under caution here at the Atlanta 400 and after 392 laps the leaders are: Dale Earnhardt, Cole Trickle, Rusty Wallace, Ricky Rudd and Russ Wheeler -

BENNY PARSONS V.O.

Harry Hogge and his pit crew seem to have that Superflo Chevy running effortlessly for a change -

NED JARRETT V.O.

- well it also seems Trickle's concentrating on all 40 drivers today and not just Russ Wheeler, it does make a difference -

EXT PIT ROAD

195

Harry glances at an eager and excited Claire. He winks - it's going good.

Cole ducks into pit road. Wheeler squeezes in behind him. In that no-man's land between the track and the road Wheeler bumps Cole.

INT CAR COLE

196

reacts, looks through his rear view mirror.

INT CAR WHEELER

197

waves as if to say, 'sorry'.

EXT PIT AREA HARRY

198

has reacted to the bumping. Claire watches.

Cole's pit and Wheeler's pit are adjacent, with Wheeler's in front of Cole's. When Cole jets in, Wheeler pulls up in front and deliberately parks wide.

When Cole tries to leave the pit his exit is blocked by the bumper of Wheeler's car still being serviced. In a fury Cole has to back up but in that half-second Wheeler pulls out in front of Cole as do two other drivers. Buck is beside himself.

BUCK

(in his own heavy Southern accent)

- that no account red neck son-of-a-bitch -

Harry glares across the pits at Daland who is with Wheeler's crew. Daland looks sheepish and shrugs as if to say it was an accident.

ON THE RACE TRACK

Cole is now running fifth position, behind Wheeler and others.

NED JARRETT

- a very costly pit stop for Cole
Trickle, going in second and
coming out fifth with 6 laps to
go -

BENNY PARSONS

- through no fault of his own,
Ned, Russ Wheeler pitting wide
pinned Trickle to the wall,
wouldn't you say -

NED JARRETT

- well nobody ever accused race
car drivers of bein' good at
parallel parking, Benny Parsons -

EXT TRACK

199

Cole threads his way back through traffic, going high on the
outside of Rudd, nearly scraping the wall, then diving down
on the inside pinching by Wallace and Wheeler who was in
third position. He draws virtually even with the leader.
The crowd roars approval.

Claire with Harry is exhilarated.

AT THE STRIPE

200

The white flag is dropped.

INT CAR COLE

201

inches into the lead. He glances into his rear view mirror.
Wheeler breaks in it. Cole breaks out in an instant sweat.
Mute Sound. There's a rattling that seems to fill the entire
cockpit. Cole glances around frantically.

WITH HARRY AND CLAIRE

- PIT

202

COLE'S VOICE

(panicked)

- my rear bumper's loose -

HARRY

- nobody touched your rear
bumper, Cole -

COLE'S VOICE

- then it's the quarter panel
something's loose, Harry!

HARRY
(deadly calm)
- check your spare goggles,
they're taped to the roll cage -

CLAIRE
Something wrong?

HARRY
(downplaying it)
- sometimes when these boys run
out front they start hearing
things, it's nothin' -

Claire's not altogether reassured.

INT CAR COLE

203

has found the flapping goggles to his huge relief. He's
about to say something when he sees Wheeler very large in his
rear view mirror.

Wheeler barely touches Cole's bumper on the last turn.
Cole reacts, jerks the wheel too sharply, and spins. He goes
into the wall and comes off it with two flat tires - just a
couple of hundred yards from the finish.

NED JARRETT
- what a shame -

BENNY PARSONS V.O.
- didn't seem like there was much
contact, Ned -

NED JARRETT
- well sometimes it doesn't take
that much, Benny.

EXT PIT ROAD

204

Claire watches Harry as he's leapt into the adjacent pit and
is nose to nose with Daland:

HARRY
- Russ Wheeler don't deserve to
win Tim, and if Nascar won't call
it low down, shit-ass racin', you
better -

DALAND
(eyeing the two hostile crews
nervously)
- it was just racin', Harry. Cole
overreacted -

COLE

- PIT

205

meanwhile has made it to the pits, car smoking and two tires
flat. He pokes his head through the webbing:

COLE
Change my tires.

BUCK
(confused)
- what for? The race is over,
Cole.

COLE
Change my tires.

The crew changes Cole's tires. He zooms back on the track. Claire watches, puzzled.

INT CAR WHEELER

206

is in the middle of his leisurely victory lap when he looks into his rear view mirror. He screams.

COLE

- TRACK

207

rear ends Wheeler and plows him into the wall, leaving both cars in a tangled and smoking heap. NASCAR officials come running.

HARRY AND DALAND

- PIT

208

turn from each other, stare at the wreck. As it dawns on him:

DALAND
He's..destroyed..both..my..cars!

HARRY
You done that, you greedy used
car salesman -

That does it. Fist fights between the two crews break out. Harry and Daland get knocked to the ground.

As they're lying side by side, trying to keep from getting pummelled:

DALAND
- he's fired, you're fired, you're
all fired, you hear me?

Harry trying hard to ward off blows, nods.

EXT HIGHWAY RENT-A-CAR (DAY)

209

moving along with the leisurely flow of Sunday traffic.

INT CAR COLE AND CLAIRE (MOVING)

210

seat belts buckled. Both stare quietly ahead. They might have been travelling for days. They might have been together for years. Cole spots the airport turn-off and makes it.

EXT ATLANTA TERMINAL

211

Cole pulls up in a busy loading zone. He reaches over and opens the door for Claire.

COLE
Well, thanks for coming -

CLAIRE
Where are you going from here?

COLE
Drop the rent-a-car off, catch the flight to Charlotte -

He shrugs helplessly.

CLAIRE
Would you..like me to come with you?

Cole is surprised. It momentarily conceals his pleasure.

COLE
Don't you have to be at the hospital?

A cab pulls up behind them. Honks. Claire moves close to him.

CLAIRE
We could call this a medical emergency.

COLE
(a trifle defensive)
- it's not. I mean there's nothin' wrong with me...

The cab honks again.

CLAIRE
(softly)
We could also..try to see Rowdy.

This brings up Cole sharply.

COLE
Oh. Yeah.

CLAIRE
Anything wrong with that?

COLE
Of course not. I guess I'd forgotten about that.

CLAIRE
(unavoidably pointed)
I know.

COLE
(irritated)
So it's a medical emergency after
all. Why didn't you just say so?

The cab honks three times. Without looking back Cole flips the cab driver the finger. The cab driver responds by giving Cole's rear bumper a tap. It is a replay of Wheeler's tap, and Cole flies into a rage. He jams the car into reverse and slams into the cab.

CLAIRE
Cole!..

Before she can say anything Cole has rammed the car into forward, screeches ahead ten yards and jams it back into reverse. The cab driver's eyes pop open. he sees it coming and peels out into traffic before Cole can hit him again. Cole takes off after him, Claire having a hard time closing her door.

CLAIRE
Let me out of this car, Cole...
(Cole doesn't answer)
- let me out of the car. Let me
out or I'm getting out -

Cole clips the suitcase of some poor guy who's just taken it out of his trunk. It bursts open and clothes and toilet articles go flying everywhere. This slows Cole momentarily. Claire throws open the passenger door and is going to leap. Cole grabs her and tries to slam the door shut, Claire fights to keep it open:

CLAIRE
(screaming)
Let me out!

Cole slams on the brakes. Claire leaps out of the car. Cole tries to back up. She finds the stairs and starts to the lower level. Cole abandons the car and takes off after her -

COLE
- wait, just wait -

Cole leaps the railing and drops to the ground right in front of her.

CLAIRE
Get away or I'll call the police -

COLE
You'll what?

CLAIRE
You heard me.

She turns and walks away. Cole hesitates, then takes off after her. As they walk side by side:

COLE
Okay, call the police. I'm not leaving till you talk to me.

They walk a few more steps.

CLAIRE
I've got nothing to say.

COLE
Well I do.

Claire stops on a dime. She turns to him. With deadly force:

CLAIRE
Okay, great. Let's hear it.

Cole tries to work his mouth but nothing comes out.

CLAIRE
That's it? Fine.

She turns to go again. Cole grabs her. The look she gives him makes him release her immediately.

CLAIRE
You shouldn't be driving a car anywhere - not on the road, not on a race track and not in a parking lot. You are selfish and you are crazy and you are scared -

COLE
I'm not scared -

CLAIRE
(almost shouting)
You are scared to death.
(then)
You and Rowdy have the same sickness - it's called denial, and it's probably going to kill you both.

She turns away and gets about ten steps. Can't stand it and marches back.

CLAIRE
You want to control something that's out of control, that's what you said to me wasn't it?
(MORE)

CLAIRE (cont'd)

Well I'm going to let you in on a secret that almost everybody else in the world automatically knows - control is an illusion, you infantile egomaniac. Nobody knows what's going to happen next - not on the freeway, not in an airplane, not inside our own bodies, and certainly not on a racetrack with 40 other infantile egomaniacs. Nobody knows and nobody controls anything - you've gotten a glimpse of that and you're scared. You may not have the courage to race anymore. You may never have had it - Oh God, I hate you for this you son of a bitch! You've made me sound like a doctor -

She spits this last out, near tears and walks away.

Cole slouches back into his car.

EXT LAUNDROMAT-DRY CLEANERS (DAY)

212

Cole's bike is parked outside an establishment off the highway and on the edge of town. He slouches out of the place carrying a couple of brown paper laundry bags, sporting a three day growth of beard and wearing clothes that look like he's been in them three days. He's a mess. He ties the laundry bags onto his bike with bungy cords, or starts to. He walks over and leans on a fence at the edge of the laundromat.

BELOW HIM

213

is an abandoned football field. It's one of those all purpose places - soccer goals as well as dilapidated goal posts sprout from a field of dirty weeds and dying grass. Two kids in beat up old cars are racin', digging a loose oval with their tires from goal post to goal post, yelling at each other, frammin' and bammin' all over the place, and having a hell of a time - cheered on by a couple of girls and their buddies from the sidelines. Cole watches as the eager drivers keep going back and forth, round and round, back and forth, round and round...

EXT MEADOW (DAY)

214

Rowdy's at work on a hay baling machine, back to CAMERA. He's chewing headache tablets (the meadow is littered with Goody's wrappers.) Rowdy turns off the machine. He presses his hands to his temples. In the silence there's a familiar sound coming up through the hollow. Rowdy doesn't turn toward the sound. He waits for it to reach him.

COLE

215

shuts down his motorcycle and stares at Rowdy's back. It's almost as if he's afraid to see his face.

ROWDY
(without turning)
Hear you're out of a job.

COLE
- yep.

INT DEN ROWDY'S LAKE HOUSE (DAY)

216

Amid lengthening shadows Rowdy wanders around, chewing more Goody's headache powders and drinking a beer. Cole lounges on a sofa, under a row of racing trophies on a table behind it.

COLE
You're not looking too good.

ROWDY
Neither are you.

Rowdy smiles but it's more of a grimace because of the pain he's in. He pops another headache tablet.

COLE
How many of those things you chew every day?

ROWDY
(shrugs)
Like you said I can't count past five. What you come here for anyway?

Cole pulls out a pair of airline tickets and tosses them on the table next to the trophies.

COLE
Take you to the hospital.

Rowdy smirks.

ROWDY
Drummin' up business for your lady friend.

COLE
Can't drive unless you go.

ROWDY
Ifn it'd been anybody but a damn woman doctor I'da been back on the track weeks ago -

COLE
Is that right?

ROWDY
(furious)
Shit I've raced with my legs
broke, my heart bruised, eyes
popped outta my head like they was
on springs, this'll go away like
anything else - far as I'm
concerned I'm gonna live forever
unless I go to some damn hospital
where they take off your shoes,
make you shut your eyes, and bang
you're dead.

Cole nods. He rises, indicates a trophy next to a rack with
golf clubs and a couple of baseball bats.

COLE
What'd you win this for?

Rowdy stares. He obviously doesn't know.

ROWDY
Doesn't it say?

COLE
Yeah - it's the Winston Cup,
buddy. Well hell, that's an easy
one to forget. What's your name
or has that slipped your mind?

Rowdy turns away. Cole picks a baseball bat out of the rack.
He slams it hard into the table. The trophies jump and Rowdy
does too.

COLE
Okay, we can fix your head here or
down there, what's it gonna be?

EXT DAYTONA MEMORIAL (DAY)

217

Claire is waiting for the two men who make their way up the
steps to her.

INT HOSPITAL COLE

218

sits in a visitors' area, mechanically glancing through the
sports pages. He spots coverage of his Atlanta race and
commentary on his firing, quickly turns the page.

CLAIRE'S VOICE
Rowdy would like to see you.

She looks directly at Cole who doesn't exactly meet her gaze.

COLE
How is he?

CLAIRE
I think he wants to tell you
himself.

INT HOSPITAL ROOM (DAY)

219

Cole comes in with Claire. Rowdy's in bed.

ROWDY
Well, the doc here says I need
minor brain surgery.

CLAIRE
That's not exactly how I put it.

COLE
- listen, any surgery on his brain
is bound to be minor.

All three laugh. Then there's an uncomfortable silence.
Claire regards both men carefully. Cole won't look at her.

ROWDY
Listen doc, can I talk to this guy
a second?

CLAIRE
Of course -
(she touches Cole, he nearly
jumps)
- can I get you a cup of coffee?

COLE
(politely)
Oh no thank you anyway -

Still he won't look directly at her. She shows her
disappointment, then leaves. After a moment:

ROWDY
They say I busted a blood vessel
in my brain...

Cole nods.

ROWDY
- so they wanna drill a hole in my
head, ha, ha, get rid of the leaky
blood...
(very directly)
You reckon I should let 'em, Cole?

Cole is shocked. It's clear Rowdy's going to depend heavily
on Cole's answer.

COLE
(after a moment)
- yeah.

ROWDY
You'd let 'em if it was you.

COLE
I would.

ROWDY
Okay..then I gotta ask you to do
somethin'.

COLE
Hell, name it.

ROWDY
Drive my car.

Cole looks like he's been smacked in the face.

COLE
What're you talking about?

ROWDY
Daytona.

Cole moves over to Rowdy's bedside.

COLE
- you've got plenty of time to get
ready for Daytona, Rowdy. You
don't need me -

Rowdy suddenly grips Cole's arm and holds on tight. His
voice is thick:

ROWDY
I ain't too sure how I'm gonna
come outta this deal, okay!..
(releases his grip on Cole,
his voice is very low)
..I lost my sponsor. I got a
lotta land and a lotta plans that
ain't paid for. I'm a jackass.
If somethin' happened now Loretta
wouldn't be left with a pot to pee
in or a window to throw it out..

Rowdy's eyes well up. He's deeply ashamed and can't look at
Cole.

ROWDY
..so..a good run at Daytona, all
that network t.v. shit - it's the
place to pick a sponsor back up,
you know?

Cole nods.

COLE

- but geez, Rowdy. There's plenty of other drivers. You don't need me.

ROWDY

Don't give me that mealy mouthed shit you son of a bitch. You know what you are! you got balls that big and on any given Sunday you're liable to be the best driver on the track, me included. I want the best for my family. My money's good. Don't bullshit me, Cole. Is there some other reason I ain't good enough for you to drive for?

Cole can't trust himself to speak. He shakes his head.

ROWDY

(fiercely)

Then you'll do it?

Cole nods. Rowdy heaves a sigh of relief.

ROWDY

Shit man, you had me goin'. Now let's get down to business. What's your deal with Daland?

COLE

..oh..hell..we'll work it out. Could you excuse me a second?

EXT ROWDY'S HOSPITAL ROOM

220

Cole makes it out the door and into the wall, pressing his forehead up against it, Claire comes up immediately.

CLAIRE

Cole, what's wrong?

COLE

(his face to the wall)

Nothing..he's fine..he's gonna do it. He's gonna have the operation.

Cole can't quite suppress the stomach spasms.

CLAIRE

Then what's wrong?..

(she continues to stare at him and starts to become unglued herself)

- please look at me...I'm sorry..I'm sorry for everything I said to you..it was awful..

Cole turns to her. His face is tear streaked.

COLE
It was accurate.

CLAIRE
Would you kiss me?

COLE
(very quietly)
No.

CLAIRE
(near tears herself)
What's wrong?

COLE
- nothin'. Nothin'. nothin'..
tell Rowdy I'll call him..

He hurries down the hospital corridor and out of sight, leaving Claire standing there helpless and confused and thoroughly miserable. Then it strikes her. She turns slowly and gazes at the door leading to Rowdy's room.

INT DAYTONA AIRPORT (NIGHT)

221

Cole, carry on over shoulder hands over his boarding pass and goes up the accordion jetway. There's a clatter behind him.

VOICE
- I don't have one, I'm a doctor,
I have to see somebody -

Cole ducks back down. Claire comes into view, out of breath in her hospital whites and staring directly up at him.

CLAIRE
Are you going to do it? Rowdy
said you are..are you?..

She looks so unhinged that Cole comes back down the ramp, drops his carry on.

COLE
- yeah.

CLAIRE
(flabbergasted)
- you mean you actually want to
drive Rowdy's car?

COLE
I don't want to drive any car.

CLAIRE

(with growing desperation)
Then tell him, Cole. Tell him the truth before this goes any further. You're not up to it.

COLE

He won't believe it.

CLAIRE

Of course he will. Just -

COLE

(grabbing her by the shoulders)
He's a suspicious redneck and he's too goddam tough, Claire. He won't believe I'm a coward. He'll just think I'm a liar.

There's a final boarding call.

COLE

- look, he's trying to protect his family the best way he knows how..

CLAIRE

Then I'll tell him it's not the best way -

COLE

(gently)
Do that and he'll call you a liar. Then he'll walk out of that hospital without the operation..

Claire barely nods. She knows Cole's right. She starts to cry. The boarding call again.

COLE

Would you give me a kiss?

She does, and fervently. Cole then rushes up the ramp and out of sight.

EXT. HARRY'S BARN (DAY)

222

There are the grazing cows and the rusted race cars as first seen by Tim Daland. Harry chuckles and shakes his head. *

HARRY

(to Buck and his cronies) *

No, no, nossir! Can't use 'em,
don't want 'em, and couldn't
afford 'em if I did.

Harry doesn't appear to hear Cole enter because he is preoccupied with the tractor and his friends. *

COLE

What the hell are you talking
about?

HARRY

Race car drivers - I know all
about you and Rowdy Burns. I
ain't settin' up that car for
Daytona or anywhere else Cole, but
you're welcome to come on in.
We'll break out the moonshine,
start tellin' lies and callin' up
the women - but no talk about
racin'.

COLE

-okay, no talk about racing.

INT. HARRY'S BARN & COLE

223

and a few good ol' boys from neighboring farms, along with Buck are listening as Harry holds forth - there are empty long neck beer bottles, Wild Turkey fifths, even a stray Mason jar or two - with maraschino cherry pits spewed into coffee cans and styrofoam cups.

HARRY

- so anyway, there was this coal
mine I believed was gonna make me
rich, it was sold to me so good,
hell I proceeded to go up in the
mountains and get in on this coal
mine..

Buck's eyes roll up into his head and he glances over at Cole - they've heard this one before. During this camera circles the room going over memorabilia past the windows which are now dark and back into the room which is now empty except for Harry and one good ol boy who is having a hard time making it to the end of Harry's tale:

Meanwhile Buck and Cole are going over some memorabilia and Harry is having a hard time ignoring them. Cole holds a photo of a young man who looks like a sophisticated version of Buck sitting on a railing staring at Harry. Cole laughs.

Jan 19 1990

110A.

The young man's chic coat is around Harry's shoulders,
European style. The young man holds a cigarette in his mouth
European style. Harry's looking up trying to hold a
cigarette in his mouth the same way.

COLE

What's going on here?

HARRY

(continuing but acutely aware
of Buck and Cole)

- now these mountains had been
worked out for fifty years don't
you know -

BUCK

I believe my Pappy was trying to
teach Harry to smoke like an
Italian -

HARRY

He wasn't teachin' me to smoke
like an Italian. He was teachin'
me to smoke like a Frenchman.

COLE

(another photo)

When was this?

BUCK

- probably nineteen seventy three
at the t.v. station after Harry
and Pappy won their second Grand
National -

HARRY

They call that a dog and pony
show-

Harry can't stand it. He spotted the photo.

HARRY

That was nine-teen seventy-five
and it was our third Grand
National, goddam it!

BUCK

Sorry Harry -

HARRY

- it's just that it's tough enough
to hear the truth about Buddy -

BUCK

(nods)

- anyway I'm gonna take off -

GOOD OL BOY

- me too Harry -

Buck and Cole exchange a quick look and Buck glides on off. In a moment Cole and Harry are alone, Cole surrounded by photos of Buddy Bretherton. Both he & Harry have been drinking heavily but it doesn't show except for a certain squinty-eyed intensity.

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COLE

Why won't you set up the car?

*

Harry sits down abruptly.

HARRY

When you come out with the truth it has to come out like it is or I don't want to tell it..

COLE

Okay. Tell the truth.

HARRY

- ever since you and Rowdy crashed at Daytona and Rowdy got sick, you been waitin' for the other shoe to drop, waitin' on somethin' bad to happen to you... maybe if youda got busted up in that race youda been better off - but you just couldn't see nothin' for a few hours and you been worried about what you can't see ever since. You been hearin' things in the car.. Say, Buddy Bretherton started hearin' voices. All kinds of 'em.

(MORE)

*

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*

HARRY (cont'd)
Everywhere - Atlanta, Richmond,
Wilkesboro, and all of 'em only
had but one thing to say -
(in a ghostly voice)
'get ouuut of that raaace carr!.'

Harry chuckles. Then:

HARRY
(cont'd)
You pegged the engine at Atlanta,
red-lined the sumbitch and blew it
sky high. Done it deliberate.
9,400 rpms according to the little
tell tale button. You was worried
if you didn't get outta that car
right quick - you'd die.
(leans over)
Call me a liar.

Harry spits in his cup, takes a slug of moonshine, glares:

COLE
You're not a liar.

HARRY
Well then, what the hell are we
talking about?

COLE
Racing Rowdy's car at Daytona. I
can't do it without you.

HARRY
You can't do it, period!..and I
ain't goin' back there, Cole.

Harry leaves the kitchen table.

INT. BARN (NIGHT)

Harry's turning out lights as Cole enters the barn - standing
near the spot where Harry built their first car.

COLE
Buddy didn't really die of a heart
attack, did he?

HARRY
..oh, his heart attacked him all
right, but not in the car. You
don't want to hear about it. I'm
going to bed - lock up when you
leave -

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Harry just about makes it thru the doorway when Cole stops him:

COLE

Nascar privately claimed the set-up on the car killed Buddy, that you used thin wall tubing to keep the weight down, exhaust fumes broke through the firewall and carbon monoxide knocked Buddy out. They said they'd investigate unless you agreed to retire.

HARRY

(turns back, slowly)
..you sound like you actually learned a thing or two about race cars.

COLE

(pursuing it)
- so you agreed to retire.

HARRY

- yeah I agreed and they come up with this heart attack horseshit! when Buddy hit the wall at the third turn he was jabberin' on the radio about as fast as he was driving, carbon monoxide my ass that was the loudest talking unconscious man you ever heard in your life!..

Harry's been talking pretty fast himself. He suddenly seems spent.

HARRY

..nothin' killed Buddy but his imagination.

COLE

Then why didn't you let 'em investigate?..why Harry?

HARRY

- cos I shoul'da known better than to let him drive in the first place. Cos I know race car drivers, Cole.. a driver gets his bell rung and a couple of lights flicker, or he gets rich and he's always been poor, or he gets a family and he worries about them. He gets frightened or fat and loses what he needs more than his eyesight, more than his reflexes, more than anything in the world - he loses his need, his need. His need to drive right out there on the ragged edge..

(holds an empty Mason jar upside down)

- when that's gone, it's gone and there ain't no still where you can go to fill it up.. Buddy was a terrible pain in the ass. He thought he knew about cars which made him twice as ignorant as you. I mean he would lay everything wrong on us, particularly when he started gettin' scared. If he burnt up a ring because he forgot to turn on a ring cooler I didn't say nothin'. If the brakes went out because he abused 'em, it was my fault..but still, I look at guys like..

(he obviously means Cole as well but can't say it)

.. Buddy, I seen him do things in my race car that's absolutely unbelievable..that really showed me what I'd done..and then you see, you're going to automatically have to sort of love that guy whether you want to or not..

Harry breaks off. He is too emotional to continue. Cole waits a long moment.

COLE

Harry, I have to ask you something..before Buddy hit the wall, how was he actually doing in that race?

Harry can't believe it. He rises unsteadily, starts to go after Cole.

HARRY

You ornery, no good son-of-a-bitch -

*
*
*

COLE

(backing up)

Harry, I don't want you to hurt yourself - I'm countin' on you to set up the car -

*

HARRY

- you get back in that car and you'll die -

Cole stops backing up.

COLE

I'm not getting back in my car. I'm getting in Rowdy's!

Harry smashes the Mason jar to the ground.

HARRY

- that sounds just dumb enough to be a race driver! You think you'll hide from your bad luck in his car? and what the hell for? For Rowdy? If he could run tomorrow he'd crash you to win the race. He's mean. He's no particular friend. Why?

COLE

Because he asked me to.

HARRY

- and you do anything somebody asks you?

The two men are now toe to toe. Spitting it at him:

COLE

When they need it as bad as Rowdy does - yes.

This hits Harry like a punch. The need. For a moment it appears he's been had. Then his lips curl like an animal's about to attack. It explodes from him:

*
*
*

HARRY

HORSESHIT. You just want to race!

*
*

COLE

Yeah and so do you.

*
*

HARRY

You're scared!

*
*

COLE

Yeah and so are you!..but I'm not
Buddy Bretherton, I haven't been
doing this for twenty years, it's
too soon for me to be scared.
There's something else. Daytona.
You've never won it Harry, not
with Buddy, not with me, not ever.
We promised we'd do it.

Harry is agonized. He does want it. He looks to Cole,
helpless:

HARRY

..I honestly just wouldn't know
how this deal's gonna turn out
Cole..

COLE

I don't know either Harry. But
goddam - aren't you curious to
find out?

EXT. DAYTONA SPEEDWAY (DAY)

BOB JENKINS

This is it, welcome to Daytona and
another year of Winston Cup
racing, as forty of the top
drivers in the country begin their
annual quest for the most coveted
prize in auto racing, the Winston
Cup -

NED JARRETT

- but today, Bob Jenkins, these drivers have only one thing on their minds, the crown jewel, the superbowl of racing - the Daytona 500 -

During this the gorgeous and vulgar panoply of pre-race Daytona at the opening is reprised, but now there are recognizable characters in the crowd:

Daland with Waddell and Russ Wheeler walk with their car as it's being pushed onto the track. Daland spots Harry at the Rowdy Burns car, hood up, Nascar inspector present. Darryl Waltrip kisses his little baby girl before he ambles onto the track. Ken Schrader walks hand in hand with his wife down the twin lanes of cars. He takes off his soft cap and hands it to her. Begins to put on his helmet. She watches.

NED JARRETT V.O.

- well it's certainly been a strange turn of events and it must be a peculiar feeling for Cole Trickle, just about to get into that 51 car with Rowdy Burns' name on it -

BENNY PARSONS V.O.

- well Ned he probably figures it this way, he won't have to worry about looking for it in his rear view mirror -

Daland moves up to Harry, who is still working on the engine, hood raised, the Nascar official hovering, watching every move.

DALAND

(quietly)

- you told me you guys didn't have a sponsor -

He's referring to the Mellow Yellow that has replaced the EXXON on Rowdy's hood.

HARRY

- they give us just about enough money to paint their name on the car -

Daland nods, moves on. Cole is walking down the track hand in hand with Claire and talking quietly when he spots his car. He breaks into a dead run. Arrives in a sweat:

COLE

What's the hood doing up?

HARRY

We had to change engines and
forgot to tighten the oil line.

COLE

Why'd you have to change engines?

HARRY

Found some metal in the Oberg
filter - I'm sure that explains it
for you.

Obviously it doesn't. Cole smiles a tentative, sheepish
smile. Then he's back on it:

COLE

Where'd you get the engine?

HARRY

We stole it.

Cole spots Daland talking to Wheeler. Wheeler waves, winks.

COLE

What were you talking to Daland
about?

HARRY

Claire, put this boy in the car.
Tell him to wait till he gets on
the track before he starts
sweatin' - it's gonna be fine.

Claire walks with Cole to the driver's side.

CLAIRE

(lightly)

- drive carefully -

COLE

I will...just gonna give Rowdy a
decent showing, I'm not gonna kill
myself..

He's meant this figuratively, but it's literal meaning hits
them both.

CLAIRE

- good.

She gives him a lingering kiss and he slips into the car.
The webbing drops and Claire looks like she's just walked
under a dark cloud - then she's suddenly grabbed by the hand.

ON THE TRACK

225

NASCAR OFFICIAL

- and now to give us the most famous words in racing, Rowdy Burns..

There is sustained applause from the crowd - with a couple of isolated boos, which Rowdy particularly appreciates. He waves with the cane he's using. Stands between the two rows of cars.

ROWDY

- thank you. I'd rather be in my car today but one way or another it's nice to be back on the track. I especially want to thank this gal here -

(he's holding Claire's hand)

- she's the one that put the hole in my head a lot of you claimed was already there - gentlemen, start your engines -

There is a roar that is louder than anything heard thus far. Claire can't believe the sound. The cars fly past her and Rowdy. Rowdy spots Cole as he passes, gives him a hi sign. Cole returns it automatically. Claire looks worried.

ROWDY

(as they leave the track)

We don't got a thing to worry about, doc -

Claire tries to look reassured.

ROWDY (cont'd)

You watch. That boy can't help himself - he's gonna win this race or die tryin'.

Rowdy chuckles.

JUST ABOVE THE "O"

226

in Daytona the green flag waves. The cars cross the stripe in a roar and a blur. The race is on.

RANDOM SHOTS

227

of the race in progress. There are spins, crashes, smoking tires, yellow flags, pit stops, green flags.

BOB JENKINS V.O.

- after 125 laps here at the Daytona 500 the leader is Dale Earnhardt, followed by Rusty Wallace, Harry Gant, Russ Wheeler..

Jenkins sets the first ten places, then superimposes the next five. Cole is not among them. CAMERA drifts further back in the field.

BOB JENKINS V.O. (cont'd)

- the much anticipated duel between the Daland/Russ Wheeler Hardees car and Cole Trickle has not been a factor here so far, Ned Jarrett -

NED JARRETT V.O.

(as CAMERA isolates Cole)
- well Trickle's certainly running a different kind of race today. He's stayed in the middle of the pack and appears to be content to let others do the hard chargin' -

INT. CAR COLE

228

expression set. Perspiring.

HARRY'S VOICE

- :47:01, leader is :45:90

ROWDY

- PITS

229

watching with Claire doesn't look overly pleased.

ON THE TRACK

230

the hood from one in the crowd of cars in front of Cole pops up. The driver loses control. He bounces off several cars and hits the wall. It's a multi-car crash. The car hood helicopters high in the air.

INT. CAR COLE

231

fighting his way through the smoke and fire and then sees it - the helicoptering car hood descending and heading right for his cockpit. He screams. Turns to the infield to avoid impact - the hood just brushes him on the passenger side.

WITH HARRY

- PITS 232

HARRY

- there's some oil at the bottom of turn three, leader's just taken it - you all right?

COLE'S VOICE

- seems like there's a hundred cars out here.

HARRY

You're not used to runnin' in a crowd.

WITH COLE

233

This registers. He puts his foot on the gas.

WIDER ANGLE TRACK

234

BOB JENKINS V.O.

- we're back under green here at the Daytona 500 and somebody appears to have lit a fire under the 51 car -

Cole is threading his way high and low through traffic. He spots Gant and Wheeler running side by side.

NED JARRETT V.O.

- right now he's coming up on the leaders Gant and Wheeler -

COLE'S POV

235

There's barely a car's width between Wheeler and Gant. Cole takes the plunge, scraping right between them.

The two cars are buffeted by the near impact and Cole emerges in the lead.

BENNY PARSONS

- now what do we call that, Ned Jarrett? A Trickle sandwich?

NED JARRETT

- might as well - after 165 laps Cole Trickle's the new leader here at the Daytona 500 -

The crowd has gone wild. Harry isn't sure what to think. Rowdy nudges Claire - he knew it all along. Claire is worried.

INT. CAR COLE

236

perspiring more heavily than ever.

HARRY'S VOICE

I don't believe you did that.

COLE

Neither do I.

INT. CAR RUSS WHEELER

237

who doesn't believe it either. His steady stream of invective is lost in the engine's roar.

WITH HARRY

- PITS

238

talking patiently into the radio.

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WITH CLAIRE

- PITS 239

more nervous than ever.

WITH COLE

- TRACK 240

running out front. He spots Wheeler coming up behind him. He jams his foot on the accelerator to get all the speed he can. He holds it to the floor going into turn three.

CLOSE PEDAL

- TRACK 241

with Cole's foot pressing it through the floor. There is a tiny snap. When Cole's foot comes off the gas to brake, the accelerator remains jammed on the floor.

WITH COLE

- TRACK 242

as the wall on turn three approaches. He brakes. The car doesn't slow. It continues running full out. The wall approaches in lightning leaps. Cole jams his foot harder on the brake. He jams both feet on the brake. Smoke drifts up from the floorboards. Cole just makes it through the turn, the car running an odd line.

WITH HARRY

- PITS 243

noticing.

HARRY

What's goin' on?

COLE

..accelerator's stuck. What can I do, Harry?..Harry?

Harry's beside himself but tries to be calm for Cole.

HARRY

(as calm as he can)

- oh, pop the clutch and blow the engine - you got no choice
Cole..you done good, but it's over..

WITH COLE

- TRACK 244

going down the backstretch, still in the lead. The wall is approaching. He starts to come down on the clutch but changes his mind and brakes - smoke flies up through the floorboard. Cole makes it through the turn, still in the lead.

NED JARRETT V.O.

Trickle's runnin' a very peculiar line out there..

HARRY'S VOICE

You try that again and you're gonna have a car runnin' flat out with no brakes -

DOWN THE FRONT STRETCH

245

Cole is trying to reach the dash but can't. He is strapped in too tightly. He loosens the shoulder harness.

COLE

How many more laps?

HARRY'S VOICE

Cole!

His shoulder harness is now loose enough for him to reach the dash. His fingers struggle toward a button on the dash but the wall is approaching too quickly. He has to jam on the brakes again. The cockpit fills with smoke.

BOB JENKINS

- with thirty-two laps to go, Trickle is still leading Russ Wheeler at the Daytona 500 -

NED JARRETT

(an urgency that breaks thru his professional demeanor)
There's somethin' definitely wrong with that race car -

BOB JENKINS

Let's go down to Dr. Jerry Punch -

JERRY PUNCH

- PITS

246

in the pit with Harry. Claire and Rowdy nearby.

PUNCH

- apparently there seems to be some sort of carburetor linkage problem with the Cole Trickle car, how about it Harry?

He holds the microphone under Harry's nose. Harry is sweating bullets. He ignores Punch.

PUNCH

Harry?

HARRY

The fucking accelerator is stuck to the floorboard! now would you excuse me please?

PUNCH

Well, back to you Bob Jenkins -

INT. CAR COLE

247

approaching the wall again.

HARRY'S VOICE

Cole? You can't brake anymore.
You blow that engine now, hear?

Cole reaches out and flips the switch he couldn't reach before. There is silence in the cockpit. He glides through the turn, struggling with the wheel, and keeping Wheeler behind him.

FROM A DISTANCE

248

the line of the car looks smoother.

HARRY

(astonished)

What the hell'd you do?

COLE'S VOICE

I might not know much about cars,
Harry..but I know how to turn 'em
on and off..

INT. CAR COLE

249

He's through the turn. He hits the ignition just as Wheeler pulls up alongside him. His engine roars and he pulls ahead once again.

HARRY'S VOICE

- you can't do that for
twenty-five more laps..

COLE'S VOICE

I'm gonna try..

Coming off the straightaway and into the turn Cole flips the switch. Again there's an eery silence. Cole holds through the turn, fighting to stay in the groove. Wheeler's right behind him.

WIDE ANGLE TRACK

250

BENNY PARSONS V.O.

I don't see how he can keep doing
this..

NED JARRETT V.O.

Benny you been saying that for 10
laps.

BENNY PARSONS V.O.

And I still don't see it -

BOB JENKINS V.O.

With just over 5 laps to go here at Daytona Cole Trickle has managed to cling to the thinnest of leads under extraordinary conditions...

AT THE THIRD TURN

- TRACK

251

Cole shuts off and moves into it. As he does Wheeler moves closer. The progressive shutting on and off of his engine has brought Wheeler to the point where he's finally reached Cole's bumper. He gives it a nudge.

INT. CAR COLE

252

with no engine the tiniest of nudges sends him careening wildly. Nearly through the turn he tries to turn on the engine but it's too late - he slams into the wall with two flat tires.

Wheeler takes the lead. The caution flag comes out. The cars slow down. Harry hangs his head.

INT. CAR COLE

253

looks down. He sees the impact has freed the accelerator. He turns on the engine. The gears grind. He swears furiously.

HARRY'S VOICE

Cole, you okay?

COLE

- the good news is the accelerator's fixed - the bad news is the transmission's fucked. What can I do?

HARRY

- PITS

254

comes to life.

HARRY

Hell, Cole seein' as you do everything else backwards - try reverse.

COLE

- TRACK

255

slams the car into reverse and it works. He comes screaming down the track backwards at nearly eighty miles an hour, catching up with the pack. He reaches pit road and brakes, flipping the car 180 degrees, pitting perfectly.

Buck leads the charge. His over-the-wall-gang jack up the car, change the tires. Buck struggles with the transmission.

HARRY

You can't fix it, just get it in
high gear -

Harry and Buck twist the linkage, drop the car to the road -
the car sputters in high gear. His crew have to keep pushing
it down the road.

DALAND WITH WHEELER'S CREW

256

watch. Cole's car is dying without more momentum.

Daland signals Wheeler's crew. They rush out and together
with Harry and his crew, they push Cole's car. It stops
sputtering and moves onto the track where the cars are still
running under caution.

NASCAR OFFICIAL

(to Daland)

You can't do that. It's not your
car.

DALAND

It sure as hell is my engine in
that car - that's what my boys are
pushin'.

WHEELER

- TRACK

257

looks thru his rear view mirror. He can't believe Cole is
back on the track. He momentarily fails to see the pace car
has gone off the track.

WADDELL'S VOICE

Green flag! Green flag! what the
hell are you waitin' on Russ?

Wheeler takes off but keeps one eye on his rear view mirror.

INT. CAR COLE

258

COLE

Where am I?

HARRY'S VOICE

Runnin' seventh.

COLE

How many laps to go?

HARRY'S VOICE

Three.

ON THE TRACK

259

Cole threads his way relentlessly thru traffic.

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AT THE STRIPE

260

the white flag is waved. Cole crosses it and passes another car. There's only one remaining between Cole and Wheeler.

WITH WHEELER

261

growing more and more edgy. He makes it thru the second turn. Checks his rear view mirror. He sees Cole move out behind the number two car. Cole passes it and is now growing in Wheeler's rear view mirror as Wheeler approaches the third turn. Wheeler is fascinated. As Cole's car continues to fill up Wheeler's rear view mirror, Wheeler keeps watching and watching and drives right off the track and into the infield. He ploughs into the huge mound of earth in front of the lake.

EXT. PIT ROAD

262

Harry, Buck, Claire, Rowdy, and the pit crew begin to race toward the finish.

THE CHECKERED FLAG

263

is waving over the "O" in Daytona. The crowd surges and roars. Cole crosses the stripe.

ON THE TRACK

264

Cole's car is mobbed. As the webbing is pulled back - freeze frame to:

PHOTOGRAPHS IN VICTORY LANE

265

Not as slow as the black and white stills in the beginning or as quick as the shots of Cole in his first win at Pocono - but Cole with Claire, Harry, Rowdy, Daland - kidding, clowning, kissing, drinking in all the champagne and sweetness of victory. Continue through credits.

FADE