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Days of Thunder

By Robert Towne

Welcome to the Daytona 500,
the Superbowl of motor racing.
Walking onto the grid
is two-time champion Rowdy Burns.
A contender from Pennsylvania,
Aldo Benedetti.
Gentlemen, start your engines.
Number 43, Richard Petty,
spins to the inside of the track.
Richard Petty is out
of the Daytona 500.
Speaking of people out of the race,
remember Harry Hogge?
His driver, Buddy Bretherton, died
here last year in a fiery crash.
- You're enjoying the good life.
- Yeah.
I never minded spreading a little
fertilizer around now and then.
- How's the truck running?
- Good.
I want you to build me a car.
Everybody knows some car dealer
who can't afford a race team.
No driver will sign with you.
If they wreck one car, you can't
afford to build them another.
No car's going to win without
a driver ... not even mine.
If you built the car,
I'd get a damn driver.
What kind of driver are you going
to find after the season's started?
You can work with him. You can
build a driver like you build a car.
That hound is the best
coon dog I've ever seen.
- And I didn't teach him a thing.
- I've got somebody.
- Take a look at him.
- He doesn't sound like somebody.
Then take a look at nobody.
- Tim, I gave up racing.
- You didn't give up racing.

You quit to avoid an investigation into Buddy's crash at Daytona.

I talked to NASCAR. If you come back there won't be an investigation.

- How did you sell them that deal?

- I'm a hell of a salesman.

Now that's a race car driver.

When's your driver due?

- Your guy runs those Indy types.

- Sprints, mainly.

Two championships, three all-star wins, seven straight feature wins.

He's a real statistician.

Does he know anything about drivers?

- Harry, where's your driver from?

- Eagle Rock.

- Is that up around Wilkesboro?

- No. Glendale, California.

- He's a Yankee?

- Californians aren't Yankees.

- They're not really anything.

- You said it.

The shocks are right, we're dialed in. Don't change a thing.

- Hey, you're looking pretty good.

- You're the one looking good.

It hasn't been easy, Harry, but this bitch is ready to run.

We appreciate you letting us use the car, Rowdy.

I told you. Harry's got a new driver and he needs a car for a few laps.

Harry Hogge asked us personally as a favor.

Who is this driver?.

Tim tells me

you've been running open wheels.

Now you just want

to up and drive NASCAR?

- This is stock car racing.

- I've watched it on television.

- You've seen it on television?

- ESPN, the coverage is excellent.

This may not be the best time

for you to run this car.

- Is there some problem?

- No, sir.

You bend this bitch,
and I'll tear your balls off.

Would you mind very much
holding on to this?

Didn't you hear what that man said?

- Hold on, we ought to talk.

- About how I'm going to run?

About how you've managed to live
so long. You ain't racing this car.

What's going on?

You said you'd look at him.

- I've looked at him.

- I paid \$2,500 to use this track.

- Forget it. He needs a brand name.

- I know a driver when I see one.

- Harry, is this happening or what?

- Do us all a favor, Harry.

Let me drive.

I won't make a fool out of you.

That tunnel turn is real tricky.

Hot or cold, it's slick.

You'll slam into the wall
before you know it. So take it easy.

- I'm dropping the hammer.

- No, you're not.

- it's under Rowdy's time.

- He should've cracked up the car.

- That was fast.

- Yeah?

the pole in the last race here.

- You never drove a stock car?.

- No, sprints mainly.

- Buck Bretherton.

- Cole Trickle, nice to meet you.

You were one lucky son of a bitch
in the tunnel turn.

If you think it was luck,

let's do it again.

You run good.

Go get your own car

and we'll see how you do in a crowd.

- What's wrong with open wheels?

- I lost my ride.

After all those wins,
you were fired?

I lost my ride. I'd have quit
regardless. I wasn't going anywhere.

- Where do you want to go?

- Indianapolis.

To win in Indy I'd need a great car,
but stock cars are all the same.

There's nothing stock
about a stock car.

I'm not trying to insult you, but
stock cars are built to run equal.

- I won't be beaten by a car.

- Only by a driver.

You build me a car,
and I'll win Daytona next year.

I'm going to give you an engine
low to the ground.

An extra-big oil pan
that'll cut the wind underneath you.

That'll give you

I'll give you a fuel line
that'll hold an extra gallon of gas.

I'll shave half an inch off you
and shape you like a bullet.

When I get you primed,
painted and weighed ...

... you're going to be ready
to go out on that racetrack.

You're going to be perfect.

I'm going to pull
this rookie's chain.

- Cole, you're all over the track.

- He just slammed into me.

He didn't slam you or bump you.

He rubbed you. Rubbing is racing.

There goes the fender.

There goes the quarter panel.

While we're still under a caution,
go out and hit the pace car.

Hit the pace car?. What for?.

You hit every other damn thing

out there. I want you to be perfect.

You're too high.

How about that?

This side we don't have to fix.

I don't want you spoiled, Buck.

This is gonna hurt.

Did you see that guy?.

- I've got to pit.

- No, we're busy now.

- We're eating ice cream.

- Ice cream!

You can come in and get one,

but it wouldn't impress NASCAR.

You have enough trouble

riding around the track as it is.

Take it easy.

Come on now, Cole!

We messed up big-time on Sunday.

I had sponsors in the stands.

I was hugging and holding hands

and praying for a good showing.

And we end up looking like

a monkey fucking a football.

Everybody out, please ...

except you two.

I've got a question: What is the one
thing you need to do to win a race?

- it's pretty obvious ...

- Quiet! You must finish the race.

I realize that Harry's

been around a long time.

But I need a proper car

that doesn't blow engines.

If he didn't over-rev the engine,

it wouldn't blow.

When you shift the gear, -

- and the needle on the tach

reads 9,000 rpm, that's bad.

- The tires blow, is that my fault?

- Yes, it's your fault.

There's 40 other drivers out there

who don't use up their tires.

There's nothing I can't do

with a race car.

- There's only so much I can do!
- That's obvious.
He doesn't need
to appreciate your job to do his.
He has to know
what a car can and can't do!
You want me to work the pit
and you drive?
I can't talk to this son of a bitch.
I can't talk to that son of a bitch.
I really can't.
- You think he can drive?
- He can drive.
He can drive
beyond the limits of the car!
If he'd listen to me,
we'd never lose a race.
If we don't get a sponsor soon,
my ass is fried.
I'm liable to be out
of the car business all together.
Harry, I know you're great.
You know you're great.
But if the driver doesn't trust you,
we're never going to win a race.
Hey, Harry.
- We've got to talk.
- All right, talk.
On the radio during the race ...
You've got to tell us
what's going on with the car.
You want to change the way I drive.
Set up the car
so I don't have to change.
- Tell me how.
- What do you want to know?
Is she running loose or tight?
A turn here, take some wedge out,
we'll win some races.
I can't do that. I don't know
what the hell you're talking about.
How do you mean that?
- I don't know much about cars.
- Neither does any other driver.

No, I really don't know.
A turn here? A wedge there?
- I don't know.
- How can that be?
They told me
to get in a car and drive.
I'd like to help out, but I can't.
I don't have the vocabulary.
Well ... we're just going
to have to figure one out.
Don't worry about it.
All right?
How does she feel?
- Her ass is all over the place.
- Her rear end is loose.
'Loose' is fast, and 'on the edge'
is out of control.
Cole, there is something else.
- Tires is what wins a race.
- What are you talking about?
If you can't run without melting
the tires, we can't finish a race.
What do you want?
Run 50 laps any way you like,
then 50 laps like I want you to.
Give me an honest run.
If you do, I'll beat you.
Now we're going to do it
When you were racing Indy cars,
the tires were twice as wide -
- and the car weighed half as much.
Now it's the opposite.
You're burning them up.
They melt and get greasy.
You slip and slide
and you're out of control. Let's go!
His way, my way.
I was six seconds faster.
You can buy me some lunch
at the highway joint.
- What's wrong?
- We're figuring out what to do.
- About what?
- We're in trouble.

Rowdy took the pole in 30:25.
We're almost a second off the pace.
We're looking for some speed.
The car's perfect, Harry.
it's the first race of the season at
Darlington International Speedway.
You're running 12th.
- You're going to burn the tires.
- Everybody else slowed down.
He's right. Check his lap times.
Everybody else has fallen off.
You're doing good, Cole.
You're gaining on the leader.
Don't pass
on the outside of turn four.
Stay to the inside.
Ten laps to go.
Trickle is right behind Rowdy Burns.
- I'm right behind the leader.
- Five laps to go.
- Remember me?
- What the hell's going on?
Just a little rubbing.
Rubbing's racing.
I'm going to take this rookie
once and for all.
That's enough!
You can't play with Rowdy like this.
Relax, Harry.
Rowdy Burns is out!
No! An incredible recovery by Rowdy.
We have a new leader.
Cole Trickle in number 46.
We're under caution
with three laps to go.
- Come on in.
- What for?. it's almost over.
You've done 68 laps.
Everybody's got to pit, Cole.
Go, go!
The air gun's jammed,
get me another one.
Let's go!
Damn it! Go! Go!

Get them on quick!

- Son of a bitch!

- Now, Cole ...

- Son of a bitch!

- We're on the air, all right?

I was in first place. Now I'm
in third with two laps to go.

Don't get excited.

Third place is pretty respectable.

Going into turn four,

drive right by him on the outside.

Nobody goes to the outside
on turn four.

- You can hold it.

- He's going to end up in the wall.

The pace car is about to go off.

We don't have time to talk.

- We've got a good set of tires on.

- What?

- Those tires are matched perfect.

- You're going to get him killed.

If you go to the outside,
you can hold it.

All right.

The white flag is out.

One lap to go.

The boy don't have the balls
to pass me on the outside.

They're heading into
treacherous turn four.

Cole Trickle wins his first ever
NASCAR victory.

Second place goes to Rowdy Burns.

On that last turn, did you know you
could make the car stick like that?

I knew it all along.

Harry put on special tires.

- What's special about them?

- Nothing in particular.

- You told me ...

- I had to calm you down.

You were acting like such
a candy-ass when the air gun stuck.

Try this on for size.

We've got ourselves a sponsor.
Promise me that whatever else we do
from here, we win Daytona.
That's a promise.
Selling useless mining stock
is called a dog and pony show.
It may be funny, but it's not that
funny when it happens to you.
- It happened to me.
- You bought worthless stock?.
I told you I lost my ride.
That's how I lost it.
Team owner was a conman
selling junk bonds.
But mainly he sold stolen yachts.
After I won, he used my name
to promote the sales.
He went to jail
and I lost my ride.
- It was pretty humiliating.
- Hell, don't be embarrassed.
Some lowlife piece of trash
put you in a bad position.
That depends on whether you're
related to that piece of trash.
He was my father.
I've never really
stuck with anything since.
They don't trust me,
and I don't trust them.
Like for instance ...
You lied to me today. It was
dumb-luck I didn't end up crashed.
- I ought to punch you out.
- Yeah? Give it a try.
No.
I wouldn't want my ass kicked
by a 60-year-old man.
Drivers just don't go
to the outside like that.
I knew you could do it.
I believed it in my heart.
- Peach or cherry?.
- Cherry.

I need a leak.

There's calculating drivers,
and then there's kamikaze drivers.

Cole here's a kamikaze,
like my pappy was. Buddy Bretherton.

Buddy Bretherton was your dad?

- He died at Daytona.

- Last year.

- How did it happen?

- He hit the wall.

He was probably dead before that.

The coroner reported a heart attack.

We've been pulled over.

Everybody out and up against
the wall. You're under arrest.

- What the hell for?.

- That.

Transportation of alcohol
for the purpose of distribution.

This is not distribution,
this is consumption.

That doesn't make it legal.

Up against the wall.

It looks like we've found something.

A concealed weapon.

- Where?

- Right here.

Now, the only question is:

Will he actually use it?

Don't be mad. Harry and the boys
thought you might like me.

Here we are for summer speed week
in Daytona Beach, Florida.

The favorite today is newcomer
Cole Trickle in number 46.

He has won an unprecedented
five out of his last six races.

Stop playing peek-a-boo
in Rowdy's rear-view mirror.

- I'm not doing anything like that.

- Then what are you doing?

I loosened his bumper.

I'll have to break it off.

If his bumper goes through

your radiator, you're finished.

Rowdy, let him go by.

I'm going to take him

on the high side.

- What are you worried about, Harry?.

- Great recovery, Cole.

Trickle's right behind the number 51

car, and they'll go at it again.

There's a crash

coming out of turn four.

I see it.

- I can't see anything.

- Wiggle your fingers for me.

I can't see anything.

I'm all right.

- I don't need recharging.

- It's standard procedure.

- You go screw yourself.

- What was that?

I wouldn't tell you to do that.

- Tell me what's going on.

- What's your name?

- Cole.

- Cole, lie still, please.

- CAT scan, right away.

- Yes, Doctor.

He's had a concussion. His brain
is bruised and it's going to swell.

That's what's affecting his vision.

You have a concussion.

- It will affect your vision.

- Will it go away?.

Tell him we're running some tests.

What did his helmet look like?

Was it cracked?

- No.

- Was it scratched?

Was the helmet scratched

at the front or back?.

- The back and the front.

- Are you a brain doctor?

Could someone talk to me?

When I'm driving, I've got a guy
on the radio who talks to me.

Don't worry,
we're going to take care of him.

Harry.

- Are you okay, Harry?.

- Yeah. Why?.

You look all bent out of shape.

- Hell, it's probably just my eyes.

- No, I've been here all night.

Jesus! What are they giving me here?

What happened?

Rowdy was spinning across the track.

The rule is, go straight for them.

So I never took my foot off the gas.

He should have been gone by the time

I got there ... but he wasn't.

I think another car hit you

and knocked you into Rowdy.

It's one of those things that never

happens. Don't even think about it.

- I'll get the doctor.

- I feel great.

Damn nice to see you, Cole.

It's damn nice to see you, Buck.

Cole, you've met Dr Lewicki.

- That's your doctor.

- He's not actually seen me before.

Sure, Harry.

- No ...

- Dr Lewicki.

Smock, stethoscope.

It's a great costume, Harry.

- How are you, Doc?

- This really is Dr Lewicki.

- I was just about to go off duty.

- You came by to look me over.

That's not a bad idea.

Is your vision restored?

- I think so.

- Nothing's blurred?

No haloes around objects?

Flashing lights?

- What are you going to do now?.

- Look into your eyes.

Doc ...

Isn't this
what you're really looking for?.
That's interesting enough,
but it's just not my specialty.
- She was the real thing?
- I wouldn't be joking around here.
Sorry, I'm trying not to smile.
All right, get out.
Get out of here.
- I can walk.
- Not while you're in this hospital.
- Can you pick up the pace a little?
- If you want drugs, see the nurse.
Get out of the way.
Good morning, gentlemen.
Right this way.
Neither Mr. Burns nor Mr. Trickle
have any significant cranial injury.
Let's have that in English.
Did they mess up their squash?
Their brains are intact ...
as much as they ever were.
- Do they get clearance to race?
- It's a dangerous pastime.
- That's not a medical objection.
- They won't get clearance just yet.
- That's total horseshit.
- Gentlemen, please ...
I think they'd like another opinion.
We'd like to talk to your boss.
Which is a re-evaluation
in a week or two.
Thank you. We have something
to say to the boys in private.
Okay, Big John's turn.
If you want to become a greasy
spot on a country road, go ahead.
I don't give a shit
and I don't think anybody else does.
But you're not going to do it
on my racetrack.
You've all heard
of Japanese inspection?
When the Japs get a load of lettuce

they don't want in the country, -
- they let it sit on the docks
until they get ready to look at it.
By then it's all gone rotten.
There's nothing left to inspect.
Lettuce is a perishable item,
like you two monkeys.
You trade paint one more time,
I'll black flag the two of you.
I'll take apart your race car
for inspection.
After you've put it back together,
you can race.
Now, as there's no hard feelings,
we're all going out to dinner.
- I've got other plans.
- You'll have to change them.
You two are going
to drive to dinner together.
Dr Lewicki ...
I want to apologize
for what happened with Cole.
It's nothing to worry about.
It was hardly your doing.
That's just it, it was. Not long
ago, we played a trick on Cole.
We dressed up a pretty girl
in a highway-patrol uniform.
We told her to get real ornery
with him and she did.
- You mean ..?
- I mean real ornery.
- Why do you want me to know this?
- Don't hold a bad opinion of Cole.
I believe it scares him. He needs
reassurance from you that he's okay.
After all, you're his doctor.
That's it.
Doc ...
I heard you thought
I was a highway-patrol officer.
- Thank you for taking care of me.
- It's my job.
- It's my life.

- This time let's shake hands.

- Of course.

- Good luck, Cole.

- Dr Lewicki, could I see you?

- You will, I promise.

I mean have some dinner,

I'll take you to a race.

That's very sweet, but it won't get
you back on the track any faster.

No ...

It's not what I meant.

- Now what?

- Here's how I see this deal ...

Neither of us is going to let
the other drive this car to dinner.

- There's only one way to settle it.

- What are you talking about?

Absolutely.

Let me tell you something. If you
can't control your race drivers ...

Stick to something you can control.

Like used cars

in downtown Charlotte.

- Too close to call?

- Yeah.

- You're late.

- We had car trouble.

- What kind of car trouble?

- I believe it was the radiator.

Yes, Rowdy, I believe it was.

Do you know anybody

at Daytona Memorial?

- The chief of staff.

- Is he a race fan?

Russ Wheeler is driving for us,
till you get your medical clearance.

It's a real pleasure

to race your car, Mr. Trickle.

I need the home address

of a doctor ...

I'm only sorry I won't be able
to drive it as good as you.

I'll see you later, Harry.

The doctor ...

What?

I was desperate
to get your attention.

You got it.

I walked into a jungle.

It's nicely extravagant,
but I can't. I'm a doctor on call.

Somebody has to re-examine me.

I'll take you to a race.

I don't want to watch you guys
chasing each other on my day off.

How about chasing me
on your day off?

I don't have a day off.

I'm on call 24 hours.

- Let's suppose you had a day off.

- Sugar.

Could I interest you
in the North Carolina countryside?

- Speaking theoretically?.

- Speaking theoretically.

Maybe.

You'd have to convince my boss.

Good. How tall are you?

- What did he say?.

- Fly to Charlotte to see the boys.

You're very quick.

You ought to see me drive.

- Rowdy is not here.

- I told him to be here by five.

We should probably get started
on Cole.

Close your eyes. Palms up.

Open your eyes. Arms down.

Follow my finger.

Stand with your feet together
and close your eyes.

Walk one foot in front of the other.

Open your eyes.

Back on the table.

- This is tough.

- Examinations always are.

I might not like what I see.

That has to worry you. Pick a spot

on the wall and look at it.

Please, don't move your eyes.

Just focus on one spot.

- What do you see?

- The retina.

What does it look like?

Very pretty, actually.

- Seen enough?

- Just about.

- What did you do that for?.

- It's the Lowinski sign.

If the toe goes up, you're in trouble. You're cleared to race.

I'm sorry,

it just drove me nuts in there.

- How could you ignore me like that?

- I wasn't ignoring you!

I wasn't ignoring you.

I gave you a very thorough physical.

- Don't do anything weird.

- I won't.

It's something

Harry and I work on together.

It's called draughting.

One car tucks in behind another.

Two cars can go faster than one.

They divide the air resistance.

The lead car has to floor it to hit 200 mph.

The car behind doesn't. He can go just as fast with power in reserve.

When these two cars

come off that last turn, -

- the car at the back

can move out of the draught, -

- slingshot past the lead car

and beat it to the finish line.

He goes straight to Victory Lane.

- You and Harry work on that?

- More or less.

Yeah, right. Is there anything you want to do besides racing?

- Anything you say.

- You must want something else ...

... eventually.

I can tell you what I don't want
to be in life, and that's a fraud.
I want to know it's not just luck
that gets me round that racetrack.

- But that's not what you're asking.

- What am I asking?

- How can I be in bed with this guy?.

- I know the answer to that one.

How could a brilliant brain doctor
be in bed with a racing driver?.

What's your response to that,
by the way?.

Do something to make me respect you.

Tell me what you love
so much about racing.

The speed.

To be able to control it.

To know that I can control
something that's out of control.

I'd really have to show you.

Show me.

It's funny. When I grew up, all I
wanted to do was work on race cars.

Now all I want to do is to make
enough money to work on a farm.

- Hi, Claire, I'm Jennie.

- Nice to meet you.

We're going to build
our permanent home up there.

- Does it cost much?

- About \$10 million.

Jennie's doing the building.

She's designing the house.

We just want a place
that no one's lived in but us.

- What is it?

- I'm just seasick.

You didn't forget
about the physical.

Nobody in my family goes to a doctor
unless they're dying.

- I'm just not feeling good.

- Stand with your feet together.

Put your arms out.
Close your eyes.
Take it easy. I've got you.
I'm fine.
I'm fine.
Go back to Daytona.
The head of neurosurgery is my boss.
He's as good as they come.
- Did you get sick in there?
- No.
He did, he got sick.
You're one hell of a candy-ass.
It's imperative that you get back
to Daytona and see Dr Wilhaire.
There's another new Winston Cup team
sponsored by Hardee's.
The driver is Russ Wheeler, -
- the young man who subbed
so superbly for Cole Trickle.
Listen to this horseshit.
With these two competitive spirits,
will there be any conflict?
We believe we can maintain the
integrity of these two race teams.
Who will you be rooting for, Tim?
I'll wave to Cole
every time I lap him.
- These new tires are terrible.
- You're doing good, Cole.
I'm too loose.
- The car feels all wrong.
- Cole's upset.
- What about?
- About being in that race car.
Wheeler just passed the eight car.
He's coming up on your inside.
Jesus!
- The engine blew.
- How?.
I'm not a mechanic, Harry.
I'm in Georgia.
Rowdy's in North Carolina.
Somebody better
talk him into coming down here.

The longer he ignores it, the more damage will be done to his brain.

- Where's Cole?

- He's on the phone.

We could use a little privacy.

- What's wrong with him?

- What's wrong is you, Tim.

- Two race teams is one too many!

- It doesn't bother Russ Wheeler.

No, with Cole's reputation Wheeler knows he can bump him all he wants.

I don't see Russ doing anything like that, neither does NASCAR.

It ain't happening then, under the watchful eyes of you experts!

I tell you what is happening:

Cole's not running good

and now he's got sponsor trouble.

- But you don't?

- No.

But I want to keep the sponsor and Cole. He made this all happen.

Right!

Were you on the phone with the doc?

Fighting?

She's too busy to talk right now.

Here's your owner, Tim Daland.

Russ ran a great race today.

I'm very pleased.

caution here at North Wilkesboro.

- Cole hasn't seen Rowdy yet.

- Cole's just like any other driver.

He doesn't want to see Rowdy.

Drivers don't like to be reminded of what can happen to them out there.

The only time a driver goes to a funeral is when he's actually dead.

- He's blocking me.

- That's right.

Move the son of a bitch!

Son of a bitch!

Trickle at the bottom of the track with both right-side tires flat.

Wheeler takes the chequered flag.

Wheeler doesn't deserve to win.

That's low-down shit-assed racing.

It's just racing. Cole overreacted.

- Change my tires.

- I don't know what for. It's over.

There seems to be a little post-race activity just outside the pit lane.

You shit!

He's destroyed both my cars!

He's fired! You're all fired!

- Are you heading off to Daytona?

- Where are you going from here?

I'll take you to the airport.

I'll catch a flight to Charlotte.

- You want me to come with you?

- What about the hospital?

We could try to see Rowdy.

- Is there anything wrong with that?

- Of course not.

- I guess I forgot about that.

- Yeah, I know.

Let me out of the car.

Let me out.

- Let me out or I'm getting out.

- Hey!

Claire! Wait.

- Get away or I'll call the police.

- I'm not leaving until we talk.

- I've got nothing to say.

- Well I do!

That's it? Fine.

You shouldn't be driving a car,
not on a road or a racetrack.

You're selfish, you're crazy
and you're scared.

You and Rowdy have a sickness.

It's called denial.

And it's probably
going to kill you both.

You want to control something
that's out of control, right?

I'm going to let you in on a secret
that most other people know.

Control is an illusion. Nobody knows

what's going to happen next.
Not on a freeway, -
- and certainly not on a racetrack
with 40 other infantile egomaniacs.
Nobody controls anything. You've had
a glimpse of that and you're scared.
You might not have the courage
to race anymore.
I hate you for this.
You make me sound like a doctor.
Jennie ...
Why are you here?
Where is he?
- I hear you're out of a job.
- Yeah.
You're not looking too good.
- How many of these do you take?
- What did you come here for?.
To take you to the hospital.
If it wasn't for that woman doctor,
I'd be back on the track.
- Is that right?
- Yeah, that's right.
I've raced with my legs broken,
heart bruised and eyes popping out.
This is going to go away.
I'm going to live forever, -
- unless I go to some damn hospital
where you just lay down and die.
What did you win this for?.
This one right here.
- Doesn't it say?.
- Yeah, it's the Winston Cup.
What's your name?
Or has that slipped your mind, too?
- Screw you, man.
- Okay.
We can go down there and fix your
head or we can fix it right here!
Rowdy would like to see you.
- How is he?
- He's okay.
- How are you?
- Good.

- Will he make Daytona?
- He'll make it out of the hospital.
But he'll never
drive a race car again.
This is Dr Wilhaire.
He's going to be doing the surgery.
Cole Trickle.
How is he?
The doc says
I need minor brain surgery.
Any surgery on his brain
is bound to be minor.
- Can I talk to this guy a second?
- Of course.
A blood vessel in my brain busted.
They want to drill a hole in my head
and get rid of the blood.
- Should I let them do it?
- Yeah.
- You'd let them if it was you?
- I would.
Then I've got to ask you to do
something for me.
- Drive my car.
- What?
Daytona.
You've got plenty of time
to get ready for Daytona.
I lost my sponsor. They're not sure
I'm going to come out of this deal.
Are you?
I've got a lot of land
and a lot of plans I ain't paid for.
So to get my sponsor back,
my car has to run good at Daytona.
All that network TV shit.
- There's plenty of other drivers.
- Don't give me that shit.
My car has to be in the top five, -
- before my sponsors
will pick up the tab for the year.
Maybe after Daytona I can drive.
In the meantime, I want the best
for my family, so don't bullshit me.

Is there some other reason why
I ain't good enough to drive for?.

Then you'll do it?

Shit, man! You had me going.

Let's get down to business.

What's your deal with Daland?

I haven't worked it out.

Excuse me for a second.

- Cole, what's wrong?

- Tell Rowdy I'll call him.

No, sir! Can't use 'em.

Don't want 'em. Can't afford 'em.

- What are you talking about?

- Race car drivers. You and Rowdy.

I ain't setting up that car
for Daytona.

But come on in. We'll bring out the
moonshine and start telling lies.

- But no talk about racing.

- All right, no talk about racing.

I'll race your ass.

I'm going to take off.

Good night, Harry.

Why won't you set up the car?.

Ever since you and Rowdy
crashed at Daytona -

- you've been waiting on something
bad to happen to you.

Just like Buddy Bretherton.

He started hearing voices.

All of them saying one thing:

'Get out of that race car.'

You pegged the engine at Atlanta
and blew it sky-high.

It was deliberate.

according to the telltale button.

You thought if you didn't get out
of that car you'd die.

Now call me a liar.

- You're not lying.

- What are we talking about then?

Racing Rowdy's car at Daytona.

I can't do it without you.

You can't do it period.

I ain't going back there, Cole.
Buddy didn't die of a heart attack.
Buddy didn't die of a heart attack.
No, he didn't, but you don't
want to hear about it.
NASCAR privately claimed
that your car is what killed Buddy.
You used thin-walled tubing
to keep the weight down.
- Carbon monoxide knocked Buddy out.
- Horseshit.
When Buddy hit the wall, he was
talking as fast as he was driving.
That was the loudest-talking
unconscious man you ever heard.
Why didn't you let them investigate?
Because I should have known better
than to let him drive.
Buddy was a terrible
pain in the ass.
He thought he knew about cars, which
made him twice as ignorant as you.
Still ...
Guys like Buddy ...
I've seen him do things in my car
that are unbelievable.
He showed me what I had done.
Then you automatically
have to sort of love the guy ...
... whether you want to or not.
Buddy Bretherton.
I have to ask you something.
Before Buddy hit the wall,
how was he doing in that race?
You ornery, no good ...
You stay out of that car.
If you get back in that car,
you'll die. You hear?.
I'm not getting back in my car,
I'm getting in Rowdy's.
You dumb drivers.
You think you'll hide
from your bad luck in his car?.
He'd crash you tomorrow

to win the race!

- He's no particular friend, so why?.

- He asked me to.

- You just want to race again.

- And so do you.

Well, you're scared.

Yeah, and so are you.

Yeah.

What?

I need this, Harry.

I don't have anything else.

You've given me a life.

I don't want to lose it.

Put me in that car. Let me be the
one to show you what you've done.

Just trust me.

Let me drive.

I won't make a fool out of you.

I ... honestly don't know
how this deal's going to turn out.

Neither do I, Harry.

I'm setting up for cool weather.

If the sun breaks, you'll run loose.

Cole's not ready for that.

He's changed.

You cannot get out of control.

He's liable to hurt you
and you're liable to hurt him.

I couldn't handle that.

You've got to take care of him.

All right?

You've got to take care of him.

This is not the kind of answer

I'm looking for from you.

Daytona is a tough racetrack.

We're going to keep an eye on Cole
to see if he has all his reflexes.

I don't think that the accident
will affect the way Cole performs.

I hope I beat him.

A lot of guys don't like him.

The guy's got a lot of talent.

He just wants to win.

He's been a danger to himself

and to other drivers.

If he comes near me,

I'm going to put him in the wall.

I only expect to see him

in my rear-view mirror.

Come in.

Harry said you wouldn't mind

if I stopped by.

- How's Rowdy?.

- He's getting better every day.

Especially since you said you were
looking forward to racing his car.

So I lied.

- What are you thinking?

- 'What's he thinking?'

Everybody's the same. You've got to
be good at your job to enjoy life.

This is my job.

It's all I know.

You know I can't watch you do this.

Claire ...

I'm more afraid of being nothing
than I am of being hurt.

Walk me in?

Welcome to the Daytona 500,
the Superbowl of motor racing.

Among today's favorites has
to be Wheeler in the Hardee's car.

He's the man to watch, after
winning the pole for today's event.

But don't count out Cole Trickle.

He's returning to Daytona for
the first time since his accident.

I heard you didn't have a sponsor.

They gave us just enough money
to put their name on the car.

- Tim.

- Cole.

Why is the hood up?

What's wrong?

We had to change engines.

We forgot to tighten the oil line.

- Why did you change engines?

- There was metal in the oil filter.

- Where did you get the engine?

- We stole it.

Claire, put the boy in his car
before he starts sweating.

So, are you going to get in your car
and take off?

Drive carefully.

Gentlemen, start your engines.

We are underway.

The Daytona 500 is on.

We are 56 laps into the 200-lap
event and Wheeler is in the lead.

You're 47:

You're running last.

What's going on, Cole?

Are you all right?

Just past the halfway mark
and Wheeler still leads.

There's a crash at turn three.

Oil at the bottom of the track.

Cars are sliding down
from the top of the track.

You'd better go high.

Pick a line you can drive through.

Cole, are you all right?

Answer me, please.

Go around those wrecks.

You can drive through it.

I know it in my heart.

I'm through it, Harry!

I'm out of here.

Cole's moved up to ninth.

Wheeler continues to lead, but the
man on the move is Cole Trickle.

I'm going to make a hole
to get through here.

Here we go.

Wheeler knocked me into Ganz.

Ganz spun out.

He's going high.

Goddamn it!

Trickle takes the lead.

Go, Cole.

This is what it's all about.
With 23 laps to go,
Cole Trickle is leading.
- Take him now, Russ.
- He's all mine.
The accelerator is stuck.
I can't slow down.
Step on the clutch
and let the son of a bitch blow it.
Son of a ...
The accelerator is fixed,
but the transmission is screwed.
- Are they out of the race?
- They will be.
Get me out in front of the pace car
or the race is over for us!
- The linkage is all twisted.
- Just give him the high gear.
- I've got it.
- Let's go.
- Come on.
- Go! Go! Go!
Get out there and help them!
- We made it. Good work.
- I owe you one.
That's not your car.
It's my engine in that car and
that's what my boys are pushing.
You've got to be at top speed
when the green flag drops.
The green flag is out
and racing resumes.
Wheeler's still in the lead.
- Where am I?
- Ninth. Eight laps to go.
- Am I gaining on Wheeler?
- Trickle's moving up fast.
Remember me?
I'm going to draught Wheeler,
make him pull me around.
He's on my ass.
He's going on the outside.
I'm going to put him in the wall.
I'm setting him up, Harry.

There's the white flag.
One lap to go.
- Don't keep this up, Cole, please.
- This guy's going down!
Last turn, Russ.
He'll try and slingshot past you.
I know Cole.
He always goes to the outside.
This one's for you, Harry.
He's going high.
He's going low!
Son of a bitch!
Here comes the finish line,
and Cole Trickle takes the win!
- You weren't going to watch.
- I lied.
- Where's Harry?.
- I don't know.
Harry ...
- Say something, will you?
- I really can't.
You didn't know
how this was going to turn out.
It's like you said: There's
nothing you can't do in a race car.
- We won.
- Yeah.
Can you walk,
or am I going to have to carry you?
Where to?
- Victory Lane.
- Oh yeah.
Walk?. Hell ...
I'll race your ass!