

DEMOLITION DAD

by
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FADE IN:

INT. PATRIOT MUTUAL INSURANCE - DAY

DENNIS EDWARDS, an honest-looking guy in his late 30's, sits in his office. He is straight-laced and tightly wound, like his head might pop off at any moment.

Across from him are a typical suburban couple - The Shermans, DUDLEY and LISA, 30's. Lisa is very pregnant.

DENNIS
Disasters can strike at any moment.
One minute, your house is just sitting
there. Being a house. Then, before
you know it you've got nothing but
ashes.

EXT. TYPICAL SUBURBAN HOME - DAY

A run-of-the-mill house in a run-of-the-mill neighborhood. All is quiet, serene and safe. Then ...an EXPLOSION erupts inside the house and it's immediately engulfed in flames.

INT. PATRIOT MUTUAL INSURANCE

Dennis continues, as the Shermans listen.

DENNIS
Or what about floods?

EXT. TYPICAL SUBURBAN HOME

The house is back to normal, just in time for a massive FLOOD to pour freakishly out of nowhere. The house gets taken down the street.

DENNIS (V.O.)
Sure, it's unlikely. But what if?
(beat)
Don't forget about tornados,
earthquakes, sandstorms and lava.

As Dennis mentions each subsequent disaster, we see the house befall its fate in a flash.

An impromptu LAVA FLOW melts the house ...

INT. PATRIOT MUTUAL INSURANCE - DAY

DENNIS
Seventeen American homes are liquefied
each year by rivers of hot molten
magma.

DUDLEY
We don't live near any volcanoes.

DENNIS

So you think. Many are dormant.
Until...
(Dennis snaps his fingers)
All your earthly possessions become a
hot gelatinous goo.

The Shermans are freaked.

LISA

So you have a policy that covers lava?

DENNIS

We have a comprehensive biblical
disaster policy.
(beat)
But let's talk about life insurance.
When is the baby due, Mrs. Sherman?

Lisa looks at Dudley and smiles.

LISA

In two weeks.

DENNIS

In that case, I'm not going to pull
any punches. Straight dope time.

Dennis removes his jacket and rolls up his sleeves.

DENNIS

Lisa. Dudley. May I call you Lisa
and Dudley?
(off their nods)
I've personally had clients who, well,
had the type of calamitous bad luck
that resulted in their immediate and
sometimes gruesome deaths.

Lisa clutches Dudley's hand.

LISA

Tell us.

DENNIS

I had a guy who got ground up in the
rotors of his speedboat. Fish bait.
Another was in a mineshaft explosion
and he wasn't even a miner. Don't get
me started about wasps. We'd be here
all day. And cars - cars are rolling
death machines.

DUDLEY

You're not just giving us a sales
pitch are you?

DENNIS
No, sir. And quite honestly ...

Dennis lowers his voice.

DENNIS
Across the street's a company called
American Life and Liberty. They offer
an auto insurance policy that's far
superior to ours.
(beat)
I actually have a policy with them
that insures my insurance. Talk to
Phil and tell him Dennis sent you.

DUDLEY
We will. Thank you.

DENNIS
My job is to see danger around every
corner.

Dennis speaks from the heart, and the Shermans see it.

DENNIS
And I want to make sure that you, your
children, and your pets have peace of
mind if and when something horrific
happens.

The Shermans consider.

DUDLEY
We'll take everything you have.

INT. PATRIOT MUTUAL INSURANCE, HALLWAY - DAY

Dennis ushers the Shermans to an elevator.

LISA
Thank you so much for your time, Mr.
Edwards.

DENNIS
Please - Dennis.

DUDLEY
Dennis. Thank you.

The elevator dings open, and the Shermans get inside.

DENNIS
You're taking the elevator?

DUDLEY
Yeah, why?

Dennis just gives a pained look as the elevator shuts with the startled Shermans inside.

INT. PATRIOT MUTUAL INSURANCE - DAY

Dennis heads back to his office and sits down at his computer.

Dennis looks over at a framed photo of him, his wife, and their two kids standing in front of their house. Dennis has his arm swung loosely around his wife's waist and his two kids grin from ear to ear. They are the picture of suburban contentment.

Dennis presses a button on the frame. The canned voices of his wife and children play.

FAMILY
(through talking picture
frame)
We love you dad.

Dennis stares at the photo for a moment too long. He sighs.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Dennis walks past oversized SUV's and shiny BMW's to his safe and sensible Volvo 240 Station Wagon.

Dennis squeezes past an SUV, then unlocks his door and gets inside.

INT. DENNIS'S VOLVO - DAY

Dennis settles into the driver's seat and turns on his GPS tracking system, which speaks with a soothing FEMALE VOICE.

AUTOMATED GPS VOICE
Good afternoon, Dennis.

DENNIS
Afternoon, Lois.

He punches in an address.

AUTOMATED GPS VOICE
Destination accepted. Please proceed
to stop sign and make a left turn.

Dennis buckles up, adjusts his rearview mirror and carefully pulls out of his spot.

EXT. DOWNTOWN SACRAMENTO STREETS - DAY

Dennis's Volvo gets passed by car after car as he drives five miles below the posted speed limit.

INT. DENNIS'S VOLVO - DAY

Dennis stops the car and scans the high school. SKATEBOARDERS do dangerous-looking tricks off a handrail. One skater hits the concrete pretty hard and Dennis winces.

Dennis glances toward a secluded corner of the school building. He sees his son, STEVEN EDWARDS, 16, standing next to a cute black-clad "goth" girl, ANGELA, 16. Steven and the girl are visibly flirting. Steven's a slightly awkward teen, trying his best to fit in and rebel all at once.

Dennis watches with concern. Suddenly, Dennis's mouth drops open as...

Angela lights up a cigarette. Dennis HONKS the car horn.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL PARKING LOT - DAY

Steven turns and sees his dad HONKING furiously.

STEVE
Oh, no. There's the warden.

ANGELA
Give your dad a break. He's probably freaked about the divorce thing.

STEVEN
They're separated, not divorced.

Steven picks up his backpack.

ANGELA
Are you going to tell him about us?

STEVEN
Are you kidding? My dad still thinks I'm a kid. He's not ready to accept a "girlfriend". Not until he stops laying out my clothes in the morning.

Dennis HONKS.

ANGELA
Kind of a control freak, huh?

STEVEN
He prefers the term "involved" parent.

Angela laughs. She blows a cloud of smoke and Dennis HONKS again.

ANGELA
Still. You should tell him about us. If we don't teach our parents to be mature adults, who will?

STEVEN
I don't think there's much hope for my
dad. Well, I better ...

Steven gives Angela an awkward hug, one eye on his dad.

ANGELA
Can I get a kiss?

STEVEN
Uh ... not now. He won't like that.
I'll call you.

Steven runs off and climbs into the station wagon.

Angela waves at Dennis, and Dennis waves back suspiciously.

INT. DENNIS'S VOLVO - DAY

Dennis drives as Steven sits in the backseat, staring out the
window, despondent.

Dennis drives with his hands at ten and two. He checks his
mirrors every thirty seconds. Dennis's GPS system tracks the
wagon's route on a small display screen.

AUTOMATED GPS VOICE
Proceed two-point-six miles.

Dennis looks at Steven in his rearview mirror.

DENNIS
Is she your girlfriend?

STEVEN
No.

DENNIS
Smoking will stunt her growth.

Steven doesn't respond. Finally -

STEVEN
Can I drive home?

DENNIS
This street's too busy.

Steven looks out the window. There are no other cars on the
road.

DENNIS
There's a right way and a wrong way to
approach driver's education. The
wrong way is to throw you out on the
street when you're not ready.

Steven rolls his eyes. He turns on his iPod and puts in his earphones. PUNK MUSIC BLARES.

Dennis keeps driving.

EXT. PROSPECT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL – DAY

MEGAN EDWARDS, 10, stands under a tree with the other members of her string quartet. She holds a cello and is by far the least geeky member of the group.

ANNA, a redhead with big glasses, holds a viola case. SIMON and GEORGE both hold violin cases. They are twins.

ANNA
Not our best day.

SIMON
Give us a break.

GEORGE
Yeah. We have a cold.

Simon snuffles and George wipes his nose.

Megan rolls her eyes.

Dennis gets out of the car and waves his hand.

DENNIS
Megan!

MEGAN
See you guys later.

Simon and George SNEEZE in unison.

Megan hoists the huge cello onto her back. The instrument dwarfs her little body. Megan scuffles over towards her dad. Dennis grabs the cello and puts it into the trunk.

INT. DENNIS'S VOLVO – DAY

Dennis drives with both Steven and Megan in the backseat.

AUTOMATED GPS VOICE
Turn left now.

Dennis activates his blinker and turns left. Megan leans forward to talk to her dad.

MEGAN
Guess what? Ms. Lee says I'm a great soprano. She asked me to join the choir.

Dennis is silent.

MEGAN

It won't be a distraction.

DENNIS

Really? And what about quartet? And orchestra? I thought this year you wanted to make first chair.

MEGAN

Dad.

(beat)

Mom says it's okay with her.

DENNIS

Mom says that?

MEGAN

And Travis says that singing will help me reach my utmost potential.

Dennis furrows his brow. He glances back at Megan.

DENNIS

Travis? Who's--

As Dennis turns into the driveway Megan shrieks.

MEGAN

Dad, look out!

Dennis turns to the front and slams on the brakes. Too late! Dennis rams the station wagon into a car reversing out of the driveway. There's a violent CRUNCH and Dennis, Megan and Steven all lurch forward.

AUTOMATED GPS VOICE

(calm as only an automated voice can be)

Please stop vehicle. You have arrived at your destination.

Dennis gathers himself and quickly turns to Steven and Megan.

DENNIS

Are you okay?! Steven? Megan?

They are both unscathed.

MEGAN

That was awesome!

STEVEN

(grins)

Nice one, dad.

EXT. KATIE'S HOUSE - DAY

Dennis exits his wagon and sees that he has just crushed a green Mustang Fastback - in what was formerly perfect condition.

DENNIS
(sotto)
Shit.

The Mustang door opens, and out steps TRAVIS REXFORD, late 30's, rugged good looks, a "tough guy" with the scars to prove it. Travis inspects his mangled bumper.

TRAVIS
Trouble with your brakes?

DENNIS
I-- yeah, I--
(beat)
Are you alright?

Travis turns his head from side to side. As he turns the joints in his neck CRACK loudly. Travis then POPS his shoulders, SNAPS his back and continues to adjust various parts of his body releasing a long SNAP, CRACKLE, POP medley that goes on and on.

Dennis cringes. That doesn't sound good.

TRAVIS
I'm fine. A little pain does me good.
But the Green Machine's gonna need
some TLC.

The door of the station wagon opens and Steven and Megan step out.

MEGAN
Hi, Travis.

TRAVIS
Hi, Megan.

Steven waves at Travis and walks towards the house.

DENNIS
You're Travis?

TRAVIS
(Travis extends his hand
to shake)
Travis Rexford. You must be Dennis.

DENNIS
(RE: the accident)
Look, I'll take care of this.
(MORE)

DENNIS (CONT'D)

I wasn't facing forward at the moment of impact. I was negligent and therefore I'm liable. Only ... I'd rather not go through my insurance. I've got a perfect driving record and I'd like to keep this smear off of it.

TRAVIS

I understand. I hate smears. Smudges too.

Dennis writes down a phone number and hands it to Travis.

DENNIS

Well, I appreciate it.

TRAVIS

I'll be in touch.

Travis heads over to the driver's side and gets in his car. As he does, Dennis instinctively grabs his digital camera and takes a picture of the accident.

After a kick and a snort, Travis's Mustang starts. As the Mustang pulls away, Dennis notices the personalized license plate that reads "T-REX 1".

INT. KATIE'S HOUSE - DAY

Megan and Steven watch television in the living room. Dennis enters and wistfully eyeballs what used to be his home. Dennis sighs and heads towards the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Dennis enters the kitchen and sees KATIE EDWARDS, late 30's, and a beautiful force of nature. Katie is scurrying around the kitchen - chopping carrots and celery. Dennis comes in and clears his throat.

Katie goes to the refrigerator and pulls out a Tupperware container full of leftovers. She hands the container to Dennis.

KATIE

Take this. It's chicken casserole.

Dennis takes the casserole.

DENNIS

Who's Travis?

KATIE

(hesitates)

Travis is my landscape architect. I'm getting the backyard redone.

DENNIS

What? But we just spent three thousand dollars getting the backyard redone.

KATIE

That was ten years ago. It's due for a change.

Dennis reacts. He walks to the sliding door to take a look at his backyard. In the corner is a meticulously crafted herb garden with little signs to label each plant.

DENNIS

Okay. Just please tell me that you'll leave my tarragon and my rosemary ... and my fennel.

KATIE

Don't worry. I won't touch your herb garden.

Dennis sighs, relieved. He looks over at the kitchen table and sees a backpack and a bunch of college textbooks. Dennis picks up a book.

DENNIS

What's all this?

Katie takes the book from him and stuffs it into her backpack. Katie waits a long moment. Finally, she responds.

KATIE

They're textbooks, Dennis. I'm going back to school. I'm getting my masters in education so that I can start a charter school.

DENNIS

Wow. A charter school. That's great. It's just ... I thought we decided opening a business was out of the question right now. We discussed how the stress and the strain -

KATIE

Well, we may have decided that. But *I've* changed my mind.

DENNIS

So change it back.

Katie shoots Dennis a look.

DENNIS

It's just ... starting a business is risky. I've been over the numbers with you. Statistically -

KATIE

I don't care about statistics. I've seen too many kids get left behind in the public school system. And I want to change that. This is my dream. Don't you understand? That used to mean something to you.

Dennis studies Katie for a moment. It looks like she might be getting through to him. Finally -

DENNIS

What about your job? And the costs? Have you thought about that?

KATIE

I have it figured out.

DENNIS

And what about the kids? Megan's at a very important age. Is that "all figured out" too?

Katie stares at Dennis. Once again he's gone too far.

DENNIS

You can't do this.

KATIE

What?

DENNIS

You heard me. I said you can't do this. You hate finance. You're terrible at marketing. Don't you remember econ class? You'd stay up all night. Pull out your hair. One time I found a clump the size of a rat in the bathroom sink. I understand you're going through something here ... but starting a business doesn't make sense for someone with your particular psychological profile. I'm sorry but ... I forbid it.

Katie laughs, stunned.

KATIE

Wait. What? Did you say you forbid it?

Katie laughs again.

KATIE

You forbid it? Dennis. You know what? For years I've put up with you double checking the expiration date on milk and triple checking the doors at night. I've put up with your scare stories about power lines, microwaves and hair dryers. But now we're separated. And if I want to start a business then I can start a business. And I will ... with or without your support.

Dennis protests – but Katie stands up and pushes all of her books off of the table and into a laundry basket on one of the chairs.

KATIE

I can't argue right now. I have to go to class.

Katie turns and heads out the door. Dennis hesitates for a moment, then turns and leaves.

INT. PATRIOT MUTUAL INSURANCE, DENNIS'S OFFICE – DAY

Dennis downloads the photo from the accident with Travis from his digital camera. Travis's mustang looks pretty mangled.

An ANNOYING COWORKER, 30's, walks by.

ANNOYING COWORKER

Oooh – some putz took out a Mustang, huh? Schmuck!

The coworker walks off, laughing. Dennis grumbles to himself. His PHONE RINGS and Dennis answers.

DENNIS

(into phone)

Dennis Edwards, Patriot Mutual Insurance.

TRAVIS

(through phone)

Katie just told me you're an insurance guy. That's ironic.

DENNIS

Not really. I don't do auto insurance. I do home owners. Life insurance. That sort of thing.

There's an awkward silence.

TRAVIS

I'm going to email you an address, Dennis. Can you bring me a check for the damages tonight? I want to go ahead with the repairs as soon as possible.

DENNIS

Uh, sure.

TRAVIS

Great. I'll see you tonight then.

Travis hangs up.

INT. DENNIS'S VOLVO - NIGHT

Dennis checks a printed-out email and programs an address into his GPS tracking system.

AUTOMATED GPS VOICE

Destination accepted. Please proceed to stop sign and make a right turn.

Dennis begins driving.

INT. DENNIS'S VOLVO - NIGHT

Dennis gets into a dark and unfamiliar part of town.

AUTOMATED GPS VOICE

Continue three-point-eight miles.

Dennis yawns and continues.

EXT. DARK STREET - NIGHT

The station wagon slows as it approaches a narrow street.

AUTOMATED GPS VOICE

Turn left ahead.

The station wagon turns left down the street.

INT. DENNIS'S VOLVO - NIGHT

Dennis drives along the dark street.

AUTOMATED GPS VOICE

Make immediate right.

Dennis turns to the right and after a moment the street goes under a bridge and becomes a tunnel.

DENNIS

(sotto)

What the hell...

Dennis drives through the dark tunnel, sweating and silently cursing to himself.

EXT. DIRT FIELD - NIGHT

Dennis's Volvo emerges from the tunnel and creeps slowly onto a dirt field bathed in fluorescent light. Dennis's station wagon now drives on dirt and mud.

INT. DENNIS'S VOLVO - NIGHT

Dennis looks around and sees a group of outrageously-colored cars parked in two rows, their rear bumpers facing him. Just beyond the two rows of cars is a chain link fence and bleachers full of onlookers.

Dennis checks his GPS.

DENNIS
(to himself)
This can't be right.

Suddenly, Dennis hears a CROWD CHEERING and ENGINES REVVING wildly.

Dennis glances into his rearview mirror and is blinded by CAR BRAKELIGHTS.

Before he knows what's happening, a dozen DEMOLITION DERBY CARS roar towards him, their drivers hunting for blood. Dennis has ended up in the middle of a demolition derby!

Dennis instinctively guns his engine and tears off away from the derby cars.

EXT. DERBY FIELD - NIGHT

Dennis's station wagon narrowly avoids being hit by a car covered with black and white zebra stripes.

We hear Dennis's SCREAMS coming from inside the car.

INT. DENNIS'S VOLVO - NIGHT

Dennis hangs onto the steering wheel for dear life.

AUTOMATED GPS VOICE
Tend left. Tend left.

Dennis TENDS LEFT to avoid a derby car speeding towards him.

(NOTE: The AUTOMATED GPS VOICE should be constant through this section, growing ever more annoying as the race goes on.)

Dennis looks over at a neighboring derby car. It's currently being driven by GORDO "THE JACKAL" GATHRIGHT, 30's, a wild-eyed lunatic.

Gordo catches Dennis's gaze, and Dennis rolls down his electric car window.

DENNIS
(shouting over to Gordo)
Excuse me! Excuse me!

Gordo looks over at Dennis.

GORDO
Yeah?! What?

DENNIS
I seem to have made a wrong turn. Can you direct me to 8th street?

GORDO
Look out!!!

Dennis gets smashed by two derby cars and his AIRBAG EXPLODES IN HIS FACE.

DENNIS
AAGHGHGHAHAA! I'm going to die!!!

Dennis can't see. He battles to push the airbag down so that he can see the cars around him. Gordo looks over at Dennis, concerned.

GORDO
Dude! Hey dude! You gotta Zen out, man!

Dennis looks at Gordo and calms down, if only a bit. He takes a few deep breaths and continues to drive.

Dennis's cell phone rings, and Dennis instinctively answers -

DENNIS
Dennis Edwards. Patriot Mutual Insurance.

KATIE
(through phone)
I'm sorry to bother you. Is this a bad time?

DENNIS
No, Katie. Not at all.

Dennis swerves between two smoking wrecks.

DENNIS
So what's up?

KATIE
There's something I forgot to mention
in our conversation earlier.

DENNIS
Oh?

KATIE
It's about Travis, my landscape
architect.

DENNIS
Yes. What about him?

KATIE
Well, uh, in the interest of full
disclosure, and staying honest, like
we talked about -

DENNIS
Katie, just tell me -

KATIE
We dated a little while in high
school. But only for like two years.

A buried anger sparks to life in Dennis's eyes.

AUTOMATED GPS VOICE
Tend left. Tend left. Please merge
ahead.

DENNIS
I thought your high school boyfriend
was named Rex.

KATIE
Yeah. Travis Rexford. I called him
Rex.

Dennis boils

KATIE
Anyway, he recently moved into town.
And even though he's just a friend ... I
thought you should know our history.

A car smashes into Dennis's car and he drops his cell phone.

KATIE
Dennis? Are you still there?

Dennis stares ahead – his eyes oddly unfocused. Another car smashes into Dennis. And another. And another. Dennis is no longer concerned.

Suddenly, something inside of Dennis SNAPS and he jerks his car into second gear, slams the pedal to the metal, and accelerates across the derby track like a man possessed.

Dennis slams his station wagon into an old Cadillac El Dorado with no concern for his own safety. He quickly reverses, gets another car in his sights, and bears down on it with savage speed.

One by one, Dennis and his wagon maul all the other cars.

Gordo is one of the remaining drivers, and he SCREAMS LIKE A WOMAN as Dennis bears down on him and rams his car.

Before you know it, Dennis's station wagon is the only car still rolling in the muddy pit.

The CROWD GOES WILD.

Dennis smiles at the crowd and waves, still not certain about what just happened. He reaches down and finds his cell phone, but Katie has hung up.

Dennis stops his car as he rolls toward a BUSTY BLONDE in hot pants and a bikini top, holding a trophy.

EXT. DERBY FIELD – NIGHT

Dennis exits his car and is CHEERED by the crowd.

A chubby promoter, MR. DEVLIN, steps beside Dennis, and their photographs are immediately taken by several photographers.

MR. DEVLIN

Congratulations on the win. On behalf of the International Demolition Derby Driver's Association and Freezy's Fried Chicken, we present you with this trophy and this coupon, valid only at your local participating Freezy's Fried Chicken.

The Busty Blonde hands Dennis the trophy. She leans over and kisses him on the cheek.

DENNIS

Uh, thanks.

Suddenly, Gordo steps up beside Dennis and pulls him away from the group.

GORDO
That was some of the fiercest driving
I've ever seen, man! What circuit you
from?

DENNIS
What do you mean?

GORDO
I mean, I haven't seen you around here
before. You have a partner?

DENNIS
Listen...

GORDO
Gordo...

He gestures to his crash helmet, which reads "The Jackal."

GORDO
The Jackal.

DENNIS
Right. All of you people are at fault
for smashing up my wagon, and we're
going to need to exchange insurance
information.

Some of the other DRIVERS hear this and scoff at Dennis.

GORDO
I'm getting your vibe.

DENNIS
Good.

GORDO
But seriously, you ever driven
professionally? I've been looking for
a partner for a while now and, face
it, man, you got skills. Mad skills!

Dennis spots Travis nearby with an "eat shit" grin on his
face. Travis wears a demolition derby driver jumpsuit like
the other drivers. Dennis reacts, SHOCKED.

DENNIS
Excuse me.

Gordo watches Dennis make his way over to Travis.

DENNIS
Hey!

Travis turns and faces Dennis.

DENNIS

What's the big idea giving me directions here? I could have been killed out there.

TRAVIS

I didn't tell you to drive onto the track.

DENNIS

It's where GPS led me.

TRAVIS

Maybe you shouldn't trust GPS.

DENNIS

So you're one of these guys?

TRAVIS

Six-time demolition derby champion, with three national titles, nine golden axle awards, and a sandwich named after me at Freezy's Fried Chicken.

Travis gestures to a large billboard looming over the derby course. It features Travis in his "T-REX" crash helmet, eating a chicken sandwich.

DENNIS

Big whup.

TRAVIS

It's called the T-Rexwich.

DENNIS

In light of what happened tonight, I don't think I need to give you a check. It's going to cost a fortune to fix my wagon, and it was your fault I ended up out there.

(beat)

Also I'd prefer if you consulted me before making any large changes to my backyard.

TRAVIS

Ah, I see how it is. This is about Katie.

DENNIS

My wife has nothing to do with this.

TRAVIS

Ex-wife.

DENNIS
We're separated. Not divorced ...
bucko.

TRAVIS
Bucko?

Dennis shrugs.

TRAVIS
I want my check, Dennis. And one way
or another I'm going to get it.

Travis walks away.

GORDO (O.S.)
Hey you!

Dennis turns and sees Gordo coming over.

GORDO
You look like you need some beers!

Dennis does, in fact, look like he needs some beers.

INT. THE CRANKSHAFT - NIGHT

A dank, windowless dive bar for demolition derby drivers. Dirty, with peanut shells littering the floor, and crushed radiators, engines, steering wheels and other car parts mounted on the wall.

In the corner, an ad hoc FIRST AID STATION has been set up and a couple of derby drivers are being bandaged by a nurse.

Gordo grabs two beer bottles and hands one to Dennis. Gordo clinks his beer bottle against Dennis's with unexpected force.

GORDO
Three cheers for Dennis. The new
derby king!

Gordo takes a big slug of his beer and Dennis takes a small sip.

GORDO
What you did tonight was - whoo!
(suddenly serious)
You have a gift.

DENNIS
Thanks.

GORDO

The way you manifested your aggression onto the field of battle ... it was like watching my destiny.

Gordo seems overcome. But he recovers.

GORDO

You and I are meant to be partners.

DENNIS

No, thank you.

GORDO

Hold on. I'm not talking about sharing a sandbox. I'm talking about the national derby championship. A fifty thousand dollar prize. If we go for it, it's ours.

DENNIS

I'm sorry to disappoint you. But in my opinion the risk of severe bodily injury far outweighs the reward of any cash prize.

GORDO

Sure. But we're talking about fifty thousand dollars.

Dennis shrugs. Obviously, he doesn't care about the money. Gordo studies him for a moment.

GORDO

So, what's going on with you and Travis?

DENNIS

Nothing. He's my wife's ex-boyfriend. But they're just friends.

(beat)

He's landscaping our backyard.

Gordo scoffs. Dennis reacts.

DENNIS

What?

GORDO

Nothing. I just don't think a man and a woman who once did the bang-bang can ever be "just friends".

DENNIS

Maybe. But Katie isn't that kind of woman. We're taking a break. We're not "messing around".

Gordo scoffs again. Dennis glares at him.

GORDO
Regalo numero uno of separation.
Boinking is optional.

DENNIS
No. Separated is still married.
Katie and I are still married. And
while you're married you don't have
sex with anyone else. That's the
code. There's no ambiguity.

GORDO
And you're sure Travis follows the
code?

Dennis looks away and Gordo senses his chance.

GORDO
We live in a dog eat dog world,
Dennis. Do you know what would happen
back in caveman times if another
caveman came around wanting to
landscape your lady's backyard?

DENNIS
No.

GORDO
You'd smash him in the face with a
club.
(beat)
Animal kingdom, man. Two bulls lock
horns for their female. Two rams
just...

Gordo grits his teeth and growls.

GORDO
Ostriches ripping out each other's--

DENNIS
Ostriches?

GORDO
Those are mean birds, man. Whatever.
Get that other rooster outta the
henhouse. I'm talkin' about an alpha
male grudge match where only the
strongest survives.

Dennis eyes Gordo.

DENNIS

First of all, you're mixing metaphors all over the place. And second, you're blowing this out of proportion.

GORDO

Am I? I know Travis. He's a punk. If you wanna protect your girl - you gotta tell him to step off. And the best way to do that is in the mud. In the derby.

Dennis soaks this in.

GORDO

Travis and his partner are not indestructible. The right team can beat them. The right man can beat them. If you enter the derby you can pound Travis into a million pieces and show him that you're the king of the jungle.

Dennis doesn't say anything. He's conflicted. Finally -

DENNIS

I'm sorry. I need to go.

Dennis gets up and Gordo hands him a greasy business card.

GORDO

You gotta do, what you gotta do. I get that. But if you change your mind. Call me.

DENNIS

(reads the card)

This is a business card for a submarine sandwich shop.

Gordo takes back the card.

GORDO

If you buy nine hoagies, you get the tenth one free.

(hands Dennis another
equally greasy card)

Here you go. Dude... we are meant to be.

Dennis nods. He turns and leaves the bar and does not look back. Gordo watches him go.

INT. DENNIS'S VOLVO - NIGHT

Dennis sits in his crushed Volvo. He's frustrated and breathing hard.

Finally, he makes a decision and turns on the engine. With a pop, grind and screech it rumbles to life.

EXT. KATIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Dennis pulls up outside of Katie's house. His bumper drags on the ground SPARKING and FLASHING - but Dennis doesn't care.

AUTOMATED GPS VOICE
You have arrived at your destination.

INT. DENNIS'S VOLVO - NIGHT

Dennis turns off the car and is about to exit when he looks over and through the front window of the house he sees Katie, Steven, Megan and Travis all eating dinner together at the dining room table.

Dennis watches as Travis says something and everyone laughs. Travis reaches out and playfully punches Steven in the arm and Katie smiles. She reaches out and puts her hand on Travis's shoulder and leaves it there just a moment too long.

Dennis watches them interact and his face tells the story. He's devastated.

EXT. GORDO'S HOUSE - DAY

Dennis pulls up outside of Gordo's house. Dennis gets out of his car and cautiously approaches the garage.

Suddenly, the garage door opens up revealing a gaping cavern filled with cars and parts.

Gordo steps out of the garage - exhaust billowing around him like clouds. Dennis stumbles back in awe.

Suddenly, Gordo hacks like a cat coughing up a fur ball.

GORDO
Damn carburetor.

Gordo turns, sees Dennis and grins a mile-wide grin.

GORDO
Dennis Edwards. I knew you'd be back.

DENNIS
I'm here to drive derby.

GORDO
Partners?

Gordo sticks out his hand. Dennis takes Gordo's hand and shakes it.

DENNIS

Partners.

Gordo throws back his head and WHOOPS for joy. Dennis steps back, surprised.

GORDO

The Krunch Patrol rides again. Come on. Qualls are tomorrow and we gotta get you track legal.

Gordo turns and heads towards the house. Dennis takes a deep breath and follows.

INT. GORDO'S HOUSE - DAY

Dennis and Gordo enter. The living room is tastefully decorated with demolition derby memorabilia. Trophies, old license plates, and a framed checkered flag decorate the living room.

Gordo walks over to the staircase and screams at the top of his lungs.

GORDO

Mom!

(beat)

I still live with my mom. But she's cool. She gets me.

Gordo looks up the stairs. His mom is taking her own sweet time.

GORDO

Mom! Hurry up! We got company.

Gordo heads over to a small dish of candy that sits on a doily. He takes a Milk Dud.

GORDO

Milk Dud?

Dennis shakes his head. Dennis walks over to a huge photograph of GORDO'S MOM standing on top of her purple derby car - waving two checkered flags in victory. On the hood of the car the name "SIMPLY SMASHING" is written in black paint.

GORDO

Mom was a metal jockey. She brought down the checkered flag more times than any other driver on the circuit.

Gordo's mom, SANDRA, 60's, appears at the top of the stairs. She's tough but attractive. Her long hair is tied back in a ponytail.

She walks down the stairs, her knees POPPING with every step. Dennis cringes. Gordo's mom extends her hand to Dennis.

SANDRA
Hi. I'm Sandra. Gordon, did you offer him a Snapple?

GORDO
No. But I said he could have a Milk Dud. He didn't want it.

Sandra shoots Gordo a look.

SANDRA
Would you like a Snapple?

DENNIS
No, thanks.

GORDO
Dennis is my new derby partner. Could you make him a uniform by tomorrow?

Sandra eyes Dennis up and down.

SANDRA
You drive derby?

GORDO
He's meaner than he looks.

Sandra considers. She motions for Dennis to turn around. Dennis does a quick pirouette.

Sandra grabs a sewing kit and pulls out her measuring tape. She measures Dennis across the shoulders and down one arm. Sandra crouches down and her knees POP again – louder this time.

SANDRA
Let's see what we've got down south.

Sandra reaches up and measures Dennis' inseam. Dennis fidgets, nervous.

SANDRA
Don't worry, kiddo. Just let mommy do her business.

Dennis squirms as her hand gets near his "junk". Dennis jumps and accidentally hits Sandra in the head, which results in a loud, metallic CLANG. As the CLANG RINGS OUT.

GORDO
Mom has a steel plate in her head. You can hit it if you want.

Dennis is a little freaked.

SANDRA
Go ahead. I don't feel a thing.

Dennis reaches out and bangs on her head. It CLANGS again.

GORDO
Back in 79' Mom went through the windshield and flew twenty feet into the concession stand.

Dennis is freaked. Sandra stands up with a POP.

SANDRA
Give me ten hours.

EXT. GORDO'S BACKYARD - DAY

Gordo shepherds Dennis into the dirt yard behind his garage. Sitting in the yard are three 1970's-era derby cars. A yellow Chevy Impala, a shock blue Pontiac Bonneville, and a red Monte Carlo.

GORDO
Behold. My sweet babies.

Dennis walks over to get a closer look. All three cars have had their windows removed and there are chains where the windshields used to be.

GORDO
You've got the instincts of a champion. But if we're gonna compete with the big dawgs, you've got to learn some basics.

Dennis reaches out to touch the Impala and Gordo reacts.

GORDO
Whoa, whoa, whoa. That's Suzy Q. My mom's car. She's off limits.

Dennis backs away from the car and checks his watch.

DENNIS
I have to go.

GORDO
You can't go now. We've got training to do. Do you have any idea how to react to a double-team or a donut bomb?

DENNIS
I'm sorry. I have responsibilities.

GORDO
Dude. You need the practice!

DENNIS
Gordo -

GORDO
Okay. Okay. Just promise me you
won't stay out late drinking and
partying and chasing tail. I need you
in the zone tomorrow.

DENNIS
(holds up two fingers)
Scout's honor.

Dennis turns and walks towards his Volvo.

GORDO
Wait. The Volvo stays here. She
needs a tune-up before the derby.

Dennis looks hesitant.

GORDO
Relax. I'll treat her like a queen.

Gordo pulls a set of keys out of his pocket and tosses them
to Dennis.

GORDO
Here. Take my ride.

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

Dennis BIKES into the parking lot of the elementary school.
The marquee out front reads "PROSPECT ELEMENTARY MUSIC
RECITAL - TONIGHT!"

Dennis sweats profusely. He pulls up to the bike rack, pulls
out a bike lock and quickly locks up the bike and the helmet
with the keys Gordo gave him.

Dennis turns and runs towards the elementary school. A
mother and father getting out of their SUV regard Dennis
contemptuously.

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Parents and kids file in. Dennis enters, grabs a program,
and looks for a seat.

Dennis spots Katie sitting in a crowded row but there's one
empty seat beside her. Dennis musters his courage and walks
to her row.

Katie notices Dennis worming his way through the row toward her. She steels herself. Dennis makes it over.

DENNIS
This seat taken?

KATIE
No. Go ahead.

Dennis sits next to Katie. There's an awkward silence.

DENNIS
Where's Steven?

KATIE
Going to his kid sister's music
recital with his mom wasn't high on
his list of priorities.

DENNIS
So he's home alone?

KATIE
He's sixteen, Dennis. He can handle
it.

DENNIS
I saw him with a girl who was smoking.

KATIE
She's Angela. They're just friends.

DENNIS
Should he be hanging out with smokers?

KATIE
He told me he tried a cigarette.

DENNIS
What?! Katie, c'mon!

KATIE
Dennis, please. He didn't like it and
told me he'd never do it again. He
trusted me enough to talk about it,
and that's what's important. And I
will not turn this into a thing.

Dennis stifles the urge to say more about it.

DENNIS
So. How's school?

KATIE
Good. I aced my psychology test. And
I've decided to take Portuguese.

DENNIS

Oh. You know, Spanish is a lot more practical.

Katie shoots Dennis a look. After a moment -

KATIE

And what's new with you?

DENNIS

I made out my will.

KATIE

Your will?

DENNIS

In case something happens to me.

KATIE

What's going to happen?

DENNIS

You never know. I want you and the kids to be taken care of.

On Katie's look the lights go dim. Dennis sees Megan and the other members of her quarter walk on stage and he CHEERS and CLAPS loudly. A couple of parents glare at him, but Dennis doesn't notice.

The four children sit down and ready their instruments. Then Megan plays a few bars and the other children join in.

Katie turns and watches Dennis. He has his eyes closed and he is totally lost in the music. She smiles, touched. Then turns back to watch the kids.

EXT. DERBY STADIUM - DAY

Men and women of all shapes and sizes crowd into the derby stadium while the drivers make last minute adjustments. It's a panorama of sight and sound.

EXT. THE PIT - DAY

In the midst of it all, Gordo paces back and forth by his mom's yellow Impala. The Impala now has black tailfins and the words "THE JACKAL" are painted on the side.

Gordo already wears his uniform. He checks his watch. Finally, Dennis pulls up on his bicycle. Gordo exhales, relieved.

GORDO

Thank mercy. I thought you'd never get here.

DENNIS
Well your "ride" isn't exactly built
for speed.

Dennis takes a close look at Gordo's derby car. He turns to Gordo.

DENNIS
I thought Suzy Q was off limits.

GORDO
Desperate times require desperate
measures.

Gordo shepherds Dennis across the grass to the pit area where tattooed men put the finishing touches on their derby cars.

GORDO
Ernesto was up all night with the
modifications. So it wouldn't be
inappropriate for you to thank him or
buy him a couple of cold ones. Or
maybe just send a card.

Dennis turns and sees a derby car SCREAMING at high speeds STRAIGHT FOR THEM. Dennis cowers. The driver HONKS and the car SCREECHES to a halt just inches from their feet.

Dennis stares in horror at his modified Volvo 240. The car has been completely repainted bright yellow. Blue and red flames blaze down the sides. Big shark teeth decorate the front. It looks badass.

ERNESTO TORRES, 60's, slides out the car window now that the doors have been welded shut.

ERNESTO
What do you think?!

GORDO
Awesome! You're an artist, dude!

In shock, Dennis touches the car with a finger.

GORDO
Paint's still wet.

Red paint comes off on his fingers. Dennis whimpers.

Ernesto reaches out to shake Dennis's hand. Dennis looks down and notices that Ernesto's forearms are decorated with tattoos.

ERNESTO
I saw you drive. You're a mean SOB.
Aren't ya?

DENNIS

Not usually.

ERNESTO

Well, you've got a gift. I haven't seen anything like it in years. Not since The Chuck used to tear this place apart. But that was before.

Gordo shoots Ernesto a look.

GORDO

Okay, enough chit-chat. Let's get you changed.

Gordo yanks Dennis away from the car.

ERNESTO

Give 'em hell, you guys!

Ernesto tosses the keys at Dennis. Still in shock, Dennis doesn't react to the keys, and they bounce off his chest.

GORDO

Thanks, man!

Gordo picks up the keys and hands them to Dennis.

EXT. DERBY STADIUM - DAY

Gordo pulls a uniform from a bag and hands it to Dennis. Dennis looks around - he has no idea where he will change. Gordo points towards a port-a-potty. Dennis winces.

GORDO

It's all we got.

Dennis shudders. He heads over to the port-a-potty.

Dennis gets in line behind two people. Suddenly, a disgusting sound is heard from the bathroom. What the hell was that?

In a moment, a huge man comes out. Disgusted, the people in front of Dennis turn and hurry away. Now Dennis is at the front of the line.

Dennis looks around. No other port-a-potty's in sight. Reluctantly, Dennis hyperventilates to get a store of breath, takes a deep breath, and then shuts his mouth.

INT. PORT-A-POTTY - DAY

Dennis enters the port-a-potty with his mouth closed. Dennis pulls off his shirt and pants and pulls the uniform pants up. They are extremely tight and Dennis must wriggle and tug to get them up his legs.

Dennis keeps wriggling and tugging - but the pants are skin tight and not moving. Finally, Dennis has no choice. He opens his mouth to take a breath and...

EXT. PORT-A-POTTY - DAY

Dennis falls out of the port-a-potty and onto the grass - gasping for air.

Dennis looks down and realizes that his pants are around his ankles and people are pointing and laughing at his tightie-whities. Dennis turns bright red. He reaches down and tries to pull his pants up. No luck. And now more people are gathering.

Suddenly, Gordo shows up. Gordo steps in front of Dennis.

GORDO

Come on, people. Nothing to see here.

People laugh. Dennis reaches down and tugs up his pants.

GORDO

Go on. Get. It's just a grown man in his underwear. I know you've all seen that before.

Finally, Dennis gets his pants up around his waist.

GORDO

You about done, Dennis?

DENNIS

Yeah.

Dennis pulls on his shirt and Gordo turns around. Gordo grimaces. The shirt only runs half way down Dennis's midriff. All in all, Dennis looks like a stuffed sausage.

GORDO

Whoa. I guess mom took a few too many Advil. She hurts real bad sometimes.

DENNIS

I look ridiculous.

GORDO

(shakes his head)

It's how you drive. Not what you wear. Bang it up out there and you can wear a frilly pink tutu.

Dennis nods. Not totally convinced.

EXT. THE PIT - DAY

Dennis and Gordo walk towards their cars. Dennis has a visible wedgie and is walking like he has a stick up his butt.

GORDO

Now, remember. The rules are simple. Don't get out of your car. Don't hit anyone on the driver's side door. And as soon as your car can't move anymore flip your green flag so that the other drivers realize you're out of competition.

Gordo activates a switch on the Volvo, and a green flag pops up. Gordo resets the flag.

GORDO

If you don't flip the flag, then the other drivers must assume you're still in it to win it and they'll keep smacking you around. Comprende?

Dennis nods. He pulls a neck brace out of his backpack and puts it on. Dennis rolls his shoulders and takes a deep breath.

GORDO

What's that?

DENNIS

It's a neck brace.

GORDO

You look ridiculous.

DENNIS

I thought you said I could wear a frilly pink tutu.

GORDO

Well you can't.

DENNIS

You don't understand. The only reason I "banged it up" last time was because I had a certain image in my head.

GORDO

An image?

DENNIS

Of Travis ... and my wife.

Gordo considers. Finally, he realizes what he has to do.

GORDO
Give me the neck brace.

DENNIS
No.

GORDO
Give me the neck brace!

DENNIS
No!

Gordo reaches for the neck brace, and Dennis tries to fend Gordo off. A brief wrestling match ensues. Other derby drivers look on.

GORDO
Give it--

DENNIS
Quit--!

Finally Gordo rips off the neck brace and steps on it. Then he kicks it. Dennis glares at Gordo.

GORDO
Now close your eyes.

DENNIS
Come on.

GORDO
Do it.

Dennis closes his eyes.

GORDO
Good. Now I want you to imagine something. Let's travel to your happy place.

DENNIS
My backyard. My herb garden.

GORDO
Fine. I want you to imagine that you are working in your herb garden. Maybe you're planting some peppers.

DENNIS
I like fennel.

Gordo stares at Dennis like he's a freak.

GORDO
Right. So you're planting a big patch of fennel in your herb garden.
(MORE)

GORDO (CONT'D)

(beat)

You got that image?

DENNIS

Yeah.

GORDO

Good. So you're digging away under the sweltering sun - when suddenly you hear a sound. It's coming from inside your house. You're not really sure what it is so you go to investigate.

(beat)

The sound gets louder. It's - yes, it's the unmistakable sound of a woman moaning in ecstasy.

Gordo imitates a woman orgasming.

GORDO

You move, stealthy now, closer and closer to the window. And the sound gets louder and louder ... and finally you're next to the window and you look inside and there ... do you know what you see?

Dennis shakes his head.

GORDO

Oh, yes you do. You know what you see.

DENNIS

What do I see?

GORDO

You see Katie and Travis making sweet love in your bed. She has her legs wrapped around his neck and she's screaming like a banshee. And you can't believe your eyes so you yell at the top of your lungs.

EXT. KATIE'S HOUSE - DAY (FANTASY)

The scene Gordo's been describing - Dennis stands outside the bedroom window and screams at the top of his lungs. To make matters worse, Travis is wearing his crash helmet as he's making sweet love to Katie.

DENNIS

No!!!

Travis sees Dennis and pauses to laugh a diabolical laugh.

GORDO (V.O.)
 But Travis just laughs and laughs and
 laughs...

EXT. DERBY STADIUM – DAY (REALITY)

Dennis hyperventilates. Gordo delivers the coup de grace.

GORDO
 And then the sorry bastard has the
 nerve to go right back to it. He's
 not tired at all.

Dennis is red in the face. He looks like he is about to
 explode.

GORDO
 Open your eyes.

Dennis opens his eyes.

GORDO
 Now. Hold that image until the flag
 goes down. Then let it out. Let it
 all out.

EXT. DERBY FIELD – DAY

Dennis, in his Volvo, and Gordo, in his mom's Chevy Impala,
 drive out onto the derby field single file behind a long line
 of pimped out derby cars. The dirt has been watered down and
 the track is a muddy, gooey mess.

The drivers take their places on the edge of the track 10 to
 a side. Their noses face the fence and their rear bumpers
 face the center.

The cars are painted and decorated with flags, skulls,
 animals, and other designs. All of the drivers have
 nicknames painted on the side of their cars – names like
 ORANGE CRUSH, FIT TO HIT, WHIPLASH and of course, THE JACKAL.

A driver in a SKI CAP pulls up next to Dennis, bears his
 METAL TEETH and snarls. But Dennis doesn't react. His eyes
 are fixed on the starting flag.

AUTOMATED GPS VOICE
 Please input destination.

Dennis shuts off the GPS. Gordo looks over at Dennis and
 raises his fist.

Finally, the flag drops and Dennis EXPLODES.

Dennis accelerates backwards into a giant red Cadillac and
 SMASH – sends it spinning.

Dennis then sets his sights on a white car and at the last minute spins out throwing a WAVE OF MUD AND ROCKS over an entire section of screaming fans.

EXT. GRANDSTANDS - DAY

One COUPLE, 20's, looks down and sees that their nachos are covered in mud. The couple considers, shrugs, and eats the nachos anyway.

EXT. DERBY FIELD - DAY

Back on the track, Gordo plows towards a brown Plymouth Fury with two white smokestacks on the front. The car looks like a bull. Gordo accelerates and SLAMMMM! The bull is dead.

GORDO
Whooh hoo! Chev-ro-laid!

At center field, a group of cars ping pong off each other like little toy cars. Fired up, Dennis drives into the middle of the group and starts smashing and crashing on all sides.

BAM! CRUNCH! POW! Dennis is unstoppable.

Without realizing his error - Dennis sets his sights on Gordo's back bumper. Gordo sees Dennis coming and braces himself against the steering wheel. TIME SLOWS DOWN as Dennis barrels across the field.

GORDO
Oh, shit!

BANG! Gordo's Impala takes a massive hit and spins away. Gordo SCREAMS as his car whips round and round and finally SLAMS into the concrete shoulder.

GORDO
Ahhhhhh!!!

By now, a thick cloud of black smoke rises above a field of broken and mangled wrecks. The only one still moving is Dennis. The referee blows his whistle and waves two checkered flags.

The derby is over and Dennis has won!

Gordo jumps out of his car. He rushes over to Dennis and throws his arms around him.

GORDO
Give me some love.

Gordo grabs the checkered flags from the referee and jumps on top of the Volvo. Gordo waves the flags with abandon. He's on top of the world.

In the stands, Travis claps politely. His face betrays no emotion.

INT. THE CRANKSHAFT - NIGHT

There's a big celebration under way. Drivers and fans alike are laughing and drinking.

Dennis and Gordo lounge at the bar, having beers. They have a big trophy in front of them. Dennis's face is bruised and he has blood on his shirt - but despite his injuries he's feeling good.

A female GROUPIE, 20s, comes up to Dennis. She's very sexy and flirting it up.

GROUPIE

(to Dennis)

I'm so sorry to bother you, and I hope this isn't weird but could I possibly get your autograph?

DENNIS

Wow. Sure. Uh...

He looks around for something to write on. Gordo hands him a napkin and a pen. The girl is all smiles.

DENNIS

Right. To whom do I make it out?

GROUPIE

Tanya. With a Y.

Dennis writes out a quick message: "DEAR TANYA, DRIVE CAREFULLY! - DENNIS"

She reads it and laughs.

GROUPIE

Oh my god. Thank you soooo much!

She walks away.

GORDO

Idiot! Drop your digits on that next time, bonehead.

DENNIS

I don't think so.

GORDO

Look, I know you're still hung up on this "Katie" chick. But your life's taking off now, Big D. You have options.

(MORE)

GORDO (CONT'D)

Dames like that are gonna be scratchin' at your back door like alley cats wanting milk. Trust me. I know.

DENNIS

Really? You have alley cats scratching at the back door of your mom's house?

GORDO

You know it.

Gordo raises his beer, and they clink bottles.

GORDO

Good work today, partner. Although next time, remember - I'm on your team. I think you gave me whiplash.

A tough-looking driver with a shaved head, THE HITMAN, brings a shot over to Dennis.

THE HITMAN

Good driving today, Dennis.

DENNIS

Thanks, Hitman.

Dennis hands the shot to Gordo, and Gordo downs it.

GORDO

All you need now is a nickname. Dennis Edwards sounds like a podiatrist.

DENNIS

How'd you get your name? The Jackal.

GORDO

Pphfssh.... you don't wanna know.

Dennis and Gordo think for a long moment.

GORDO

How 'bout Dennis the Menace?

DENNIS

Copyright infringement.

GORDO

Big Nasty? No? Um. Devil Spawn? The "Dent-ist"?

Gordo shrugs.

GORDO
Don't worry. We'll think of something.

Dennis nods. He pulls out his cell phone. Starts to dial.

GORDO
What are you doing?

DENNIS
Calling Katie. I want to check in.

Gordo grabs the phone.

GORDO
Whoa, dude! You can call the ball and chain some other time. Right now we need to enjoy the moment.

Dennis looks around at the demolition derby drivers and fans. Everyone is having a good time – dancing and rocking out. Gordo pushes Dennis out towards the dance floor.

DENNIS
Wait ...

A ROCK SONG starts to play and Gordo dances. He is spastic but wonderful. All hands and arms and legs. Dennis watches, paralyzed. Gordo starts to chicken dance.

GORDO
You gotta do the funky chicken.

Dennis doesn't move.

GORDO
The groovy gorilla.

Gordo swings his arms like a gorilla and moves around the room.

GORDO
The leaping lizard.

Gordo starts to leap. He stops in front of a frozen Dennis.

GORDO
Dude! Everyone can do the leaping lizard.

Gordo grabs Dennis and the two begin to dance. Dennis is stiff at first. Nervous. But then he begins to cut loose. He boogies with his left foot. And then he boogies with his right foot.

And then ... he boogies with his whole body.

The other derby drivers laugh and clap.

EXT. CRANKSHAFT - NIGHT

Through the windows, we see people dancing and partying and getting freaky. It's clear it will be a long night.

INT. PT CRUISER - DAY

Dennis drives a rented PT Cruiser carefully down his street. He stops across the street from his house and sees Travis in the side-yard.

Travis swings a pick. His shirt is off and his muscles ripple in the sun.

Suddenly, Katie appears from the house. She walks over to Travis and hands him a glass of lemonade. Travis takes the lemonade and drinks it down in one gulp. He wipes his mouth with his hand.

Travis says something and Katie laughs. Katie then turns and heads back to the house. Travis watches Katie's butt swing back and forth as she walks back towards the house. Dennis scowls.

EXT. KATIE'S HOUSE - DAY

Dennis walks along the side-yard, turns a corner and stops short when he sees the chaos in his backyard.

Sod is being ripped up and heavy landscaping machinery stand at the ready. A JUNGLE GYM and a KOI POND are among the new additions.

Travis lifts his pick and is about to cleave Dennis's beloved herb garden.

DENNIS

Stop!

TRAVIS

Dennis. What a pleasure. I didn't expect to see you today.

DENNIS

This is my house.

Travis leans on his pick.

TRAVIS

Well, you have a lovely home. And a wonderful family. The kids are great. And Katie. Wow. She's still a knockout.

Dennis seethes.

TRAVIS

Truth is - I envy you. I've always wanted a little house in the suburbs. With a garden and a fountain and a wife.

(beat, Travis is lost in the dream)

Anyway, I saw you derby last night. It looks like you enjoy crunchin' bones.

DENNIS

Well -

TRAVIS

Just understand, amateurs like yourself often get hurt. I'm sure you've heard the stories. Hot metal searing through wrists. Ankles. You name it. I've chopped it off. One time I hit a guy so hard his kidney ended up in the glove box next to his license and registration. And his maps.

Dennis reacts.

TRAVIS

You see for me the derby's not a game. It's a way of life.

(beat)

I plan to die in the derby.

Dennis gulps. Focuses.

DENNIS

Let's talk about the yard.

TRAVIS

Of course.

Travis turns and looks at the untouched portion of the yard. It includes grass and a colorful mixture of plants.

TRAVIS

My plan is to rip out the existing planting and replace them with native plants.

DENNIS

Native plants? You mean weeds.

TRAVIS

A weed is an unattractive or unwanted plant.

TRAVIS
 (gestures to a box of ugly
 plants)
 Clearly, these aren't weeds.

DENNIS
 Do what you have to do. Just don't
 touch my herb garden.

TRAVIS
 Sorry, Dennis. No can do. Katie told
 me specifically. The herb garden must
 go.

Dennis reacts. He attempts to stand between Travis and the
 herb garden.

DENNIS
 Get back.

Travis reaches down and pulls out Dennis's herbs one by one.
 He smells each plant and tosses it aside.

TRAVIS
 Basil ... oregano ...um fennel.

DENNIS
 I'm warning you.

Travis grins. He throws the fennel aside and goes to pull
 another plant. Dennis loses it. He bum rushes Travis and
 tackles him to the ground. They hit the dirt hard and begin
 rolling around, grunting and groaning.

Travis shoves Dennis and flattens his face right onto a
 fennel plant. Dennis finds himself staring at a little sign
 that reads "FENNEL - HANDLE DELICATELY."

Fury in his eyes, Dennis YELLS and bucks Travis off of him.

Travis and Dennis both scramble to their feet. Dennis rushes
 Travis and grabs him by the shoulders. Two two men spin in
 circles.

Suddenly, Travis breaks free and using the MONKEY BARS on the
 JUNGLE GYM he leaps up and kicks Dennis in the chest with
 both feet.

TRAVIS
 (Bruce Lee-style)
 Wwaaahh!!

Dennis goes flying back into the herb garden. Travis does a
 running KAMIKAZE LEAP through the air and smashes Dennis to
 the ground one more time.

Their faces end up next to a nest of SPIDERS. Dennis's eyes widen in fear.

TRAVIS
(to the spiders)
Bite him! Bite him!

Finally, Dennis uses all his weight to steamroll Travis backward.... and backward.... and backward....right into the KOI POND. They splash down – blasting water and fish everywhere.

As Dennis chokes and spits out water –

KATIE (O.S.)
What's going on?

Dennis turns and sees Katie and the kids staring at them in confusion. Dennis gestures to the herb garden.

DENNIS
He tore out my herb garden.

Katie looks at the decimated herb garden.

KATIE
Travis. I told you specifically. The herb garden stays put.

Travis and Dennis get to their feet.

TRAVIS
Oh, man. I'm sorry. I guess I got my wires crossed.
(turns to Dennis)
Listen, buddy. I'm really sorry. I'll replant everything and even add chives if you'd like.

DENNIS
No. Just ... don't touch it.

Dennis turns and starts walking away.

KATIE
Dennis ...

DENNIS
I gotta go.

KATIE
Wait. What about the kids? It's your weekend.

Dennis turns back. He sees Megan and Steven taking this all in.

DENNIS

I know.

Dennis turns to the kids.

DENNIS

Alright, come on. We've got fun time scheduled.

Dennis glares at Travis, and then heads towards the street with the kids in tow. Katie watches them go. Clearly she's troubled.

EXT. DENNIS'S APARTMENT - DAY

Dennis and the kids pull into the driveway. Dennis jumps out of the car and unlocks the front door. The kids follow behind.

INT. DENNIS'S APARTMENT - DAY

Dennis walks into his living room. The apartment is spare with white walls and utilitarian furniture. Dennis hears CHOPPING NOISES coming from the kitchen.

He motions for his kids to stay back.

Dennis peers into the kitchen and spots Gordo wearing a pink frilly apron and in midst of preparing an elaborate breakfast. There is fruit, batter and syrup everywhere.

GORDO

Mornin'!

Gordo takes a look at Dennis who is still covered in dirt.

GORDO

Whoa. What happened to you?

Dennis is about to speak when Megan and Steven come around the corner.

MEGAN

Is that mom's apron?

GORDO

Yes, I believe it is.

DENNIS

(groans)

Why are you here?

GORDO

Dude. Things are real bad at home. Mom's been spitting nails since I smashed up Suzy Q.

Steven opens the refrigerator. He finds Gordo's crash helmet. Steven pulls out the helmet. On the side the words "The Jackal" are written in black paint.

STEVEN
Who's the Jackal?

Dennis and Gordo exchange a look. Gordo comes over and grabs the helmet.

GORDO
I've been looking for that.

STEVEN
You drive derby? Where's your car?

Gordo looks at the garage door and Steven follows his gaze. Steven turns and heads out to the garage. The others follow.

INT. DENNIS'S GARAGE - DAY

Steven sees a car covered by a tarp and pulls it off. Underneath, battered and worse for wear, is the old VOLVO 240.

MEGAN
Our car!

STEVEN
You said it was in the shop.
(he can't believe it)
You're a driver?

Dennis shrugs - he's been caught. Gordo jumps in.

GORDO
He's not just a driver. He is legend.
He makes grown men cry like little girls.
(beat, to Megan)
No offense.

Steven and Megan are obviously impressed.

MEGAN
That's so cool.

DENNIS
Just don't tell your mom, okay?

The kids nod. Steven takes a closer look at the car.

STEVEN
So, can I take her for a spin?

Dennis considers. Reluctantly he hands the keys to Steven.

DENNIS
Don't make me regret this.

INT. DENNIS'S VOLVO - MOVING - DAY

Steven drives, Gordo now in the passenger seat. Megan and Dennis sit in the back.

DENNIS
Keep your hands at ten and two.

STEVEN
They are.

DENNIS
Check your mirrors.

STEVEN
I am.

DENNIS
Don't forget to signal.

GORDO
Dude, shut up. You're the fun police.

Gordo spots something in the road ahead.

GORDO
Two points for the cat!!

A CAT scampers in front of the car. Steven sees it and calmly slows the car to let it pass.

DENNIS
Thank you for not killing the cat,
Steven.

GORDO
Hey, let's take this baby out where we
have more room to drive.

DENNIS
No.

GORDO
(playing Dennis)
It'll be safer.

Dennis grumbles to himself.

EXT. PASTURE - DAY

A dirt road runs beside a big open cow pasture. The Volvo kicks up some dust as it drives along the dirt road.

INT. DENNIS'S VOLVO - DAY

Steven drives.

GORDO
You're doing great, man. You musta
inherited your dad's driving skills.

STEVEN
Thanks, Gordo. This is cool.

MEGAN
Can I drive next?

GORDO
Sure.
(Dennis gives Gordo a
look)
Start 'em young, man. Mom had me
driving at seven.

Megan looks at Dennis, imploring. Dennis shakes his head -
NO WAY.

GORDO
Give it some gas. Let's open her up!

Steven accelerates.

DENNIS
Uh-uh. Slow it down, mister.

GORDO
Relax. I've got it under control. A
little more gas.

Steven accelerates. We're going pretty fast now.

DENNIS
Gordo, shut up. Steven, slow down.

GORDO
You're being a back seat driver.
Little more gas, Steve.

Steven accelerates. The wind is blasting them.

GORDO
This is helpful. Gotta get a feel for
her. You're gonna pass that driver's
test with flying colors. Whoo-hoo.

Steven whips up a hill and WHOOSH time seems to SLOW DOWN as
the Volvo is LAUNCHED INTO THE AIR and flies over a small
stream bed. The kids throw their arms up in the air.

STEVEN

Whooooo!!

MEGAN

Yayyyy!!!

DENNIS

ENOUGH! STOP NOW!

Steven hits the brakes and brings the car to a stop. A huge cloud of dirt and dust settles over the car. Steven has a big smile on his face.

DENNIS

Gordo. A word.

EXT. REMOTE ROAD - DAY

Dennis and Gordo climb out of the car through the windows. They take a few steps away to have a private conversation. Dennis is upset.

DENNIS

Now - you've gone too far.

GORDO

Dennis, look, I'm not here to step on your toes but look at the kid.

Dennis looks over - Steven is still pretending he's driving.

GORDO

You had him so terrified of driving, he would've had a heckuva time passing his driver's test. Sometimes the best way to learn how to swim is to be thrown in a pool.

(thoughtful beat)

Or a river in my case.

DENNIS

All right. But that's enough for today. I gotta take you home. I gotta have some time with my kids. I am, after all, the fun police.

Gordo smiles. Dennis smiles. Progress! They walk back to the car.

INT. VOLVO - DAY

Dennis drives towards Gordo's house. At the corner, there's a big hand-lettered sign that reads: "HE'S GONE AND HIS STUFF'S ON THE LAWN."

Gordo sees the sign and howls with laughter.

GORDO
 Oh, man. He's gone and his stuff's on
 the lawn. That's gotta hurt.

Dennis turns onto the street and Gordo's rant is cut short
 when he sees people poking through his stuff on the lawn at
 his mom's house.

Realization immediately sets in -

GORDO
 ... Mom.

Dennis stops the car and Gordo clambers out the window.

Gordo hurries up to a YARD SALE GUY who is handling a NEON
 BEER SIGN. Gordo tries to take it from him.

YARD SALE GUY
 Hey, I'm buying that!

GORDO
 It's not for sale!

Gordo's rips the beer sign away. His attention is drawn to a
 YARD SALE LADY who is examining a THIGHMASTER.

GORDO
 That's my ThighMaster!!
 (he runs over)
 I ordered this from Suzanne Somers.
 Get your grubby mitts off it!

Gordo's mom Sandra exits the house.

SANDRA
 Gordon! Stop!

GORDO
 Mom! WHY??!!!

SANDRA
 You don't care about what belongs to
 me? I don't care about what belongs
 to you.

She slams the door back into the house. Dennis sidles up to
 Gordo.

DENNIS
 Uh... what's going on?

GORDO
 It's Suzy Q. I wasn't supposed to
 drive her in the derby.

A WEIRD OLD GUY comes up to Gordo with a calendar.

WEIRD OLD GUY
How much for this David Hasselhoff
calendar?

GORDO
(seething)
That's not even mine.

An ENGINE REVS and the blue Pontiac Bonneville we saw earlier
comes rolling from the backyard, driven by another guy.

GORDO
My Pontiac! Stop!!! Get outta my
car, interloper!!

Gordo chases the Pontiac, tripping over some of his stuff in
the yard, but the Pontiac takes off down the street in a
blaze of glory.

Fuming now, Gordo storms back toward the house.

INT. GORDO'S HOUSE - DAY

Gordo blasts inside.

GORDO
MOM!! You sold the Pontiac?!!

SANDRA
And the Monte Carlo.

Dennis follows Gordo in.

SANDRA
And furthermore, Gordon, it's time you
moved out. I'm sick and tired of you
freeloading. You need to learn
responsibility. Yes, this is tough
love, but Gordon... it's for your own
good.

Gordo is devastated.

EXT. GORDO'S HOUSE - DAY

Dennis and Gordo walk back outside. Gordo watches people
picking through his stuff but now he doesn't care.

Back at the car, Steven and Megan are waiting for them.

GORDO
Looks like I'm gonna be homeless for a
while.

DENNIS
Uh... well...

STEVEN
C'mon, dad.

Dennis sighs.

INT. DENNIS'S VOLVO – DAY

Dennis and Megan sit in the front seat, while Gordo and Steven sit in the back stuffed together with spare parts from Gordo's cars, a few trash bags full of clothes, a thigh master, a neon beer sign, and a large stuffed lizard.

Gordo leans forward to talk to Dennis.

GORDO
Thanks, brother. It's adversity that
brings people together.
(beat)
Do you think we can stop and buy some
Milk Duds?

EXT. DENNIS'S APARTMENT – NIGHT

Dennis walks outside. He looks around for Steven, but doesn't see him anywhere. Dennis hears a SOUND by the side of the house.

Dennis heads towards the sound. He turns the corner into the side yard and sees Steven and Angela standing against a tree and kissing. Dennis's EYES BULGE.

DENNIS
Steven Michael Edwards.

Steven and Angela startle and turn towards Dennis. Steven is flustered.

STEVEN
Dad!

Dennis nods to Angela.

DENNIS
Hello, Angela.

ANGELA
Hello, Mr. Edwards. It's nice to
finally meet you.

Angela holds her hand out to Dennis. Dennis hesitates for a moment, then reaches out and shakes Angela's hand. Angela gestures to Steven.

ANGELA
Steven didn't think you'd like me.

STEVEN

That's not true.

ANGELA

Well, he didn't think you'd like the idea of me. But I told him that he has to trust you. You're a good dad. And even if you act crazy sometimes ... you still want what's best for him.

DENNIS

Thanks.

ANGELA

No problem.

(beat)

Anyway. I better go.

Angela turns to Steven and gives him a kiss. Still flustered, Steven keeps one eye on his dad.

STEVEN

Okay. Bye.

Angela smiles and then turns and walks towards the street where her car is parked. Dennis watches as she jumps in her old green Miata and speeds away.

Dennis stands there, staring at the street, feeling sucker-punched. Finally, Steven speaks up.

STEVEN

Okay, yes. Angela is my girlfriend.

DENNIS

She seems like a nice girl.

Steven lights up.

STEVEN

Yeah. She is. She's incredible.

DENNIS

Well, I'm happy you're happy. Of course, I wish you'd told me about it. Rather than trying to hide it behind my back.

STEVEN

Okay, but ... I didn't want you to freak out.

DENNIS

Freak out? I don't freak out. I am definitely not one who freaks out. I just think a little father-son honesty should be on the program.

Steven nods. He and Dennis walk over to the sidewalk in front of the apartment and sit on the curb. Dennis stares up at the stars for a moment. He sighs.

DENNIS
Believe it or not I was once young and
in love.

STEVEN
Yeah. With mom.

Dennis shakes his head coyly.

DENNIS
No. Before that. When I was in high
school. Her name was Jenny Brasco and
she was a knockout.

STEVEN
(floored)
Dad!

DENNIS
It's true. She was exceptional. And
we were completely and totally in
love. She and I dated for three
months. Which was a lifetime. And
all I could think about was ... you
know. It was a difficult time in my
life.

Steven is intrigued.

STEVEN
Does mom know?

DENNIS
Of course. Your mom knows all my
stories.

STEVEN
Well, Angela and I aren't having sex.
Okay? She doesn't want to. Not that
I don't wish I could change her mind.

Dennis shoots Steven a look.

STEVEN
I'm kidding. I'm kidding. We're
gonna wait until we're older.

DENNIS
That's good to hear. Just remember,
you can talk to me about anything.

(MORE)

DENNIS (CONT'D)

Even if it's weird or embarrassing or involves dangerous situations where you should have known better. I'm here.

STEVEN

Okay. Thanks.

DENNIS

You're welcome. Also ... it only takes one sperm. Just one. So ... don't be an idiot.

Steven laughs. Suddenly, Gordo comes out and spots the two of them on the curb. Gordo heads over.

GORDO

Hey, you two. What's up? A little father-son bonding.

STEVEN

Yeah. Dad was telling me about his love life.

Gordo plops a squat between Dennis and Steven.

GORDO

Ohh. Cool. This I gotta hear. No offense ... but I don't get how you landed a hot chickadee like Katie. You're a little stale compared to that squishy love muffin.

Steven laughs. Dennis shoots him a look.

DENNIS

None of your business.

STEVEN

Come on, dad. Tell us. I've never heard this story.

GORDO

Yeah. Tell us!

Dennis glares at Gordo.

DENNIS

It was back in college.

EXT. COLLEGE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Katie walks across campus in a crazy 80's outfit. Her hair is streaked blonde. A couple of jocks walk with her. They are flirting it up. Trying to get her attention.

DENNIS (V.O.)

Katie was a hot ticket then. Just like now. And she dated a lot of guys. But I was smart.

INT. COLLEGE LIBRARY, STUDY ROOM – NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Dennis and Katie sit together at a long table covered with books. Dennis's hair is out of control – tamed by a headband. Dennis stares intently at Katie. She looks up and he is flustered. He leans over and scratches something on her paper.

DENNIS (V.O.)

I became her study buddy. And we worked on our problem sets together. Sometimes we studied late into the night.

INT. COLLEGE LIBRARY, STUDY ROOM – LATER (FLASHBACK)

Katie yawns. Dennis reaches under the table and produces a coffee out of thin air. Katie smiles and puts her hand on Dennis's arm. Dennis stares at her hand. He looks up at Katie. And, suddenly, they lean in for a momentous first kiss.

DENNIS (V.O.)

And at the end of it all. When the other guys were gone. I was still there. She always said I was her biggest supporter. And her biggest fan. And eventually she realized that she wanted me around all the time.

EXT. DENNIS'S APARTMENT – NIGHT (REAL TIME)

Dennis is lost in his reverie.

STEVEN

So mom dated a lot of guys?

DENNIS

What? Oh, well you know. A few. Not that many really.

GORDO

That's heartwarming. But come on. That's not the whole story. You haven't been this uptight forever.

DENNIS

Yeah. I don't know. Maybe I have become more uptight over the years. But that's life. I have a family now. I have responsibilities. I can't be the wild man I was in college forever.

Gordo studies Dennis.

GORDO
You were a wild man?

DENNIS
Well, wild might be a bit of an
exaggeration.

GORDO
No. I can see it when you drive. You
were a wild man.

DENNIS
Honestly, I misused the word.

GORDO
Whatever, dude. Don't you see? Katie
needs her wild man back. And lucky
for you - you're a derby driver now.
Which means ...you can deliver.

Gordo jumps to his feet.

GORDO
When Katie sees you out in the mud,
blastin' metal, crunchin' steel -
she'll remember the wild man she
married. The fox. The lion. The
jackrabbit. The animal who never gave
her a moment's peace.
(there's a twinkle in his
eye)
And when she sees that - whoo! It's
gonna be beautiful.

DENNIS
Maybe. But I don't want her to see me
lose. I don't want her to see me
until I'm a champion.

GORDO
Sure. But this isn't all about you,
Big D. It's also about Katie and her
needs. When she married you she
married a certain kind of man. A man
who sometimes doesn't eat his
vegetables. A man who could walk on
the beach without any sun block
whatsoever.

DENNIS
SPF is very important.

GORDO
 Shut up, dude. The point is Katie
 married a fly-by-the-seat-of-his-pants
 kind of cat who scoffs at authority,
 mocks convention and freeballs.

DENNIS
 Freeballs?

GORDO
 Yes, Dennis. I'm talking about not
 wearing any underwear.

STEVEN
 You don't...?

GORDO
 Never.

Steven and Dennis are weirded out for a moment.

GORDO
 You just have to find that guy again.
 You have to bring him back and show
 Katie that he was in you all along.
 Just, maybe, taking a nap or
 something.

Dennis considers. It's wise advice

EXT. DERBY STADIUM - DAY

Men, women and children crowd into the grandstands at the
 demolition derby semi-finals.

On the track an overweight official shakes his big butt to
 rock n' roll music.

Behind the fence, mechanics put final touches on colorful
 derby cars. The loud clang of metal against metal
 reverberates across the arena.

EXT. GRANDSTANDS - DAY

Katie and the kids take a seat in the front row of the
 grandstands. Steven and Megan nervously scan the crowd for
 their dad.

INT. STADIUM BATHROOM - DAY

Gordo and Dennis are nose to nose in the bathroom. Gordo has
 his hands on Dennis's shoulders and Dennis's eyes are closed.

GORDO
 I want you to imagine that you're
 stopping by Katie's classroom;
 (MORE)

GORDO (CONT'D)
it's lunchtime and you've brought her
Chinese food.

DENNIS
Can it be Mediterranean?

GORDO
Fine. You're bringing her shawarma.

Dennis nods approvingly.

GORDO
You open the door and call out -
Katie. Katie, I brought you shawarma.
You look around but she's not at her
desk.

DENNIS
Come on. Give it to me.

GORDO
Then you hear a familiar and ever-so-
soft moan.

Gordo moans for Dennis.

GORDO (V.O.)
Ohhh, ohh, ohh.

INT. STADIUM BATHROOM - DAY (REALITY)

A BEARDED MAN, 40's, walks into the restroom and sees Gordo moaning while holding onto Dennis. The man looks Gordo up and down, cocks his hip and makes a KISSY SOUND. Clearly, he wants some action too.

Gordo shoots the man a look and the man turns and scurries out of the bathroom. Gordo returns to moaning.

GORDO
Ohh, ohhh, ohhh.

EXT. STADIUM BATHROOM - DAY

Outside the restroom a small crowd has gathered. The bystanders exchange nervous glances as the moans get louder and louder.

INT. STADIUM BATHROOM - DAY

Dennis fumes and his face twitches as Gordo's moans of ecstasy build and build until Gordo erupts with one climactic shriek.

EXT. STADIUM BATHROOM – DAY

Dennis and Gordo EXPLODE out of the bathroom and into the blinding sun. The bystanders whisper and point – but Dennis doesn't notice and Gordo doesn't care.

EXT. THE PIT – DAY

Down at the pit, Travis and his very large and ominous-looking partner BODY BAG JONES, 30's, scan the competition.

Travis looks up into the stands and sees Katie. He waves and Katie waves back. Body Bag gives Travis a knowing look and Travis grins.

TRAVIS

Not yet. But I'm working on it.

EXT. THE PIT – DAY

Dennis and Gordo approach their vehicles. Ernesto stands by Gordo's newly modified derby car. It's a Ford Galaxy painted yellow with Gordo's signature black tailfins on the back.

Dennis jumps into his car and puts on his seat belt. He is focused, expressionless.

ERNESTO

What's wrong with him?

Gordo shakes his head and puts his finger to his lips. Suddenly, Travis and Body Bag show up. Body Bag looms over Gordo.

TRAVIS

Well, well, well. If it isn't Gordo the Jackal. Trying to scratch his way to the top one more time. You remember my partner Body Bag Jones.

Body Bag snarls.

TRAVIS

Too bad you still can't find a decent partner. I hear the Chuck –

Gordo nervously interrupts.

GORDO

Yeah, yeah, whatever. Save your flippity-flap. You guys won the national title last year, but this year it's ours.

TRAVIS

Well there's a first time for everything.

Travis and Body Bag laugh.

Travis turns his attention to Dennis – who's still in his trance. Travis puts his face right up next to Dennis.

TRAVIS

I just want you to know ... if anything happens to you, I'll take good care of Katie. I'll make sure she gets everything she needs.

Travis stands up and he and Body Bag walk away. Gordo checks in with Dennis.

GORDO

You still good?

Dennis remains expressionless. Gordo stands and puts on his helmet.

GORDO

Wreck and roll!

EXT. DERBY FIELD – DAY

The drivers take their positions on the edges of the dirt field.

Body Bag and Travis line up with their rear bumpers directly across from Dennis and Gordo.

Travis drives a green Plymouth Fury with the words "T REX" written on the side in bright orange paint. His car is decorated to look like a dinosaur with scales, talons and fangs. Body Bag drives a Dodge Monaco. His car is white and has a stripe that looks like a zipper painted across the top. On the side in black are the words "BODY BAG".

Dennis stares at the starting flag.

Finally, the flagman waves the green flag and the derby is on. Immediately, Dennis throws his car in gear. He accelerates forward and then throws the Volvo into reverse – smashing a shiny yellow and black Bonneville.

Dennis spies Travis in his Rex-mobile. Dennis accelerates and bangs Travis in the fender.

EXT. GRANDSTANDS – DAY

Katie recognizes the Volvo and reacts. She takes a closer look. She's stunned.

KATIE

Oh my God. Dennis?!

EXT. DERBY FIELD - DAY

Dennis reverses to get another hit and sees Katie on the sidelines. Dennis reacts, stunned. His face loses its expressionless quality and his lips quiver.

Dennis reverses to get a better look. He sees Katie and the kids watching him with a mixture of fear and dread on their faces.

DENNIS

Katie -

Suddenly, Dennis loses his focus. He looks around and sees danger all around him.

Dennis panics. He sees a giant red Plymouth Fury racing towards him. He tries to accelerate, but his foot misses the pedal. BLAM! Dennis is hit by the Fury.

Dennis reverses his car, but before he gets very far a gold El Dorado hits him from the side and he spins out of control.

Dennis attempts to put the car in gear - but he's out of luck. He turns the engine and the car sputters and stalls. Dennis looks around in panic. He sees a blue Oldsmobile tricked out with shark teeth and chains bearing down on him but there's nothing he can do.

Dennis grips his steering wheel and prepares for impact. WHAMMO! The car hits and he pitches forward, his head snapping with the impact.

Suddenly, it's a feeding frenzy. Dennis is being hit on all sides. POW! BAM! CRASH! Dennis's car is hit again and again.

Gordo sees Dennis being hit, and accelerates across the track. Gordo screams out his window.

GORDO

Flip your flag!

However, Dennis is frozen. And the drivers show no mercy. Body Bag, realizing his strategic advantage, reverses thirty feet and then comes roaring at Dennis with all his fury.

EXT. GRANDSTANDS - DAY

In the stands, Katie and the kids watch in horror. Megan covers her eyes.

EXT. DERBY FIELD - DAY

BLAMMM! Body Bag hits Dennis and Dennis's engine bursts into flames.

A red caution flag is waved and the cars come to a halt. Gordo jumps out of his car and runs over to Dennis.

Gordo pulls Dennis out of the burning car. Dennis is catatonic. Gordo lays Dennis on the ground.

GORDO
Stay with me, bro.

Suddenly, a group of EMT's in yellow jumpsuits surround them. The EMT's push Gordo out of the way and move Dennis onto a stretcher.

Katie, Megan and Steven come rushing over - but before they have a chance to talk to Dennis he is loaded into the ambulance. Megan calls out in fear.

MEGAN
Dad!

The EMT's shut the ambulance doors and speed away - as Gordo and Dennis's family look on in horror.

INT. DENNIS'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Dennis lies prostrate on a hospital bed. He's in severe pain and struggles to drink juice through a plastic straw.

Katie enters the room and is shocked to see Dennis with bandages on his face and arms.

KATIE
Oh, my poor baby.

Katie rushes over to Dennis and takes him in her arms. She rocks him back and forth, strokes his head and pulls him into a tight embrace. Finally -

KATIE
Are you okay?

DENNIS
I'm okay...

Katie lets out a sigh.

DENNIS
Though it does hurt to move.

Frustration and anger bubble up inside Katie.

KATIE
You idiot!

DENNIS
What?

KATIE

What possessed you to do this? You're not a demolition derby driver; you're an insurance salesman!

DENNIS

A guy can change.

KATIE

Guys can change, but you're not a guy. You're Dennis. You hate roller coasters and you're afraid of Aspartame! Normal families practice evacuating the house in case of fire. We've had evacuations for fire, earthquake, and asteroid! You do not change!

Katie is pissed and Dennis is hurt. But they're interrupted when the door opens and Steven and Megan enter.

There's a long, awkward silence as the kids get closer to Dennis. Finally -

MEGAN

Does it hurt to move your big toe?

Dennis moves his big toe and winces.

DENNIS

Yes.

MEGAN

Does it hurt to move your tongue?

Dennis sticks out his tongue and moves it.

DENNIS

(tongue out)
Uh-huh.

MEGAN

Does it hurt if I pull your ear?

Dennis nods that it's okay. Megan pulls his ear.

DENNIS

Not too bad.

STEVEN

Dad... it's better this way. Just stay home and stuff.

Dennis is crushed to hear this.

KATIE

C'mon. Dad needs to rest.

Megan waves goodbye but Steven refuses to make eye contact. Katie and the kids leave Dennis alone.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY

As Katie and the kids trudge away from Dennis's room, Gordo appears, carrying a BOUQUET OF FLOWERS AND BALLOONS.

Gordo smiles, but Katie responds with an icy look.

INT. DENNIS'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Gordo enters with the flowers and balloons. Despite the silliness of what he's brought, Gordo wears a serious expression. He pulls up a chair and sits beside Dennis.

He grabs Dennis's hand and tries to hold it...

GORDO
I'm really sorry.

Dennis squirms out of the hand-hold.

GORDO
I never thought anything like this would happen to you.

DENNIS
It's not your fault. I saw Katie in the crowd. Lost my focus.

Gordo thinks for a long moment.

GORDO
Look, man... it's been a good run. I enjoyed being your partner.

DENNIS
What are you talking about?

GORDO
We lost semi's. We gotta shut it down.

DENNIS
No, no. We have to drive finals. We gotta beat those two goons.

GORDO
Dude, this ain't your bag. Apparently your skills are somewhat unpredictable.

DENNIS
I don't care. It was one bad round.

GORDO
Dennis ... you almost got killed today.

DENNIS

You didn't see the way Katie just looked at me. And Steven. Even Megan. I'm a wimp in their eyes.

GORDO

I gotta be straight with you. All that stuff I told you about the caveman...

DENNIS

Yeah.

GORDO

About the rams and the ostriches...

DENNIS

Yeah. Alpha male.

GORDO

It was a load.

DENNIS

No, man, it wasn't a load. It's true. Just like you said. Katie needs a man. The man she married. The guy who used to take risks and be spontaneous and not worry about every little thing all of the time.

Dennis is really rolling now and Gordo is soaking it in.

DENNIS

Gordo, we're talking about my family being a family again. Christmas Eves. Birthdays. Hell, any day of the week. But together. The only way I can get that back is if you help me. You saved my life today, but that's not worth a bag of beans unless that life is with Katie and the kids.

Dennis has touched a nerve in Gordo.

DENNIS

We're partners.

That word - partners - hits Gordo in the gut.

GORDO

I gotta go. Just...

Gordo can't finish his thought. He leaves in a hurry.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY

Gordo strides away from Dennis's room. He makes it to the hospital elevator and punches the button. Gordo waits for the elevator to arrive. He watches it tick up the floors one, two, three.

Finally, he can't take it anymore. He buries his face in his hands and GROANS in frustration. A young couple standing next to Gordo slowly back away.

Upset, Gordo turns and hurries back towards Dennis's room.

INT. DENNIS'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Gordo enters the room and paces back and forth. He's all wound up.

GORDO

Okay, we'll go to finals and trounce Travis. I know the commissioner and he owes me a favor. But there are three conditions, and you must adhere to each.

DENNIS

Okay.

GORDO

Firstly, you must admit you know nothing about derby. And I know everything.

DENNIS

I wouldn't say I know nothing.

Gordo shoots Dennis a look.

DENNIS

I know nothing.

GORDO

We can no longer rely on your hidden rage issues. So secondly, you must follow my strict and oftentimes oppressive training regime and you must never deviate from said regime.

DENNIS

Fine. I won't deviate.

GORDO

That's good. Thirdly, you must shave - or wax - every single hair off your body, from the top of your head to the bottom of your feet.

DENNIS

Why?

GORDO

What did I just say?! Never deviate from said regime!

DENNIS

Okay, I'll shave.

GORDO

That was actually just a test. And there always has to be three conditions. Whoever heard of two conditions?

EXT. ABANDONED AIRFIELD - DAY

Dennis sits in his Volvo wearing his crash helmet and facing a RAMP. He still has a bandage on his face - but other than that he looks ready to go.

GORDO (V.O.)

Our training begins at 6 am. You should report fifteen minutes early.

Gordo slaps the top of the car and Dennis slams his foot on the accelerator.

In the car, Dennis gulps as he hits the ramp. Dennis turns the steering wheel and the car topples upside down! It spins over - fast - and all Dennis sees is a blur.

GORDO (V.O.)

Preferably on an empty stomach.

Dennis stumbles out of the car. A crowd of onlookers CHEER. Dennis retches on the dirt.

EXT. ABANDONED AIRFIELD - DAY

Gordo is strapped into a FLAME THROWER and points the gun at Dennis, who is wearing a flame retardant suit and helmet.

GORDO (V.O.)

At 0-900 hours you will be engulfed in flames. This happens frequently in races and you need to get used to it.

With that, Gordo shoots a BLAST OF FIRE at Dennis. Dennis's suit catches on fire and he runs around in circles trying to bat it out.

INT. HOCKEY RINK - DAY

Dennis's Volvo slaloms between orange cones on the ice. Dennis struggles to maintain control as the Volvo slides around.

GORDO (V.O.)
The ice rink poses its own challenges.
But if you can drive on ice. You can
drive on mud.

Dennis swerves, loses control and the car spins round and round in circles until it CRASHES into the wall of the rink.

GORDO (V.O.)
Don't worry. It takes practice.

INT. LAUNDROMAT - DAY

Dennis loads uniforms into a washing machine.

GORDO (V.O.)
Of course, there are some mysteries in
the training.

Gordo comes over with more clothes - including dirty jock straps and socks. Dennis gags.

GORDO (V.O.)
Don't blame me. My mom used to do my
laundry. I miss her.

Dennis feels bad and loads in Gordo's jock straps.

INT. DENNIS'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Gordo and Dennis sit at the kitchen table, playing chess.

GORDO (V.O.)
Finally, there is a mental element to
the derby. It's all about strategy.

Gordo makes a move and hits a clock. Dennis stares at the board. A long pause ensues as Dennis ponders his move. And ponders... And ponders... Yep, still pondering.

Wow, it's really getting long now. Gordo yawns. Finally -

DENNIS
This really isn't as exciting as the
other stuff we've been doing, is it?

GORDO
Nope, wanna get the flame thrower?

DENNIS
Yeah.

They're out of their chairs in a flash.

EXT. ABANDONED AIRFIELD - NIGHT

This time, it's night and both Gordo and Dennis wear the flame retardant suits and helmets.

GORDO (V.O.)
 But the most important part of the
 derby. And that which cannot be
 taught ... is heart.

Ernesto stands near them, manning the FLAME THROWER.

ERNESTO
 Ya' ready?

DENNIS & GORDO
 Yeah!!

Ernesto BLASTS THEM WITH FIRE.

EXT. COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS - DAY

A county fair bustles with activity. A Ferris wheel and other rides, food stands and a clown-dunking booth - it's a fun and electric atmosphere.

Gordo buys two big chilidogs and takes one to Dennis.

GORDO
 Eat this.
 (takes bite)
 Need your vitamins.

Dennis takes a bite.

GORDO
 The county fair, bro. Take it in.
 These places are the lifeblood of the
 demolition derby. All over the
 country, gladiators like us climb into
 their war chariots and pound the
 living crap out of each other for no
 other reason than to satisfy a hidden
 and unquenchable thirst for blood,
 anarchy and carnage.

They pass a wholesome-looking family in a PETTING ZOO, where the kids feed docile FARM ANIMALS.

GORDO
 And it's fun for the whole family.

They pass more food stands.

They arrive at a food stand for Freezy's Fried Chicken, where Travis and Body Bag Jones stand surrounded by fans, autograph-seekers and photographers.

Travis plays it up for his fans.

TRAVIS

T-Rex and Body Bag can't be beat!
We're national champs, and we're gonna
stay that way. Now step on up, order
yourself a T-Rexwich and you'll get a
signed copy of our picture.

Travis spots Dennis and Gordo. He smiles an eat-shit grin. Dennis's eyes narrow with hate.

GORDO

C'mon, man. Don't worry about him. We
have more training to do.

Gordo pulls Dennis away.

EXT. BUMPER CAR TRACK - DAY

Dennis sits crammed in a kiddie bumper car, his knees up around his shoulders and his hands gripping the tiny steering wheel.

Dennis gets mercilessly sideswiped by a LITTLE GIRL in another bumper car.

LITTLE GIRL

You suck, mister!

She drives off. Gordo shouts instructions from outside the track, surrounded by the kids' parents.

GORDO

Don't let her get in your head, man.
Remember protect your engine. You
wanna ram these little monsters with
your back end.

Dennis gets bashed by more kids in their cars as they speed past him. It's cutthroat!

Dennis punches it and accelerates after the Little Girl. She looks back over her shoulder as Dennis bears down on her like a madman. SLAM! Dennis delivers a monster hit.

Dennis reverses and prepares to deliver another hit.

DENNIS

You're goin' down, Sally!!

Dennis guns for her, but she brakes at the last moment. Dennis swerves, loses control of his bumper car and spins into the guard rail. His bumper car wheezes and smokes.

Dennis hears laughter and ironic clapping.

TRAVIS (O.S.)
Nice driving!

Dennis sees that Travis and Body Bag have been watching the whole thing.

DENNIS
You think you can do better?

Travis can't believe it - he just got challenged!

GORDO
No, no, no, Dennis. Not here. Not like this.

TRAVIS
On the contrary, I think this is a great idea. Body Bag?

Body Bag nods and he squeezes into a bumper car, as does Travis. Against his better judgment -

GORDO
Well, here we go.

Gordo leaps over the guard rail and finds the bumper car with a Mean Kid in it.

GORDO
Take a hike, Timmy.

The Mean Kid won't get up, so Gordo picks him up and deposits him kicking and screaming on the other side of the guardrail. Gordo jumps into the bumper car. Now it's on!

Engines rev. The four men swerve around little kids to attack one another. Worried moms pull their children off the track. No place for kids here.

The hits get harder and faster until it's finally just a brutal, no-holds-barred free for all.

There's a huge crash with all four cars in the center of the track. The four men jump up and get in each other's faces.

GORDO
Not so tough now, are you, T-Wuss?

Travis scoffs.

TRAVIS

Come on, Gordo. You've been driving this circuit for ten years with nothing to show for it. You're a loser. And a wimp. You'll never be half the driver your mom was. She could take a hit. You can't handle the pain.

Dennis jumps forward.

DENNIS

That's a lie. Gordo can take a hit and he loves pain!

Dennis hits Gordo in the stomach.

GORDO

Ow!

DENNIS

He lives for it.

Dennis kicks Gordo in the shin.

GORDO

Quit it!

DENNIS

This man eats hurt for breakfast and asks for more!

Dennis elbows Gordo in the face and Gordo SCREAMS.

Suddenly -

BAD FAIR COP (O.S.)

Step outta them cars!

Dennis and company look over and see two FAIR COPS wielding flashlights. Their yellow shirts read: COUNTY FAIR SECURITY. They have big cop mustaches and wear dark sunglasses.

BAD FAIR COP

Step away from the undersized vehicles with your hands up!

EXT. COUNTY FAIR - BARN - DAY

Directly behind the petting zoo is a small barn. A sign on the barn door reads "SECURITY OFFICE & DETENTION FACILITY."

INT. BARN OFFICE - DAY

Part of the barn has been modified to be an office. There is a large corkboard with Polaroid pictures of fair deviants on it.

The Bad Fair Cop chews gum and stares down at Gordo and Dennis who sit in chairs like scolded kids. His partner, the Good Fair Cop, meanwhile shops for stuff on Ebay and eats a candied apple. The two cops have twangy accents.

BAD FAIR COP

Now fightin' at the fair is serious business. And I'm more apt to believe the story of two national derby champions than I am you two deviants.
(glaring at Gordo)
And you especially. I still have you on my wall.

There's a Polaroid of Gordo on the wall of deviants.

BAD FAIR COP

You shouldn't even be on the premises after what you pulled.

GORDO

Aww, that was two years ago.

DENNIS

Where's Travis?

GOOD FAIR COP

We let 'em go.

DENNIS

Of course you did.

BAD FAIR COP

You two was the ones fightin'.

GORDO

(to Dennis)
That really hurt, by the way.

DENNIS

(to Bad Fair Cop)
Well, they started it.

The Bad Fair Cop takes out a Polaroid camera.

BAD FAIR COP

All right, let's get you boys' pictures. Say cheese.

DENNIS & GORDO

Cheese.

He snaps their picture and shakes it. Bad Fair Cop looks at the Polaroid.

GORDO

Can I see it?

Bad Fair Cop shows Gordo the photo.

GORDO
Can we do another one? My eyes are
closed.

INT. BARN - DAY

The Bad Fair Cop ushers Gordo and Dennis to a small fenced-off enclosure and opens a gate. Dennis and Gordo enter the pen.

INT. BARN PEN - DAY

Bad Fair Cop shuts them inside and locks the gate.

Also in the pen are other FAIR DEVIANTS, included a PASSED-OUT DRUNK, a TEENAGE GANGBANBER and an OLD DUDE in a suit.

Dennis and Gordo also see mean-looking farm animals - a PIG, A GOAT, and a LLAMA.

DENNIS
Why do they look so angry?

GORDO
You'd be upset too if people petted
you all day long.

DENNIS
They're from the petting zoo?

OLD DUDE
They're the bad animals that bite the
children. Don't stare at them.

GORDO
Don't worry. We'll be out of here in
eight or nine hours.

DENNIS
What?! I'm supposed to be at Steven's
driver's test ...
(checks his watch)
In fifteen minutes.

OLD DUDE
Don't shout. You'll upset them.

The mean animals snort at Dennis and Gordo.

DENNIS
We have to get out of here. C'mon.
Give me a boost out the window.

Gordo stares at the goat. The goat stares back and bares his teeth.

GORDO
I think the goat remembers me from
last time.

The animals get agitated.

OLD DUDE
Shhh.... you're getting on their nerves.

The pig snorts at Gordo. Gordo hurries over to a small window and kneels. He boosts Dennis up. Gordo grunts in pain as Dennis steps on his shoulders and then his head.

DENNIS
Just a little further.

As Dennis squeezes himself through the window, Gordo looks over and sees the goat preparing to charge.

GOAT
Bbbaaaaaaa!!

GORDO
Aw, shit.

Gordo pushes Dennis the rest of the way out. Dennis reaches back for Gordo, but Gordo gets wedged in the window ...

Just as the goat sinks his teeth into Gordo's ass -

GORDO
Owowowowowow!!!

INT. BARN OFFICE - DAY

The Fair Cops hear Gordo's screams and hurry towards the pen.

INT. BARN PEN - DAY

With all his might, Dennis yanks Gordo through the window to safety.

OLD MAN
Take us with you!

The Fair Cops enter the pen and watch Dennis and Gordo through the window, as they tear off through the fairgrounds, Gordo clutching his ass as he runs.

INT. DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES - DAY

Dennis, Gordo, Steven and Megan sit in chairs in the DMV. Gordo rubs his sore ass.

DMV EMPLOYEE
Number 205.

STEVEN

That's me!

Steven jumps up and Dennis follows him to the front window. The DMV employee hands a clipboard to Steven.

DMV EMPLOYEE

Fill this out and report to Lot A.

Dennis puts his hand on Steven's shoulder.

DENNIS

I would just like to say that this young man has had more than the average number of driver's training hours, has excellent gas, brake and steering control, and on top of it all has a thorough understanding of the rules of the road.

DMV EMPLOYEE

Thanks for sharing.

DENNIS

You're welcome.

INT. DMV - DAY

Megan and Gordo sit by side on the chairs. While Dennis stands in the corner, arranging something on his cell phone. Megan studies Gordo.

MEGAN

You look sad.

GORDO

I'm not sad.

MEGAN

That's what your mouth says. But your eyes say something different.

Gordo squinches up his eyes.

MEGAN

Have you told your mom you're sorry?

GORDO

Nah. An apology isn't gonna cut it.

MEGAN

Maybe. But you should still say it. It's the right thing to do.

Suddenly, Steven enters the office. He hands his driver's test to his father.

STEVEN

I passed!

DENNIS

Ninety-five percent!

Gordo almost falls out of his chair.

GORDO

Wow. Snaps, brother.

Dennis throws Steven the keys.

DENNIS

I guess you're driving home.

EXT. DENNIS'S APARTMENT - DAY

A shiny blue SAAB sits parked in Dennis's driveway. Steven parks the Volvo across the street.

INT. VOLVO - DAY

Stephen pulls up the parking brake.

STEVEN

You've got visitors.

DENNIS

That's strange. I'm not expecting anyone.

Steven turns off the engine and they all exit the car.

EXT. DENNIS'S APARTMENT - DAY

Steven walks up to the Saab to get a closer look.

STEVEN

Cool treads.

DENNIS

Yeah. And according to Consumer Reports it's the safest make in its size class.

Steven turns around and sees Dennis holding car keys in his hand. For a moment, Steven is confused. Then he gets it.

STEVEN

For me?

Dennis hands Steven the keys.

DENNIS

Well, now that you mention it.

Steven throws his arms around Dennis. Dennis reacts, surprised.

STEVEN
I can't believe it. Can I drive it home? I mean - to mom's house?

DENNIS
Okay.

MEGAN
Can I go too?

DENNIS
(considers)
Fine. But, Steven, go straight home. No joy riding with your sister in the car.

STEVEN
No problem.

Gordo raises a fist.

GORDO
Dude. Take that grocery-getter and make her sing!

Steven laughs and he and Megan jump in the car. Steven starts the car and then carefully backs out of the driveway. Once he's on the street he waves and then drives away.

Dennis waves - a smile on his face. After a moment, Dennis sighs then turns and heads into his apartment.

INT. DENNIS'S APARTMENT - DAY

Dennis and Gordo come inside. Gordo plops down on the couch. Dennis sits down beside him and stares ahead for a long moment. Finally -

DENNIS
Katie and I used to talk about how we'd feel when Steven got his license. How we'd be scared and excited and proud. It was gonna be a big day for us.

Dennis is caught up in the memory.

GORDO
Don't worry, bro. She'll come around.

DENNIS
Yeah? But what if she doesn't? What if it's too late?

(MORE)

DENNIS (CONT'D)

What if driving derby doesn't convince
Katie to give me another chance?

(beat)

I may never get her back.

GORDO

Dude. Don't think bad thoughts.

DENNIS

I can't help it. I have to do
something. Something big. Something
that shows Katie that we still belong
together.

Dennis thinks for a moment. Suddenly, he smiles. He picks
up his car keys and heads towards the door.

GORDO

Whoa. Whoa. It's T minus 22 hours
till derby. We've got work to do.

DENNIS

Sorry. I can't.

Dennis grabs his jacket.

GORDO

Where are you going?

DENNIS

Back in time.

Dennis turns and heads out the door.

EXT. KATIE'S SCHOOL, PARKING LOT - DAY

Dennis pulls up in his derbyized Volvo and squeals to a stop.
He climbs out of his car and leans against the door - waiting
for Katie.

After a moment, Katie comes out the front door. She looks up
and sees Dennis leaning James Dean style against his Volvo.
Katie walks over to greet him.

KATIE

Dennis!?

DENNIS

Hop in. I'm taking you on a ride.

Katie wavers.

DENNIS

Don't worry. I'm an excellent driver.

Dennis slides into the car through the window. Katie considers. Finally, she climbs through the passenger window and into the car.

EXT. COUNTY FAIR - NIGHT

As the lights of the Ferris wheel and the spinning tilt-a-whirl illuminate kids and their parents having fun at the fair, we settle on Dennis walking with Katie through the crowds.

They pass some posters that feature Travis and his derby car, advertising the upcoming national derby championships.

EXT. FERRIS WHEEL - NIGHT

Dennis escorts Katie to the Ferris wheel, where he hands two tickets to the ticket guy.

DENNIS
(to the ticket guy)
Two please.

KATIE
You're kidding, right? You're
terrified of Ferris wheels.

DENNIS
Yeah... but you love them.

To Katie's surprise, they pass the turnstile and climb aboard the Ferris wheel.

EXT. FERRIS WHEEL - NIGHT

The machine creaks and groans as it lifts its passengers up into the night sky. Dennis grips the rails of the carriage.

KATIE
You sure you're okay with this?

Dennis has his eyes squeezed shut, but he tries to act cool.

DENNIS
'Course. Great view.

KATIE
How do you know? Your eyes are
closed.

Dennis opens one eye. Then the next. He looks down. Fights closing his eyes again.

DENNIS
See? This is incredible.

KATIE
Remember the last time we were on one?

DENNIS
Uhh...I think I might have blacked out.

KATIE
Well, I remember it because you just looked at me the whole time.

DENNIS
Ooh yeah. I kept thinking...don't puke on her, don't puke on her.

KATIE
I thought you were thinking about kissing me!

They laugh, and Dennis seems to relax. Dennis works up some nerve.

DENNIS
For the record ... I'm proud of you.

KATIE
Proud of me?

DENNIS
For having the good sense to ignore me. Starting a charter school is the right thing for you to do and I'm sorry I didn't recognize that.

KATIE
(nods)
Thank you.

Suddenly, the Ferris wheel jolts to a stop. A few other passengers scream. Katie instinctively grabs Dennis's hand and squeezes it. Dennis and Katie rock back and forth in their carriage. Dennis is clearly freaked out.

DENNIS
Ooh God...

Katie gently moves his face to look at her own.

KATIE
Just look at me.
(beat)
And don't puke.

Dennis and Katie look at each other and suddenly get the giggles. The giggles turns into laughter.

Then... the laughter stops and they both stare at each other. Dennis moves forward and takes Katie's hand. He's about to kiss her when -

The Ferris wheel jolts back to life, breaking the moment.

EXT. KATIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Dennis pulls up outside of Katie's house. The two get out of the car and head for the front door still talking and laughing.

Katie opens the door -

INT. KATIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Inside Travis sits in the living room playing GRAND THEFT AUTO with Megan. Katie reacts.

KATIE

Travis. What are you doing here?

Dennis comes inside and sees Travis. Immediately, his mood darkens. Dennis gives Travis the evil eye.

Travis picks up a set of architectural blueprints and holds them up.

TRAVIS

The plans. Day after tomorrow I start the stonework on the koi pond and I want to make sure you know what's what.

Travis flashes his winning smile and Katie takes the plans.

KATIE

Thank you.

Suddenly, Steven bounces down the stairs. He's still on cloud nine.

STEVEN

Hey, mom. I'm gonna go show Angela the car.

(he sees his dad)

Oh, hey, dad. See. I made it home okay.

DENNIS

Yeah. Well, of course you did.

Steven grins, then heads out the door. Katie turns to Dennis.

KATIE

Car?

DENNIS

I got him a used SAAB. It's almost as safe as a Volvo.

Katie stares at Dennis. She's impressed. Travis pipes up.

TRAVIS

Also I drew in a limestone spa. Just in case. I know you said you want to hold off. But, hey, this way you have options.

KATIE

Great. I'll take a look.

TRAVIS

Well, I better get going. We've got a big day tomorrow. Right, Dennis?

Travis gives Katie a hug.

TRAVIS

See you later, alligator.

Travis then turns and heads out the door. Dennis follows Travis outside.

EXT. KATIE'S HOUSE – NIGHT

Travis walks towards his car. Dennis follows behind.

DENNIS

I know what you're trying to do – but it won't work.

Travis turns around.

TRAVIS

Excuse me?

DENNIS

I love my wife and she loves me. And I won't let you come between us.

TRAVIS

Aww. That's touching. But why don't we let Katie decide what she wants. Of course, I may have an advantage. We were pretty cozy back in high school. Okay, I admit it. The sex was red hot.

Dennis fumes.

TRAVIS

Buy, hey, c'mon. You gotta focus on the derby. I'd hate for what happened to The Chuck to happen to you.

DENNIS

The Chuck?

TRAVIS

Oh. You don't know who that is.

(beat)

Well, that's not surprising. You see, The Chuck was Gordo's old partner. He was one of the finest derby drivers this circuit has ever seen. But The Chuck had one big problem.

Travis hesitates — making Dennis wait.

TRAVIS

Gordo.

DENNIS

Gordo?

TRAVIS

Gordo.

(beat)

He derbies for one thing only. Himself. He has no idea how to protect a partner from a double-team or a vicious circle.

Travis sighs.

TRAVIS

And that's why The Chuck went down. You see, three years ago Gordo and The Chuck were competing at nationals. And like always, Gordo wasn't paying attention. So The Chuck got double-teamed, then sideswiped, then chicken-bombed ... and then his car exploded into a ball of flames.

(beat)

He's never been heard from since.

DENNIS

Nice story. But you're not gonna psych me out. Your radiator's got my name on it.

TRAVIS

I'm just trying to help. Ask Gordo about The Chuck.

Travis turns and jumps into his car. Dennis watches for a moment then walks back towards the house.

INT. KATIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Dennis walks into the house and finds Katie in the kitchen pouring herself a glass of wine.

KATIE
Would you like a glass?

DENNIS
Yes, please.

Katie pours Dennis a glass of wine and hands it to him. They clink glasses and Dennis takes a big gulp of wine. He takes a deep breath.

Dennis touches Katie's hand. They lock eyes.

DENNIS
Well, um ...

Dennis struggles to find the right words. The phone rings.

KATIE
Hold that thought.
(she picks up the phone)
Hello -

Her face falls.

EXT. STREET CORNER - NIGHT

Steven sits on the curb next to his totaled SAAB. In the background are PARAMEDICS and a POLICE OFFICER. In the distance SIRENS blare.

Katie and Dennis park their cars then rush over to Steven's side.

DENNIS
Steven! Are you okay? How's your
head? Are you dizzy?

Steven shakes his head.

STEVEN
No. I'm fine.

A PARAMEDIC, 20's, comes over.

PARAMEDIC
Mr. and Mrs. Edwards?

Dennis and Katie nod.

PARAMEDIC

We checked out your son and he's doing fine. So if you could just sign these forms.

DENNIS

(shakes his head)

Wait a minute. You checked him out here? On the street? I don't think that's sufficient.

The paramedic cocks his head.

PARAMEDIC

I can assure you -

DENNIS

No. He needs to go to the hospital for a thorough exam.

PARAMEDIC

Certainly, I understand. And if you want to take him to the emergency room that's your right. But I can't take him.

DENNIS

What? He was in a major accident. He could have internal bleeding; hematoma, bone spurs - or any of a million other potential conditions and you want to leave him on the side of the road.

PARAMEDIC

No. I want to release him to his parents.

Katie interrupts and reaches for the paper.

KATIE

I'll sign.

Katie takes the paper, skims it quickly, and signs. Dennis watches her in frustration.

PARAMEDIC

Thank you, ma'am.

The paramedic takes the form and leaves. Dennis turns to Steven.

DENNIS

So, what happened?

STEVEN

I don't really know. I was at a stoplight and this jerk just plowed into me and took off. I never even saw his plates.

KATIE

He was probably drunk.

DENNIS

Well, this settles it. You're not ready to be driving.

Katie reacts.

KATIE

What are you talking about? It wasn't his fault.

DENNIS

Open your eyes. The car's totaled and he never saw it coming. We're lucky he wasn't killed.

KATIE

Don't be ridiculous.

DENNIS

Ridiculous? Every hour of every day a teenage driver is killed. Do you want Steven to be one of them?

KATIE

You're not helping.

DENNIS

Really? And you think ignoring the situation is helping. Is that what a good mother does? Smile and sign the papers so that her son can be road kill?

Katie is stung.

KATIE

That's not fair.

Dennis is quiet. He knows he's gone too far. Katie takes a deep breath.

KATIE

I think you should go.

DENNIS

Katie -

KATIE
Please, Dennis. Just go.

Dennis is about to say something. Then he thinks better of it and turns and walks away.

EXT. THE PIT - NIGHT

Under the KLIEG LIGHTS a dozen demolition derby drivers and their pit crews work into the night. Hammers pound, engines growl, and torches sizzle and spark.

The dirt, fire, smoke and rusted machinery all create the sense that the apocalypse has come and gone and now we're watching reruns. Amid the chaos, Gordo and Ernesto put final welds on the Ford Galaxy.

Suddenly, from out of the smoke, Dennis appears looking despondent. He approaches the Ford and Gordo and Ernesto stop working.

DENNIS
Steven was in a car accident.

Gordo drops his torch.

ERNESTO
Is he alright?

DENNIS
He's fine. He's at the house with Katie.

GORDO
Thank mercy.

Dennis turns to Gordo. He studies him for a moment. Finally -

DENNIS
Gordo. Who's The Chuck?

Gordo tries to cover his shock.

GORDO
Where did you hear that name?

DENNIS
It doesn't matter.

Gordo turns to Ernesto and he nods, encouraging. Gordo sighs.

GORDO
The Chuck was a good friend of mine.
My old partner.
(MORE)

GORDO (CONT'D)

We were a great team... until Travis and Body Bag destroyed him.

DENNIS

Why didn't you tell me about him?

GORDO

Honestly? I didn't think you could handle it. The Chuck went down hard. Travis and Body Bag took turns slamming him in the driver's side door and when it was over The Chuck never wanted to see me again.

Dennis is quiet.

GORDO

So ... what else did Travis tell you?

DENNIS

Enough so that I've gotten a pretty good idea about "Gordo the Jackal".

(beat)

This is all about revenge. Isn't it, partner?

Dennis says the word partner dripping with contempt.

GORDO

No. It was. But now it's more than that. Now this is about us.

DENNIS

Right. Well, pardon me if I don't see it that way. The way I see it - I'm your golden ticket. You talked me into driving derby so that you could use my "mad skills" to get revenge for you and your partner. You've never cared about me or my family.

GORDO

That's not true.

Dennis shakes his head. Gordo holds up his hands.

GORDO

Dennis.

Dennis turns away.

GORDO

Fine. You know what? You're full of shit. You act like you don't want to do the derby because I betrayed you. But that's not true.

(MORE)

GORDO (CONT'D)

We both know that you don't want to do the derby because you're scared.

Dennis scoffs.

GORDO

Travis got under your skin. I get that. I just wish you could see ...this isn't about me betraying you. This is about you betraying yourself.

DENNIS

Is that all?

GORDO

Yeah. That's all.

Gordo throws off his face-guard and walks away from the car. He turns and addresses Dennis with aplomb.

GORDO

Tomorrow The Jackal rides alone.

Gordo turns on his heels and heads away. Dennis watches him go. Once Gordo is gone, Dennis leans against the car and buries his face in his hands.

Ernesto walks over and stands next to Dennis.

ERNESTO

You know, driving derby takes a special kind of crazy. I've never done it. Probably never will. There's no shame in deciding you want out.

Dennis lifts up his head.

DENNIS

I better go.

Ernesto nods. He walks over to Dennis's Volvo and pulls off the tarp. On the side in bright red, orange and brown letters are the words DEMOLITION DAD.

Dennis stares at the words. He's taken aback.

ERNESTO

It was Gordo's idea. He didn't want you to drive finals without a name.

Dennis looks away. Ernesto pulls the keys out of his pocket and hands them to Dennis.

ERNESTO

Just for the record ... I loved watching you drive.

Dennis nods. He slides into the Volvo through the window and fires up the engine. He hesitates. For a moment it looks like he might change his mind.

Then with a belch and a squawk he throws the car in gear and zooms away. Ernesto sighs.

EXT. SACRAMENTO MOTOR SPEEDWAY - DAY

WOMEN in tight jeans and MEN sporting various degrees of grease and grunge stream into the stadium. Food shacks serving up pretzels, nachos and beer do a swift business.

Up in the air a BLIMP soars by while down on the ground REPORTERS call in reports from news vans. A festive atmosphere dominates.

EXT. FENCE AREA - DAY

Katie, Megan, Steven and Angela make their way to some seats near the fence. Katie scans the stadium nervously.

KATIE

Do you see your father?

Megan and Steven look around.

STEVEN

No. But I'm not holding my breath.

EXT. GRANDSTANDS - DAY

Sandra climbs up through the stands, her knees cracking and popping the whole way. She finds a good spot and lays out a foam seat pad and covers it with a cozy blanket. She then pulls out a packet of beef jerky and turns to the FAT MAN sitting next to her.

SANDRA

Jerky?

The fat man grins and takes a piece of jerky.

Sandra pulls out her binoculars and focuses them on the pit where Ernesto has Gordo in a bear hug and is in the process of cracking Gordo's back. She turns the focus ring to get a better picture.

EXT. PIT AREA - DAY

Ernesto hoists Gordo off the ground. Off a loud CRUNCH -

ERNESTO

There you go. Good as new.

GORDO

Thanks, man.

ERNESTO

Keep you eyes on the prize out there.
If you go down, go down fighting.

GORDO

I'm not going down. I've got this.

Ernesto nods, but Gordo doesn't look so confident. Gordo climbs into his Galaxy.

EXT. DERBY FIELD - DAY

Twenty derby cars make their way onto the big dirt field, as the onlookers cheer them on.

EXT. ANNOUNCER'S PLATFORM - DAY

The ANNOUNCER, 50's, balances a toothpick in his mouth while speaking.

ANNOUNCER

Welcome boys and girls to the third and final qualifying round of the demolition derby championships. The three teams that survive this round will advance to the finals to compete for fifty thousand dollars.

EXT. DERBY FIELD - DAY

Gordo steers into place, not looking his usual confident self. The drivers back into their starting positions - rear bumper to rear bumper.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Good luck, drivers.

The Flagman drops the green flag, and Gordo steps on the gas. He flies back and CRASH. Game on!

Gordo roars around the ring in reverse. The smashing and scraping is the fiercest it's ever been. Sparks fly as metal hits metal.

Teammates gang up on Gordo and he takes hit after hit.

Gordo grits his teeth and tries to play a defensive game - but he's grossly outmatched. He avoids one team, only to get hammered by another.

Steam shoots out of his engine like a geyser, and the Galaxy starts leaking oil.

EXT. SIDELINES - DAY

Travis and Body Bag Jones watch the action. Travis is amused by Gordo's predicament.

EXT. DERBY FIELD - DAY

Gordo's engine starts to sputter, and the Galaxy dies in center field.

GORDO
No, no! Dammit!

Gordo pounds on the steering wheel, but he's done. He tries to restart the engine. It groans.

EXT. GRANDSTANDS - DAY

Sandra jumps to her feet - worried.

EXT. DERBY FIELD - DAY

Several drivers see Gordo, dead in the water. They bear down on him like a pack of hungry wolves.

GORDO
And so this is where the Jackal dies...

Gordo shuts his eyes and accepts his fate.

All the cars are about to crunch Gordo's car like a tin can when - out of nowhere -

Dennis's Volvo careens into the path of the cars and sideswipes most of them in one ferocious arc.

The derby cars spiral off course and Gordo is saved. He opens his eyes.

GORDO
What the...?

The Volvo fishtails and ends up right beside Gordo's Galaxy. Dennis sits behind the wheel of his Volvo, looking like a total stud.

Dennis yells from inside his car.

DENNIS
Looks like you need some help.

Gordo can't believe his eyes.

GORDO
Dennis...holy crap...

DENNIS
Does she still run?

Gordo tries the engine again. It responds and roars to life. Gordo WHOOPS.

GORDO
Let's do this!

Dennis gives Gordo a thumbs up – and it's game on.

EXT. SIDELINES – DAY

Travis and Body Bag watch from the sidelines, they're not so happy anymore.

EXT. DERBY FIELD – DAY

Dennis and Gordo work their mojo and start blasting away the competitors.

One car goes down, then another, and another. Dennis and Gordo hoot and holler like school kids, having the time of their lives, as they take no prisoners.

Finally, Dennis and Gordo are among the last men standing.

The checkered flag waves.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
Ladies and gentlemen, our three
winning teams who will move on to the
final round are the Bruise Brothers ...

The two drivers from the Bruise Brothers cars punch the sky.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
The Asian Invasion...

Two Asian drivers smile and high-five at their cars.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
And Krunch Patrol!

Dennis and Gordo hug at center field.

EXT. THE PIT – DAY

Gordo and Dennis push Gordo's Galaxy into Ernesto's makeshift garage area. It's smoking, leaking fluid and looks like it's been through a meteor shower.

Ernesto stares woefully at the car.

ERNESTO
Your radiator's cracked, your tires
are busted and your motor belt's
ripped in two places.
(sighs)
How much time do I got?

Gordo pats him on the back.

GORDO

Dude! You can fix anything!

Dennis cracks his neck. SNAP. SNAP. He's like an old pro. Dennis looks around. Suddenly, he spots Katie and the kids by the fence. Shocked, Dennis turns to Gordo.

DENNIS

I'll be right back.

EXT. FENCE AREA - DAY

Dennis turns and walks over to Katie, Steven and Angela at the fence. He's apprehensive.

DENNIS

I didn't think you'd come.

KATIE

I wouldn't believe it if I hadn't seen it ... but you were fearless out there.

Dennis smiles. He turns to Steven.

DENNIS

I know after last night's performance this will be hard to believe ... but I'm sorry. I overreacted to your accident. It wasn't your fault and I shouldn't have blamed you. I blew it.

Steven is listening.

DENNIS

Ever since you were born my job has been to protect you. But that's not my job anymore. And I know that. I know you can take care of yourself. You're a responsible young man. And I'm sorry I haven't given you more space to make your own decisions. It's just ... sometimes once you start a job it's hard to give it up.

STEVEN

So does this mean I can keep my license?

DENNIS

Yes. On one condition.

Steven cocks his head.

DENNIS

Angela. If you don't mind. I need your boyfriend's help in the pit.

ANGELA
Okay by me, Mr. Edwards.

STEVEN
Are you serious?

Dennis nods. Steven smiles at his mom.

STEVEN
Well, that I can do.

Steven jumps over the fence and heads over towards the pit.

Dennis looks at Katie. Suddenly, he has to speak.

DENNIS
Last night, I was way over the line ...
and I don't want to be that guy
anymore. I don't want to hold you
back or the kids back. I want to be a
good husband and a good father. And I
know I've still got a ways to go but ...
I'm trying.

Katie's eyes glow. She nods.

KATIE
Boa sorte.
(beat)
It means good luck in Portuguese.

Suddenly, Gordo calls to Dennis from the pit.

GORDO
Hey, lover-boy. We need you in the
pit.

DENNIS
I've gotta go.

KATIE
Yeah. Okay.

DENNIS
Okay.

Dennis nods awkwardly and turns to go. Suddenly, Megan
rushes down the stairs carrying a box of licorice. She joins
them at the fence.

MEGAN
Dad, wait. I want to help.

DENNIS
Really? Well, you're standing on the
wrong side of the fence.

Megan YELPS in excitement and jumps over the fence. Katie reacts, nervous. Dennis turns to her and smiles.

DENNIS
Don't worry. She'll be fine.

Dennis turns and heads back to the pit.

EXT. THE PIT - DAY

Dennis joins Gordo, Ernesto and the kids in the pit.

Ernesto hands Steven a torch. He hands Dennis and Gordo sledgehammers and he hands Megan a mallet.

The pit crew gathers around the mangled car. Ernesto flips on his GHETTO BLASTER and a ROCK SONG starts to play. Ernesto picks up a wrench. He squares his shoulder and approaches the "troops".

ERNESTO
I know this looks bad. Our car is smoking, bent and broken. Shattered into more pieces than Humpty Dumpty. But ladies and gentleman, boys and girls ... I just have one thing to say to you. Humpty Dumpty never had a pit crew like this! Let's pimp this ride!

The "crew" cheers in agreement. Lifting their tools like weapons. In a flash, they descend upon the car.

BEGIN MONTAGE

The rock song continues as time and space are distorted by the glare of fire.

--Steven fires up his acetylene torch and it CRACKLES and POPS. Steven grins, his face aglow as he lowers the flame to the car door.

--Megan and Dennis roll in a pair of tires.

--Gordo jumps on the back end of the car and begins to jump up and down to pound out the kinks.

--Dennis opens the hood and dives inside, throwing spark plugs in all directions.

--Megan tosses Ernesto a quart of motor oil and the box of licorice and he catches both behind his back.

--Ernesto slides underneath the car. Metal bangs against metal. And he slides out drenched in oil.

Ernesto jumps to his feet. Looks the car up and down. He nods. Beautiful.

END MONTAGE

The team steps back to evaluate their work. The car sparkles and shines. Gordo whistles. Then he starts to clap. Slowly the others start to clap too – until everyone is clapping for Ernesto. He blushes.

ERNESTO

We took this lemon ... and made sweet lemonade.

Gordo throws his arms around Ernesto. They have a moment. Then Ernesto sees something. He scowls.

Gordo turns around and sees Travis and Body Bag are approaching.

GORDO

Uh, oh. Stink alert.

Gordo and Dennis turn and walk away from Ernesto and the kids.

EXT. THE PIT – DAY

Gordo and Dennis approach Travis and Body Bag.

TRAVIS

Hello, boys. We just wanted to wish you luck and, in case you're not around after, we wanted to say goodbye.

Dennis fake laughs.

DENNIS

Oh. Wow. Great. Thanks. Listen, I'm glad you came by because I've been thinking about what you said and I'm ready to make the ultimate sacrifice. I'm ready to die in the derby. But there's one thing you should know.

(beat)

I'm taking you with me.

TRAVIS

Nice talk. But I know you. And you are certified Grade A chicken.

DENNIS

Yeah. Are you sure? Are you willing to bet your life on it? Because maybe you haven't noticed, but I'm feeling a little desperate these days. Truth is – I can't wait to hit a man so hard that my eyeballs shake.

Travis has started to sweat and his hands are shaking. Gordo notices.

GORDO
Whoa! What's wrong? You got the shakes?

Travis shoves his hands into his pockets.

TRAVIS
No. It's the coffee. I should have asked for decaf.

By now Travis is drenched in sweat.

GORDO
Nah. You're feeling scared. Having second thoughts. Imagining what it will feel like when this monster hits you in the sweet-spot and your brains explode out of your ears and eye sockets.

TRAVIS
Drill a hole in it, Gordo. We'll handle this in the mud. Where we can deal with you the way we dealt with The Chuck.

Gordo lunges. But Dennis holds him back.

TRAVIS
We'll see you and your "carbage" on the field.

Travis and Body Bag walk away. Gordo turns to Dennis.

GORDO
Close your eyes.

DENNIS
No.

GORDO
Come on. We don't have much time.

DENNIS
(shakes his head)
I don't need that anymore. I want to do this on my own.

Gordo is shocked.

GORDO
Are you sure?

DENNIS
Do I look sure?

Gordo considers. Dennis gets annoyed.

DENNIS
I'm sure.

Gordo nods. He grabs Dennis by the shoulders and looks into his eyes.

GORDO
What time is it? That's right boys
and girls.
(Gordo's eyes flash)
It's Krunch Time!

DENNIS
Krunch Patrol!

EXT. SACRAMENTO MOTOR SPEEDWAY - DAY

Multi-colored derby cars make their way onto the derby field and take their positions. Dennis grips his steering wheel. His heart pounds like a sledgehammer.

EXT. ANNOUNCER'S PLATFORM - DAY

ANNOUNCER
Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the
Sacramento Motor Speedway national
demolition derby championship.

The announcer picks something out of his teeth. Spits it out.

ANNOUNCER
Please give a big round of applause to
reigning champions Travis Rexford and
Body Bag Jones.

EXT. DERBY FIELD - DAY

"HIGHWAY TO HELL" blares through the speakers as Travis and Body Bag drive onto the field, waving to the cheering crowd.

Colorful fireworks explode and shake the bleachers. BOOM!
BOOM! BOOM!

At center field, Travis and Body Bag do crazy eights, barely missing each other. The crowd hoots and hollers, eating this up. Some fans even sing along.

Finally, the music stops and Travis and Body Bag back into position.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
Are you ready to rip up some Detroit
iron?

The crowd goes wild. Ernesto, Steven and Megan clap enthusiastically. Up in the grandstands Gordo's mom watches Gordo through binoculars.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
Drivers start your engines.

The cars burst to life and the drivers rev their engines. Travis revs his engine and shoots Dennis a menacing look. Body Bag cracks his neck. Dennis turns and watches the flagman.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
Let's start 'em off. Five -

CROWD
Four, three, two, one!

On one the flagman drops the green flag and the cars shoot backwards. With a burst of adrenaline, Dennis shoots back and makes the first hit of the day. CRASH! The derby has begun.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
Hold on tight, drivers. There's no
turning back now.

Tires POP, radiator hoses EXPLODE, and the sound of crumpling metal fills the air.

Dennis looks around and spots a black and red sedan that looks like a snake and reads "KICK ASP" on the side. Dennis slams on the gas and rams the sedan.

Across the field, Gordo drives in a big circle, hooting and hollering as he circles around the other cars.

Gordo spots Travis and lines him up in his crosshairs. Gordo lets out a REBEL YELL and speeds towards Travis.

GORDO
Ahhhh!!!!

BLAM! Gordo delivers a blow to Travis's backside. Gordo's Galaxy belches smoke and his tires spin in the mud.

ANNOUNCERS (O.S.)
Oh my neck. It's enough to make Henry
Ford weep.

Dennis spots Gordo across the field - he's stuck in the mud. Nearby, Dennis sees Travis and Body Bag. They've seen Gordo too.

Gordo turns and sees Travis and Body Bag.

GORDO
Aww, hell.

Gordo begins to rock his car furiously back and forth, back and forth, trying desperately to get out of the mud. Gordo guns the engine. But he only digs deeper into the mud.

Dennis maneuvers his Volvo around several stalled cars.

DENNIS
Hang on, Gordo. I'm comin'!

BOOM! Dennis gets blind-sided by a purple Ford Cadillac and is pushed off course. Dennis slams on the gas but there's no way he'll get to Gordo in time.

Gordo watches as Travis and Body Bag line him up in their sights. Gordo throws his car into reverse and pounds the pedal. But it's useless.

Gordo closes his eyes and grips the steering wheel. POW! POW! Gordo is hit on both sides and his car burst into flames.

DENNIS
Gordo!

A red flag is thrown to halt the derby. A man with an extinguisher rushes onto the field and douses the flames.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
Whoa! Looks like we got Car-be-que.
Let's hope he's okay.

An ambulance drives onto the field. EMT's pull Gordo out of his car and load him onto a stretcher. Dennis puts his hand on the door handle. He's ready to jump out and be disqualified at any second.

EXT. GRANDSTANDS - DAY

Sandra anxiously watches the EMT's treating her son.

EXT. DERBY FIELD - DAY

Dennis's eyes narrow - his anxiety growing greater and greater every second. Finally, Gordo sits up and throws his arms up in the air.

GORDO
Krunch Patrol!

Dennis lets out a breath.

The crowd CHEERS and SCREAMS for Gordo. Gordo waves to his fans as he stands up and leaves the field.

The flagman throws down the green flag and Dennis punches his car into gear.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
Back to action, fans. We've got five cars left, and Dennis Edwards is the only one without a partner.

Dennis scans the field. It's just him against Body Bag, Travis and a few other competitors now.

WHAM! Dennis accelerates backwards and slams into an old Buick sedan. The smell of charred Buick fills the air.

Dennis then shoves his car into drive, speeding towards a Chevy Monaco. WHOOSH! Dennis hits the front of the Monaco and is launched into the sky. The Volvo SPINS THROUGH THE AIR and lands on its wheels.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
You gotta be kidding me!

Dennis shakes his head and lets out a satisfied WHOOP.

EXT. SIDELINES - DAY

Ernesto and the kids go crazy. Up in the stands, Katie and Angela clap and whistle and Sandra catcalls.

EXT. DERBY FIELD - DAY

Suddenly, Travis comes out of nowhere and hits Dennis in the driver's side door.

EXT. PIT - DAY

Ernesto winces.

STEVEN
Hey! That's cheating.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
Travis Rexford with a cheap shot to the driver's side door. He'll be warned for that.

EXT. DERBY FIELD - DAY

Dennis throws his car into reverse to get away from Travis. Dennis gauges the playing field. The only drivers left are him, Body Bag and Travis.

Dennis's eyes narrow. With calculated precision he gets Body Bag in his cross hairs and accelerates - BANG - dealing a stunning blow. Dennis brakes and then reverses to avoid retaliation.

He begins to line up another hit when he sees he's in big trouble.

Travis and Body Bag have LINED HIM UP BETWEEN THEM. In the perfect position for a double-team. Dennis attempts to reverse - but as he does so they follow him - keeping him between them like two cats playing with a mouse.

Travis and Body Bag rev their engines. They are toying with him. Travis laughs.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Oh, lookout. This is gonna hurt.

Finally, Travis and Body Bag make their move. They speed towards Dennis with all the speed and ferocity of marauding Huns. Dennis stays still. He grits his teeth and grips the steering wheel. At the last second, Dennis accelerates, leaping out of the way of the two drivers.

Unable to stop in time, Travis delivers a major blow to Body Bag's front end and crushes his radiator.

Body Bag's car LURCHES TO A HALT, steam spewing from its engine like a geyser. Body Bag punches the dashboard.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Whoa! Smack down! We're down to our final two.

Travis accelerates to the far end of the arena. Dennis sees this and does the same. The two men line up across from each other and stare each other down.

It's a GAME OF CHICKEN!!!

Both men rev their engines. Travis CACKLES like a maniac and Dennis cracks his neck.

EXT. GRANDSTANDS - DAY

Sensing a kill, the crowd quiets down.

EXT. DERBY FIELD - DAY

Finally, Travis's car jumps forward and Dennis steps on the gas.

The two men shoot across the field, coming at each other with all of the speed, energy and enthusiasm that their tired engines can muster.

CRASH! BANG! CR-R-RUNCH! Fenders hit and gears mash, sheet metal crumples and dirt and debris fly into the air.

For a moment both men are stunned and the crowd is hushed. Then they both step on the gas. Dennis tries to reverse but his fender is locked together with Travis's fender. Travis and Dennis both reverse but they are stuck.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

I don't know about you folks. But that looks like modern art to me.

Dennis begins to rock his car back and forth, seeking to set his Volvo free.

Travis begins doing the same thing and they are rocking and rocking in the same direction.

EXT. PIT - DAY

Megan watches this, perplexed.

MEGAN

What are they doing?

ERNESTO

I have no idea.

EXT. DERBY FIELD - DAY

Finally, once the cars are really rocking, Dennis throws his body in the opposite direction, using gravity and momentum to help unlock the cars.

KECHUNK! It works and the two cars unlock.

Dennis and Travis both reverse and come at each other again. This time Dennis knocks Travis's front side sending Travis spinning away.

Travis SCREAMS as his car is whipped around and around and around.

TRAVIS

Ahhhhh!

Dennis reverses and preps his car for the next offensive. Dennis accelerates and POW he slams into Travis again.

Dennis reverses, preparing to deliver the death blow, when he sees that Travis's car is smoking.

Travis's engine sputters to a stop. His car fills with smoke. Travis turns his ignition. Nothing. He turns it again. Still nothing.

Finally, he cranks it for all it's worth. But it simply shudders and conks out.

Travis BANGS HIS HEAD against the steering wheel.

Across the field, the flagman waves two checkered flags and the crowd goes wild! Dennis sits in his car for a moment - stunned by his victory.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
Let's hear it for Dennis Edwards, the
least defensive driver in America.

Dennis takes a deep breath, jumps out of his car and climbs onto the roof. The crowd WHOOPS, CLAPS, WHISTLES and HOLLERS. Ernesto and the kids jump up and down.

Dennis fights to hold back tears.

EXT. GRANDSTANDS - DAY

Katie blows Dennis a kiss.

EXT. DERBY FIELD - DAY

Suddenly, Gordo bursts onto the field. He runs past the flagman, grabs the checkered flags, and jumps onto the roof of the Volvo with Dennis.

Gordo pulls Dennis into a giant bear hug.

GORDO
Dude! You're my hero.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
Ladies and gentlemen, the new national
derby champions, Krunch Patrol!

Gordo turns to the crowd and waves both flags over his head. The crowd erupts in APPLAUSE.

Photographers surround the vehicle and begin to snap photographs as Dennis and Gordo pose together on top of the car.

EXT. GRANDSTANDS - DAY

Katie and Angela leave the grandstands and make their way towards the field.

EXT. PIT - DAY

The kids jump over the concrete barrier and run onto the field.

EXT. DERBY FIELD - DAY

An official brings over two large trophies and the photographers snap more pictures.

INT. TRAVIS'S PLYMOUTH - DAY

Meanwhile, Travis still battles his ignition. He turns it once, twice, three times and finally it sputters to life. Travis grins, victory at last. He revs his engine and his eyes narrow.

In a flash - Travis throws his car in drive and speeds across the field straight towards Dennis's Volvo.

EXT. DERBY FIELD - DAY

Photographers, seeing Travis's oncoming vehicle, scurry out of the way. Gordo looks over and reacts -

GORDO

Jump!!!

Dennis and Gordo jump off the roof just as Travis slams into the Volvo. Travis's Plymouth bursts into a ball of flames.

Firemen rush onto the field and blast the Plymouth with a wave of frothy white foam. After a moment, the fire is out and the firemen pull Travis out of the car.

Travis is coated head to toe in froth. He looks like a ferocious snowman. Travis pushes his way through the firemen and over to where Gordo and Dennis are standing and brushing the dirt off their pants.

Travis ignores Gordo and faces Dennis.

TRAVIS

Congratulations, Dennis. But don't forget. Even though you've won the derby, sooner or later Katie's gonna want a real man ... and when that day comes, she'll come to me.

Suddenly, Travis is tapped on the shoulder. He turns around and sees Katie.

KATIE

T-Rex is it?

Travis stammers. Katie cuts him off.

KATIE

As far as I'm concerned our relationship is like the dinosaurs. It existed once a long, long time ago. And thankfully - now it's extinct.

(MORE)

KATIE (CONT'D)

(beat)

So, if you'll excuse me. I'd like to congratulate my husband.

Travis reacts. Katie and the kids push past Travis and walk over to Dennis.

STEVEN

Dad. That was so awesome!

Dennis grins. Megan turns to Dennis.

MEGAN

You were on fire!

GORDO

Actually, that was me.

Katie touches Dennis's arm.

KATIE

Congratulations. You were ... incredible.

Gordo watches this.

GORDO

You know, it's derby tradition for the victors to get a kiss from every lady in the house.

KATIE

Really?

DENNIS

(nods)

Oh, yeah.

Katie considers. She approaches Gordo and gives him a peck on the cheek. She then turns to Dennis, puts her hands around his neck and gives him a long, hard kiss.

He emerges, flustered.

DENNIS

Actually, I think it's two.

Katie laughs - then leans in to kiss Dennis again. Gordo winks at the kids. A track official comes over and clears his throat.

OFFICIAL

Gentlemen. I'm here to present you with your cash prize.

The official hands each man a check. Gordo stares at his check, mesmerized.

SANDRA (O.S.)
 Congratulations, Gordon.

Gordo looks up and sees his mother standing in front of him.

SANDRA
 Where's my hug?

Gordo throws his arms around his mom. He then pulls back and hands her his check.

GORDO
 Take it, please. Before I change my mind.

Sandra takes the check and puts it in her pocket.

SANDRA
 I'm proud of you, Gordon. You may be a good-for-nothing freeloader. But you drive just like your mama.

Gordo grins like this is the best complement he's ever received. He turns to Dennis and Katie.

GORDO
 I've been thinking. Now that we're national champs - it'd be a crime not to go world. The international world championship of derby is the biggest carmagedon you've ever seen!

Gordo starts mimicking car crashes and explosions. Katie holds up her hand.

KATIE
 Gordo -

Gordo turns to Katie. Katie shakes her head.

GORDO
 Come on, mama. If you want - you can drive.

Katie and Dennis both laugh. Dennis looks at Katie.

DENNIS
 Can I give you a ride?

KATIE
 That depends.

Dennis waits on pins and needles.

KATIE
 Does she still run?

DENNIS

Are you kidding? This is the Volvo 240 Wagon. The safest and most reliable car in its size class. She may be bruised but her spirit's not broken.

Dennis turns to Steven and throws him the keys. Steven grins. He tosses the keys in the air and then catches them with a swagger.

Steven gestures for Angela to join him and the two of them head over to the car and slide through the windows and into the front seat.

Megan and Katie wiggle through the windows and into the back seat.

Dennis turns to Gordo and Gordo signals for him to get going. Dennis jumps into the car with his family.

INT. DENNIS'S VOLVO - DAY

Dennis throws his arm around Katie's shoulder and they snuggle up together with Megan in the back seat.

Steven starts the engine and lightly steps on the gas. The car spits and sputters.

EXT. SACRAMENTO MOTOR SPEEDWAY - DAY

Gordo watches as the car jerks forward and backward and then finally gets going. Dennis sticks his hand out the window and gives Gordo a thumbs up sign. Gordo returns the signal.

The Volvo engine backfires and then the car pulls away.

AUTOMATED GPS VOICE

Destination accepted. We're going home.

As the family car disappears into the distance ...

FADE OUT.