

INK

Episode One

"Poison Gifts"

Written by

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NEWSREEL FOOTAGE - VARIOUS

A series of quick TV NEWS clips. Retro video quality. Square format. 1980s fashion and styling. We begin with "APNN."

APNN REPORTER

... Some call him a genius. Some call him a madman. But Jim Frakes calls himself an American...

Another station. Another jumble of letters: "BG&BN."

BG&BN REPORTER

... Jim Frakes, CEO of Jupiter Motor Company, is unveiling a brand new electric-powered vehicle that he believes will send a shockwave through the automotive industry...

B-ROLL: A curtain flies off a car. Cameras flash.

Now an angry reporter. "USPN" in the corner of the screen.

USPN REPORTER

... unleashing dangerous and unstable technology onto our roads. Would you feel safe driving your kids around in a car that uses the same technology as an electric chair? Let's hope it never rains...

Another channel. A CLOSE UP on JIM FRAKES (40s). He's suave and charming. Passionate. Captivating. Heroic.

JIM FRAKES

America was built on innovation. Technology. Forward thinking. That's the torch I'm carrying with the release of our new electric vehicle. I want people to see that it's still possible to succeed outside the corporate sphere. The American dream may be diminished, but it's not dead.

EXT. TEST TRACK - MORNING

News footage blends into reality. Jim Frakes wields a mic like a natural-born performer. A photogenic test driver in a jumpsuit, TONY RINALDI (25), stands next to him.

The ELECTRIC CAR shines in the sun behind them. Half sharp Delorean, half sleek Tesla, it has a stunning silhouette.

JIM FRAKES

It might look like a car behind me.
It has four wheels. A suspension.
Power windows. But it's what's
under the hood that matters. The
engine. What powers it. This isn't
just a car. It's a revolution.

(beat)

We don't intend to compete with
Liberty Motors. We intend to race
laps around them. So I've invited
motorsport champion Tony Rinaldi
here to put our groundbreaking new
vehicle through its paces.

The assembled press and guests CLAP from the bleachers.

JIM FRAKES (CONT'D)

(to Tony, hamming it up)

You're known for your bold driving,
Tony. So don't hold back now, OK?

Tony gives a thumbs up. Moves toward the car.

JIM FRAKES (CONT'D)

Hang on, Tony. I wouldn't be much
of a CEO if I let someone else do
the driving for me. Whaddya say,
folks? Should I take it for a
victory lap first?

The audience loves it. Tony, genuinely surprised, holds the
door open. Jim hands him the mic and climbs in.

The car PURRS to life. With a wave, Jim pulls away from the
crowd. It's a triumphant moment. He rounds a turn and--

BOOM!

The car EXPLODES. Hot and fast. A fireball. Then nothing.

TITLE CARD: "INK"

END OF TEASER

EXT. ABOVE THE CLOUDS - MORNING

Marshmallow clouds. Bright sun. Peaceful. We PULL BACK and PASS THROUGH a window into...

INT. PRIVATE JET - SAME TIME

GABE LAMB (24), headphones on, tape deck whirring, gazes past his reflection to the clouds. He sketches their fluffy form in a NOTEPAD. His fuzzy, bleached hair, nose piercing, and slouched demeanor are best summed up as "Dennis-Rodman-lite."

ROSE (O.S.)

Once more. Then we'll be done.

ROSE LAMB (50), graceful, kind-eyed, and looking fierce in a pastel powersuit, holds up a photo of an old white man with with even whiter hair. A real Southern Gentleman.

Across from her sits ZEKE LAMB (15). He bounces one of his lanky legs impatiently. His baby-face is scrunched up with annoyance. Glancing at the photo he rolls his eyes.

ZEKE

Really, mom? Again? Why don't Bernie and Gabe have to do this?

BERNIE LAMB (26), no-nonsense, driven, and zipped-up in camo fatigues, speaks without looking up from her thick book.

BERNIE

Because me and Gabe already know it all. Now answer.

ZEKE

Fine. It's Clark Henry Briggs. CEO of United Southern Petroleum. Next.

ROSE

CEO *and president* of United Southern Petroleum.

BERNIE

And he goes by CH.

ROSE

Now. How about his wife and kids?

ZEKE

(rote)

His new wife is Mina. His oldest son is Clark Jr. Then there's Lydia. Then Henry.

(MORE)

ZEKE (CONT'D)

All from his first wife. And now he has two kids with Mina. Derek and Hunter.

(beat)

See? I know all this. Are we done?

ROSE

You want something harder?

She flips through the stack and lifts a photo of a man with the sinister, vacant expression of a KGB agent. Zeke pauses.

ZEKE

I know who it is. It's the COO of BG&B. Ugh, what's his name?

(off Bernie scoffing)

Why don't you answer it then?

BERNIE

This is your game. Not mine.

Zeke balls up a piece of paper and throws it at Gabe. Annoyed, Gabe takes off his headphones and glares at him.

GABE

What? I'm trying to draw.

ZEKE

Who's the COO of BG&B?

Gabe shakes his head. He's about to put his headphones back on when a door opens and MARCUS LAMB (55) enters. His tall stature and broad shoulders fill out his tailored suit. He has a righteous attitude that his kids know can flip from New Testament to Old Testament faster than you can say "amen."

MARCUS

We'll be landing shortly. Remember, they may act crude in the south, but they're not fools. Not truly. Don't let your guard down. Keep your eyes and ears sharp. See. *Don't be seen.*

They all nod. Despite the bickering, they're a united front.

EXT. USP AIRPORT - TARMAC - DAY

The Lamb family descends the jet's staircase. A motorcade of boxy black limousines await. Gleaming chrome "LM" logos emblazon their grills. Two tiny USP flags adorn each hood.

GABE

(re: LM logos)

Nice of them to use our cars for the motorcade.

MARCUS

Yes. A diplomatic gesture. It's important to notice those details.

(beat, to the kids)

You three take that car. Your mom and I have things to discuss.

BERNIE

Can I go with you?

MARCUS

No, I want you to stay with the boys. Keep 'em honest.

BERNIE

Am I going to be on babysitting duty the whole time we're here?

MARCUS

If that's what's asked of you.

Bernie falls in line. Joins her brothers.

As the cars drive off, we glimpse an armada of oil derricks blanketing the swampy marshes beyond the airport runway.

SUPER: "The Incorporated Territories of United Southern Petroleum - Outside Galveston"

INT. LIMOUSINE #1 - DAY

Rose runs her hand across the stitched black leather seats.

ROSE

Surprised CH paid for the luxury model. Even sprung for the car phone. He's never met a penny he wouldn't pinch.

MARCUS

Nothing about this adds up. When has he ever invited our family to visit? And to his private villa?

(beat)

It's clear he's using his birthday and this ridiculous race as cover for something.

ROSE

Seizing more land overseas? That's what he did last time he slowed oil production this much.

MARCUS

Possibly. But that wouldn't require these theatrics. No, it's something else. He wants something from us. And CH always gets what he wants.

ROSE

He doesn't have to...

Marcus gives her a dubious look as he lifts the car phone.

MARCUS

Maybe Floyd has answers.

INT. LIMOUSINE #2 - DAY

Gabe sketches the oil derricks and reedy grasses of the Gulf Coast. The limo comes to a stop. Gabe looks outside and sees a ROSEATE SPOONBILL with bright pink feathers in the marsh. He beams, inspired. He starts drawing it as the limo departs.

INT. LIMOUSINE #1 - DAY

We catch the final part of Marcus' phone call.

MARCUS

It's OK. Just get an official statement released. I trust you.

Marcus hangs up. His grim expression says it all - *bad news*.

ROSE

What is it?

MARCUS

Jim Frakes is dead.

ROSE

Jesus. What happened?

MARCUS

Apparently he was test driving their newest car when it exploded.

They share a knowing look - *smells fishy...*

EXT. USP VILLA - MAIN GATES - DAY

The limos pass through tall iron gates. A massive Spanish villa overlooks a lush, verdant lawn. No scrub grass here.

INT. LIMOUSINE #2 - SAME TIME

Zeke presses his face against the glass, gobsmacked.

BERNIE

Sit back. You'll make us look like country bumpkins. We have big estates, too.

ZEKE

Not like this.

EXT. USP VILLA - FRONT ENTRANCE - SAME TIME

The Briggs family is assembled on the marble steps as if a Christmas photo is about to be snapped.

Dead center is CLARK HENRY "CH" BRIGGS (69), white suit, cowboy boots, Antebellum smarm. On his arm is MINA YALOVA BRIGGS (30), a trophy wife as bronzed, fit, and posed as the athlete atop an actual trophy. Squirming beside her in their cloying seersucker suits are DEREK (7) and HUNTER (6).

HENRY

Jesus, can't they drive any faster?
It's hot as shit out here.

LYDIA

Good, maybe you'll sweat the booze out of your system.

The snarky comments hail from HENRY (25) and LYDIA (31), who stand aloof behind their father. Henry has a fuckboy vibe with his Miami Vice V-neck, sunglasses, and coiffed hair. Lydia's snakeskin dress complements her venomous tongue. Her heavy makeup poorly masks a face ravaged by plastic surgery.

CH

Hush up. I want everyone on their best behavior. Got it?

HENRY

Whatever you say, pops.

The limos come to a stop and the Lamb family emerges. CH gregariously barrels down the steps, arms wide.

MARCUS

Good to see you, CH. Thanks for having us all down here.

CH

This ain't a business trip.

CH brushes Marcus' outstretched hand aside and hugs him. As we'll come to learn, CH employs an oldschool strongman tactic where he jumps off a topic so quickly that his interlocutor gets whiplash and doesn't have time to mount a response.

CH (CONT'D)

(pulling away)

You feel strong! Like a bull.
What's the secret? Don't say diet.
(to Rose)

And look at you. Rose, Rose, Rose.
A fitting name for such a beauty.
Get on in here. But don't poke me
with one of those thorns!

He pulls Rose in for a hug. She plays along.

ROSE

You're not lookin' bad for 70, CH.

CH releases Rose and mimes getting pricked.

CH

Hey, there's one of those thorns!
I'm still 69 until midnight so
don't go short-changin' me.

CH turns his wily eyes toward Bernie. Toeing the line between respect and mockery, he straightens and salutes her.

BERNIE

No need for all that.

CH

I disagree. My kids could learn a
thing or two from your service.

The compliment lands. Bernie stands a bit taller. CH moves on to Gabe. He sizes up his style then gives his hand a shake.

CH (CONT'D)

Well, Gabe, I never took you for a
blond. But I bet the ladies like
it, eh? You a bit of a ladykiller?

GABE

I don't know about all that.

CH

Well I call it like I see it.

CH turns to Zeke and pretends to crane his neck way up.

CH (CONT'D)

Lordy! Last I recall, you weren't any taller than a picket fence.

ZEKE

I'm still growing, too.

CH

I'll bet. I'll bet.

(addressing all)

And y'all remember the gang here, right? There's my Turkish delight, Mina, wranglin' those little rascals Derek and Hunter. And of course you know Lydia and Henry.

(beat, re: Marcus)

I see this ugly mug plenty, but I can't, for the life of me, think of the last time our families spent any real time together. Like we did way back when.

(then)

So my birthday wish is that we all enjoy each other's company, enjoy this beautiful villa, and then cap it off tomorrow with a good old-fashioned car race. Doesn't sound half bad, does it?

As if perfectly on cue, a loud motor VROOMS. A cherry red sports car cruises up the driveway. It SCREECHES to a halt. Out steps CLARK BRIGGS JR. (34), Prince Charming in a driver's jumpsuit. Even Bernie swoons at the sight of him.

CLARK

Sorry. Got here as fast as I could.

CH

That's how you make an entrance. Clark Jr. here's gonna be drivin' the USP car in tomorrow's race. Gonna win it, too, aren't ya?

CLARK

Yes, sir.

(re: sports car)

Shame I won't be able to drive that beauty. Liberty still makes the fastest cars in the biz.

MARCUS

Gotta keep the playing field fair.
 (beat)
 Well, since we're all here, we do
 have a birthday gift for you, CH.

Rose reaches into the limo and retrieves a WRAPPED PACKAGE the size of a cigar box. CH receives it with faux humility.

CH

Well, shoot, should I open it now?

HENRY

Yes, *please*.

Lydia elbows Henry. CH's grin falters, but only for a moment. He delicately unwraps the paper, revealing a CARVED BOX.

CH

Hey, I know this box. You really giving them to me?

MARCUS

Mhmm. My dad said he always caught you staring at them in his office. I'm sure he would have wanted you to have them.

CH opens the lid of the box. Cradled in red velvet are two FLINTLOCK PISTOLS and several ROUND BULLETS.

CH

Whew. This is a mighty fine gift. Any of you know what these are?

BERNIE

They're Napoleon's pistols.

CH

Smart girl. France gave them to your granddaddy when he bailed their sorry asses out of their war debts. Very least they could do.
 (to Marcus and Rose)
 Thank you.

CLARK

Who's up for a swim? I know I am.

Everyone starts heading inside. CH puts an arm around Marcus.

CH

How's your golf game these days?

EST. BG&B HQ - DAY

A commanding, brutalist building made of tiered concrete and exposed iron girders. It looms over the Mississippi River. A radio tower caps its peak like a banner above a castle.

SUPER: "BG&B Holdings - St. Louis Headquarters"

INT. BG&B HQ - MEETING ROOM - DAY

A joyless room with beige walls and brown carpet. Four bored MIDDLE MANAGERS sit at a table. They're indistinguishable.

JOHNNY TAKESHI (32) stands beside a shrouded EASEL. One thing is clear: he's a nerd. But a cut of his shaggy black hair, a shirt without a pocket protector, and a pair of chic glasses would be enough to bring his underlying good looks to light.

The other thing that's clear is that he's passionate. Unfortunately, his passion doesn't translate to charisma, as he stumbles over the words in his prepared pitch.

JOHNNY

... so we might not all get the corner office we dream of, but someday the secretary - sorry - someday we might all get the secretary that goes with it.

(off the painful silence)

Imagine a rolodex, a filing cabinet, a typewriter, and a mainframe calculator all in one machine.

Johnny pulls the sheet off the easel and nearly tips the entire thing over. As the easel settles, we see a DRAWING of what appears to be a very boxy TV with a very tiny screen.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

We call it "The Executive Secretary Machine."

Johnny holds for applause. But there's only a COUGH. Ouch.

MIDDLE MANAGER #1

So it's a TV?

JOHNNY

Well, uh, no, but it *would* use a BG&B TV screen to display text.

MIDDLE MANAGER #2

Text? Isn't that what paper's for?

JOHNNY

Yes, but someday this might replace
all of the paper we use in offices.

MIDDLE MANAGER #1

Who cares? In case you didn't know,
paper grows on trees.

The Middle Managers chuckle at the lame joke. Johnny sweats.

JOHNNY

The Executive Secre--

MIDDLE MANAGER #2

I think we've seen enough. Thank
you, um, Mr. Takeshi, right?

JOHNNY

Yes, sir. One other...
(off their stern looks)
Thank you.

Johnny quickly bows and grabs his easel. As he retreats, he
hears the Managers quietly laughing. He stops, hand on the
doorknob. He musters his courage and turns around.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

I'm not asking you to fund some...
some toy. This could change the
business world as we know it. This
tech is long overdue. If we don't
build it, someone else will.

Any goodwill Johnny accrued evaporates in an instant.

MIDDLE MANAGER #2

How long have you had citizenship
with us at BG&B? Two years? Not a
very long time. But long enough to
know how all this works. You're a
smart guy, aren't you? That's why
we poached you. *So be smart.*

JOHNNY

I thought BG&B cared about
innovation. Pushing the envelope.
People like Jim Frakes prove that--

Middle Manager #2 heartily guffaws. The others titter.

MIDDLE MANAGER #2

Jim Frakes? He a hero of yours? You
might want to check the news. See
where innovation gets you.

INT. BG&B HQ - BREAK ROOM - LATER

Fluorescent lighting. Linoleum floor. Orange laminate counters. The shambling corpse of '70s corporate decor.

A square TV in the upper corner of the room shows footage of Jim Frakes' accident. His headshot fills half the screen. Johnny's eyes are on the TV, but his thousand yard stare is somewhere beyond it. The world around him is gone. Until--

AMARA (O.S.)

Hey, Johnny, did you hear me?

JOHNNY

(snapping out of it)

What? Sorry, I was watching the TV.

He turns to see AMARA BAKSHI (29) and HUGH McCAUL (40). Both textbook-definition nerds. Amara fusses with her long, frizzy braid - a nervous tick. Hugh sweats through his short-sleeve, button-down shirt and mops at his receding red hairline.

AMARA

It's fine, I was just asking if you were OK. You looked a little--

HUGH

We thought you blew a fuse.

JOHNNY

I just can't believe it. He was really *doing* something. And now...

HUGH

I can believe it. Another assassination at the hands of our corporate overlords. A hundred bucks says it was Liberty Motors.

AMARA

Don't say that sort of thing at the office. Not everything is a corporate conspiracy.

HUGH

So you admit *some* things are a corporate conspiracy?

Amara rolls her eyes. She excitedly changes the subject.

AMARA

Well...? How'd it go?!

Johnny gives her a grim look. She gets the memo.

AMARA (CONT'D)

That bad? Did you say my line about the corner office?

JOHNNY

They didn't even let me finish.

HUGH

Not to say, "I told you so," but... I told you so. They were never going to say "yes." These pitch opportunities are a sham. Even if they like your idea, they'll just steal it without giving you credit. Seen it a million times.

AMARA

Sorry, Johnny. But we can still keep working on it on the side.

JOHNNY

Except we can't manufacture the parts we need. Unless Hugh digs a miracle out of the trash, we're screwed.

Johnny looks back up at the TV, defeated. He stands.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

I should get back to work.

Hugh and Amara share a look of pity as Johnny shuffles out.

HENRY (PRELAP)

Cannonball!

EXT. USP VILLA - POOL - DAY

SPLASH! Henry cannonballs into the pool. One of the dozen WAITSTAFF roaming the perimeter hops away to avoid the water.

Clark, Zeke, Derek, and Hunter play games together in the shallow end. Clark is the picture perfect step-brother.

Henry resurfaces with a goofy grin. Mina, sunbathing in a bikini, gives him a scathing glance over her sunglasses.

Nearby, Gabe clutches the side of the pool to stay afloat. He not-so-secretly eyes Mina. Henry paddles over to him.

HENRY

Like what you see?

Gabe, caught, flails and looks away.

GABE

Oh, no, I was just looking at the design of her bathing suit.

HENRY

Dude, relax. I don't blame you. She's hot as fuck.

(off Gabe's shock)

I can say that. She's my step-mom.

(re: Lydia at the bar)

And get this, she's younger than my sister. Lydia *hates* it. It's hilarious.

(calling out to Lydia)

Hey, Lydia! How old are you?

Lydia flips him off while sipping a margarita.

GABE

Did she just flip you off?

HENRY

Jeez, you Liberty kids are uptight. Here, let's loosen you up a bit.

Henry waves to a YOUNG WAITRESS. She plasters on a smile and walks over to the boys.

YOUNG WAITRESS

Mr. Briggs, what can I get for you?

HENRY

Sorry, I've got water in my ears. Could you bend down a bit for me?

She knows the game. And she obeys. Her uniform's loose blouse seems almost perfectly designed for this situation...

YOUNG WAITRESS

What can I get for you?

HENRY

Two big, luscious... tequila shots.
(to Gabe)

And did you want anything?

(before Gabe can answer)

I'm kidding, dude. One's for you.

Henry waves the Young Waitress off. Grins at Gabe.

HENRY (CONT'D)
 (re: Young Waitress)
 She's on the menu, too.

Lydia, disgusted at what she's hearing, gets up and walks away. She spots Bernie, fully clothed, reading at a table.

LYDIA
 Not getting in?

BERNIE
 I didn't pack a bathing suit.

LYDIA
 I bet I've got one that fits you.

BERNIE
 That's OK. I'm good with my book.

LYDIA
 You can read anywhere. This is supposed to be vacation, right? What's the temperature in Detroit?

BERNIE
 Cold.

LYDIA
 That's what I thought. Come on.

INT. USP VILLA - LYDIA'S SUITE - BEDROOM - DAY

Bernie lifts a scanty bikini as if its neon green color is radioactive. Another swimsuit flies past her from the closet.

LYDIA (O.S.)
 I don't think I wore either of these. They're cute, though.

BERNIE
 They're a bit... revealing?

LYDIA (O.S.)
 That's the point.

Bernie, out of her element, attempts to practice her social skills. But her delivery is... stilted.

BERNIE
 So. I feel like you and I never really get to talk. I don't actually know much about you.

LYDIA (O.S.)
You sure you wanna know me better?

BERNIE
I mean. I think so. Why not?

LYDIA (O.S.)
Alright. I'll bite. Fire away.

BERNIE
If you weren't in line to be CEO,
what would you want to do instead?

We now join Lydia in the walk-in closet. She rifles through dozens of swimsuit options, rejecting most of them.

LYDIA
Well I'm not in line to be CEO
because I don't have a dick. But I
always thought I'd make a great
madame of an upscale brothel. Which
is basically the same as being CEO.
Except the fucking is more
explicit.
(re: swimsuit)
Maybe this one?

A hideous pink swimsuit sails past Bernie.

BERNIE
Maybe... What about boyfriends? Do
you want to get married someday?

LYDIA (O.S.)
Jeez. You getting intel on me?
(beat)
Sure, I'd get married. If he were
hot and let me screw other people.
(annoyed, throwing back)
And what about you? Are you
actually this much of a prude or
just pretending?

BERNIE
I don't know what you mean.

Lydia steps out from the closet.

LYDIA
The whole goody-goody, holier-than-
thou soldier routine is cute. Gold
star. But dressing in camo won't
hide the fact that you're a woman.

BERNIE

I'm not hiding. I want people to respect me. Not objectify me.

LYDIA

Listen, you're an attractive girl. That's a major asset in this world. Believe me. And the most successful people? They don't waste assets.

Bernie's anger shifts to pity as she re-examines Lydia's face. It's a jigsaw of corrective plastic surgeries. Overworked clay. It's off-putting. Incongruent.

BERNIE

(holding up a swimsuit)
OK. I do kinda like this one.

EXT. USP VILLA - POOL - DAY

Bernie, in a leopard-print one-piece, self-consciously walks beside Lydia, who proudly struts in her billowing sheer robe.

Zeke pulls off his goggles as if to confirm what he's seeing.

ZEKE

Bernie?!

Gabe and Henry, buzzed and bobbing next to empty bottles and shot glasses, turn to look. Bernie feels all the eyes on her.

LYDIA

Don't worry about them. This is about us. Come, sit with me.

Lydia sits at the bar. Bernie hesitates. She sees a towel on a bench. She grabs it, wraps it around her waist, then sits.

LYDIA (CONT'D)

Well... It's a start.
(re: bottles, to Henry)
Quite the pace you're setting.
Showing off for your guest?

Henry splashes water at her. It lands well short of the mark. Lydia rolls her eyes. Bernie flashes Gabe a scolding look.

HENRY

(to Gabe)
Wanna go? There's a bit too much bitching around here for my liking.

Gabe eyes Bernie. Considers. His grin gives us his answer.

EXT. USP VILLA - GOLF COURSE - DAY

CH peers into the tall grass at the edge of the fairway. He slips a golf ball out of his pocket and drops it at his feet.

CH

There it is! Wasn't as deep in there as I thought.

Marcus watches from the green. He smirks, not remotely fooled. CH wedges his ball onto the green. A nice chip. He waddles over. Takes a moment to catch his breath.

CH (CONT'D)

Since when did you get so good?

MARCUS

You told me not to let you win.

CH

Well I was lying. How dare you bully an old man like this on his birthday? It's unseemly.

MARCUS

Whatever happened to honesty between allies?

(re: the green)

It's still your shot. I'm up there.

CH grumbles as he lines up a long putt. He wipes sweat from his brow. He swings. His aim looks true, but as the ball approaches the hole it veers wide and rolls long.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Ooh. Close. Little too much power.

Marcus casually sinks his own putt. CH frowns. Marcus barely removes his ball from the hole when CH putts his own in.

CH

It's hot. Let's have a drink.

CH waves at a CART GIRL nearby. She opens one of the cart's coolers and prepares drinks. CADDIES bag up the clubs.

CH directs Marcus toward a bench in the shade. They sit and look out over the estate. It's a spectacular view. A beat.

CH (CONT'D)

I blinked and now I'm 70. Christ. What horseshit.

MARCUS

I'd say you did OK for yourself.

CH

Ha! Inheritance and incremental growth. Hardly a headline.

(beat, wistful)

There were dozens of Roman emperors. How many can you name?

Before Marcus can answer, the Cart Girl arrives with two MINT JULEPS. CH takes a sip through the striped straw.

MARCUS

I remember Nero.

(beat)

I think I'd rather keep the trains on time and be forgotten than be remembered for derailing them.

CH

That's rich coming from the king of automobiles.

(beat)

In that case, I think you'll be smart enough not to derail my plans. Don't worry, your part in this is very simple. You just have to say "yes." You've always been good at that, haven't ya?

MARCUS

(playful)

Thought this wasn't a business trip. Alright, let's hear it.

CH

You've seen the value of the dollar. Pitiful. It's a goddamn anchor around our necks. I'm not gonna let it drag us down with it. It's time to cut the rope. Make a clean break once and for all.

Marcus gives him a long, appraising look. *He's serious.*

MARCUS

You want to stop using the US Dollar? Entirely? Jesus. There's nothing clean about that. You'll destroy the world economy.

CH

I *am* the world economy. Let's stop pussyfooting around it. Oil is money. Everyone knows it. I'm just making it official.

MARCUS

How? By creating your own currency? The United States will push back--

CH

Fuck the United States. They should be grateful we stuck with the dollar as long as we did. Buncha misguided pageantry on our part.

CH takes a long pull off his drink.

CH (CONT'D)

We don't owe them anything. You especially. What has the US ever done for you and your people?

The point lands. Marcus remains stoic as it sinks in. A beat.

CH (CONT'D)

(re: Marcus' full drink)
Not a Mint Julep man, huh?

MARCUS

Mint tends to overpower things.
(beat)
So I take it you're asking Liberty Motors to rally behind your cause?

CH

There'll be a whole heckuva lot less kicking and screaming if we both adopt the new currency together. Instant capitulation.

MARCUS

Your new currency. And if I say no?

CH sucks on his straw. It SQUELCHES as he drains the drink.

CH

Our industries are bound together, tight as a knot. Automobiles need oil. It'd be financial suicide not to follow my lead.

Marcus looks down at his drink. Swirls it as he thinks.

MARCUS

You're turning 70. You've run United Southern Petroleum for nearly forty years. Why do this now? Why not simply retire and enjoy what you've accomplished?

A long beat. CH seems to relish in forming his response.

CH

Because that's boring as shit.

As he says it, something catches his eye. He abruptly stands. Marcus follows his gaze and sees-- an ALLIGATOR on the green.

CH (CONT'D)

(yelling at the Caddies)
Don't just stand there! Spook it back into the water!

The Caddies, young and dumb, bumble about as they try to appease CH's commands. One unsheathes a golf club.

CH (CONT'D)

Not with my good clubs! Christ.
(to Marcus)
Hold this.

CH holds out his glass. Marcus stands and reflexively takes it. Then CH marches toward the gator. He shouts and waves his arms at the beast, which remains unmoved and unimpressed.

Marcus stares at the empty glass in one hand and the full drink in the other. He scowls and looks up at CH. CH, defeated, throws his hands up and heads back to Marcus.

CH (CONT'D)

That stubborn bastard's not going anywhere. But he won't bother us. Just hope he doesn't tear up the green. Have you seen gator claws?

Marcus holds the empty glass out to CH. CH waves it off.

CH (CONT'D)

It's empty. Just set it down. Oh, but I will take that one since you're not too keen on it.

CH grabs the full drink. Marcus quietly seethes.

CH (CONT'D)

So are we doin' this or what?

MARCUS

I can't give you an answer yet. I have to run it past the board. And Rose. This isn't a simple request.

CH

It oughtta be simple. I don't care what your board thinks. I care what you think. You run the goddamn place, don't you?

MARCUS

Yes. And I like running things. *My way.* I'm sure you understand that.

CH

Fine, fine. You think on it. Talk to your board and all that. But I want your answer before you leave.

(beat)

Now let's finish this game. Feels like I might have a comeback in me.

CH patronizingly pats Marcus on the back and saunters off.

INT. USP VILLA - LYDIA'S SUITE - DAY

Lydia sits in a robe at her vanity meticulously applying makeup. She's fresh out of the shower. A KNOCK on the door.

LYDIA

(calling out)

You can just leave it in the hall.

Another KNOCK. Annoyed, Lydia stomps toward the door.

LYDIA (CONT'D)

Do you not speak English or are you just dumb?

Lydia rips the door open. Clark stands in the threshold.

CLARK

If that's how you talk to family I'd hate to hear how you talk to the help.

LYDIA

Very funny. What do you want?

CLARK

I'm heading to the track. Wanna join? Thought you might want an excuse to get out of here.

LYDIA

How charitable. You know I love sitting around in dirty garages with dick-brained grease monkeys.

CLARK

Ah, but all the sexy drivers will be there, too. Hey, if you'd rather stay here with our step-sister - sorry, *step-mom* - then have at it.

LYDIA

Asshole. Fine. Give me a minute.

EXT. USP - ROAD NEAR RACETRACK - DAY

Clark sports a big grin as he speeds Lydia down the Gulf Coast road. Floating oil platforms dot the watery horizon.

LYDIA

What are you so happy about?

CLARK

Y'know, sometimes people are just happy and they smile.

LYDIA

That's absurd.

Clark sees a slow car up ahead. He crosses the double yellow line and zooms past the pitiful commuter car. Lydia tenses.

CLARK

See? Wasn't that fun?

LYDIA

Not really. Come on. I know when you're hiding something. Spill it.

CLARK

Nah. I can't.

LYDIA

Well now you're just being a dick.

CLARK

OK OK. Fine. But I'm not supposed to tell anyone yet.

(MORE)

CLARK (CONT'D)

(beat)

After the race, dad's going to officially name me CEO and begin the transition process.

LYDIA

Seriously? Wow... that's great.

CLARK

You don't sound so sure.

LYDIA

No, it's just. I mean, until the old man's dead I figured he'd still be running the show.

CLARK

Jesus, Lyd, obviously. He'll remain president. I'll just be CEO. It's a formality. But still a big step. Can you try to be happy for me?

LYDIA

(hesitant)

Clark. Of course I'm happy for you.

The car slows as it passes through a large gate. Up ahead we see the immense racetrack grandstands.

CLARK

Now it's you who's holding back.

LYDIA

I love you. You know that. You're one of the only people who doesn't piss me off. It's dad that worries me... he always has another game he's playing. And naming a new CEO... sometimes it's a setup.

(beat)

I was with a West German guy once and he told me that the word "gift" in German means "poison."

CLARK

Well that sums up your world view.

Clark stops the car in front of a gate. Clark's HEAD MECHANIC runs over and starts to roll the fence open for them.

CLARK (CONT'D)

Look, I appreciate your concern. But do you really think dad would set me up as - what - a fall guy?

LYDIA

No. You're right. Dad's an asshole,
but that'd be a new low.

(beat)

I'm proud of you. I don't know how
you turned out normal growing up in
our house. I'm glad one of us did.

Clark drives through the open gate. Suddenly they're on the
racetrack itself. Clark rolls down his window.

CLARK

(to the Mechanic)

Is the track clear? I wanna take my
sister here on a hot lap.

HEAD MECHANIC

Track's all yours.

LYDIA

Uhh no. I didn't sign up for that.

CLARK

Sorry. It's my first order as CEO.

LYDIA

(buckling up)

Christ. Just don't kill us, OK?

She barely gets the words out when Clark GUNS IT. The car
PEELS OUT, leaving burned rubber on the track. He expertly
speeds down the straights and drifts around the corners.

Lydia is equal parts terrified and thrilled. She yelps and
shuts her eyes. Clark looks over and grins. It's a sweet
moment between siblings. We hear Lydia's cackling screams as
we PULL OUT to a wide shot of the track.

INT. USP VILLA - FOYER - DAY

CLOSE UP: Hands over eyes.

BERNIE

... 58. 59. 60!

Bernie drops her hands and surveys the vast foyer. A central
grand staircase splits as it ascends. But she keeps her eyes
on the ground floor. She ventures into a...

SITTING ROOM

... and gets on her knees to check under the furniture.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

Come out, come out, wherever you are. Watch out, cuz I'm trained for this sort of thing.

She checks behind curtains. In a closet. Then enters a...

HUNTING DISPLAY ROOM

... where the plaid wallpaper is barely visible behind the mounted bucks and exotic, taxidermy animals. A mountain lion peers down at her from a fake log. A grizzly stands at full height, claws raised, jaw frozen in a mighty, soundless roar.

Bernie proceeds with caution, as though a stuffed monster might come to life at any moment. She hears a GIGGLE and whirls toward its source - a large TURKEY with fanned plume.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

Hmmm, I'm looking for a boy named Hunter. This sure seems like the place he'd be hiding.

As she says it, she leaps to the side of the turkey. Sure enough, Hunter crouches in the corner behind it. He groans.

HUNTER

That wasn't fair. You heard me! I should get to hide again.

BERNIE

Sorry. Rules are rules. But maybe you could help me track down Derek? Work as a team?

HUNTER

You're not going to find him.

BERNIE

Oh? Why's that?

HUNTER

Cuz he's hiding upstairs. Even though we said it's out of bounds.

BERNIE

Now *that's* unfair.

INT. USP VILLA - FOYER - DAY

Bernie and Hunter go opposite directions as the grand staircase splits. She flashes a series of elaborate military hand signals to him. He nods, serious. Then scurries off.

INT. USP VILLA - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Bernie tiptoes past closed doors, not daring to open any.

BERNIE

Derek. Come on out, you cheater.

Bernie's ears perk up. The sound of a TV BROADCAST filters through a partially-open door up ahead. She moves to the door and peers inside. Plenty of places to hide. She enters the...

PRIVATE SUITE SITTING ROOM

And begins looking behind the sofa and lounge chairs inside the large space. Bernie pauses as she hears the TV AUDIO.

USPN REPORTER

... on top of a weak dollar, the death of Jupiter CEO Jim Frakes has investors even more spooked. You've heard of a bear market. Get ready for a POLAR bear market...

Suddenly a door across the room opens. Mina enters in a silk robe that hardly conceals her. She talks on a big, bulky CORDLESS PHONE. She doesn't see Bernie duck beside the sofa.

MINA

Daddy. I know. What do you expect me to do? Don't you have, like, spies for this type of thing?

Mina, agitated, stomps toward the sofa. She grabs the REMOTE and MUTES the TV. Then she plops down, mere inches away from Bernie. Mina is oblivious as Bernie quietly slides around to the back of the sofa. *The seeker has become the hider.*

Bernie scans for exits. There's a third door - and Mina's back is to it - but it's all the way across the room. No cover. But it's her best bet. She makes a break for it when--

MINA (CONT'D)

You're being ridiculous. Do you expect them to just, like, announce that they killed someone?

Bernie stops - *eavesdropping might be worth the risk.*

MINA (CONT'D)

OK, sorry. Just. I dunno. They're soooo boring. I doubt they did it.

Bernie's fully invested when -- KNOCK KNOCK. A MAID with a CART peeks in. Mina waves for her to enter. *Oh shit.*

MINA (CONT'D)

(with pauses to listen)

Ugh, daddy, I already told you, not until after the race. No, he still hasn't told anyone. Oh my God, yes, obviously Clark knows.

Bernie inches to the far side of the sofa. She sneaks behind the arm just as the Maid, dusting, rounds the corner.

MINA (CONT'D)

So what if Clark is CEO? It doesn't, like, change anything.

The Maid sees dirty GLASSES on a table near Bernie. Bernie tenses as her FOOTSTEPS approach. *There's nowhere to hide.* But as the Maid walks past Bernie's hiding place, Bernie's gone! We glimpse an arm as it slips under the sofa. *Phew.*

MINA (CONT'D)

Oh my God, why are you yelling at me? No, I know. I'm trying!

The Maid accidentally CLINKS the glasses. Mina huffs, annoyed. She stands and storms out the same way she came in.

The Maid sighs - *Lord help me.* Then she sees her cart quickly rolling across the room by itself. *What the hell?* She runs to stop it before it does any damage.

We see under the sofa. *No one's there.* Bernie's home free.

INT. USP RACETRACK - PIT GARAGE - DAY

Light cascades through the open garage door and brilliantly defines the elegant contours of a white RACECAR. The car's design seems deliberately outdated. Its open-wheel chassis and lack of any safety apparatus evokes an era when the Monaco Grand Prix was the pinnacle of motorsport.

A MECHANIC tweaks its mean-looking engine. A RAKISH DRIVER wearing a crisp cowboy hat oversees the work. The top of his half-zipped jumpsuit hangs limp around his waist. He lifts his head at the sound of high heels CLACKING toward him.

Lydia, still high off the hot lap adrenaline, stands in the doorway. She eyes him the way a lioness eyes a gazelle.

LYDIA

Think you could give me a ride?

HARD CUT TO:

INT. USP RACETRACK - GARAGE OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Lydia digs her long fingernails into the Rakish Driver's chest as she rides him. The sofa rhythmically SLAMS the wall.

INT. USP RACETRACK - PIT GARAGE - SAME TIME

The Mechanic looks up at the ceiling toward the source of the muffled sexual CLATTER. He shudders at the sound of Lydia's performative SHRIEKS and MOANS. He returns to his work.

INT. BG&B HQ - RECORDS & DISPOSAL DEPT. - DAY

A vast underground warehouse. Cement on all surfaces. Giant shelves stretch into darkness. Hugh holds a CLIPBOARD and looks over a batch of tagged and organized ELECTRONIC JUNK.

A set of swinging doors BANG open, making Hugh jump. A WORKER wheels in a cart that's brimming with even more junk.

HUGH

Seriously? It's Friday afternoon.
Where did this even come from?

WORKER

Hey man, I just push the carts.

HUGH

Fine, fine. Put it over there.

The Worker shakes his head but complies. Hugh looks at his watch. Then he peers down into the pile of parts and...

His eyes light up like he just hit three 7s at the slots.

PRELAP: The sound of a basketball BOUNCING on a court.

EXT. USP VILLA - BASKETBALL COURT - DAY

Zeke, alone, jukes an imaginary player. He shoots! No good.

While grabbing the ball he sees a GARDENING TRUCK drive by. An ALLIGATOR TAIL hangs out the back. A white sheet with a bloody patch covers the rest of the body. Zeke blinks. *Huh?*

EXT. USP VILLA - SHOOTING RANGE - DAY

SLO-MO MONTAGE: A beer bottle soars across the blue sky. It EXPLODES! Glass shards and backwash cascade like a firework.

Henry chugs a beer and throws the bottle high into the air. Gabe aims a DESERT EAGLE PISTOL and shoots it. It SHATTERS.

Henry, armed with an AK-47, sprays bullets at a target. Empty shell casings leap like popcorn kernels out of the chamber.

Henry and Gabe throw back a shot of clear rum.

Gabe lights up a wooden target with an AR-15. Wood chips fly.

The boys grin from ear to ear. They cheers. Then chug.

END SLO-MO MONTAGE.

The boys, beers in hand, sit on the stand's wooden counter.

HENRY

See? Things aren't so bad once the stick's outta your ass.

GABE

I think this is the first time I've actually enjoyed shooting a gun. Helps not having a drill instructor shouting in your ear.

HENRY

Fuuuuck. You guys do that whole forced conscription shit, right? Even the CEO's kids? Harsh.

GABE

It's not forced. I was told doing it would "set a good example for the people." As if anyone would enlist just because I did. Folks only do it cuz it's the easiest way to get a share in the company.

(beat)

It, uh, wasn't a good fit for me.

HENRY

Well your sister sure seems to have taken to it like a pig to shit. And I doubt she's hurting for shares.

GABE

Yeah, that's not the only thing Bernie and I don't have in common.

HENRY

Oh, her balls are bigger than yours, too?

Gabe can't help but chuckle. Despite his crass varnish, Henry's charming underlayer shines through. He's scandalizing, yet enthralling. Gabe marvels at him.

Henry hops down, wobbling as he lands. He's well past tipsy.

GABE

You're an asshole. You know that?

HENRY

Of course! Being an asshole is great. It's a true luxury. I relish that shit. I'd kill myself if I had to act like Clark all the time.

GABE

Huh. Yeah, I guess I wouldn't want to be in Bernie's shoes either.

(off Henry's snickering)

What?

HENRY

Do you really think Bernie's gonna become CEO? Buddy. Come on now.

GABE

She's the oldest and clearly the most responsible. So... yeah.

HENRY

Okayyyy. Has Liberty Motors ever had a female CEO? Didn't think so.

(reaching in his backpack)

Want another?

Henry waggles a beer at Gabe. Gabe wrestles with the simple decision. His thoughts have become heavy. Finally...

GABE

Fuck it. Why not?

Henry tosses him the beer. Gabe juggles to catch it.

HENRY

Oh ho ho. I almost forgot. I've got a special treat for us.

(digging in the backpack)

Dah duh duh dahhh!

Henry pulls out the CARVED WOODEN BOX. Holds it aloft.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Like my daddy always says: "If you're gonna shoot the shit, don't use a shit gun."

Henry pops open the lid. NAPOLEON'S PISTOLS gleam.

GABE

Whoa. I don't think you should--

Henry cuts him off by grabbing a pistol free and throwing the box onto the counter. Gabe jumps down out of the way.

HENRY

How many frogs you think that short son of a bitch shot with these?

GABE

I doubt they've ever been fired.

HENRY

So they're virgins? Nice.

GABE

Yeah, well, we can't shoot them either. You need, like, actual gunpowder. And a wad.

HENRY

A wad for the virgins? Pfft. Easy.

Henry peels the label off his beer. Wads it up. Grins.

HENRY (CONT'D)

And we've got gunpowder galore!

Henry picks up the Desert Eagle pistol. He releases the magazine. It pops right out. He tips it on its side and a bullet CLATTERS onto the wooden counter.

GABE

What, you're just gonna open a bullet? Good luck with that.

HENRY

I've found with a little force you can open just about anything.

Henry flips the Desert Eagle and grabs it by the barrel. He lifts it over his head and SLAMS the grip onto the bullet.

GABE

Jesus! What the fuck?!

There's hardly a scratch on the bullet. Before Gabe can stop him, Henry raises his arm and SLAMS it down again.

GABE (CONT'D)

Dude! Stop! There's still a bullet in the chamber!

HENRY

Relax, I ejected the mag. See?

Henry casually presses the barrel to his head.

He moves his finger to the trigger and--

Gabe TACKLES him! Henry's arm flails as they fall--

BANG!

The Tinnitus RINGING overwhelms the soundscape. Until...

We hear Gabe's heavy, panicked breaths. He pins Henry to the ground. Neither moves. A long, fearful beat. Then...

HENRY (CONT'D)

Wow. That would have sucked.

Henry grabs Gabe's face with both hands and gives him an exaggerated kiss on the lips. Mwah! It stuns Gabe.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Dude, you saved my life. Holy shit!

Gabe doesn't move. He stares at Henry. Their faces are mere inches apart. The moment lingers. A little too long.

HENRY (CONT'D)

But, uh, you can let me up now.

Gabe snaps out of it. He leaps to his feet, releasing Henry.

GABE

Right, yeah. Sorry.

HENRY

Whew. That sobered me the fuck up.

(beat, unfazed)

I need a real drink now.

INT. USP VILLA - MARCUS & ROSE'S SUITE - BATHROOM - EVENING

Marcus lets the shower's piping hot water stream down his clean-shaven head. His eyes are closed, deep in thought.

ROSE (O.S.)
 Didn't hear you come in.

Marcus turns the water off. Grabs a towel. A cloud of steam escapes as he slides open the glass door and steps out.

MARCUS
 Didn't want to wake you. How long were you asleep? You feeling OK?

ROSE
 Fine, fine. I was *very* relaxed after my spa day. And the travel must have gotten to me, too.

Marcus moves past her to the mirror. Gruffly dries himself off. Rose can sense something's bothering him.

ROSE (CONT'D)
 Hmmm. Did CH beat you in golf?

Marcus flashes her a look in the mirror. He's in no mood.

ROSE (CONT'D)
 All your tough talk to the kids. And you're the one who got rattled. What is it about that man?

MARCUS
That man reminded me that he and I share an unbreakable bond. But when one person holds the power it's not a bond. It's bondage.

EXT. BG&B - EMPLOYEE HOUSING SUBDIVISION - EVENING

BIRDS-EYE: A grid of houses and roads as neat as a microchip. Ranch style. Square lots. The American Dream™.

Johnny drives a sensible Liberty Motors car down the road. He slows when he sees CONCERNED NEIGHBORS gathering to gawk at a commotion. Johnny turns to look.

BG&B SECURITY OFFICERS swarm a home like ants at a picnic. Furniture is strewn across the lawn. File boxes upended. No rock left unturned. It's a show of force. A public shaming.

A COMMUNITY LIAISON (aka a "Cee-Lee") in an unremarkable tan suit watches the action while smoking a cigarette. He turns and looks directly at Johnny. His eyes send a chill down Johnny's spine. Johnny speeds up and drives off.

PRELAP: KNOCK NUH NUH KNOCK KNOCK... KNOCK KNOCK.

INT. BG&B - HUGH'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

ANGLE ON: A peephole. Hugh's eye fills it.

CLICK. SCRAPE. CLICK. The door opens partway.

HUGH
Verbal ID?

JOHNNY
Come on, Hugh, just open it.

HUGH
Alright, fine, you pass the test.

Hugh opens the door all the way and Johnny enters. Hugh's home is a mini version of an idyllic 1960's ranch home. Minus the nuclear family. Empty pizzas boxes. Scattered beer bottles. Pin-up "art" on the walls. Yep. Bachelor pad.

Amara sits at the dining table scrutinizing one of the more lewd images. She smiles and waves when she sees Johnny.

AMARA
Hey! Did Hugh tell you what's going on or am I the only one in the dark? Cuz that'd be rude.

JOHNNY
You're not alone. And this had better be good. I'm missing dinner.

HUGH
Oh. It's good. Very good.
(to Johnny)
Want a beer? It's not that corporate Heartland swill. It's the good stuff outta Boston.

JOHNNY
No I'm OK. But Boston, huh? This must be a special occasion.

Hugh grabs a beer for himself as Johnny sits next to Amara. Hugh re-enters holding the beer and... something else.

HUGH
You might not want a beer. But I bet you want this.

Hugh holds up the item. It looks like a CIRCUIT BOARD. Johnny and Amara's jaws drop. They instantly see the potential.

AMARA

Where...? How?

Johnny jumps up and gets a closer look. He examines every detail of the circuit board with wonder.

JOHNNY

It's missing some capacitors and transistors, but otherwise, I think it might actually work.

(beat)

This came through Disposals? Who was working on this?

HUGH

No clue. It didn't say. But it was all flagged for the furnace. So no one's going to miss it. How's that for a miracle?

As Hugh says it, a flicker of concern crosses Johnny's face. But he dismisses it as quickly as it appeared.

JOHNNY

You know what? I think I will have that beer.

INT. USP VILLA - DINING HALL - NIGHT

The long table, candelabra, mounds of food, and gloved WAITERS could lead one to mistake this for Versailles.

It's palpably quiet, save for the SCRAPING of knives and forks on china. It's been a weird day. Everyone is tired.

CH sits at the head of the table. The Waiter pours wine for him. He gestures for them to keep going... keep going. Good.

CH

(playful)

Well, Marcus, I s'pose I oughtta apologize now while we're still on friendly terms.

MARCUS

Oh? Didn't take you for the apologizing type.

CH

It's just that Clark here's gonna put such a hurtin' on you in the race tomorrow. Don't want it to damage our relationship too much.

MARCUS

That right? I guess there's a first time for everything.

CLARK

All I'll say is that the lap times are there. It'll be a good race.

ZEKE

There's no way your car is faster than ours!

Rose gives Zeke a gentle look. *The grownups are talking.*

CH

It's not all about the car, son. It's about who's driving it.

LYDIA

Says the man who's never driven a day in his life.

CH

Don't be ugly, Lydia.

That shuts her up. Henry smirks. Mina sees the night souring. She gives a hand signal to a Waiter who hurriedly exits.

MINA

I think it's time for your special surprise! I made a couple calls and managed to convince your favorite comedian to come perform for us.

CH

Bob Callaway? Well how 'bout that!

MINA

No... Rooney Winfield. I thought--

As she says it, ROONEY WINFIELD (a hard 55) bursts through the doors. CH does a poor job masking his disappointment.

ROONEY

Don't everyone clap at once now. I thought this was a birthday, not a funeral. Yeesh.

The assembled families politely CLAP. CH glowers.

ROONEY (CONT'D)

There's the birthday boy. Uh oh, he looks like his birthday wish didn't come true. Hey, don't worry, pal. I wouldn't be able to blow out all 70 candles either. Next year maybe let your wife do it. Didn't you marry her for her blowing skills?

Henry giggles. He loves it. Everyone else is uncomfortable.

ROONEY (CONT'D)

CH. That's a funny name. But it makes more sense when you know that it's short for "Cha Ching." The doc said that's the noise he heard when you slid out of your mother.

(with a lewd gesture)

Cha ching!

(beat)

But seriously, CH is a great businessman. His parents were teaching him from the day he was born. Cuz they charged him rent for his time in the womb. With interest!

There's a bit more laughter, but CH's dark mood sets a tone that's hard to overcome. He loathes jokes at his expense.

ROONEY (CONT'D)

I saw a list that shows CH is the richest man alive. I said to myself, "of course he is... his dad is the richest man dead!" Funny thing, huh. Turns out they don't let you take the money with you to heaven. Eh, it's no big loss. All the hookers worth a damn are in hell anyway. And surely your dad didn't end up down there, right?

CH is working hard to keep his fake smile plastered on.

ROONEY (CONT'D)

I don't think CH is loving this. But my hands are tied! You see, I can't make jokes about Marcus Lamb. He's the Liberty Motors CEO. And there's a rule in comedy that says only one car CEO can get roasted per day.

Henry cackles. Marcus' chair GRINDS the floor as he leaps up. Everyone quiets. CH stands and gives a few generous CLAPS.

CH

Thank you, Rooney. Very good. Very good. But best to wrap it up now.

ROONEY

But I was just getting... Right. Thanks for having me. Enjoy the rest of your night, folks!

Rooney scuttles away. Mina looks shellshocked. No one quite knows how to proceed. The awkward silence is deafening.

CH

I need to take a walk. You up for a stroll, Marcus? I've got something I wanna show you.

MINA

But we still have the cake and--

CH gives her a look that could stun Medusa.

INT. USP VILLA - GARAGE - NIGHT

A dark room. Even without lights we can tell it's massive.

With a KA-CHUNK, the overhead lights POP on, one bank at a time. The lights reveal row after row of CLASSIC CARS. They have a familiar look, but none are identifiable.

CH

Not bad, eh? Don't get jealous, most of them are yours.

Marcus brushes his hand along the curved fin of a fast-looking, solid metal car. Space-age chic.

MARCUS

I'm impressed. This one never even went into wide production.

CH

Most morons wouldn't know what to do with a bullet like that anyway. They're more than happy with their safe little commuter cars.

(beat)

These aren't why I brought you down. I got a real special one.

CH leads Marcus toward a true ANTIQUE VEHICLE. It looks like a cross between a Model T and a tractor. Beautiful in its own industrial way. Marcus is floored.

MARCUS

Where on earth did you find this?
Only three were ever made. I
thought they were all destroyed.

CH

It's amazing what you can find if
you dig deep enough and have
unlimited resources. I should know,
I'm an oil man.

Marcus wanders around it, observing each and every detail.

MARCUS

You did a great job restoring it.
It's immaculate.

CH

You think I'm just showin' it to
you? This is a real piece of your
family history. It's yours.

Marcus hesitates, waiting for the other shoe to drop.

MARCUS

CH. That's truly generous of you.

CH

Don't sound so surprised!
(beat)
Boy, your great granddad. Whew. Now
that's an inspiring story. It's
still hard to believe that a slave
without a lick of formal education
thought up somethin' as complex as
this. Musta been one smart fella.

There's the other shoe. CH's threatening "mob speak" subtext is clear: *your great grandpa was a liar and I have the proof.*

MARCUS

(tactfully deflecting)
He wasn't that smart. He never
dreamed this would become the
automobile. He just wanted to build
a cheap farm machine that could
replace the labor of ten men. It
was his belief that slavery
wouldn't be abolished because it
was morally reprehensible.

(MORE)

MARCUS (CONT'D)

It would only be abolished once it became economically unsavory.

CH

And thus, Liberty Motors was born. What a yarn! One invention really can spark a revolution...

Marcus is done playing games. His tone darkens.

MARCUS

I've heard you catch more flies with honey. Yet all you've served me is vinegar.

(beat)

Did you think I'd be grateful that you had Jim Frakes killed? Was that your way of trying to butter me up before your outrageous proposal? And now this-- this threat about my family? It's too far.

CH

Let's not get excited. Jim wasn't supposed to be driving. That twat Tony Rinaldi was. I didn't want him driving in my race tomorrow. Figured if he blew up and left Jim with egg on his face then you and I would both be popping champagne.

(beat)

So we got a bit more than we bargained for. I'm not complaining.

MARCUS

I am. Liberty Motors will be blamed for this. It's my reputation that's going to take the hit.

CH

Good lord. You care too much what others think of you. No one's gonna even remember this in a week.

MARCUS

I'll remember.

(beat)

What's to stop you from blowing up my car if I ever get in your way?

CH

Well, you and I aren't competitors.

(beat)

Are we?

Marcus strides right up to CH. He towers over him.

MARCUS

I have an answer for your proposal.
No. I think it's reckless and ill-
 conceived. It's madness.

(beat)

But I'm not a dictator. I govern.
 If the Liberty board and our
 shareholders determine it's most
 prudent to adopt your currency -
 and they most likely will - then I
 won't hesitate to sign the papers.

CH

As long as I get what I want, I
 don't care what you think of me.
 See? I practice what I preach.

CH turns and walks away from Marcus.

CH (CONT'D)

Enjoy the gift. I'm certain people
 will be very intrigued to learn
 more about your family history.

Marcus clenches his jaw. Then he returns his attention to the
 antique automobile. He frowns - *could his ancestor truly have
 designed this?* And with that, the seed of doubt is planted.

INT. BG&B - HUGH'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Johnny, Amara, and Hugh toil away at a workstation table. The
 EXECUTIVE SECRETARY MACHINE sits atop the table. Or, rather,
 a torn-apart TV set and a rat's nest of cables sits atop the
 table. "Prototype" would be a generous description.

Light flickers as Amara solders the circuit board. Then she
 YELPS. She puts her finger in her mouth. Singed.

JOHNNY

You OK? Let me see.

She holds out her hand. He takes it and tenderly examines it.
 There's a romantic undertone. Hugh notes the moment, uneasy.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Doesn't look too bad. Hugh, do you
 have frozen peas or anything?

Amara pulls her hand away, embarrassed.

AMARA

It's nothing. I'm fine.

HUGH

Maybe that's our cue to stop for the night. I'm exhausted. We can pick it up tomorrow morning.

JOHNNY

You're right. Plus, if we time it right we could finish up before the race starts. Then watch it here?

AMARA

Oooh. I'll bring snacks!

INT. USP VILLA - MARCUS & ROSE'S SUITE - NIGHT

Marcus enters to find Rose, arms folded. She nods toward the bathroom. There's a RETCHING. A toilet FLUSHES. Gabe emerges.

GABE

Dad, I'm sorry, I can explain--

MARCUS

You'd best start. Didn't I tell you to keep your wits about you?

ROSE

Tell him what you told me. Go on.

GABE

(hesitant)

Me and Henry. It was his idea. We went to the shooting range and--

MARCUS

This before or after you started drinking like a bum?

Gabe winces as if struck. Marcus has his answer.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Drunk and shooting guns. We've been here not but one day and you're already acting like a redneck fool.

GABE

Yeah, well, this *fool* saved Henry's life. So maybe you should thank me instead of preaching at me.

MARCUS

It's gonna be like that, huh?

Gabe stands his ground. The liquid courage fuels him.

GABE

He would have shot himself if I hadn't stopped him.

MARCUS

You want a pat on the head? It was your idiotic, irresponsible actions that put you in that position.

(beat, shaking his head)

I knew you weren't ready for this. But I prayed that I was wrong.

(off Gabe moving to speak)

Don't. One more word outta you and I'll lose the last of my patience.

Gabe seethes. Rose flashes him a look - *don't do it*. Gabe relents. He huffs and SLAMS the door on his way out.

ROSE

You feel good about that? He did save the boy's life.

MARCUS

And *he* could have been killed.

ROSE

But he wasn't. They're not kids anymore. We won't always be there to protect them. We have to trust that we raised them right.

MARCUS

And did we? They're soft. Coddled. This world will eat them up.

ROSE

Let it try. When the day comes that they're forced to fight? I have faith that they'll survive. Just like we did.

She soothingly takes his hand; she knows how to stop the spread of his wildfire. He sighs and kisses her hand.

INT. BG&B - JOHNNY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Johnny creeps into the dark bedroom. Even though it's dark, we can see that it's a cleaner space than Hugh's. There's a woman's touch to it: sensible décor, floral bedspread.

And that suspicion is confirmed when Johnny climbs into bed and cuddles up to his sleeping wife, SUSAN TAKESHI (28).

EXT. USP RACETRACK - VARIOUS - DAY

Heat shimmers on the pavement. Swarms of RACE ATTENDEES throng the concourse. The grandstands are packed. Mechanics rush to make final car adjustments. It's a bustling scene.

ANNOUNCER #1 (O.S.)

Welcome, motorsport fans, to today's special exhibition race, hosted here in the beautiful Incorporated Territories of United Southern Petroleum. Or "The Ink" as some call it.

TV STYLE BROADCAST: As the announcing continues, we see visuals that match the details being discussed.

ANNOUNCER #1 (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Today's race is being held in honor of Clark Henry Briggs, president and CEO of the USP, to celebrate his 70th birthday. Mighty generous of him to host us all here for what promises to be an excellent event.

CH, with Mina on his arm, waves from a LUXURY DECK above the crowds. They CHEER for him.

ANNOUNCER #2 (O.S.)

That's right, Wes. And he's not the only head of state present. Of course we have Marcus Lamb from the Affiliated Partnerships of Liberty Motors here with his family.

Marcus, Rose, and the kids mingle on the luxury deck.

ANNOUNCER #2 (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I also spied Nasir Yalova and his twin daughters here all the way from the La Brea Studios Kingdom. I wonder if any of their movie stars tagged along with them.

NASIR YALOVA (60), is flanked by his fraternal twin daughters, DINA and NINA (23). If they look familiar, it's because they're Mina's sisters. Nasir wears a silly crown.

ANNOUNCER #1 (O.S.)

Yes, there's the self-styled king himself. He never likes to miss a big event, does he?

ANNOUNCER #2 (O.S.)

Certainly not. Neither does the American president. Indeed, there's president Dougall now. Here no doubt to support the American drivers on today's grid.

HOWARD DOUGALL (73), has a dopey smile adorning his doughy jowls. The camera catches him at an unflattering moment as he takes a bite of a chicken wing.

INT. USP RACETRACK - ANNOUNCERS' BOOTH - DAY

ANNOUNCER #1 and ANNOUNCER #2 sit side-by-side. Their large headphones give them a comical silhouette.

ANNOUNCER #1

It's a randomized starting grid, but fate has favored our hosts. The USP car is there in pole position.

EXT. USP RACETRACK - VARIOUS - SAME TIME

The cars are lined up in their starting formation. Engines GROWL. Their exhaust sends roiling heatwaves into the air.

ANNOUNCER #2 (O.S.)

And if you're just now joining us, it's Clark Briggs Jr. behind the wheel of the fire red USP car. Let's see if he can get his dad the birthday gift of a race win.

Clark looks up at the luxury deck and gives his dad a nod.

ANNOUNCER #2 (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Starting in second is the royal purple of La Brea Studios. And behind them is the golden wheat stylings of the Heartland Wholesale Food and Beverage car.

TV BROADCAST: A cable camera GLIDES over the tops of the vehicles as Announcer #2 calls them out.

ANNOUNCER #2 (O.S.) (CONT'D)

In fourth position is the silver bullet of Liberty Motors, always a contender. Followed by our first American entry, the stark white car sponsored by Native Tobacco.

We recognize the white car from Lydia's trip to the garage. It's the Rakish Driver behind the wheel.

INT. BG&B - HUGH'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

Johnny, Amara, and Hugh are back at the workstation as if they never left. Across the room, Hugh's TV shows the same race broadcast. Their heads perk up at the sound of...

ANNOUNCER #2 (O.S.)

... then the splendid azure blue of the BG&B Holdings car...

The trio CLAP and give some sarcastic WHOOPS. But then the mood shifts as the Announcer continues.

ON THE TV: The same sweeping cable-cam shot shows an orange car near the back of the lineup.

ANNOUNCER #2 (O.S.) (CONT'D)

And now the orange Jupiter Motors car. Remarkably, Tony Rinaldi is still driving, despite witnessing the terrible accident yesterday that resulted in the death of Jupiter CEO Jim Frakes.

(beat)

People are rightfully skeptical an electric car can be competitive, but with Tony behind the wheel, anything's possible.

Amara and Hugh give Johnny a sympathetic look.

JOHNNY

I'm OK. Really.

(re: workstation)

Let's finish this in his honor.

They nod in agreement. Then something catch's Hugh's eye.

HUGH

Whoa! What the hell's happening?

EXT. USP RACETRACK - VARIOUS - SAME TIME

TV BROADCAST: Suddenly the camera WHIPS to the side. We CUT TO another camera feed. And now we see a dozen PROTESTERS jump a fence and rush onto the racetrack!

ANNOUNCER #1 (O.S.)
What's this? It seems a group of
people have run onto the track.

A MURMUR courses through the crowd. People stand and point.

ANNOUNCER #2 (O.S.)
Yes, they appear to be protestors.
But this is a very dangerous idea.
Let's hope they get it sorted soon.

The Protestors throw a bucket of VISCOUS LIQUID over the asphalt in front of the cars. Then they sit down on it.

ANNOUNCER #1 (O.S.)
I think that's some sort of glue--

The broadcast CUTS OUT and the USP logo fills the screen.

INT. BG&B - HUGH'S HOUSE - SAME TIME

We see the same USP logo on Hugh's TV. The trio look at one another. *Whoa.* Then they shrug and get back to work.

EXT. USP RACETRACK - LUXURY DECK - DAY

CH is as red as the USP racecar. He stands near a bar's high counter and strangles a phone receiver.

CH
(into phone)
I don't care how you do it! I want
excessive force! Get those filthy
fucking rats off my racetrack!

CH SLAMS the receiver. A sheepish BARTENDER stares at him.

CH (CONT'D)
I'm not paying you to stand there!

EXT. USP RACETRACK - TRACK - MOMENTS LATER

The Protestors sit firmly on the track. They're a blend between ivy league beatniks and crunchy hippies.

PROTESTORS
 (chanting)
*Protect our soil /
 Stop drilling oil...*

Ten jackbooted USP SECURITY GUARDS with state-of-the-art military gear burst onto the scene. They descend upon the Protestors with ruthless efficiency. No kid gloves here.

Batons break noses. Security Guards grab Protestors by the hair and rip them off the glue like carrots from dirt. The crowd CHEERS the Security Guards on. It's bloodsport to them.

On the luxury deck, Zeke watches the action through a pair of BINOCULARS. He CHEERS along with the crowd. Marcus quiets him by placing a hand on his shoulder.

MARCUS
 We might not agree with the
 protestors' message. But violence
 is a tool of the weak. Understood?

EXT. USP RACETRACK - LUXURY DECK - SAME TIME

A RACE ORGANIZER in a smart dress updates CH. They're in a quiet corner of the deck away from the action.

RACE ORGANIZER
 They have to make sure the glue
 won't pose any risk to the cars.
 Should only be a few minutes, sir.

CH grumbles and waves her away. As he turns, he clocks Gabe sitting by himself nearby. CH considers him for a beat, then strides over and plunks down beside him.

CH
 What have you got to feel sad
 about? It's my race getting ruined
 by these pansy-ass protestors.

Gabe snaps up. He grimaces from the movement. Hangovers...

GABE
 Oh, um, hi, Mr. Briggs. I just
 needed some peace and quiet.

CH
 Please, you can call me CH. And
 lemme guess - hungover and sick of
 your own family?
 (Gabe's shock confirms it)
 Yeah, I know the feeling.
 (MORE)

CH (CONT'D)

I bet your parents keep you kids
penned up pretty tight, huh?

GABE

Yeah, I guess so. But they're just
trying to keep us out of trouble.

CH

And how's that working out for 'em?
(off Gabe's smirk)

Figured. That there's a fool's
errand. Young folks need guidance,
sure. But they don't need a leash.

(beat)

So. A little birdie told me I owe
you an awful big debt of gratitude.

Gabe's face flushes with panic.

GABE

I can explain, sir. I'm so sorry--

CH

What're you apologizin' for? You're
a goddamn hero!

CH pats him on the back. Relief floods over him.

CH (CONT'D)

Henry's a fuckup, sure. But I do
still love him. Lord knows why.

(beat)

I don't know if it's turnin' 70 or
seein' you kids, but it's got me
reminiscin'. Did you know that I
shadowed your granddad for a year
when I was about your age? Even
lived in the same house as your
dad. We used to do that sort of
thing back then. Build
relationships. Learn the ropes. All
that jazz.

GABE

Really? I can't believe my dad
never said anything about that.

CH

Oh, I'm sure there's lots of things
your daddy hasn't told you.

(beat, coyly)

Huh. I just had a thought. Nah,
nevermind. Forget it.

GABE

What? What is it?

CH

I was just thinkin'... you wouldn't have any interest in doin' that, would you? Shadowing me, that is.

GABE

Mr. Briggs - I mean, CH - that's uh. I don't know what to say. What about Clark Jr. and Henry?

CH

Clark's fine. As for Henry. Well, it'd be good for him to be around someone his own age who's actually got their head on straight. And I can tell he likes ya. Which is rare. He doesn't like anyone.

Gabe looks off toward the guests on the deck. He can see Henry holding court with the Yalova twins. Gabe considers. Before he can answer, the Race Organizer returns.

RACE ORGANIZER

Good news, sir. They're ready to get started. Just waiting for you.

CH

Thank Christ.

(to Gabe)

You think on my proposal. We'd be lucky to have ya.

EXT. USP RACETRACK - VARIOUS - DAY

The cars idle in formation. Their shimmering fumes distort the unlit bank of lights hanging above the starting line.

ANNOUNCER #1 (O.S.)

We apologize once again for any disruption, but now that the track has been deemed safe and the cars are back in formation, we're finally ready to start this race.

INT. BG&B - HUGH'S HOUSE - SAME TIME

On Hugh's TV, the USP logo is suddenly replaced by the race broadcast once again. Hugh clocks it.

HUGH

Nice! The race is back on and it hasn't even started yet. Lucky.

Amara takes his word for it. She's currently up to her shoulder in the rat's nest of cables. She's struggling, but finally something CLICKS within. Aha!

AMARA

It's in!

HUGH

Does that mean?

AMARA

I think so.

They all take a step back. No one's sure what to do.

AMARA (CONT'D)

Johnny. You should do the honors.

Johnny smiles. Then he takes a deep breath and leans down. He extends his finger toward the POWER BUTTON.

EXT. USP RACETRACK - VARIOUS / INT. BG&B - HUGH'S HOUSE

The starting light sequence begins. From left to right, a staccato beat of red lights fills the bank one by one. As each light blinks on we see QUICK POPS of our characters.

BLINK. CH has a hungry look in his eyes.

BLINK. Marcus exudes a quiet confidence.

BLINK. Gabe weighs his future.

BLINK. Clark grins as his adrenaline peaks.

BLINK. Johnny presses the power button.

The red lights disappear. The cars ROAR to life. They're off!

ANNOUNCER #2 (O.S.)

And we're lights out here at the USP exhibition race!

Clark's car jumps off the line and pulls a length ahead of the La Brea car. The La Brea driver tries to get the edge by taking the quicker inside line on the first turn. But Clark cuts him off. The La Brea car swerves left and CRASHES into the Heartland car. There's a spray of shrapnel and rubber as the two cars COLLIDE. They spin out into the gravel.

ANNOUNCER #1 (O.S.)

And there's contact! Both cars suffering major damage. The La Brea car didn't have enough space or enough grip. And now both the La Brea and Heartland cars are out.

The crowd CHEERS. The race goes on as the two DQ'd drivers climb out of their cars and share some choice, unheard words. Nasir Yalova throws his crown on the ground in anger.

Tony Rinaldi's orange car darts and weaves through the lurched vehicles ahead of him.

ANNOUNCER #2 (O.S.)

That caused quite a bunch-up in the midfield. But Tony Rinaldi has taken advantage of it. He's weaving right through the traffic and he's moving up into 5th after starting all the way back in 9th. Amazing.

The USP car is far out in front followed by the Liberty Motors car. Then it's the Native Tobacco vehicle, the BG&B car, and Tony Rinaldi's. These are the only cars that matter.

INT. BG&B - HUGH'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

The trio stare at the proto-computer's black screen. We hear the WHIR of components, but there's no image yet.

HUGH

Is the screen connected?

AMARA

I triple-checked the cable.

JOHNNY

Shh! I think I hear it starting up.

Sure enough, the mechanical WHIR shifts into a new gear as more components spark to life. It's really HUMMING now.

The nervous, excited energy is overwhelming. Amara twists her braid. Johnny crosses his fingers. And then...

The screen POPS on with a static HISS. It's still almost entirely black. But now there's a WHITE TEXT CURSOR blinking in the upper left hand corner. *It's working.*

No one dares ruin the moment by speaking. The three simply look at each other in unmitigated awe.

Johnny reaches down and puts his shaking fingers on the ELECTRIC TYPEWRITER that doubles as a keyboard. He begins typing...

ON SCREEN: "LET THERE BE LIGHT."

Hugh lets out a glorious BELLOW. Amara SHRIEKS. Johnny grins.

EXT. USP RACETRACK - VARIOUS - DAY

ANGLE ON: A display board shows it's lap 15 of 42.

The race has settled into a nice rhythm, which allows CH to hobnob. We catch quick moments as he makes the rounds.

CH gives US President Dougall a forceful pat on the back.

CH

Poll numbers are lookin' strong!

(winking)

Heck, we might just have a chance of winning this reelection.

(then, cajoling)

Now when are you gonna come to your senses and sell me Native Tobacco? Throw in Mississippi and Alabama while you're at it. I'd be doing you a favor!

CH sidles up to Nasir Yalova. Delivers more playful ribbing.

CH (CONT'D)

When you make a movie about this race, are you gonna cut out the bit where you crashed on the first lap?

(beat, serious)

Oh, and your contract with Rooney Winfield? Tear it up. I don't wanna see that hack on my TV ever again.

CH leans against the rail next to Marcus and Zeke.

CH (CONT'D)

No shame in second place. No glory, either. But what can ya do.

MARCUS

Counting your chicks a little early, wouldn't you say? Still plenty of race left.

CH

Love the optimism. Best of luck.

CH gives him a condescending pat and departs. We stay with Marcus and Zeke. Zeke lowers his binoculars.

ZEKE

Do you really think we can win?

MARCUS

Their car's performing well and Clark's a good driver. But we could still win with a better strategy.

(off Zeke's scrutiny)

We have an opportunity for an undercut if we time it right. If we pit before Clark, we'll have fresher tires and could claw back some time. Then we might take the lead once he's forced to pit.

EXT. USP RACETRACK - LUXURY DECK - DAY

Bernie hangs out alone near the railing. She bides her time by people-watching. And she notices a pattern: everyone is whispering and casting furtive glances her way as they pass by. She frowns.

Bernie crosses to where Marcus is finishing a conversation with a WEALTHY COUPLE. With a handshake he splits away from them. Bernie notices that they, too, seem shift.

MARCUS

Hey, Bernie. Everything OK?

BERNIE

I have something I need to ask you.
(looking around)
Not here.

Bernie guides him to a quieter part of the luxury deck.

MARCUS

What is it? You're sure you're OK?

BERNIE

I'm fine. It's just...
(sighing)
Did we do it? I don't care if we did. I just... I need to know. I've earned the right to know.

Marcus initially plays dumb. But now he reassesses his daughter. A hint of pride cracks his lips.

MARCUS

I want to be offended that you could even ask a question like that. But you're right. You shouldn't be in the dark about those things. Not anymore.

(beat)

No. We had nothing to do with it. I promise you.

BERNIE

So it was just an accident?

(off Marcus' look)

Someone else? Who?

Marcus gives her a knowing look. It clicks. She gasps. Then she looks at her surroundings with fresh eyes.

MARCUS

Come on. There's nothing we can do about it now. Let's enjoy the race.

He puts his arm around her and they return to the railing.

BINOCULAR POV: We see the PIT CREWS up close as they scamper about their tasks like worker bees. The view swings to the side and we see a vaguely familiar MAN. *How do we know him?*

Zeke pulls the binoculars away. He's standing at the rail with Rose. He tugs on Rose's sleeve.

ZEKE

Mom! It's the BG&B guy! From the picture.

ROSE

Hmmm. I don't know about that. That man is what they call a recluse.

ZEKE

Look!

Zeke hands her the binoculars. She reluctantly looks.

ROSE

I'm looking, but I don't see him.

ZEKE

You're not looking in the right place. He's right down there.

Rose readjusts. Still nothing. Zeke snatches the binoculars back. He looks again. But now he doesn't see him, either.

ZEKE (CONT'D)

I swear he was just there.

Rose gives his shoulder a rub. He shrugs her away. *Teens.*

EXT. USP RACETRACK - VARIOUS - DAY

ANGLE ON: The display board shows it's lap 20 of 42.

The silver Liberty Motors car swings into the pit lane.

ANNOUNCER #1 (O.S.)

Oh, this is interesting. The Liberty car is pitting early while the USP car stays out on the track. Is this an attempt at an undercut?

ANNOUNCER #2 (O.S.)

I think it is. It's not a bad strategy. Let's see if it forces the USP's hand and makes them pit earlier than they intended.

Marcus catches CH's eyes from across the luxury deck. Marcus raises his glass in a faux toast. CH mockingly golf claps.

The three cars behind Liberty (Native, Jupiter, BG&B) all pit in response. The Liberty car has a fast pitstop and exhibits a blistering pace as it re-enters the track.

ANNOUNCER #2 (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Look at this. The other drivers are wisely following Liberty's lead. Now it's only the USP car on older tires. They'll either tuck tail and pit on the next lap or let their pride keep them out longer.

EXT. USP RACETRACK - VARIOUS / INT. BG&B - HUGH'S HOUSE

Jupiter is right on the heels of the Native Tobacco car. Tony Rinaldi feints to the outside line of a turn. The Rakish Driver responds and tries to block. It's exactly what Tony wanted. He changes tack, darts inside, and overtakes.

ANNOUNCER #1 (O.S.)

What a move by Tony Rinaldi! Baiting the outside line and expertly performing the overtake. He's up in third place now.

ANNOUNCER #2 (O.S.)

If the USP car doesn't pit on this lap, they might find themselves re-entering the track behind Jupiter Motors. I can't imagine CH would be too pleased about that.

Clark checks his rearview. The Liberty car is far back but gaining. Then he sees his Pit Crew holding a sign - *pit now!*

Clark wheels into the pit lane. Stops the car in his box.

CLARK

(to no one in particular)

Why did you keep me out so long?!

The WHIRR of wheel guns and the PUMPING of jacks is the only response. In mere seconds Clark's back on the gas.

But he has to go slow in the re-entry lane. And the Liberty car is speeding down the straight section of the track beside him. It's impossible to tell if Clark will come out in front or if the Liberty car will barely edge ahead of him. Either way, it's going to be damn close. The crowd holds its breath.

At Hugh's house, Johnny, Amara, and Hugh have even stopped what they're doing to watch the TV. It's that good.

On the luxury deck, everyone is fixated on the moment.

CH

(under his breath)

Come on, Clark. Don't let me down.

The USP car clears the safety line. Clark slams the accelerator. He rejoins the track like a gunshot, neck and neck with the Liberty car. The crowd EXPLODES in excitement.

ANNOUNCER #2 (O.S.)

Wow! Incredible! Whoever takes the lead here might very well hold it until the end of the race.

ANNOUNCER #1 (O.S.)

The USP car's cold tires won't have nearly as much grip. It'll take some fancy driving from Clark Jr.

It's a wheel-to-wheel dogfight as the two cars negotiate a serpentine section of track. When one gains the advantage on a turn, the other gains it back on the next. Their wheels are so close you couldn't slide a credit card between them.

The cars round a corner and enter a long straightaway. It's a pure drag race now. Both cars are at full tilt. But the straight ends in a sharp hairpin turn. And it's coming fast.

ANNOUNCER #2 (O.S.)
It's a game of chicken. Who will
brake first going into the hairpin?

Neither car is willing to concede. They're carrying an insane amount of speed as they close in on the tight turn.

Marcus' face shifts from excited to concerned.

MARCUS
Come on. Brake. Brake you fool.

Marcus can see the writing on the wall. He snaps his eyes to CH, but the birthday boy is still enthralled by the action.

What happens next happens lightning fast. Both cars brake. A jet of smoke shoots off Clark's back left tire. The whole back end slides out of his control. Clark tries to correct, but he overdoes it. He launches into a tailspin.

The USP car CLIPS the Liberty car. A shower of sparks, shrapnel, and shredded tires erupts into the air. The Liberty car spins and skids safely to a stop in the gravel.

But the USP car doesn't lose momentum. It slices across the gravel at breakneck speed. It hitches... then FLIPS! Once. Twice. Three times. Then it SLAMS into the wall. CRUNCH!

The crowd GASPS.

Lydia drops her glass. It SHATTERS on the cement floor.

CH goes as white as his suit. And for the first time, it doesn't look like he's holding all the cards.

Back on the track, the USP car is a snarl of metal. But the crash might not be fatal. Everyone waits with bated breath for any sign of life. Instead, a flicker of flame appears...

And spreads...

And the car EXPLODES.

Gas-fueled flames engulf the vehicle. Black smoke billows. The fire burns... and burns... and burns... until we...

FADE OUT.

THE END