CAR OF THE YEAR

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of Master of Arts in Screenwriting

By

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Dedication

To my parents, Joan and George Pappy Sr., for all their years of undying love and support.
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In this satirical comedy screenplay, idealistic automotive engineer Clyde Bunter struggles to convince his Uncle Howard, owner of a fourth-rate car company in 1970’s Detroit, to let him build a revolutionary new fuel efficient engine. But Uncle Howard’s sudden coma leaves the company in the hands of Clyde’s incompetent cousin, Max, and the company’s evil CFO, Edgar Wright. Together, these two manage to confound all of Clyde’s efforts, finally forcing him to quit the company and strike out on his own, finding the money to build his very own “car of the future.”

Unfortunately, Wright’s continued efforts from afar to sabotage the new car project result in a failed venture and an undercover sting operation which leaves Clyde facing federal charges. Faced with an inept court-appointed legal team, the brilliant young engineer must successfully defend himself against the charges or else face 20 years in prison.
FADE IN

PROMOTIONAL FILM

Scratchy 16 millimeter film. “BUNTLER MOTORS” flashes onscreen. Suddenly, on a track, heading straight for camera, a behemoth of a car. It “runs over” the camera with a ROAR.

New shot: a mid-60’s stock car race. Cheesy MUSIC plays (heavy on the brass, painfully excessive treble and no bass).

MALE ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
Daytona Beach, where Detroit’s finest come to prove their mettle.

Cars ZOOM past, engines ROARING.

MALE ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (CONT’D)
The Big-3: GM, Ford and Chrysler, vying for supremacy at the track.

An unbelievably huge ROAR accompanies the approach of the odd-looking 4-door behemoth from the first shot.

MALE ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (CONT’D)
And always a distant fourth, Buntler Motors. Until now: meet the audacious Buntler Bison!

Different shot: the Bison SCREAMS recklessly into a turn, inches past the Big-3, BANGING rivals aside. The Bison’s bumper breaks loose and SMASHES into a rival’s windshield.

The Big-3 CRASH into each other as the Bison pulls away and crosses the finish line in front of a CHEERING crowd.

MALE ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (CONT’D)
Oh, and a tough break for the Big-3! But all’s fair in cars and war, leaving Buntler the winner in 1967!
The Bison stops and MAX BUNTLER (31) hops out, pulls off his helmet as his PIT CREW showers him in champagne. Two YOUNG WOMEN in mini-skirts sidle up on either side as he grins.

MALE ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (CONT’D)
Let’s meet the winner, Max Buntler!

Max slaps one of the women on the rear end and winks at the camera, giving a thumbs up. The girl recoils angrily.

New scene: a white, high-ceilinged automotive lab with mechanical equipment, oscilloscopes, blueprints, etc.

CLYDE BUNTLER, 33, works on a pristine Carburetor at a workbench. He wears a white lab coat, pocket protector and horn-rimmed glasses. He’s not at all cool.

MALE ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (CONT’D)
But don’t forget Max’s genius cousin, Clyde.

Clyde glances at the camera uneasily, unhappy at the intrusion. He turns his back, but the camera circles him.

MALE ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (CONT’D)
Clyde Buntler, the brains behind the Buntler Bison’s secret weapon.

New shot: the huge Bison engine on a display stand.

MALE ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (CONT’D)
The Buntler V-10, so powerful it’s been banned in seven states...and the District of Columbia.

The camera pans to catch Clyde retreating, shaking his head “No” and holding up a hand to block his face.

New shot: The 1967 Buntler Bison V-10 Convertible, ugly testament to Detroit’s hubris, rotating on a turntable, a blonde MODEL at the wheel (wearing sunglasses and scarf).

MALE ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (CONT’D)
The Buntler Bison Limited Edition: you’ll never forget this car!
Back to the winner’s circle: Max saunters away, arm around one of the young women as he chugs a bottle of champagne.

A Big-3 DRIVER lunges for him in rage as the OTHER TWO hold him back. The young woman he smacked glares silently.

MALE ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (CONT’D)
Buntler Motors: Charging ahead!

Just before exiting frame, Max turns to address the camera:

MAX
We make an okay family car, too!

He winks and flashes a thumbs up.

Behind him, Clyde puts a hand over his face in embarrassment.

The MUSIC swells as “BUNTLER MOTORS: CHARGING AHEAD!” fills the screen, followed by a BEEP and scratchy film leader before the last of the film threads through.

INT. BANQUET ROOM - NIGHT

The lights come up on tuxedo-clad HOWARD BUNTLER, 64, at a podium before a black tie CROWD of 120 at tables.


HOWARD
Well, I promised my son Max that I’d show you this... “promotional” film he made back in the sixties.

He’s met with stunned silence.

HOWARD (CONT’D)
Clearly we never released it. Still, his words ring true: the Bison has been an “okay” car for us, a modest but steady seller.

To Howard’s left, distinguished EVERETT WRIGHT, 60, mumbles:
WRIGHT
Hear, hear.

HOWARD
And as we all know, modest but steady sales are what Buntler Motors is all about.

People enthusiastically CLINK their glasses.

HOWARD (CONT’D)
And now, since Max convinced me to show you his film, I promised my nephew he could say a few words.

Silence as Clyde (now 40, horn-rimmed glasses but with longer hair/sideburns), takes the podium, fumbling with his notes. FEEDBACK whines from the PA system. Clyde winces.

CLYDE
Um, I’m here today...tonight...to talk about...fuel economy.

Low GROANS fill the room. Wright rolls his eyes.

CLYDE (CONT’D)
This graph shows that crude oil’s had a stationary price relative to other inflation-affected goods and commodities for the past 25 years.

People get up to leave.

CLYDE (CONT’D)
This can’t last forever. The rest of the world is catching up to us, industrializing...buying the same oil we’re trying to buy!

He sees a mass exodus forming.

CLYDE (CONT’D)
Mark my words, we’re headed for an...an energy crisis! The price of gas will go through the roof!
The crowd goes quiet. He has their attention now.

    CLYDE (CONT’D)
    And when it does, Buntler Motors and its fleet-wide average of four miles per gallon, will be ruined.

Dead silence. Some people look scared.

Suddenly, MAX (now 38) bursts into the room, drunk, with a STEWARDESS on each arm.

    MAX
    Sorry I’m late!
    (looks at a stewardess)
    I had...luggage trouble.

He kisses her passionately. The other stewardess GIGGLES.

    MAX (CONT’D)
    Did I miss anything?

Clyde glares at his cousin as Wright jumps to his feet.

    WRIGHT
    The only thing you missed was your film. I think we should show it again! What do you all say?

The crowd CHEERS in approval as Max beams, drags the stewardesses to a nearby table and chugs a bottle of wine.

    CLYDE
    Hey, I’m not done here!

Wright ignores him.

    WRIGHT
    Projectionist, can we roll that again please?

The lights go down.

    CLYDE
    But--
Howard gently pulls Clyde out through the back door.

INT. HALLWAY OF BANQUET HALL - NIGHT

Clyde pulls free of Howard angrily.

CLYDE
What’s the idea, Uncle Howard? You said I could talk to them!

HOWARD
Look, Clyde, things have never been better. We’re making money, GM’s making money, Ford, Chrysler. America loves us!

CLYDE
It won’t last. Not when gas hits...fifty cents a gallon!

Howard looks amused.

HOWARD
That high, huh?

CLYDE
Maybe higher!

HOWARD
Well, Buntler Motors is a follower, not a leader. Fuel efficiency, that’s something for GM to tackle.

Clyde’s face falls.

HOWARD (CONT’D)
Tell you what: I’ll try to get you in to see some executives at GM. How’s that?

CLYDE
It’s a start. But what about the executive situation here?

Howard looks down awkwardly.
CLYDE (CONT’D)
My father left his shares to you with the understanding that I’d be CEO of Buntler when I turned 40.

HOWARD
And when’s that?

CLYDE
Last month.

Howard looks around for eavesdroppers and lowers his voice.

HOWARD
Listen, Clyde, don’t tell anyone, but I’m retiring next Spring. Can’t you hold off till then?
(even lower voice)
It’ll give me time to get Max comfortable with the idea. He really wants to be CEO.

CLYDE
That would be like giving a loaded gun to a child!

Howard laughs.

HOWARD
I’d feel better about that than giving Max control of Buntler.

Clyde laughs as Howard puts a hand on his shoulder.

HOWARD (CONT’D)
You will be the next CEO, Clyde. In the mean time, I’ll set up that meeting with GM.

EXT. DETROIT COMMUNITY CENTER - NIGHT

Establishing shot: parking lot, cars, and a sign.
INT. COMMUNITY CENTER MULTI-PURPOSE ROOM - NIGHT

Several BLUE COLLAR GUYS sit in folding metal chairs. Clyde and WAYNE, another, slightly less-nerdy engineer (mid-30’s), anxiously wait and watch at the front of the room.

WAYNE
I still don’t understand why they wouldn’t hold the meeting at GM.

Clyde smiles as a MAN IN A BLUE SUIT tentatively enters.

CLYDE
Welcome! You’re a GM man, right?

The man stops dead in his tracks, looking horrified.

GM MAN
How did you know?

CLYDE
The suit. Blue means GM. I’m Clyde Buntler. Of Buntler Motors.

The GM man tentatively shakes hands. Clyde gestures.

CLYDE (CONT’D)
These other men are from Chrysler.

GM man nods nervously and sits without saying anything.

CLYDE (CONT’D)
Nobody’s wearing a brown suit...so much for Ford.

He steps up to a lectern and addresses the seated men.

CLYDE (CONT’D)
Thank you all for coming tonight. Why don’t we start by going around the room and introducing ourselves.

(to GM man)
Would you go first?

The GM man looks terrified.
CLYDE (CONT’D)
It’s okay, you’re among friends.

GM MAN
Okay. My name is Frank, and I’m...an alcoholic.

CLYDE
Oh, no. This isn’t the AA meeting.

The GM man’s face goes white.

CHRYSLER GUY #1
I saw some guys around back smokin’ cigarettes and drinkin’ coffee.

CLYDE
Yes, those are the alcoholics.

The GM man runs for the door.

CLYDE (CONT’D)
You can stay if you’d like.

GM man shoots him an icy glare as he exits.

CLYDE (CONT’D)
Okay, maybe introductions were a bad idea. At least Chrysler is taking this thing seriously.

CHRYSLER GUY #1
Taking what seriously?

CLYDE
The price of oil, sir.

CHRYSLER GUY #1
What’s wrong with the price of oil?

CLYDE
It’s too low.

The Chrysler guys give him a strange look.
CLYDE (CONT’D)
Did you know that OPEC’s discussing removing all price controls and letting free market forces prevail?

CHRYSLER GUY #2
What’s OPEC?

CLYDE
What do you men do at Chrysler?

CHRYSLER GUY #1
Assembly line - transmissions.

CHRYSLER GUY #2
Spark plugs.

CHRYSLER GUY #3
Hub caps.

Guy #1 holds up a form.

CHRYSLER GUY #1
Can you sign this so my foreman knows I came? He promised me two vacation days if I sat in for him.

CHRYSLER GUY #2
My boss is only giving me one day!

CHRYSLER GUY #3
All I got was a six-pack!

The workers jump to their feet, all TALKING over each other.

CHRYSLER GUY #2
This is bullshit! I need a beer.

Clyde looks deflated as the men storm out.

INT. BUNTLE SPECIAL PROJECTS WORKSHOP - DAY

A huge, pristine auto workshop. “BUNTLE SPECIAL PROJECTS” appears painted in huge letters on a wall.
At one end, Clyde stands before an sleek V-4 engine, small but elegant, a brightly-shining, silver-plated work of art.

Clyde throws a switch. A starter GROWLS and the V-4 quickly PURRS to life: the Swiss watch of automobile engines.

His engineering nerd team, Wayne, KARL (40), and STEVE (early-30’s) watch in awe.

CLYDE
Let’s do a quick horsepower check.

His team takes positions at important-looking equipment.

ACROSS THE ROOM

Howard enters with Wright and several other suit-wearing BUNTLE BOARD MEMBERS (all men in their 50’s and 60’s).

WRIGHT
I don’t know why you have to drag us down here like this, Howard.

HOWARD
Automotive innovation doesn’t happen in boardrooms, Everett.

WRIGHT
It doesn’t happen down here, either.

AT CLYDE’S WORKSTATION

Clyde manipulates controls, making the V-4 WHIR powerfully, yet it never makes much noise. Wayne and Steve watch gauges.

STEVE
Got it!

He jots something down as the engine goes back to idling.
WAYNE
That was 190 horsepower at 4200 RPM. Not bad for 1.8 Liters and only four cylinders!

CLYDE
We can do better.

Steve notices Howard and his group across the room.

STEVE
He’s here!

CLYDE
Gentlemen, it’s time for the Buntler board to see the engine we’ll be making once I take over.

Wayne and Steve grin enthusiastically. Karl looks stern.

Clyde rushes over to Howard. He ignores Max, off to one side, standing with several thuggish MECHANICS in bright yellow jumpsuits emblazoned “TEAM MAX” across the chests.

Team Max stands beside a ridiculous, souped-up, bright orange Bison buried in chrome pipes and super-charger-type things.

Max looks worried as Clyde reaches Howard.

CLYDE (CONT’D)
I need to show you something. It’s going to change everything!

Wright rolls his eyes. Before Howard can reply, Max brushes past Clyde and grabs Howard’s arm.

MAX
Dad, dad, you gotta check this out!

He pulls Howard past Clyde, points to his orange monstrosity.

MAX (CONT’D)
I call it the “Super-Duper” Bison - or “SD” for short!
Sure enough, block letters spelling “SUPER-DUPER” appear on the black racing stripes painted on the car’s sides.

**CLYDE**
But this is important!

**HOWARD**
You know how excited Max gets. Let me just see what he’s been up to. Then I’ll come see your...thing.

**AT CLYDE’S WORKSTATION**

Clyde stumps over, looking annoyed.

**WAYNE**
What happened?

**CLYDE**
We go second.

They watch Max jump into the Super-Duper and fire it up. The deafening ROAR makes tools fall off of workbenches.

**AT MAX’S WORKSTATION**

Max grins at Howard, who holds his hands over his ears.

**MAX**
(yelling)
Not bad, huh?

**HOWARD**
What?

**MAX**
It has three of those four-barrel...do-hickeys under the hood.

**HOWARD**
What?

Max checks crib notes written on his wrist.
MAX
Carburetors! Four-barrel Carburetors. Three of ‘em!

HOWARD
What?

MAX
Watch this!

He looks forward. The yellow-clad mechanics have cleared the way. A PRO-WRESLER-TYPE MECHANIC gives the thumbs up.

Max returns the gesture and REV'S the engine, grinning maniacally. He shifts and slowly lets out the clutch.

SCREECH! The car goes flying backwards as Max SCREAMS.

AT CLYDE’S WORKSTATION

Clyde and his team make last-minute adjustments on the idling V-4 as Max and his Super-Duper bear down on them in reverse.

The NOISE causes them look just in time. Eyes wide, they YELL and dive for cover.

SMASH! The Super-Duper plows into Clyde’s V-4, crushing it against the nearby cinder-block wall.

Max crawls out of the wreck as everyone else runs up, agape.

Max groggily stares at the damage: the smashed-in rear end pins what little remains of Clyde’s V-4 up against the wall.

Clyde staggers overs, staring in horror.

MAX
Your engine scratched my car, man!

CLYDE
What?

Max glares halfheartedly, waiting for anyone to back him up.
CLYDE (CONT’D)
That was 18 months of research and development, Max!

MAX
(unsure of himself)
It...got in my way.

Clyde looks ready to explode. Howard gets between them.

HOWARD
Now Clyde, you know he needs a lot of room to...work. You should set up your projects at the other end of the workshop.

MAX
Yeah, I need a lot of room!

Clyde shakes his head, turns his back, laughs to himself and whirls around as Howard and Max try to slip away quietly.

CLYDE
Back when you wanted bigger engines so Max could race, I made them... against my better judgement. But you’re still using them in all our consumer cars seven years later.

Clyde steps up to Howard, blocking his retreat.

CLYDE (CONT’D)
Even the car hasn’t changed. All we make are Bisons, exactly the same as they were in 1966!

MAX
That’s a lie! The ’66 Bison didn’t have an 8-track tape player.

Clyde smirks.

HOWARD
Listen, Clyde, we do one thing, and we do it...well, we do it...
CLYDE
Aha! You can’t even say “well” with a straight face. Can you?

HOWARD
...good enough. We do it good enough to take eight to 10 percent of the American car market. Plus, for some reason, we’re the fleet car of choice for certain third world dictators.

CLYDE
And you’re proud of that? We’re the joke of Detroit!

HOWARD
I’m proud of the need we fulfill. The Marx Brothers needed Harpo, the Three Stooges needed Curly, and the Big-3 needs us!

Clyde stares in disbelief.

MAX
I always thought of us as more of a Shemp.

Howard puts a hand on Clyde’s shoulder.

HOWARD
You need to get out more, my boy. For God’s sake, have some fun. Find a girl!

He studies Howard’s pocket protector, horn-rimmed glasses and generally uncool appearance.

HOWARD (CONT’D)
Maybe Max could set you up.

Max considers this as Howard slips away.

MAX
Okay, fine, but not with Claudia. Or Joanie...Or Candice.
Clyde glares at him.

MAX (CONT’D)
Maybe you oughta find your own girl.

Max hurries away, leaving Clyde with his engineering team.

STEVE
Well, that sucked.

Clyde shakes his head and stares at the wreck. Wayne puts a hand on his back.

WAYNE
Everything will change once he retires. Don’t forget that.

Clyde nods solemnly.

INT. CLYDE’S BEDROOM - DAY
A sparsely-furnished room decorated in “20th Century Nerd.” Clyde’s awoken by the RINGING phone. He answers.

CLYDE
Hello?

MAX (V.O.)
It’s Max. You gotta get down here right now!

CLICK! Clyde stares at the phone.

INT. BUNTLER MOTORS MAIN CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY
Clyde steps in, surprised by the spectacle before him: The entire BUNTLER BOARD (including Wright, Uncle Howard, and Max), 18 panicking old white guys (50’s and 60’s).

BOARD MEMBER #1
How could they do this?

BOARD MEMBER #2
Why would they do this?
A third guy watches tape coming off a stock ticker.

BOARD MEMBER #3
We gotta dump our stock right now!

Howard, Max, Wright and others watch a TV.

ON THE TV SCREEN:
A serious-looking MALE NEWS ANCHOR speaks.

MALE NEWS ANCHOR
Yesterday, OPEC, the Organization of Oil Exporting Countries, voted unanimously to increase the price for a barrel of crude oil by 70%.

Cut to footage of American cars lined up bumper-to-bumper at a gas station and for a full block down the street.

MALE NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.) (CONT’D)
Oil futures and gas prices have skyrocketed in response. Worse yet, American motorists are staging a run on gas stations nationwide.

Another shot: Cars crawl past a gas station with makeshift signs reading “OUT OF GAS.”

MALE NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.) (CONT’D)
Numerous shortages are reported, and there’s talk of mandatory rationing, a situation not seen in this country since World War II.

INT. BUNTLE MOTOR'S MAIN CONFERENCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS
Uncle Howard turns away, worry weighing down his face.

MAX
Who could’ve seen this coming?

Clyde does a double-take on his dim-witted cousin.
CLYDE
I did! I saw this coming. I’ve been warning you for two years!

Nobody seems to notice Clyde’s comment. He watches Uncle Howard mumble, almost to himself.

HOWARD
It’s a house of cards...all based on cheap gas.
They’re finally gonna want good mileage.
(loudly)
We need a fuel-efficient car: now!

CLYDE
Unfortunately, Max recently destroyed my prototype V-4 engine.

MAX
I’ll call the guys down in the lab. They oughta have something up their sleeves to fix this.

Clyde rolls his eyes as Max rushes from the room.

INT. MAX’S OFFICE AT BUNTLER - DAY
Max dials the phone at a desk cluttered with kids’ toys.

INT. BUNTLER LAB - DAY
The BOYS IN THE LAB, three ultra-nerds (30’s and 40’s) who make Clyde’s engineering team look cool, sit around eating chips and drinking soda as they play Chinese Checkers.

Somewhere, a phone RINGS. They all look at each other. One of the younger guys, DEAN (34) speaks up.

DEAN
Nobody ever calls here. Ever.
ROLAND (45) sighs and walks over to a cluttered counter as the phone keeps RINGING. He digs around, finally finds it under some comic books. He reluctantly answers.

ROLAND

Lab.

The others watch with baited breath.

MAX (V.O.)
Hey, it’s Max. We got a little problem. Do you guys have anything down there that could help us roll out an economy car really fast?

(Intercut as necessary.)

Roland looks at his guys and the neglected lab.

ROLAND
Uh, no.

MAX (V.O.)
Damn! Well, how fast could you work something up? Something that gets halfway decent mileage.

Roland watches Dean and RICK (35, portly) get into a slap fight over the last potato chip.

ROLAND
We’re committed to a whole other line of research right now. Sorry.

He hangs up.

ROLAND (CONT’D)
That was close, but I ducked out.

DEAN
I’ll be goddamned if we’re suddenly gonna start doing research and development down here!

(off board, to Roland)
Your move.
INT. BUNTLER MOTORS MAIN CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Clyde and his team huddle in one corner, quietly conferring as Howard, Wright and the board members watch the TV.

ON THE TV SCREEN:

    MALE NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)
    And this just in: Cardinal O’Malley of the Detroit Archdiocese has released a statement. And I quote:
    “Jesus wouldn’t drive a Buntler.”

INT. BUNTLER MOTORS MAIN CONFERENCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Howard looks stunned.

    HOWARD
    Catholics always loved our cars!

Over at the window, Max looks down on the street below.

    MAX
    I wonder if these guys are Catholics.

Everyone rushes to the window and looks out.

VIEW FROM 2ND STORY WINDOW:

(Intercut with conference room as necessary.)

An angry crowd of 50 forms in front Buntler headquarters.

Standing atop a VW microbus, a RALPH NADER TYPE orates.

    RALPH NADER TYPE (ON MEGAPHONE)
    There are no innocents in Detroit. But even in a town of corporate degenerates, Buntler Motors sinks to the bottom of the scum pond!

The crowd ROARS like a Coliseum audience in ancient Rome.
RALPH NADER TYPE (ON MEGAPHONE)  
(CONT’D)  
Theirs aren’t cars, they’re gas-starved monsters. 
And so I have no choice but to call the American 
public to arms: Burn a Buntler! 

HOWARD  
Oh, my God! 

RALPH NADER TYPE (V.O.)  
On every block, in every town, burn a Buntler! 
Show them that we’re not going to take this 
anymore! 

The crowd SCREAMS in rage-filled glee as they torch a parked Bison with Molotov 
cocktails. 

Uncle Howard staggers back from the window, suddenly grabs his chest and collapses as 
the others watch in shock.  

INT. UNCLE HOWARD’S HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT 

Howard lies unconscious and connected to tubes, a heart monitor BEEPING away. 
Clyde, Max and Wright watch a DOCTOR (early 30’s) reading a chart at the foot of 
Howard’s bed. 

MAX  
We’re supposed to play golf next weekend, Doc. Is 
he gonna make it? 

The doctor looks at Max like he’s an idiot.  

DOCTOR  
He suffered a heart attack, a stroke, and I also 
discovered a bad case of athlete’s foot. No, he 
won’t be playing golf next weekend. 

CLYDE  
How bad is it?
DOCTOR
He’s in a coma. He could come out of it tomorrow...or maybe never. If he does come out of it, he could be fine...or a complete vegetable.

MAX
That sounds bad.

Clyde steps up and takes Howard’s hand.

CLYDE
I promise you, Uncle Howard: I will help save Buntler Motors from this crisis. You can count on me!

Wright eyes Clyde warily as Max rushes up to Howard.

MAX
You can count on me even more, dad!

He grabs Howard, accidentally pulling loose an IV. Clear liquid squirts all over the place. The Doctor intervenes.

DOCTOR
I think it would be best if you stayed three or more feet from your father at all times.

Max looks angry. He nudges Clyde.

MAX
You heard him!

Clyde steps back and watches Howard with genuine concern.

INT. BUNTLER MOTORS MAIN CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Wright presides over a meeting of the board, with Max and Clyde conspicuously absent.

BOARD MEMBER #1
Our stock’s fallen fifty percent since this gas crisis started!
BOARD MEMBER #2
We should sell everything now!

Others MUMBLE their agreement. Wright holds up a hand.

WRIGHT
May I please see the hands of anyone who’s retiring before 1980?

The room quiets down, and nobody raises a hand.

WRIGHT (CONT’D)
As I suspected. You’re over-reacting to a short-term problem... which, I might add, has actually led to a long-term opportunity.

BOARD MEMBER #3
What does that mean?

WRIGHT
The gas shortage won’t last. We just have to ride out the storm. Then it’s business as usual.

BOARD MEMBER #2
Where’s the opportunity in that?

WRIGHT
If we’re good at one thing, gentlemen, it’s limping along for years with a marginal product and anemic sales numbers.

Some board members nod in agreement.

WRIGHT (CONT’D)
I say we take it to a whole new level: roll out even worse cars, leading to even worse sales numbers, and driving the stock price through the floor!

BOARD MEMBER #1
We’ll be ruined!

WRIGHT
No! Once the stock goes below a dollar a share, we buy it all.
BOARD MEMBER #2
And then what?

Wright grins.

WRIGHT
We turn it all around: hire bright young engineers,
partner with another company, get bought out.

He strolls to the CLACKING stock ticker and reads the tape.

WRIGHT (CONT’D)
Doesn’t really matter how we do it. If we own all
the stock, and we got most of it for pennies on the
dollar, we’ll be rich!

Board members MURMUR and nod amongst themselves.

BOARD MEMBER #3
How would we go about doing this?

WRIGHT
We start by naming an easily-controllable, mentally
obtuse CEO.

BOARD MEMBER #2
You mean an imbecile!

WRIGHT
Precisely.

Grins and nods of approval around the room.

INT. BUNTLER MOTORS MAIN CONFERENCE ROOM - LATER

Clyde, Wayne, Steve and Karl stand before the board.

CLYDE
And we believe my new V-4 engine can be fully-
inserted into the production line within 15 months.
WAYNE
Perhaps even 13, if we’re lucky.

Silence as everyone stares at a drawing of Clyde’s engine.

WRIGHT
Very interesting. Thank you. And now, we’ll hear
Max’s proposal.

Max and “Team Max” tack a picture of a Bison sedan to the wall, and next to it, a photo
of the Bison’s huge V-8 engine.

MAX
My idea is so simple, a child could’ve thought of it.

STEVE
(quietly, to Wayne)
That’s insulting to children!

Wayne and Steve try to stifle giggles as Wright glares.

Max boldly walks up to the V-8 photo and tears it in half.

MAX
We just cut our Bison V-8 engine in half. Instant 4-
cylinder engine!

Mouths fall open throughout the room.

WRIGHT
How long would this take?

Max forms a football huddle with “Team Max,” finally answers.

MAX
Two and a half months.

WRIGHT
What would you call it?

MAX
The Baby Bison!
WRIGHT
I like it. It’s just the kind of creative thinking that will put this company on the right course.

CLYDE
It’s a horrible idea! Even with four cylinders, this car couldn’t possibly get more than 10 miles per gallon. Mine will get 40!

WRIGHT
This isn’t about mileage, it’s about public perception. We’ll beat the Big-3 to market with the cheapest 4-cylinder American car!

He jumps up.

WRIGHT (CONT’D)
Those in favor of putting all of Buntler’s resources into the Baby Bison, say “aye.”

A unanimous chorus of “aye’s” come from the board.

Max and his team high-five each other and run out excitedly.

CLYDE
Hold on a minute! You’re ignoring the fact that my uncle intended to hand this company over to me.

WRIGHT
What?

CLYDE
I’m to be the next CEO of Buntler Motors. And I say we commit all resources to producing my V-4.

Murmurs of surprise erupt amongst the board.

WRIGHT
This is the first I’ve heard of you being CEO. You have it in writing?

CLYDE
Er...no, it’s more of a long-standing verbal agreement.
WRIGHT
According to you. Anybody here ever heard of this?

Everyone shakes their heads “No.” Clyde’s face falls.

CLYDE
Are you kidding?

STEVE
This is bullshit!

Wright stares daggers at Steve. He forces a smile for Clyde.

WRIGHT
I’ll tell you what: help your cousin build his new car - I’m sure he can use the help.

STEVE
He’s beyond help.

Wright glares briefly before smiling again.

WRIGHT
Help him beat the Big-3 to market and this board will seriously consider naming you CEO.

Clyde swallows his outrage, nods and leaves with his guys.

Wright exchanges a knowing smile with the board members.

INT. BUNTLER SPECIAL PROJECTS WORKSHOP - DAY

Clyde’s and his team sulk at their workstation.

STEVE
Max’s idea sucks!

CLYDE
We can help make it suck less. Max can’t pull this off on his own, and I owe it to Buntler to...minimize the “suckiness” of his car.

His team seems unmoved.
We owe it to Buntler Motors. Now, let’s go help Max and his guys build their engine before one or more of them gets hurt.

WAYNE
Okay.

STEVE
Fine. But I’m doing it for you.

They follow Clyde as he heads over to Max and his team. Karl hangs back, studying Clyde stoically.

BEGIN MONTAGE

(To music: A “Super Hits of the Early ‘70’s” kind of number.)


2. Max and “Team Max” stand at a Bison V-8 engine on a bench. They don goggles and Pro-Wrestler guy fires up a chainsaw. He clearly intends to use it to cut the engine in half.

Max puts his fingers in his ears as the chainsaw nears the engine. Suddenly, Clyde reaches in and stops the saw. Pro-Wrestler guy stares at Clyde in surprise. Clyde holds up a scolding finger and shakes his head “No.”

3. Max, his team, Clyde and Karl watch Wayne and Steve use a special saw to precisely cut the V-8 in half. Max touches the engine’s hot edge and burns his finger, wincing.

4. Clyde, acting like a surgeon, holds out a latex-gloved hand. Wayne grabs a wrench off a table of what look like surgically-sterilized tools and slaps it in Clyde’s hand.

Clyde uses it to attach a carburetor to what’s starting to look like a crude 4-cylinder engine. As Clyde’s works, Steve wipes sweat from his brow (like a nurse).

Pro Wrestler guy sits nearby, reading a comic book. Max plays jacks with the rest of “Team Max,” oblivious. He bounces the ball too hard, and it flies into the open cylinder head of the engine as Clyde works.
Karl watches it all with a stern expression.

5. Wayne and Steve operating the controls of an overhead winch. Clyde directs them and guides the completed “Baby Bison” engine into the body of an unpainted Buntler Bison.

Max HONKS the horn from behind the wheel, scaring the hell out of Clyde. Max smiles sheepishly as Clyde glares.

In the background, MISTER T welds a metal plate to the side of a early-1970’s panel van.

6. Clyde sits in the first Baby Bison rolling off the line. He turns the key: the engine SPUTTERS to life.

The car stutters forward under its own power as Max and his team jump for joy. Wright and the other board members grin.

END MONTAGE

INT. BUNTLER SPECIAL PROJECTS WORKSHOP - CONTINUOUS

Off to one side, Wayne and Steve watch the car doubtfully.

    WAYNE
    Well, at least it runs.

    STEVE
    And maybe it does suck a little less than if Max built it himself.

“Team Max” pulls Clyde out of the car and carries him like a heroic quarterback, much to Clyde’s dismay.

    CLYDE
    Put me down!

Karl watches the spectacle and shakes his head disdainfully.

Max leads in six GO-GO DANCER GIRLS, followed by a GUY with a beer keg. “Team Max” CHEERS and drops Clyde, distracted.
Clyde picks himself up as Wright approaches and puts an arm on his shoulder, leading him away from the crowd.

WRIGHT
You’ve done the nearly impossible. What can we do to thank you?

CLYDE
You can name me CEO, remember?

Wright sizes him up and grins awkwardly.

WRIGHT
How’s this sound? We’ll create a new position just for you: Executive Vice President in Charge of Powerplant Development.

CLYDE
Vice President?

WRIGHT
Executive Vice President. There’s a difference. You’ll be Max’s right-hand man.

In the background, Pro-Wrestler guy holds Max upside down as he sucks on the keg tap. The go-go girls and “Team Max” chant “DRINK, DRINK, DRINK!”

CLYDE
(screaming)
Max? You’re making Max the CEO?

WRIGHT
Acting CEO. There’s a difference.

CLYDE
Max?!?

WRIGHT
His name’s on the building.

CLYDE
So is mine!
WRIGHT
He’s the son. You’re just the nephew.

Wright walks away, stopping to turn back.

WRIGHT (CONT’D)
Do the right thing here, Clyde.

Clyde stands, fuming.

EXT. STREETS OF DETROIT - DAY
Establishing shot: a big limousine glides through traffic.

INT. MAX’S LIMO - DAY
Max plays with the windows as Clyde reads from a magazine.

CLYDE
“The Baby Bison: Finally, a car that makes the Pinto look good.”

MAX
Check out the new ad on page 38.

Clyde flips the pages.

CLYDE’S POV:
The ad: a smiling Jesus drives a Baby Buntler through the desert. The caption reads: “JESUS CHANGED HIS MIND!”

INT. MAX’S LIMO - DAY
Max grins proudly. Clyde looks very concerned.

CLYDE
The board approved this?
MAX
I didn’t ask. It’s a surprise!

CLYDE
They’ll be surprised.
(beat)
Where we are we going, Max?

MAX
Well, you know how Chrysler and GM both have big buildings New York? And Ford’s got one here in Detroit?

CLYDE
Yeah. So?

MAX
I decided Buntler needs one too.

EXT. NEW BUNTLER BUILDING - DAY
The limo pulls to a stop. Max steps out, followed by Clyde.

MAX
The New Buntler Building!

He points to a six-story Holiday Inn. A low jet ROARS by.

CLYDE
You bought the Airport Holiday Inn?

MAX
It was on sale. And it’s tall!

Max steps to the door of the abandoned front office.

MAX (CONT’D)
Check this out!

He pops inside and neon BUZZES to life: The familiar green 1950/60’s Holiday Inn sign with a white star on top. But “HOLIDAY INN” has been replaced with “BUNTLER MOTORS.”
Max comes back out and admires his latest creation. Clyde just stares in shock as another jet SCREAMS by.

MAX (CONT’D)
Oh, and one more thing: I’m bringing back the V-12 engine. It’s your number one priority.

Clyde looks like he might throw up.

INT. CLYDE’S OFFICE AT BUNTLER - DAY

Clyde slowly packs things from his desk and bookshelf into cardboard boxes. Wayne and Steve watch him uneasily.

STEVE
I can’t believe you’re just gonna leave us like this!

CLYDE
You can quit, too.

STEVE
And go where? Working here put a permanent black mark on our names.

CLYDE
Mine, too.

Suddenly, the phone RINGS. He answers.

CLYDE (CONT’D)
Hello?...Speaking...Right now?...Alright.

He hangs up, looking surprised.

INT. UNCLE HOWARD’S LAWYER’S OFFICE - DAY

Clyde and Max sit across from HOWARD’S LAWYER, 70.

HOWARD’S LAWYER
Mr. Buntler left me with short video messages for you in the event of certain foreseeable occurrences.
He gestures to a bookcase with ridiculously huge video tapes.

MAX
What are those?

HOWARD’S LAWYER
Video cassette tapes. Like movies.

MAX
Wow, they’re so...small.

(They’re NOT!) Clyde approaches and reads some tape labels.

CLYDE
“In Case of Death,” “In Case of Coma,” ”...”In Case of Sudden Flight to Non-Extraditable Third World Country.”

HOWARD’S LAWYER
“In Case of Coma” applies here.

He opens wall cabinets to reveal a large TV and a giant tape player (think Xerox copy machine). He gets the tape rolling.

ON THE TV SCREEN:

(Intercut with Max and Clyde watching as appropriate.)

Howard eats a hamburger at his desk, staring at the camera.

HOWARD
Is this thing on?

He wipes his mouth and puts down the burger.

HOWARD (CONT’D)
Alright then. Hi, boys. If you’re watching this, I’ve apparently had to leave the country in a hurry-

He looks slightly off camera, surprised.
HOWARD (CONT’D)
No, wait. I’m in a coma, right. That means Buntler Motors will be counting on the two of you to steer the ship while I’m out.

He leans in and actually “looks” at Max.

HOWARD (CONT’D)
Please don’t crash it into the rocks, son.

MAX
That yacht thing was a fluke!

Howard “turns to” Clyde.

HOWARD
Clyde, I’m counting on you to stick by Max’s side.

Howard briefly “glances” at Max with a worried expression.

HOWARD (CONT’D)
He’ll need all of your help - I’m sure you know what I mean.

Max sits, completely mesmerized by a “Newton’s Cradle” (5 CLACKING steel balls hanging from fishing line) on the desk. Howard’s lawyer smacks Max’s hand away from the toy.

HOWARD (CONT’D)
Enough said. Now, go to it boys!

He picks up the burger and takes a bite before the tape ends.

MAX
Can we see “In Case of Sudden Flight to Non-Extraditable Third World Country” now?

HOWARD’S LAWYER
No.

Clyde gets up, as if in shock, and slowly walks away.

MAX (O.S.)
Please?
CLYDE
Hi, Uncle Howard. I saw the video.

The BEEP-BEEP sound of the heart monitor picks up somewhat, like Uncle Howard can hear and he’s glad Clyde came.

CLYDE (CONT’D)
Look, I just can’t stay.

The BEEP-BEEP becomes more rapid. Clyde looks alarmed.

CLYDE (CONT’D)
But they made Max the acting CEO!

BEEP-BEEP-BEEP-ing even faster!

CLYDE (CONT’D)
He’s making me build the V-12!


CLYDE (CONT’D)
Oh, my God!

An INTERN (30) sporting a giant Afro runs in and pushes Clyde aside. He starts CPR, to no effect.

INTERN
Don’t you die on me!

He grabs a set of defibrillator paddles and charges them up.

CLYDE
Maybe I don’t have to quit!

The BEEP-BEEP-BEEP resumes. The intern looks disappointed.
CLYDE (CONT’D)
But...I just can’t work for Max!

FLATLINER sound again. The intern recharges the paddles.

CLYDE (CONT’D)
Okay, okay, I’ll stay!

Still FLATLINING.

CLYDE (CONT’D)
I promise!

Just as the intern’s about to shock Uncle Howard: BEEP-BEEP-BEEP. The intern looks pissed.

ZAP! He shocks Clyde, who recoils in pain.

CLYDE (CONT’D)
Ouch!

INTERN
Once these paddles are charged, someone gets shocked.

Clyde retreats as the intern menacingly holds up his paddles.

INTERN (CONT’D)
Now, are you quitting or not?

CLYDE
No, I’ll stay!

The intern looks down at Uncle Howard, who has a slight smile on his face. On the monitor: a slow, calm BEEP-BEEP.

INTERN
You made the right choice.
INT. BUNTLER SPECIAL PROJECTS WORKSHOP - DAY

Clyde, Wayne and Steve set up black drapes to segregate Clyde’s work area from the rest of the shop. Karl watches.

CLYDE
We work on Max’s V-12 out there. In here, we rebuild my V-4.

STEVE
Cool!

Karl does not seem amused like the others.

INT. BUNTLER SPECIAL PROJECTS WORKSHOP - DAY

Karl and Steve study a drawing of the new V-12.

STEVE
Too bad we got stuck working on the sucky engine. I wonder how Clyde and Wayne are doing back there.

Max and Wright suddenly appear, startling Steve. He greets them loudly, directing his voice at the curtain.

STEVE (CONT’D)
Why, Max! What brings you down here? And you brought Mr. Wright with you, too. What a surprise!

Clyde nervously emerges from behind the curtain, followed by Wayne. The “Team Max” guys slowly amble over to watch.

MAX
We have a question for you...I forgot what it is.

WRIGHT
We’re wondering why you’ve advance-ordered so much aluminum.
CLYDE
The V-12 will be all-aluminum. It saves a lot of weight.

WRIGHT
But Buntler engines have always been made of iron - Buntler iron, from our Pittsburgh subsidiary.

MAX
Buntler iron!

Max sees an empty soda can and grabs it.

MAX (CONT’D)
This is what I think of aluminum!

He tries to crush the can between his hands but fails. He gives it to the Pro-Wrestler “Team Max” guy.

MAX (CONT’D)
Crush this!

The big man pushes the can into his own forehead, crushing it flat. He hands it to Max, who looks very impressed.

MAX (CONT’D)
Show me how to do that.

The big guy grabs a can and crushes it on Max’s forehead.

Delayed reaction: Max SCREAMS in pain, grabs his forehead.

LATER
Max sits on a stool, looking angry, ice bag on his forehead.

Clyde and his team stand facing Wright and “Team Max”.

WRIGHT
You feel better now, Max?

MAX
No.
WRIGHT
Let me see.

Max removes the ice bag to reveal a circular bruise on his forehead. Wayne and Steve struggle to keep from giggling.

MAX
Cut it out, it’s not funny!

WRIGHT
Enough of this charade.

He nods to the big guy, who rips down the black curtains.

BIG GUY
Oops, look what I found!

Everyone stares at Clyde’s resurrected silver V-4 engine.

clyde
How’d you find out?

KARL
I told him!

Karl speaks for the first time, in a high, squeaky voice.

clyde
Karl? You’re my oldest friend! We were roommates in college.

KARL
I’ve been reporting everything to Mr. Wright since freshman year!

clyde
But, why?

KARL
You borrowed my comb. Never touch a man’s comb! Never!

He lunges at Clyde, but “Team Max” holds him back.
STEVE
(aside, to Wayne)
Did you know he talked like a girl?

WAYNE
Come to think of it, I don’t think I’ve ever heard
him speak before.

WRIGHT
Needless to say, you’re all being...”reassigned.”

He nods to the big guy, who grabs a sledge hammer.

WRIGHT (CONT’D)
Team Max will take over the V-12.

The big guy SMASHES up the V-4. Clyde winces.

CLYDE
Why are you doing this?

WRIGHT
We’ve got a V-12 to build. We don’t want anyone
getting distracted now, do we?

STEVE
You mean like that?

He points at Max, completely mesmerized by a “Drinking Bird” toy repeatedly dipping
its beak in a cup water.

MAX
How does he do that?

WRIGHT
Max!

Max snaps to attention and runs back to Wright and Karl.
INT. HALLWAY AT BUNTLER MOTORS - DAY

Clyde, Wayne and Steve stump along, carrying cardboard boxes. They walk with the enthusiasm of new death row arrivals.

STEVE
The parts depot in Houston? I'll be a glorified clerk. And the weather in Houston sucks!

WAYNE
I'd take Houston over Canada any day! And accounting? What do I know about accounting?

STEVE
I don't think there's much to account for in Buntler of Canada. You still haven't told us about your new job, Clyde.

CLYDE
“Executive Vice President in Charge of Factory Operations.”

STEVE
They're screwing you, man!

CLYDE
They're screwing all of us, and it's my fault. I'm really sorry.

Wayne touches Clyde's shoulder, trying not to get choked up.

WAYNE
You're a good man, Clyde.

Clyde stares at his friend and tries to hold back a tear.

STEVE
I love you like a brother, Clyde...Actually, I can't stand my brother. Bad comparison.
INT. BUNTLER FACTORY FLOOR - DAY

Clyde stumps in as a Baby Bison rolls off the line. WORKERS stop the conveyor belt, shout and take a Polaroid of the car.

    CLYDE
    What’s going on here?

    BUNTLER WORKER #1
    We got a half & half! Left side’s a baseline model.
    Right side’s a “Supreme.”

Sure enough, one side looks plain, with narrow tires and generic hubcaps. The other side has all kinds of chrome, decals, wider tires and fancy wheels instead of hubcaps.

    BUNTLER WORKER #1 (CONT’D)
    It happens sometimes.

The worker gestures to a nearby wall: several hundred Polaroids of other “half & halves.”

Clyde wanders over and shakes his head in utter disbelief.

INT. MAX’S OFFICE AT BUNTLER - DAY

Max stands at a very complicated wall chart, moving yarn and push pins around. Wright KNOCKS and enters.

    MAX
    Check out my new Buntler org chart. I already sent out the first draft.

Wright stares at the bird’s nest of yarn and grins brightly.

    WRIGHT
    It’s perfect! Listen, you’ve heard of Modern Driver magazine, right?

    MAX
    Who hasn’t?

    WRIGHT
    Well, their Detroit correspondent, Marilyn Harper, is doing an in-depth story on our new rising star.
MAX
Why does he get a story?

WRIGHT
I’m talking about you, Max.

MAX
Oh...Oh! Then I’m all for it.

WRIGHT
Good! She’ll be spending a lot of time with you, so I want you to show her everything you do here.

MAX
Is she hot?

WRIGHT
She’s a peach! And from what I hear, she’s very friendly, if you know what I mean.

MAX
So...I should put the moves on her?

WRIGHT
Yes, Max, I think you should.

INT. BUNTLER FACTORY FLOOR - DAY

Clyde lectures 30 workers at the wall of Polaroids.

CLYDE
Gentlemen, joking about things like this is what makes Buntler Motors the laughing stock of Detroit. Don’t take pride in this...this... Wall of shame!

BUNTLER WORKER #2
“Wall of Shame.” I like it!

CLYDE
No, don’t like it! Who’s your quality control officer?
BUNTLER WORKER #2

Aren’t you?

CLYDE

I’ve never even been here before! Who’s in charge?

A guy points at the man who showed Clyde the wall of shame.

BUNTLER WORKER #3

He is.

BUNTLER WORKER #1

No, I’m not!

Worker #1 pulls out a crumpled copy of Max’s new org chart.

BUNTLER WORKER #1 (CONT’D)

According to this...Mo’s in charge.

BUNTLER WORKER #4

Mo? He retired three years ago.

BUNTLER WORKER #3

I thought he was just on vacation.

Another guy studies his own copy and jumps up and down.

BUNTLER WORKER #5

Hey, I think I’m in charge!

BUNTLER WORKER #2

The hell you are!

The workers crowd in, shouting and arguing as Clyde shakes his head in resignation and slowly walks away.

EXT. BUNTLER FACTORY - DAY

Max and MARION HARPER (30) climb out of Max’s limo. She’s beautiful, smartly dressed, and exudes confidence.
MARION
Mr. Buntler-

MAX
Max. Call me Max. Or Maximilian. Or Maximus.

MARION
Mr. Buntler-

MAX
Actually, you can call me whatever you want, baby.

She bristles at his lounge lizard act.

MARION
Mr. Buntler: Unnamed sources in the Big-3 were stunned by your recent commitment to build larger engines in the face of the energy crisis.

Max grins and gives her a cocky wink.

MARION (CONT’D)
They’re trying to figure out if you’re a genius...or an idiot.

MAX
There’s a fine line between genius and idiotness. I am that line.

She stifles a laugh and furiously takes down the quote.

INT. BUNTLER FACTORY FLOOR - DAY

Max walks through like a king, Marion in tow.

MARION
How do you respond to the accusation that you’ve been selling exactly the same car for years?

MAX
That’s a lie! Why, only last year, we introduced the plastic center console. It used to be metal.
He points to an outrageously orange Bison.

MAX (CONT’D)
And I just introduced a new line of custom colors this year. I call that one “OrangeYouGladToSeeMe?”

Marion tries to hide her obvious disdain for the color.

MARION
Amazing.

He points to a car even more ridiculous than his Super Duper.

MAX
I also developed our new limited edition “Charles Brawnson” model.

The huge letters “CHARLES BRAWNSON” appear on the hood.

MAX (CONT’D)
“Not to be confused with the actor of a similar-sounding name.” The legal department came up with that.

A TECHNICIAN climbs behind the wheel and the Charles Brawnson ROARS to life. Marion winces. Max jumps for joy.

MAX (CONT’D)
Oh, boy, they’re starting it up!

He runs over like a kid at Disneyland.

INT. CLYDE’S FACTORY OFFICE - DAY

Marion enters, spots Clyde at his desk, staring at plans for his V-4 and making a few notes. He senses her and turns.

MARION
Hello. What are you doing?

CLYDE
Studying an engine I want build.
MARION
Oh, the new V-12?

CLYDE
No, that’s the one I have to build. This one’s a V-4: all-aluminum, a hundred and ninety horsepower, and - I think - forty miles per gallon.

(frowns)
If we could make a car that weighed under twenty-eight hundred pounds.

MARION
Buntler’s never made a car under forty-eight hundred pounds.

CLYDE
The Baby Bison comes in at forty-seven seventy-five...without the optional back seat. Max’s idea.

(off the blueprints)
This is real engineering. Any idiot can get horsepower out of an oversized engine.

MARION
You mean like Max?

CLYDE
I didn’t say that.

MARION
Why do you want to build that V-4?

CLYDE
The challenge.

She subtly pulls out her note pad has he paces.

CLYDE (CONT’D)
It’s building the most complicated mass-produced, nearly maintenance-free “system of systems” ever devised. And doing it...
MARION
Well?

CLYDE
No, that would be GM.

MARION
Cheaply?

CLYDE
Ford and Chrysler.

Deflated, he slumps down at his desk.

CLYDE (CONT’D)
I don’t know why I bother.

(off the blueprints)
I used to think if I built this, America would realize
I’d handed them the car they always wanted.

He drops the blueprints in defeat and gestures out the door.

CLYDE (CONT’D)
But they keep buying those things!

She stops taking notes, deeply affected by his lamentations.

Suddenly, Max sticks his head in.

MAX
Oh, there you are! I see you met my cousin. Is he
boring you yet?

Max puts unwelcome hands around her waist.

MAX (CONT’D)
Don’t worry, I’m here to save you.

She breaks free and hurries out the door, Max in hot pursuit.

INT. BUNTLER FACTORY FLOOR - MOMENTS LATER
Marion DECKS Max, who falls down as she storms out.
MAX
Does this mean you don’t wanna go to Vegas with me?

The workers watch and laugh. Max stands angrily.

MAX (CONT'D)
Shut up!
(singling one guy out)
You, you’re fired.

BUNTLER WORKER #5
You can’t fire me! Only my supervisor can fire me.

MAX
Oh yeah? Well...who is he?

The guy pulls out his Buntler org chart and studies it.

BUNTLER WORKER #5
I haven’t figured that out yet.

Max grabs it and reads, rotates it 180 degrees, rotates it again: no use. Finally, he backs away.

MAX
I’m gonna figure out who your boss is. And when I do, he’s gonna fire you!

He storms off as Clyde watches from the office door.

CLYDE
You’re not fired.

BUNTLER WORKER #3
I know.

INT. BUNTLER MOTORS MAIN CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Wright and the board sit with Max, reading Marion’s article.
INT. BUNTLER MOTORS MAIN CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Max watches everyone else stoically reading the article.

MAX
Harebrain: That’s not good... is it?

WRIGHT
No, Max, it’s not. Looks like Clyde threw you under the bus.

MAX
What bus?

Suddenly Clyde enters.

CLYDE
You sent for me?

WRIGHT
I think you owe your cousin and this entire board an explanation.

Clyde grabs the magazine and reads. His face falls.

CLYDE
I thought we were off the record.

WRIGHT
So you don’t deny saying that?

CLYDE
Well, I certainly didn’t say he was a lecherous moron. I think he gave her that impression all by himself.

MAX
You’re just jealous!
CLYDE
She punched you and stormed off!

MAX
...She was playing hard to get.

WRIGHT
Let’s stay focused: you’ve made Buntler Motors and its CEO look bad. This can’t go unpunished.
(standing)
Effective immediately, you’re being reassigned as “Executive Vice President in Charge of Quality.”

CLYDE
Isn’t that basically the same as EVP of Factory Operations?

WRIGHT
With one major difference: You’re no longer allowed in the factory.

Clyde’s face falls.

WRIGHT (CONT’D)
In fact, you’re no longer allowed anywhere near the cars, the engines, or any of the parts.

MAX
Yeah!

WRIGHT
Your engineering days are over. This is a desk job. You’ll get to make a lot of... charts.

MAX
Hey, I wanna make charts!

WRIGHT
You can make charts, too.

As Clyde slowly withdraws, Max calls after him.
MAX
And I already solved our Quality problem: Robots in the factory!

Everyone turns to Max, surprised.

MAX (CONT’D)
I’m not a complete idiot, you know.

Everyone’s expressions demonstrate their doubt about this.

INT. BUNTLER FACTORY FLOOR - DAY

As Clyde mopes to his office, he notices “Robbie-the-Robot” working on the assembly line. The workers eye it nervously.

FOREMAN (O.S.)
Pick up the pace!

The robot looks at the FOREMAN (50).

ROBOT POV:

The foreman, on a static-corrupted screen, with superimposed old-school computer typing, listing the options: “1) IGNORE HIM; 2) KILL HIM; 3) ‘GET OFF MY BACK, ASSHOLE.’”

INT. BUNTLER FACTORY FLOOR - DAY

ROBOT
(synthetic monotone voice)
Get off my back, asshole.

Clyde turns away and shuffles into his office.

INT. CLYDE’S OFFICE AT BUNTLER FACTORY - DAY

Clyde dejectedly packs his belongings into a box. He stares at the plans for the V-4 engine, glances out the door.
CLYDE’S POV:
The robot SMASHES each car windshield as it passes by.

BUNTLER WORKER #1
Hey, stop that!

BUNTLER WORKER #4
Where’s his off switch?

One guy repeatedly STRIKES the robot with a wrench.

INT. CLYDE’S OFFICE AT BUNTLER FACTORY - DAY
Clyde picks up the phone and dials.

INT. BUNTLER LAB - DAY
The lab guys set up dominoes everywhere. The phone RINGS.

DEAN
Twice in a month? I don’t like it!

They all watch anxiously as Roland searches for the RINGING phone. He finds it in a desk drawer and answers.

ROLAND
Lab.

(Intercut as needed.)

CLYDE
It’s Clyde Buntler. How would you like to work on the most innovative engine this industry’s ever seen?

ROLAND
Hold on.
(to his guys)
You guys wanna work on the most innovative engine this industry’s ever seen?
They ignore him, busily setting up dominoes.

ROLAND (CONT’D)
No. We’re tied up with a really important project right now.

CLYDE
Listen, we both know you haven’t done any real work in seven years.

Just then, Rick accidentally sets off a chain reaction of falling dominoes around the room.

DEAN
Goddamnit, Rick!

RICK
...Sorry.

ROLAND
Okay, our current project just suffered a major setback. We can probably fit your engine in.

INT. CLYDE’S OFFICE AT BUNTLER FACTORY - DAY

Clyde hangs up, looks at his V-4 plans.

CLYDE
I promise to keep an eye on those clowns. But I’ll get you built one way or another.

He grabs his box and heads for the door.

INT. BUNTLER FACTORY FLOOR - DAY

Dejected, Clyde carries his box to the exit. He ignores the half-dozen auto workers with sticks, pipes, and other weapons doing battle with the advancing robot.

ROBOT
Red-rum! Red-rum!
BUNTLER WORKER #2
I’m filing a union grievance.

FOREMAN
Shut up and keep fighting!

The men continue BEATING on the robot, slowly retreating.

EXT. NEW BUNTLER BUILDING - DAY

Clyde walks up, doing a double take: a crane lifts an unbelievably huge desk up to the top corner of the building.

INT. MAX’S OFFICE IN NEW BUNTLER BUILDING - DAY

Clyde enters to see the huge desk taking all the floor space. Max stands on the far side, trapped against the window.

MAX
Like my desk?

CLYDE
It’s very...big.

MAX
Biggest desk in the Fortune 500.

Max grins proudly as Clyde pulls charts from his briefcase.

CLYDE
I want to discuss factory defects.

MAX
What factory defects?

CLYDE
First of all, cars come off the line with four mismatched tires.

He holds up a chart: side photo of a Buntler with a narrow white-wall rear tire and a fat racing tire on the front.
MAX
They still drive okay. Who looks at tires, anyways?

He holds up another chart, which becomes live action:

ON THE CHART:

Heavy city traffic: a Buntler makes a right turn and stalls.

CLYDE (V.O.)
A carburetor design flaw makes Bisons stall if the driver accelerates during a right turn.

The car behind the Buntler HONKS and rear-ends it (SMASH!).

INT. MAX’S OFFICE IN NEW BUNTLER BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

MAX
Lemme see that!

Unable to get past the desk, Clyde tosses the chart towards Max. It lands halfway there.

Max awkwardly stands up on the desk, hitting his head.

MAX (CONT’D)
Ouch!

He drops to hands and knees, crawling, and studies the chart.

MAX (CONT’D)
The right turn thing is a safety feature. You should never accelerate during a right turn!

Clyde holds up another chart.

CLYDE
How about the short that makes the horn blow when a driver turns left?
MAX
Another safety feature: Left turns are accidents waiting to happen!

ON THE CHART:
A Buntler cop car in a dicey part of Detroit at night. It passes a BURGLAR breaking into a storefront.

CLYDE (V.O.)
What if you’re a cop making a U-turn to sneak up on a burglar?

The cop car pulls a U-turn: the horn HONKS, the burglar looks up in alarm and takes off down an alley.

INT. MAX’S OFFICE IN NEW BUNTLER BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

MAX
Make three right turns! Just don’t accelerate or you’ll stall.

CLYDE
Listen, Max: the Japanese aren’t just winning on fuel economy. Their cars are superior in quality!

MAX
I’ll put up any Buntler against any Japanese car, anytime!

CLYDE
And you’ll lose, every time.

Max crawls to the desk’s edge, reaches for the phone, accidentally knocks it to the floor. Unable to reach through the narrow gap between desk and wall, he calls his secretary.

MAX
Janice! Janice!

Max’s secretary, JANICE (55) enters contemptuously.
MAX (CONT’D)
Send someone to buy a Japanese car!

JANICE
And just how should we pay for that, “sir?”

MAX
We’ve gotta have some money around here somewhere. Get some of it.

JANICE
Maybe we could sell your desk.

She strolls out with no sense of urgency.

MAX
And I expect some change back!

INT. BUNTLER SPECIAL PROJECTS WORKSHOP - DAY

Max and his team stand next to the orange Super-Duper, parked across from a new Japanese “Shinhatsu” sedan.

Clyde stands in the space between the cars, staring at Max.

CLYDE
Exactly what is this, Max?

Max dons a helmet, tosses one to Clyde, who almost drops it.

MAX
This is a smash-off.

CLYDE
I don’t think so.

MAX
You said these tin cans are better than Buntlers. Prove it.

BIG GUY
He’s scared.

Clyde looks scared, but as everyone laughs, he gets angry.
CLYDE
Fine. I will.

He stomps to the Shinhatsu, pulling on his helmet.

BIG GUY
Kill ‘im, boss!

Clyde stares over at the Super-Duper and gulps nervously before climbing into his much smaller car.

Clyde starts the engine, giving off a modest WHIR. Suddenly, the deafening ROAR of the Super-Duper drowns out all else.

Max grins viciously as he REVS the over-sized engine. He gives Clyde an under-handed “bring it on” gesture.

Clyde puts his car in gear and timidly crawls forward.

Max responds by flooring it, tires SCREECHING.

Clyde closes his eyes and winces as the cars meet.

KA-SMASH! The Super-Duper bounces backwards off the Japanese car, which stops dead, unscathed.

Clyde opens his eyes and sees the Super-Duper: completely smashed in, steam and smoke billowing from the folded hood!

Max sits trapped, steering wheel pressed against his chest.

MAX
Help me! Help me!

“Team Max” runs up. The big guy rips the steering wheel out.

Max cannot open his door, so the big guy TEARS it off.

Max staggers out and compares his severely-damaged car to the unscathed Shinhatsu as Clyde stares in wonder.

MAX (CONT’D)
Son of a...
CLYDE
Wow. Even I didn’t realize our cars were this bad.

Max’s face contorts in rage. He addresses the big guy.

MAX
Hurt that car!

The big guy smiles and BASHES the Shinhatsu with the Super-Duper door. It just bounces off the hood, leaving no damage.

The big guy picks up a transmission from a nearby workbench and throws it onto the Shinhatsu’s hood:

The hood CRUMPLES under the weight as Max and his guys cheer. Suddenly, the hood POPS back into shape, launching the transmission through the air. Not a scratch.

MAX (CONT’D)
Goddamnit!

He grabs a lug wrench and BEATS on the Japanese car’s fender. One of his guys bends down and studies the pristine surface.

TEAM MAX GUY #2
I think you scratched it a little.

He leans in closer, licks his finger and rubs off a smudge.

TEAM MAX GUY #2 (CONT’D)
Nope, it was just dirt.

Max lets out an epic “Bad Guy Defeated” Scream of rage.

Calming down, he notices everyone watching. He almost says something, decides not to, and suddenly runs away, ashamed.

INT. BUNTLER LAB - NIGHT

Clyde talks on the phone while the lab guys work the V-4.
clyde
i think the lab guys have actually built a better prototype.

int. broom closet “office” at buntler of canada - night

(intercut as needed.)

wayne sits shivering, stuffed up with a bad cold.

wayne
what’s the estimated horsepower?

he sneezes violently.

clyde (v.o.)
it’s up to one ninety-seven.

wayne
damn, that’s good.

he sneezes again.

clyde (v.o.)
you sound pretty sick, wayne. it must be really cold there.

wayne
oh, it’s not so bad. they said if i keep up the good work, i might even get a space heater!

he sneezes again.

int. buntler lab - night

clyde wears a guilty expression as he speaks.

clyde
i’m really sorry, wayne.
Suddenly, Max, Wright and the whole board burst into the room, followed by a CIA-TYPE MAN, 50. Clyde’s face falls.

CLYDE (CONT’D)
I gotta go.

Clyde hangs up as Wright gives him a disapproving glare.

CLYDE (CONT’D)
How did you find out this time?

The CIA-Type hands Wright a file folder. Wright opens it.

WRIGHT
Until recently, this lab hadn’t ordered supplies or requested main-frame computer time in seven years.

Dean glares at Roland.

DEAN
I told you we should have put in orders every few months! My brother could’ve resold it all on the office supply black market.

WRIGHT
Obviously, you’re all fired.

RICK
(actually crying)
I can’t do real work anymore! I’ve been here for too long!

CLYDE
Don’t fire them. This is my fault. Let me face the consequences.

WRIGHT
You will: we’re renaming you “EVP in Charge of Dealer Relations.”

He hands Clyde a plane ticket.
WRIGHT (CONT’D)
You fly to Tacoma in the morning.

CLYDE
To do what?

WRIGHT
Relate to the dealers: one by one.

MAX
That sucks. The dealers hate us!

WRIGHT
Yes, your cousin will have his work cut out for him.
(to the lab guys)
The rest of you are still fired.

Rick SOBS as Wright, Max and the board leave.

INT. MAIN CONFERENCE ROOM IN NEW BUNTLER BUILDING - DAY

Max and his team stand before Wright and the Buntler board, displaying a child-like drawing of a boxy panel-van.

MAX
We’ll only make vans! They’re exactly what hip young Americans want. Plus, they’re the perfect fleet vehicle for delivery companies, SWAT teams...
(thinking)
...and bank robbers!
(beat)
Could we get sued for that?

Wright stands, escorting Max out as he talks.

WRIGHT
I’ll have legal take a look at it. Either way, you’re doing great!

Wright watches Max and his team leave.
BOARD MEMBER #1
He’s going to destroy this company!

WRIGHT
He’s got the stock headed in the right direction.

Board Member #2 jumps up in a panic.

BOARD MEMBER #2
At this rate, the stock will be worthless before you can turn things around. We’ll be ruined!

Wright SLAPS him. Everyone stares in shock.

WRIGHT
The buy orders are in place: once Buntler stock falls below 85 cents a share, we buy and buy big!

He checks the stock ticker.

WRIGHT (CONT’D)
And once we own the majority of the shares, he’s gone!

BOARD MEMBER #1
And then? How’re you going to save a company worth 85 cents a share?

WRIGHT
By entering into a joint venture with one of our Japanese rivals.

Eyes go wide around the room.

WRIGHT (CONT’D)
We’ll produce their cars here, with American workers, in vast quantities not subject to import quotas or tariffs. We will corner the American small car market!
BOARD MEMBER #1
Sometimes I think Satan doesn’t hold a candle to you, Edgar.

WRIGHT
He doesn’t.

INT. UNCLE HOWARD’S HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT
Howard lies in bed, comatose. A female NURSE, 28, turns on the TV and gives him a sponge bath. His eyes flutter and suddenly pop open. He stares at the TV:

ON THE TV SCREEN:
An episode of Battle of the Network Stars.

INT. UNCLE HOWARD’S HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS
Howard looks from the TV to the nurse as she washes his genitals. They lock eyes as her mouth falls open in shock.

HOWARD
How long have I been out?

NURSE
...Four years.

He looks at the TV again.

HOWARD
Jesus. TV really went to shit.

He glances down at his genitals, which the nurse still holds.

HOWARD (CONT’D)
Proper introductions are probably in order given how well you already seem to know me. I’m Howard.
NURSE
Joanie.

HOWARD
I can already tell we’re gonna get along just fine, Joanie.

He gives her a wink.

INT. DOMESTIC TERMINAL AT TACOMA AIRPORT - DAY
Clyde steps off the jet way looking not at all thrilled.

INT. CAR RENTAL DESK AT TACOMA AIRPORT - DAY
Luggage by his side, Clyde speaks to a MALE CLERK (27).

CLYDE
Is it possible to rent a Buntler?

The clerk gives him a shocked double take, slowly grins.

MALE CLERK
Hey, Jerry. He wants a Buntler!

JERRY
A Buntler?

JERRY (45) and a FEMALE CLERK (50) burst out in laughter.

CLYDE
Company policy. I have to ask.

A HIPPIE GIRL (23) in line stares like a star-struck teen.

HIPPIE GIRL
Do you work for Buntler Motors?

Clyde’s flattered by what seems like positive attention.

CLYDE
Why yes, yes I do.
Slowly, her face twists in rage and she SLAPS Clyde.

HIPPIE GIRL
Planet-murdering bastard!

She storms away as Clyde holds his face. The clerks laugh.

EXT. TACOMA BUNTLER DEALERSHIP - DAY

Clyde, dressed in a suit, stands in front, warily eyeing the place, which has the “B” missing from the sign (“_UNTLER”).

INT. TACOMA BUNTLER DEALERSHIP - DAY

Clyde tentatively enters. He’s approached by a plaid-jacketed salesman, VINCE (30).

VINCE
‘Morning! Nice day to buy a car.

CLYDE
Uh, yeah. Nice day...to buy a car. Yes, I want to buy a car.

VINCE
Well you’ve come to the largest Shinhatsu dealership in the state.

CLYDE
I, uh, came to buy...a Buntler.

Vince gives Clyde a wary look. He calls out to his boss.

VINCE
Hey, Harry. This guy says he’s here to buy a Buntler.

The entire place goes silent. Other CUSTOMERS, SALESMEN, even CHILDREN stop and stare at Clyde in shock. He looks over his shoulder to make sure they are not staring at something else. Nothing there.
HARRY (48), a heavy set ex-defensive tackle smoking a cigarette, waddles over suspiciously. He sizes Clyde up.

HARRY
This guy’s got Buntler corporate written all over him.

Clyde’s face falls.

CLYDE
How’d you know?

VINCE
Nobody walks in here wearing a suit. And nobody ever comes looking to buy a Buntler.

Clyde glances around and finally notices: only Shinhatsus.

CLYDE
You’re a Buntler dealer. You’re not even selling Buntlers?

HARRY
(barely-contained rage)
We can’t even give them away.

He gestures to a banner: “FREE BUNTLER WITH EVERY PURCHASE!”

VINCE
No one wants the free Buntler.

PARTS GUY (ON PA SYSTEM)
Hey boss, can we honor the free Buntler deal on a parts purchase?

Harry turns and spots the PARTS GUY (53) behind a counter.

HARRY
(shouting)
What’s he buying?

PARTS GUY (ON PA SYSTEM)
An air filter.
Harry looks sideways at Clyde with a defiant glare.

HARRY
Give him two Buntlers!

He advances on Clyde, backed by Vince and SALESMAN #2 (38).

HARRY (CONT’D)
Get the hell out of my dealership before I kick your ass, mister!

Clyde quickly retreats.

EXT. TACOMA BUNTLER DEALERSHIP - DAY

Clyde stands on the street, studying the showroom.

Harry, Vince and the other salesman glare at him through the window. Salesman #2 makes a “slit your throat” gesture.

Clyde cringes as a brand new Shinhatsu on a test drive rolls by. His eyes follow it, and he seems to get an idea.

EXT. SHINHATSU MOTORS U.S. HEADQUARTERS - DAY

A glass/steel skyscraper in a big city: Clyde gets out of a cab, looks up at the “SHINHATSU USA” sign and enters.

He never notices Wright’s CIA-Type guy in a car across the street, SNAPPING pictures of Clyde with a telephoto lens.

INT. SHINHATSU MOTORS U.S. - CEO’S OFFICE - DAY

Clyde sits across a tasteful desk from the SHINHATSU CEO, a Japanese man of 60 in a finely tailored blue suit.

CLYDE
I want to thank you for seeing me.

A Japanese MALE TRANSLATOR (30) repeats this in JAPANESE.
I suspect that you’ll agree: Buntler is uniquely positioned to mass-produce your cars in America.

The translator relays this. The CEO responds and the translator delivers the English curtly in a blank expression.

TRANSLATOR
I agree that you are uniquely positioned: your cars are shit. Nobody wants them.

The CEO spits out more JAPANESE as shame paints Clyde’s face.

TRANSLATOR (CONT’D)
Compared to Buntler, the Big Three look like Rolls Royce, Bentley and Mercedes. This makes you a company that will take any deal I offer, no matter how unfair it seems.

Clyde gulps and looks down impotently.

CLYDE
That was my alternate theory.

The CEO barks something in Japanese.

TRANSLATOR
Shut up!

INT. MAIN CONFERENCE ROOM IN NEW BUNTLER BUILDING - DAY

Clyde stands before Wright, Max, and the Buntler board.

CLYDE
Gentlemen, I have some news that I think you are going to like.

The CIA-type guy barges in, hands Wright a folder.

WRIGHT
I don’t think so, Clyde.
Wright stands and passes the folder to a board member.

WRIGHT (CONT’D)
I have here photographic evidence of Clyde Buntler’s secret effort to sell this company to the Japanese!

Clyde sees the board members pull photos out of the folder: shots of Clyde entering Shinhatsu USA headquarters.

CLYDE
It’s just a partnership! I was about to tell you all about it.

WRIGHT
You are not authorized to make your own deals with other companies. Especially not with the Japanese!

HOWARD (O.S.)
The Japanese?

Wheel-chair-bound Howard rolls in, pushed by nurse Joanie.

CLYDE
Uncle Howard!

MAX
Dad!

WRIGHT
Shit.

HOWARD
A deal with the Japanese? What the hell is wrong with you?

CLYDE
B-but, it makes sense. My new V-4 gives us the best economy engine in the world. And they have...well, the best everything else.
HOWARD
(screaming)
The Japanese? The day the Japanese make the best
anything is the day Buntler’s stock isn’t worth the
paper it’s printed on!

Over at the stock ticker, Max checks the price.

MAX
Uh, actually-

Wright CLEARS his throat loudly, cutting Max off. But Howard got the gist of it:
Buntler’s in the toilet financially.

HOWARD
The last time I was in this room, Buntler Motors
was a perfectly mediocre company, stumbling along
just like it always has.
(glaring at everyone)
What the hell did you do to my baby?

Awkward silence. Howard starts muttering to himself.

HOWARD (CONT’D)
Of all the treacherous, subversive, Commie pinko
plots...Goddamned Japanese cars!
(shouting at Clyde)
Next, you’ll be telling me we have something to
learn about making cars from the Germans!

Max spies his BMW keychain on the table and quietly palms it.

HOWARD (CONT’D)
I’m going to have to take over control of the
company immediately.

Wright winces. Clyde’s eyes go wide in anger.

CLYDE
No! Your way overdue on that promise to appoint
me as CEO!
HOWARD
You’ve had four years, and you’ve made a complete mess of things!

CLYDE
I wasn’t the CEO, Max was!

Howard’s mouth falls open.

HOWARD
How could you let that happen?

CLYDE
Let it happen?

Howard looks at Wright.

HOWARD
And you just sat back and watched?

WRIGHT
Clyde insisted that Max take responsibility for the company.

Max looks hurt, but he senses he should go along.

MAX
Uh, yeah, he...insisted!

HOWARD
(to Clyde)
And you have the nerve to want the job now?

Clyde’s face twists into a strange, angry smile.

CLYDE
I quit!

Wright grins. The board looks shocked. Max seems relieved.

HOWARD
Fine!
Clyde storms out as Howard looks around the whole room.

HOWARD (CONT’D)
And why the hell are we in a Howard Johnson’s?

MAX
...It’s a Holiday Inn.

Howard glares, causing Max to look down, cowed.

EXT. NEW BUNTLER BUILDING - DAY

The CIA-type and two SECURITY GUARDS (30’s) escort Clyde and his box of stuff to the parking lot. The CIA-type guy motions for the guards to hang back. They reach Clyde’s car.

CIA-TYPE GUY
If it’s any consolation, I think getting away from this rat’s nest is the best thing that could ever happen. You’re too good for this.

Clyde stares at him, at the building, and back.

CLYDE
It’s no consolation.

CIA-TYPE GUY
Good luck to you, sir.

He takes Clyde’s limp hand, shakes it, and quickly withdraws.

INT. HALLWAY OF MARION’S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

A dishevelled Clyde lugs suitcases to the door and knocks.

Presently, Marion Martin opens the door, wearing a robe.

MARION
How did you get past the doorman?
CLYDE
I cried. You were right about Buntler Motors. I quit.

MARION
Oh... Why are you here?

CLYDE
I lost my place - Buntler owns it. I have nowhere to go. I don’t really have any friends left here.

MARION
Have you been drinking?

CLYDE
I had a beer.

MARION
A beer?

CLYDE
Yeah. I’m sorry you had to see me like this. I should go.

He turns. Overcome with guilt and sympathy, she stops him.

MARION
No, wait! I have a nice couch.

He turns back to her, looking doubtful.

MARION (CONT’D)
It’s okay. I’ll make you some coffee...to offset that beer.

CLYDE
Thank you.

INT. LIVING ROOM OF MARION’S APARTMENT - EVENING

An unshaven Clyde plays with slot cars, morosely watching them WHIR round and round. Marion enters carrying groceries.
MARION
What are you doing?

He never looks up, watching the cars in a trancelike state.

CLYDE
So simple. So elegant. So... beautiful.

Marion stares at him with concern.

INT. MAX’S OFFICE IN NEW BUNTLER BUILDING - DAY

Max sits at his desk, playing with toy cars. He makes engine SOUNDS and CRASHES them together, adding his own EXPLOSIONS.

Uncle Howard, pushed by nurse Joanie, tries to wheel into the office, but the over-sized desk prevents his entry.

MAX
Oh, hey Dad! C’mon in.

HOWARD
I can’t.

MAX
Yeah. I might’ve ordered the desk a little too big.

HOWARD
You think?

Max grabs some promotional copy and runs across the desk.

MAX
Check this out!

Howard looks at the copy.

INSERT: MAX’S AD COPY

An ad for the “ALL NEW BISON BUCK (THE BABY BISON GREW UP!).” Another big, ugly Buntler 4-door.
INT. MAX’S OFFICE IN NEW BUNTLER BUILDING - DAY

HOWARD
How is it “all grown up?”

MAX
Biggest V-4 engine ever made: 6.0 liters! Bigger than most V-8’s!

HOWARD
How is that good, exactly?

MAX
It’s...the biggest V-4. Ever.

Howard sighs and nods in resignation.

HOWARD
Of course.

The phone rings and Max runs back across the desk. He grabs the phone and slides off the edge, CRASHING to the floor.

MAX
Hello?

Howard looks like he might get ill as Joanie wheels him out.

INT. LIVING ROOM OF MARION’S APARTMENT - MORNING

Clyde plays with Hot Wheels: Rube_Goldberg-esque long stretches of orange track sprawling through the room, with a prodigious jump ramp set up across the coffee table.

Marion enters from the bedroom, having just woken up.

MARION
Have you been up all night?

He finishes a can of cola (empties lie all around). Clearly on a sugar-caffeine high, he frantically sets up a car.
CLYDE
I’m going for the record. I don’t think this has never been done!

MARION
Clyde! Clyde, look at me!

She grabs Clyde, shaking him until he finally focuses on her.

MARION (CONT’D)
You haven’t been out of this apartment for two weeks!

CLYDE
I have everything I need here.

MARION
This is no way to live!

She gently leads him over to a wall mirror.

MARION (CONT’D)
Look at what you’ve become.

Clyde studies his bearded face, pale complexion and sunken eyes in the mirror. He’s sobered by the sight.

CLYDE
My God: I’ve become...Max!

He throws down the Hot Wheels car in horror.

EXT. WHOLISTIC HEALING CENTER HALL - DAY

Marion tries to lead Clyde up to the place. A sign near the door announces “KONRAD’S SCREAM THERAPY SEMINAR - TODAY!”

MARION
You promised me you’d try this!

CLYDE
I changed my mind.
MARION
Listen, my Uncle did it and he went from part-time salesman at a discount men’s clothing store to the Midwest King of Leisure Suits.

CLYDE
I don’t wanna be the Midwest King of Leisure Suits.

She glares and he reluctantly lets her drag him inside.

INT. WHOLISTIC HEALING CENTER SEMINAR HALL - DAY

KONRAD (40), a goateed West-German 1970’s pseudo-spiritualist douche bag in a turtleneck, leads a group of 150 ATTENDEES through a guided visualization exercise.

KONRAD
Okay, now you trust me. I help you get in touch with that which has been holding you back.

Clyde rolls his eyes.

KONRAD (CONT’D)
Close your eyes and focus, visualize: see that which has been holding you back.

Clyde looks around at others following the instructions.

KONRAD (CONT’D)
Confront: that which has been holding you back.

As Clyde watches, a CHUBBY GUY (55) nearby writhes in anger.

CHUBBY GUY
You...bastard!

KONRAD
Do battle: with that which has been holding you back.

Clyde freaks out as a YOUNG WOMAN (23) to his left SCREAMS.
YOUNG WOMAN
I’ll kill you!

Suddenly, Konrad grabs Clyde roughly, scaring him.

KONRAD
Do battle!

CLYDE
O-okay.

He closes his eyes. Slowly, his face contorts.

CLYDE’S VISION:

(Intercut with Clyde’s face in seminar as needed.)

Blueprints and engineering drawings, pens, calipers, various car parts float by randomly - very beautiful and colorful.

CHORAL MUSIC swells as a brilliant, crystalline version of Clyde’s V-4 prototype rises up on a white marble altar.

(Clyde smiles contentedly, eyes closed.)

KONRAD (V.O.)
Find your nemesis: that which has been holding you back!

THUNDER and lightning.

(Clyde’s face turns serious, looks troubled. He grimaces.)

A giant rises up above the V-4 and ROARS like Godzilla: Max, as a diapered, bonnet-wearing baby! He grins and wields a silver baby rattle, which he uses to SMASH the V-4 into dust.

Behind him, a giant Edgar Wright LAUGHS evilly.
INT. WHOLISTIC HEALING CENTER HALL - CONTINUOUS

Clyde Screams with the best of them as his face twists in pain. Konrad smiles in satisfaction.

KONRAD
And now: awake!

Everyone goes silent and opens their eyes. Clyde’s face registers a sudden realization. He jumps to his feet.

CLYDE
I can do it myself. I can build the car that Detroit won’t!

Nearby sit ARNO and ZOLTAN, two heavyset, hirsute gentlemen (late 30’s) who might be Armenian (or Greek, Macedonian, Czechoslovakian, Bulgarian...who knows?).

Arno notices drool on his flashy suit and uses a silk handkerchief to wipe it off. Zoltan fixes a gaze on Clyde and nudges Arno. The two study Clyde and look at each other.

LATER

Everyone mills about at the back of the room, having refreshments. Clyde chews on something with disgust.

CLYDE
Great “soy chips.”

The chubby guy shares the look of disgust and takes a drink.

CHUBBY GUY
Try some of this agave nectar.

He follows his own advice and appears to regret it.

CHUBBY GUY (CONT’D)
On second thought, don’t!

Overcome by nausea, he runs to a trash bin and VOMITS. As Clyde watches in revulsion, Arno and Zoltan approach.
ZOLTAN
You are famous Clyde Buntler, no?

Clyde stares in surprise as Zoltan takes his hand.

ZOLTAN (CONT’D)
I am Zoltan. This is my brother, Arno. We are big fans!

CLYDE
Really?

ZOLTAN
Your cars are very popular in our country.

CLYDE
Really? Where is that, exactly?

The brothers share a nervous glance.

ZOLTAN
Uh, Europe. You never heard of it.

ARNO
Is difficult to pronounce.

ZOLTAN
Never mind that. We would like to offer financing to build your car.

CLYDE
(laughing)
It costs a lot more than you might think to launch a new car. Maybe eighty million dollars?

ARNO
How about one hundred million?

CLYDE
Dollars?

Arno looks to Zoltan, who calmly nods.
ARNO
Yes, dollars.

Clyde stares at them, stunned and suspicious.

CLYDE
Just what do you guys do, anyways?

The brothers share another nervous glance.

ZOLTAN
Imports!

ARNO
Exports!

They quickly look at each other and try again.

ZOLTAN
Exports!

ARNO
Imports!

Awkward silence.

ZOLTAN
Import-export business.

He grins nervously. Arno smiles, nodding in agreement.

INT. PHONE BOOTH - DAY

Clyde speaks on the phone.

CLYDE
I’m completely serious, Wayne. Do you want in?

INT. BROOM CLOSET “OFFICE” AT BUNTLER OF CANADA - DAY

Wayne sits huddled at his desk as another snowstorm rages outside. Dozens of stacked cardboard boxes surround him.

WAYNE
Hell, yes!
CLYDE (V.O.)
Good. Call Steve. Both of you get here as soon as you can.

WAYNE
Right.

He hangs up and dials again.

INT. BUNTLE PARTS DEPOT IN HOUSTON - DAY

Steve and another PARTS CLERK (35) stare at six open boxes containing air filters. Steve holds a tape measure.

STEVE
These are all the same part, but no two of them are the same size.

PARTS CLERK
Maybe we should send all six. One of them’s bound to fit.

A phone RINGS as Steve stares at the guy in disbelief.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
Steve, phone for you!

Steve walks over to a wall phone and answers.

STEVE
Hello?

WAYNE (V.O.)
It’s Wayne. Me and Clyde are building our own car. Meet me in Detroit. Tomorrow.

STEVE
Right.

He hangs up and calls over to the other parts clerk.

STEVE (CONT’D)
I, uh, gotta use the can.
He surreptitiously grabs his jacket, Smokey & the Bandit lunch box, and quietly runs for the exit.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL SCIENCE LAB - DAY

Roland tries to demonstrate a chemical technique involving a test tube and Bunsen burner to 24 HIGH SCHOOL JUNIORS.

    ROLAND
    Anyone got a lighter?

Eight different stoner dudes whip out Bics as they rush forward, flames burning like at a rock concert.

As one kid lights the Bunsen burner, Roland hears a TAP at the door. Through the window, he sees Clyde.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Roland opens the door to greet Clyde.

    CLYDE
    Someone gave me a hundred million build my own car. You want in?

    ROLAND
    Do we have to deliver the car, or do we just get the hundred million?

Clyde glares. Roland looks back at the demonstration table:

Several stoners have fashioned bongs out of Erlenmeyer flasks, surgical tubing and glass funnels. They test the devices out as other kids CHEER and HOOT.

    ROLAND (CONT’D)
    I’m in.

    CLYDE
    Where are the other guys?

    ROLAND
    Went to work for the phone company.
He looks back at the demonstration table, where most of the kids now stand around getting high.

ROLAND (CONT’D)
(halfheartedly)
Read chapters one through twenty. Quiz on Friday.

Nobody pays him any attention. He waves a dismissive hand.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

Clyde sits with his team: Wayne, Steve and Roland.

CLYDE
We need a car as revolutionary and forward-thinking as my V-4 engine.

STEVE
We should put the engine in the rear. Saves weight, and it gives you better balance and handling.

WAYNE
And we should design the body with aerodynamics in mind.

ROLAND
I’ve always liked gull-wing doors.

Clyde furiously takes notes on napkins.

STEVE
Airbags, for safety!

Unexpectedly, a COOK (55) shouts out from the order window.

COOK
Four-wheel independent suspension!

They all look at him in shock.
COOK (CONT’D)

Oh, I get it. What the hell could a fry cook have to say to a bunch of automotive engineers, huh?

He waves a dismissive hand and turns away.

Clyde reaches for another napkin and suddenly stops, staring at the stainless steel dispenser.

CLYDE

I’ve got it! We’ll make the body out of stainless steel! You don’t have to paint it, it’s scratch resistant...

He admires the napkin dispenser.

STEVE

And it just plain looks cool!

EXT. CRIME-RIDDEN DETROIT WAREHOUSE DISTRICT - DAY

Clyde, Wayne and Steve pull up outside an abandoned-looking warehouse. Cautiously, they get out.

STEVE

This is your investors’ office?

Clyde checks a scrap of paper, nods doubtfully.

WAYNE

Maybe it’s nicer inside.

Clearly, no one believes that. They enter reluctantly.

INT. DETROIT WAREHOUSE - DAY

A dark, foreboding dump, with junk scattered everywhere. At one end, VOICES and light come from an office.

CLYDE

Over there.

They head for it, hearing men speaking a FOREIGN LANGUAGE.
Clyde tentatively knocks, pushing the door fully open.

INT. DETROIT WAREHOUSE OFFICE - DAY

Clyde, Wayne and Steve enter to see Zoltan sitting at a desk, Arno standing behind him. Another MAN (44, looking like the brothers) stares down at an open briefcase. He slams it shut upon seeing the visitors.

Two suit-wearing BODYGUARDS (20’s) stand nearby, and both reach into their jackets. Zoltan HOLLERS in his native tongue. They stop; empty hands slowly come out of jackets.

Clyde and his guys look terrified as Zoltan forces a smile.

ZOLTAN
    My...friends were just leaving.

He SHOUTS something in native tongue to briefcase guy, who picks up the case and storms out. The bodyguards follow, one of them plowing into Wayne, knocking him aside.

ZOLTAN (CONT’D)
    What you have for us?

Clyde regains his composure and whips out a drawing.

CLYDE
    I give you...the Clydster.

It looks awesome. The brothers stare at it blankly.

ZOLTAN
    We love it.

CLYDE
    I just have to find a factory site, line up parts and suppliers, and then we can get to work!

Zoltan grins at Arno.
INT. MAIN CONFERENCE ROOM IN NEW BUNTLER BUILDING - DAY

Wright and the Buntler board meet, without Max and Howard. Board Member #1 refers to a magazine, showing Clyde standing proudly in front of the artist’s rendering of the Clydster.

BOARD MEMBER #1
Why do we care about this?

WRIGHT
It caused the first uptick in our stock for six and a half years!

Wright backs away from the stock ticker and sits.

WRIGHT (CONT’D)
Everyone thinks that sooner or later he’ll reconcile with the old man. Then the Clydster becomes part of the Buntler product line.

GASPS from around the room.

WRIGHT (CONT’D)
Obviously, we can’t let that happen. Luckily, I have a lot of contacts in business: commercial real estate, raw materials, components, everything he needs.

Wright grins evilly.

WRIGHT (CONT’D)
He can’t sell the car if he can’t get what he needs to build it.

INT. ABANDONED DETROIT AUTO FACTORY - DAY

Clyde, Wayne and Steve stroll with a MALE REALTOR (48).

STEVE
If Buntler had a factory like this, the Bison might have come out okay.

His colleagues give him a skeptical stare.
STEVE (CONT’D)
Okay, that’s a stretch. Still...

CLYDE
It’s perfect for the Clydster!

EXT. ABANDONED DETROIT AUTO FACTORY - DAY

Clyde, Wayne, Steve and the realtor walk out grinning.

REALTOR
I can close this deal very quickly.

Suddenly, another MALE REALTOR (35) SCREECHES up in his car, motioning for his partner to come over. They talk while eyeing Clyde and his guys warily.

WAYNE
This doesn’t look good.

The realtor returns wearing a stern expression.

REALTOR
This factory’s unavailable.

CLAIDE
We were just about to close!

Awkward beat. The realtor improvises.

REALTOR
We want more money.

CLYDE
How much more?

REALTOR
How much you got?

Clyde looks to Wayne, who does a quick slide-rule calculation, whispers something in Clyde’s ear.

Clyde whispers the figure in the realtor’s ear.
REALTOR (CONT’D)
More than that. Way more.

The realtor hurries off, tearing out of there with his partner as Clyde and his guys stare in disbelief.

CLYDE
This is the third factory to fall through.
Something’s wrong here.

INT. DETROIT WAREHOUSE - DAY
Clyde, Wayne and Steve knock on the office door, opening it:

INT. DETROIT WAREHOUSE OFFICE - DAY

Some sweaty, dishevelled GUY (35) PLEADS with Zoltan in that foreign language as Arno stares daggers. The two bodyguards stand off to one side.

ZOLTAN
(to Clyde)
Be right with you.

He nods to the bodyguards, who drag the dishevelled guy out of the office. The terrified man SCREAMS at Clyde and his guys in his native language (clearly asking for help).

Clyde, Wayne and Steve look freaked out as Zoltan rises.

ZOLTAN (CONT’D)
My cousin Avi. He always gets upset when his soccer team loses. You have good news?

CLYDE
Uh, I’ve got some bad news about the factory search.

ZOLTAN
No worry. My brother find perfect overseas site where we can leverage Asian car-making know-how.

Steve grins.
STEVE
Japan!

WAYNE
Too obvious. South Korea?

Zoltan shakes his head, points to a wall map. Clyde reads:

CLYDE
The Philippines.

STEVE
They have any car-making know-how?

ZOLTAN
Not yet. You will show them!

WAYNE
Great.

CLYDE
I’m not finished with the bad news. We have a supplier issue, too.

Zoltan and Arno share a smiling glance.

ZOLTAN
We are suppliers. What you need?

STEVE
Tires, steel, aluminum, alternators, batteries...

ZOLTAN
No problem.

WAYNE
And an engine.

ZOLTAN
Hold on.

He goes to the phone, dials a very, very long number on a rotary phone. Clyde and the guys watch in amazement.
Zoltan has a loud CONVERSATION in his native tongue, slowly going from pleasantries to angry yelling to laughter.

Finally, he hangs up and smiles.

    ZOLTAN (CONT’D)
    No problem!

He shakes Clyde’s hand and pushes the guys out of the room.

    ZOLTAN (CONT’D)
    We be in touch soon.

Closing the door, he turns to Arno.

    ZOLTAN (CONT’D)
    Could be problem.

INT. LIVING ROOM OF MARION’S APARTMENT - DAY

Clyde packs up his bags as Marion watches fretfully.

    MARION
    I’ll...miss you.

    CLYDE
    I appreciate your hospitality, Marion, but the Philippines are calling my name.

    MARION
    But...

She puts a tentative hand on his arm. He looks down at it.

    MARION (CONT’D)
    I don’t want you to go.

She jumps on him, kissing him passionately, finally stops.

    CLYDE
    Oh.
He gently pushes her off and grabs his bags.

    CLYDE (CONT’D)
    I wish things were different, but right now, there’s only room for one mistress in my life, and her name is Clydster.

She looks down sadly as he backs towards the door.

    CLYDE (CONT’D)
    Perhaps someday, when all of this is but a distant memory, when Clydsters are parked in every driveway and garage in America...

He opens the door and looks into her eyes.

    CLYDE (CONT’D)
    I will come back for you.

    MARION
    And if I haven’t found anyone else by then, I’ll be waiting!

    CLYDE
    Farewell, Marion.

She tearfully watches him go. Presently, she collects herself, crosses to a table, grabs her purse. She pulls out a matchbook with a phone number, picks up the phone, dials.

    MARION
    Hello, Eric? This is Marion.  
    (beat)
    Marion. We met a few weeks ago at the Red Onion near the airport?  
    (beat)
    No, that was my friend.  
    (beat)
    Yeah, that’s me! So...how are you?

She grins like a schoolgirl and twists her hair on a finger.
EXT. ABANDONED RURAL MILITARY BASE IN PHILIPPINES - DAY

Clyde, Wayne, Steve, Roland and the two brothers roll up in 4-wheel drive vehicles driven by PHILIPPINES ARMY GUYS. Everyone gets out. Zoltan holds up his arms, grinning.

ZOLTAN
What do you think?

A Huey comes CHOPPING in fast and low over the nearby jungle, taking and giving automatic GUNFIRE the whole way. It lands, and a PHILIPPINES GENERAL (63) gets out, marches over and shakes Zoltan’s hand.

Zoltan and the General exchange metal “Halliburton” briefcases. The General opens his: Clyde and his guys clearly see it stuffed full of American cash.

The brothers open their briefcase, but Clyde and his guys cannot see inside. The brothers grin, satisfied.

The General hands Zoltan the deed to the property and leaves without ever speaking or acknowledging Clyde and his guys.

The Huey takes off, flying low, giving and taking GUNFIRE.

CLYDE
Is it safe for us to be here?

ZOLTAN
Oh that? Is just Philippines Army on...training maneuvers.

Half a dozen trucks with CONSTRUCTION CREWS, equipment and building supplies come ROARING in.

STEVE
What now?

WAYNE
We start building a factory.

CLYDE
We still need a dealer network.
Dozens of FILIPINO CONSTRUCTION WORKERS jump off the trucks.

INT. HIGH-END CAR DEALERSHIP - DAY

Through a glass wall, Clyde appears sitting at the MANAGER’S (50) glass/chrome desk. Neither man can be heard.

The manager says something and both men stand. The manager leads Clyde to the door, putting a hand on his shoulder.

The two men enter the showroom and walk to the center.

    MANAGER
    (calling to his staff)
    Gentlemen, this is Clyde Buntler.

Everyone stares at Clyde in what looks like awe.

    MANAGER (CONT’D)
    He wants us to sell his car.

Stunned silence as everyone studies Clyde. Suddenly the manager bursts out laughing. Everyone joins in.

Clyde hangs his head in shame and slinks out.

INT. OFFICE AT MID-RANGE CAR DEALERSHIP - DAY

A cigar-smoking, Tony Soprano-type CAR DEALER (50) berates Clyde, who sits in a cheap metal chair, head down.

    CAR DEALER
    I tried selling Buntlers once back in the sixties, when they were still just sort of pieces of shit.
    (takes a cigar puff)
    Before you guys found your niche and really committed to it.

    CLYDE
    But this car isn’t a Buntler. It’s something new...and much better!
CAR DEALER
What’s your last name?

CLYDE
...Buntler.

CAR DEALER
So it’s a new and much better piece of shit. Get the hell outta here!

Clyde stands and leaves, never looking at the man.

EXT. USED CAR LOT - DAY

Clyde comes flying out the front door of the mobile home/office (having been thrown). He tumbles down a short staircase and CRASHES to the ground.

As he gets up and brushes himself off, a big EX-JOCK GUY (40) in a plaid sport jacket appears at the door, screaming.

EX-JOCK GUY
Buntler? Buntler?!

He starts down the stairs after Clyde, who runs for his life as two OTHER BIG GUYS come out and hold the first guy back.

EX-JOCK GUY (CONT’D)
Buntler?!

Clyde glances over his shoulder as he sprints away.

INT. CLYDSTER FACTORY - DAY

Wayne and Steve look over some drawings at a drafting table.

Signs of activity fill the place: Four dozen FILIPINO WORKERS moving crates around on forklifts, manning WHIRRING power tools, BANGING away with hammers.

Roland comes up pushing a crate on a cart.
ROLAND
The first engines just arrived!

Steve uses a crowbar to pry the top off the crate.

WAYNE
It’s about time. We have lot of testing to do.

Steve and the others stare down at the open crate.

STEVE
This thing’s not ready for testing.

Wayne peers inside: parts (manifold, cylinder heads, carburetor, cylinders) lying loose on top of an engine block.

WAYNE
Good God!

Steve takes some quick measurements.

STEVE
Well, this is a first: the cylinders are all slightly different diameters.
(looking up)
Where the hell did these engines come from?

Wayne studies the Cyrillic letters stamped on the crate lid.

WAYNE
Anyone wanna take a guess on how you pronounce this?

Roland runs his finger over a hanging wall map.

ROLAND
Here it is: definitely behind the Iron Curtain.

Disgusted, Steve digs into the crate, pulling out piece after piece, all covered in a combination of grease and sawdust.

STEVE
I’d like to meet the son-of-a-bitch who built this engine.
EXT. TACOMA BUNTLER DEALERSHIP - DAY

Clyde stands before the building, contemplating going in. He wears bandages from his encounter at the used car dealership.

Suddenly, Vince, the plaid-jacketed salesman he met last time, comes out the front door and approaches.

VINCE
I hope you’re not planning on going in there. My boss meant what he said about kicking your ass.

CLYDE
I know...

Vince notices the bandages.

VINCE
Yeah, looks like you do.

He gently leads Clyde into the rows of parked Shinhatsu cars.

VINCE (CONT’D)
The boss is extra angry right now ‘cause his wife’s divorcing him.

Clyde studies the Shinhatsu’s as Vince leads him along.

VINCE (CONT’D)
So why are you here, Clyde Buntler?

CLYDE
I was hoping I could get you guys to sell the Clydster, but if your boss is that angry...

Vince grins as he leads Clyde around the side of the building, to the holding lot for all the unsold Buntlers.

VINCE
That may not be a problem.

Vince KICKS the door of a Bison, putting a huge dent in it.
VINCE (CONT’D)
Damn, this one’s defective. It’ll have to go back to the factory.

Clyde stares in shock.

VINCE (CONT’D)
Anyways, the boss’s wife is gonna wind up owning this dealership. And when that happens, he’s gone.

He SMASHES the headlight of another Bison with his foot.

VINCE (CONT’D)
Oops.
(beat)
Here’s the best part: I’m nailing his wife. He don’t know that, and you’re not gonna tell him.

Clyde shakes his head “No.”

VINCE (CONT’D)
Good, ‘cause once I’m running this place, I could see committing to a shipment of, say, four Clydsters.

Clyde’s face lights up.

VINCE (CONT’D)
We’ll see how they do. If I can sell ‘em, I’ll take more later.

CLYDE
Thank you!

Vince keys a nasty SCRATCH down the side of another Bison.

CLYDE (CONT’D)
What sold you on the Clydster?

Vince smiles at him, but with anger behind it.
VINCE
You might’ve noticed that I really hate Buntler Motors! But I’m contractually bound to keep taking these goddamned cars.

Clyde nods in understanding as Vince whips out a pocket knife and slashes a tire on yet another Buntler.

VINCE (CONT’D)
Selling Clydsters would be like giving Buntler the finger.

CLYDE
I wonder if other Buntler dealers feel the same way.

VINCE
You’re goddamned right they do! How ‘bout I give you the national dealership roster? I’ll even circle the ones who hate Buntler the most.

Vince throws his shoulder into the side window of another new Buntler. It SHATTERS, and then: A CHAIN REACTION. The car literally falls apart, shedding fenders, bumpers and finally collapsing in a pile of rubble.

Clyde stares in shock as Vince smooths his jacket, takes a deep breath and strolls away from the wreckage, beaming.

VINCE (CONT’D)
I feel much better now!

Clyde follows, staring back, awestruck at the wreckage.

EXT. CLYDSTER FACTORY - DAY

A taxi pulls up and Clyde steps out with his bags, proudly taking in the new facility. He enters the main building.
INT. CLYDSTER FACTORY - DAY

Clyde walks in, grinning as he observes the signs of work in progress: a clean, well-organized, bustling factory. Although he cannot see the cars on the line, the SOUNDS of car manufacturing fill the large facility.

He triumphantly marches up to Wayne and Steve. They spot him and suddenly look worried, not at all glad to see him.

**CLYDE**

We now have a dealership network. And I see that your work has progressed well in my absence.

Wayne and Steve almost wince at these words.

**CLYDE (CONT’D)**

So, let’s have a look at the finished product.

His friends look at each other nervously, neither answering.

**CLYDE (CONT’D)**

What?

**STEVE**

Well...you gotta understand...uh...

**CLYDE**

What are you saying?

**STEVE**

Uh...

**WAYNE**

Listen, Clyde, we faced a very tight schedule, major supply chain problems and a crippling lack of qualified production line workers.

**CLYDE**

And?

**WAYNE**

Some...compromises had to be made.
What kind of compromises?

Wayne and Steve lead Clyde to a lot holding 50 new cars: boxy, inelegant, nothing like the prototype drawings (except for their shiny metallic exteriors).

What are these?

...Clydsters.

These look nothing like the drawings!

The workers had trouble fabricating the complex aerodynamic body panels and making them fit together. So we made some basic design changes.

Well, at least you kept the stainless steel body construction.

A deflated Clyde runs his hand over the fender of a car.

Well, at least you kept the stainless steel body construction.

Wayne and Steve share a worried look as Clyde pushes his thumb into the fender. It dimples inward, making that “crushed beer can” SOUND. Clyde recoils in shock.

What the hell?

Wayne glares at Steve (”Time for you to start talking!”)

We couldn’t afford stainless steel.

Then what did you use?
STEVE
...Aluminum.

CLYDE
As in “cans?”

Steve and Wayne nod in embarrassment as a nearby dump truck pours its load of aluminum cans onto a conveyer belt rolling into the factory. Clyde watches this in shock.

CLYDE (CONT’D)
Oh, my God.

He slumps down on the car’s fender - creating a major “beer can crush” SOUND as he sinks into it. Wayne and Steve wince.

INT. CLYDSTER FACTORY - DAY

Clyde stomps along, clearly upset, Steve and Wayne in tow.

CLYDE
Why didn’t you tell me about this?

WAYNE
We didn’t know where you were.

CLYDE
Well...why didn’t you ask Zoltan and Arno for more money?

Wayne and Steve exchange yet another nervous glance.

CLYDE (CONT’D)
What?

WAYNE
No one can find them.

CLYDE
Since when?

WAYNE
Six weeks ago.
CLYDE
What?

STEVE
All their numbers are disconnected. I even had an old buddy go by that warehouse. It’s abandoned.

Clyde leans against a workbench, stunned. Roland walks up, dejectedly waving the latest copies of several car magazines.

ROLAND
Early reviews of the Clydster.

Clyde glares at Wayne and Steve in disbelief.

WAYNE
One of the test drivers in Manila let some reporters take a spin.

Clyde grabs Car & Driver from Roland and reads aloud:

CLYDE
“Acceleration that rivals a VW van, handling that rivals a garbage truck, and styling that rivals a cinder block.”

He throws the magazine down and grabs Motor Trend:

CLYDE (CONT’D)
“Finally, a car that makes the Baby Bison look good.”

He drops the magazine, completely deflated.

ROLAND
At least the Automotive News is short and sweet.
(reading)
“Clydster: It’s just plain bad!”

Clyde slumps down into a chair, deflated.
CLYDE
Things couldn’t get any worse.

Just then, GUNFIRE! As Clyde watches in shock, 12 anti-government Communist REBELS with AK-47’s storm the place, SHOOTING the equipment.

One REBEL (28) rushes up to a complex piece of machinery. The FILIPINO WORKER (34) at the machine holds up his hands, yells something in TAGALOG, grabs a steel bar and SMASHES the machine as the rebel nods in approval.

When the worker runs out of steam, the rebel FIRES a single bullet into the wreckage.

The rebels make a raised fist gesture, SHOUTING and WHOOPING as they quickly withdraw.

An OLDER FILIPINO WORKER (65) in a cowboy hat stoically walks to a chalkboard reading “12 DAYS SINCE LAST COMMUNIST REBEL FACTORY TAKEOVER.” He shakes his head, erases the “12” and draws a “0” in chalk.

WAYNE
On the bright side, the attacks are getting less frequent lately.

Clyde turns and glares silently. Beat.

CLYDE
These cars have to get better. As the money comes in from the dealers, you have to improve them.
(beat)
Hell, you have to start building the car we set out to build!

WAYNE
You think you can get the dealers to take the first batch?

Clyde gives a pained grin.

CLYDE
I spent my entire career pushing cars worse than these on dealers who didn’t want them.

Wayne and Steve nod solemnly.
EXT. LAX FREIGHT DEPOT - DAY

A private C-130 rolls up and stops. A staircase wheels up as the door opens and Clyde emerges.

Car-carrying trucks ROAR up as the plane’s cargo ramp lowers.

Clyde watches TRUCKERS roll Clydsters down the ramp. His eyes go wide as he looks into one of them.

    CLYDE
    Hold it!

He opens the door to reveal: the radio, bunches of wires, instrument panel components, all scattered across the seats.

    CLYDE (CONT’D)
    Son-of-a...!

He notices the upholstery peeling off one of the seats.

A TRUCK DRIVER leans in over his shoulder to have a look.

    TRUCK DRIVER
    And I thought my AMC Pacer sucked!

INT. LAX FREIGHT DEPOT - DAY

Clyde speaks on the phone.

    CLYDE
    What the hell, Wayne?

INT. CLYDSTER FACTORY - DAY

Wayne talks on the phone, with Steve nervously watching him.

(Intercut as needed.)

    WAYNE
    Some of the guys on the production line haven’t quite gotten the hang of all the finishing work yet.
CLYDE (V.O.)
No kidding.

WAYNE
There wasn’t time to get it right and still have enough cars to fill the first shipment order.

Steve leans in, listening along with Wayne.

STEVE
We figured the dealerships could... spruce them up a little.

CLYDE (V.O.)
We’re on thin ice with the dealers. I’ll set up my own operation here to get these cars “dealer-worthy.”

WAYNE
Great idea!

CLYDE (V.O.)
And you two: Do whatever it takes to guarantee that no more cars leave the factory like this!

STEVE
(quietly, to Wayne)
How ‘bout we stop making cars?

CLYDE (V.O.)
I heard that!

Wayne smacks Steve.

WAYNE
Don’t worry, things are getting better here. The workers are really starting to do a good job.

In the background, a worker loses control of a forklift, which CRASHES into the side of a Clydster on the line.
CLYDE (V.O.)
What was that?

Workers YELL and SCREAM, running around like cut snakes.

WAYNE
Uh, we gotta go!

He abruptly hangs up.

INT. LAX FREIGHT DEPOT - DAY
Clyde stares at the phone in his hand, slowly hangs it up. He looks around and spots a female DEPOT CLERK (55) reading.

CLYDE
Do you have the Yellow Pages?

The clerk looks up from her magazine, annoyed, and digs the Yellow Pages out of a desk drawer.

CLYDE (CONT’D)
Thanks.

He flips through it, stops, tears out a page. She glares.

CLYDE (CONT’D)
Sorry. It’s an emergency.

He runs off.

EXT. INDUSTRIAL NEIGHBORHOOD IN EAST LA - DAY
Clydster-carrying trucks roll into the neighborhood.

INT. LEAD TRUCK - DAY
Clyde consults the torn off Yellow Pages sheet, checks addresses, points out the place to the driver.

CLYDE
Park here.
EXT. INDUSTRIAL NEIGHBORHOOD IN EAST LA - DAY

Clyde’s truck pulls up in front of an auto shop. The other trucks park behind the lead vehicle.

Clyde steps out and looks up at a Latino-owned garage as three LOW RIDERS (late teens) saunter up to mess with him.

    LOW RIDER #1
    Hey ese, your cars suck!

Clyde puts his head down in shame.

    CLYDE
    Yes, they do suck.

He slinks into the shop as they watch mutely.

INT. AUTO SHOP IN EAST LA - DAY

A dozen CHICANO MECHANICS (all ages) work on cars, LATIN MUSIC playing in the background. The place literally goes silent (even the music) as everyone looks up at Clyde.

One BARREL-CHESTED MECHANIC (45) with a handlebar moustache steps forward. He wears a name patch reading “RICO.”

    CLYDE
    I’d like to hire you guys to do some work on a whole bunch of cars!

Rico looks him up and down suspiciously.

INT. AUTO SHOP IN EAST LA - DAY

Another day: the shop now fully-converted into the “CLYDSTER READINESS CENTER” (as announced by a hand-lettered banner).

Clydsters sit everywhere, guys attending to them. A phone RINGS as Clyde confers with Rico.
WOMAN’S VOICE (ON PA)
Clyde Buntler, telefona for you.

Clyde heads for the office.

INT. CHOP SHOP OFFICE - DAY

Clyde answers the phone.

CLYDE
Hello?

INT. CLYDSTER FACTORY - DAY

Wayne speaks on the phone, Steve by his side. Behind them, factory operations appear to run smoothly.

(Intercut as needed.)

WAYNE
It’s Wayne. Steve’s here, too. How’s it going out there?

CLYDE (V.O.)
It’s going great! These guys are amazing. They’re working seven days a week and the cars are actually coming out pretty well.

Wayne glances nervously at Steve, who leans in to listen.

CLYDE (V.O.) (CONT’D)
I’ve been hiring drivers to take the cars to the dealers one by one.

WAYNE
Yeah, about that: we’re getting a lot of calls from the police.

CLYDE (V.O.)
Why?
WAYNE
The 800 number in the owner’s manual rings here.
Those cars you’ve been sending out? They’re starting to turn up.

CLYDE (V.O.)
Turn up?

Steve reads from a sheet of paper.

BEGIN MONTAGE

1. Two CHP OFFICERS pull to the side of the freeway, get out, survey the wreckage of what was once a Clydster.

   STEVE (V.O.)
   One was found totaled and abandoned on the Hollywood Freeway.

2. Several SLEAZY GUYS sit at a dimly lit card table, playing poker. One guy tosses the keys to a Clydster into the till. He shows his cards - and loses the hand, face falling.

   STEVE (V.O.) (CONT’D)
   Another was lost by its driver during a card game in Chicago. The vice cops confiscated it.

Suddenly, the CHICAGO POLICE kick in the door, bust the game.

   CLYDE (V.O.)
   Oh, no.

3. TIJUANA COPS in a chop shop hold up parts with Cyrillic letters, aluminum body panels, a Clydster steering wheel.

   WAYNE (V.O.)
   There’s more: the Tijuana Police think they found pieces of a Clydster in an illegal chop shop.

Dead silence.

END MONTAGE
INT. CLYDSTER FACTORY - CONTINUOUS

WAYNE
But there is some good news: the Houston dealership received a Clydster. They called to thank us.

CLYDE (V.O.)
I didn’t send one to Houston.

WAYNE
Oh. Well, they got one. Also, one of the cars got impounded in LA. Apparently, the driver forgot he was supposed to make the delivery and left it parked on the street.

CLYDE (V.O.)
I should probably go pick it up.

WAYNE
Uh, Clyde: at this point, it won’t make any difference.

Roland listens in now, too.

WAYNE (CONT’D)
The added costs of production, delivery and your “dealer readiness center” have changed the break-even point. Significantly.

CLYDE (V.O.)
How significantly?

WAYNE
To break even, we’d have to sell three Clydsters to every American.

ROLAND
Children, too? Or just adults?

Wayne glares at him.
CLYDE (V.O.)
I guess this means...bankruptcy.

Suddenly, the Communist rebels attack in a flurry of GUNFIRE.

WAYNE
Gotta go, Clyde!

He hangs up.

INT. CHOP SHOP IN EAST LA - DAY

In shock, Clyde emerges from the office, approaches a Clydster and runs his hand over the fender. Slowly, he turns around and slumps down onto it in defeat.

CRUNCH! (That “aluminum can crushing” sound again.) The mechanics working on it look at Clyde, YELLING in Spanish. Clyde puts his face in his hands, not even noticing them.

EXT. LOS ANGELES FEDERAL COURTHOUSE - DAY

Clyde carries a folder full of papers. He stops and stares up at the building sadly. Finally, he marches up the stairs.

INT. CLERK’S OFFICE OF LA FEDERAL COURTHOUSE - DAY

Clyde walks into the office, up to the “BANKRUPTCIES” window, where a male COURT CLERK (60’s) does a crossword puzzle.

CLYDE
Is this where I file for bankruptcy?

COURT CLERK
What does the sign say?

CLYDE
Sorry, it’s my first time.

COURT CLERK
I’ll be with you in a minute.
The clerk strolls away, in no hurry to help Clyde.

A SHIFTY GUY (50) in a brown suit leaning against the far wall pretends to read a newspaper. He studies Clyde.

SHIFTY GUY
Hey, you’re that car guy, right?

CLYDE
...Yeah.

Shifty guy approaches, gesturing at the “BANKRUPTCY” sign.

SHIFTY GUY
What happened?

CLYDE
Everything.

SHIFTY GUY
Come on, you can’t quit now, you’re a hero! You know, the little guy standing up to Corporate giants?

CLYDE
The giants won. I have no choice.

Shifty guy grins.

SHIFTY GUY
Maybe you do.

INT. URBAN COWBOY-THEMED BAR IN LA - NIGHT

Shifty guy leads Clyde to a booth occupied by HARVEY (48), a cigar-smoking urban cowboy wannabe studying a racing form.

SHIFTY GUY
Hey, Harve, this is Clyde Buntler.
HARVEY
Have a seat.
(to Shifty Guy)
Find that waitress, I want another beer. And one for Clyde.

Shifty guy looks deflated but complies.

HARVEY (CONT’D)
I understand that you’re in need of some cash. Maybe I can help.

CLYDE
How?

HARVEY
I’m prepared to pay well if you can help me with a little... “import” problem I’m having with some merchandise in the Philippines.

Clyde rolls his eyes.

CLYDE
Smuggling? What is it, guns? Drugs? Jewels?

Harvey laughs, waving a dismissive hand.

HARVEY
No. Lizards.

He pulls out a small, exotic LIZARD and lights it a cigarette. It takes a puff and grins, making Harvey laugh.

HARVEY (CONT’D)
I love this little guy!

CLYDE
You want me to smuggle lizards?

HARVEY
Yeah, in your cars. It’s a perfect setup, nobody would ever expect it.

Clyde gives him a skeptical look.
HARVEY (CONT’D)
Come on, it’s a petty crime. No one gets hurt.
(beat)
And I’ll pay you two million.

Clyde’s eyes go wide. He studies the smiling/smoking lizard.

CLYDE
I gotta make a call.

He leaves the table as Harvey pets the lizard’s head.

HARVEY
Nice going, little fella.

The lizard exhales smoke and grins.

INT. URBAN COWBOY BAR MEN’S ROOM - NIGHT

Clyde speaks on a pay phone.

CLYDE
Would two million save the company?

INT. CLYDSTER FACTORY - DAY

Wayne speaks on the phone.

WAYNE
Probably.

In background, the same older worker in a cowboy hat stares at the “0 DAYS SINCE LAST COMMUNIST REBEL FACTORY TAKEOVER” sign. He grabs a steel bar and smashes it.

INT. URBAN COWBOY-THEMED BAR IN LA - NIGHT

Clyde slowly approaches Harvey’s table. The cowboy shows off his smoking lizard for two giggling GIRLS (early 20’s).
CLYDE
I guess I’m in.

Harvey grins, the girls grin, the lizard grins.

EXT. PHILIPPINES AIRPORT - NIGHT

Clyde oversees the loading of Clydsters onto a C-130 as Wayne and Steve watch, noticing their boss’s nervous tension.

WAYNE
Why are we doing this at night?

CLYDE
Because we have to move fast!
(softens his tone)
To make sure this two million dollar...loan comes through.

Wayne and Steve nod warily as he leads them to their jeep.

CLYDE (CONT’D)
Get some sleep. There’s still a lot to be done at the factory.

They nod suspiciously and get in.

WAYNE
I hope you know what you’re doing.

CLYDE
...Yeah, me too.

He watches their vehicle and the empty car trucks leave.

Presently, an old van SPUTTERS up, with a crude, hand-drawn, misspelled sign taped to the side: “AIRPLANE MEELS.”

A grinning, TOOTHLESS GUY (44) gets out.

TOOTHLESS GUY
Hi, chief!
Three other GUYS (20’s and 30’s) hop out and unload boxes of lizards, carrying them to the C-130.

CLYDE
I’m Clyde. What’s the plan here?

He shakes toothless guy’s hand. The man replies in TAGALOG.

CLYDE (CONT’D)
Do you speak English?

TOOTHLESS GUY
Hi, chief!

INT. CARGO BAY OF C-130 - NIGHT

Clyde watches the guys place boxes of lizards (tails and heads peeking out of air holes) in the trunks of Clydsters.

When the men finish, they all rush out. From the cargo ramp, Clyde sees them pile into the van. Toothless guy waves.

TOOTHLESS GUY
Bye, chief!

He jumps in and the van CHUGS away, the “AIRPORT MEELS” sign tearing loose and fluttering through the air.

Clyde turns back and gets behind the wheel of a Clydster. He stares morosely at the “CLYDSTER” logo on the steering wheel.

CLYDE
I just wanted to build a good car.

He sighs, slumps his head down. A BABY LIZARD clinging to the inside roof drops unnoticed into his coat’s lapel pocket.

EXT. LAX RUNWAY - MORNING

The C-130 carrying Clyde and his lizards lands.
EXT. LAX FREIGHT DEPOT - MORNING

The C-130 rolls to a stop. A staircase ramp wheels up and Clyde steps out, yawning and pulling on his coat. A female CUSTOMS AGENT (29) meets him at the bottom.

CUSTOMS AGENT
Mr. Buntler? Please come this way.

Clyde nods and follows, failing to notice as the baby lizard sticks its head out of his lapel pocket and looks around.

INT. CUSTOMS AREA AT LAX - DAY

Clyde stands in a short line, dozing. The baby lizard climbs out of his pocket and into the open “V” of his shirt.

Clyde’s eyes pop open. He peers down his shirt, furiously untucks it. Too late - the lizard goes down his pants!

CUSTOMS CLERK (O.S.)
Next!

He approaches the counter, where a big, BRASSY WOMAN (48) takes his passport and a manifest. He tries to act natural, but it looks like he’s holding in really painful gas.

CUSTOMS CLERK (CONT’D)
You’re bringing in cars?

CLYDE
(squirming)
Yes!

She eyes him suspiciously, checks the paperwork again.

CUSTOMS CLERK
(skeptically)
From the Philippines?

She notices his expression and the way he hunches forward. She leans over the counter and sees what looks like a squirming erection through his pants (the lizard).
CUSTOMS CLERK (CONT’D)
Oh, so you like what you see, huh?

The lizard wriggles madly as Clyde realizes what she thinks.

CLYDE
I’m...sorry. It’s been a really long time since...you know.

She shakes her head mockingly.

CUSTOMS CLERK
Un uh, baby don’t play like that with wimpy little nerds. Next!

Clyde nods, shuffling away and into a nearby men’s room.

EXT. AIRPORT HOTEL IN LA - DAY

A cab rolls up and out steps Clyde, holding a manila envelope wriggling furiously. He looks up at the hotel anxiously.

INT. HALLWAY OF AIRPORT HOTEL - DAY

Clyde hesitantly works his way past closed doors with his wriggling lizard-envelope, checking room numbers. He finally stops at a door and builds up the nerve to knock.

The door opens to reveal Harvey and the shifty guy.

HARVEY
Clyde Buntler. Come on in.

INT. AIRPORT HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Harvey and shifty guy lead Clyde into the room, stealing glances at a wall mirror like bad actors “playing to camera.”

HARVEY
Have a seat.

Clyde tries to sit on the edge of the queen-sized bed.
SHIFTY GUY

Not there!

Harvey stares daggers at shifty guy, who looks down.

HARVEY

He means you’d be a lot more comfortable over here on the couch.

A little taken aback, Clyde nods and sits on the couch, which just happens to face the mirror.

HARVEY (CONT’D)

So, did you do it?

CLYDE

Yes.

HARVEY

Um, just so we’re clear, exactly what did you do?

CLYDE

...Exactly what you told me to do.

HARVEY

And that was? Just so we’re clear.

CLYDE

I snuck the lizards into LAX in the trunks of my cars...which are now sitting in a warehouse nearby.

He holds up the wriggling envelope.

CLYDE (CONT’D)

Except for this one.

He opens the envelope, releasing the baby lizard. It runs under the bed, scaring shifty guy, who SCREAMS and jumps on the bed like a frightened child.

Suddenly, AGENT RAY BUTOWSKY (45), wearing slacks, suit vest, and shoulder holster bursts into the room through a connecting door, ignoring Clyde and berating the other two.
BUTOWSKY
That was the clumsiest elicitation of a confession
I’ve ever seen! And letting an endangered species
run free in a hotel room? Goddamnit, guys!

CLYDE
What is this?

BUTOWSKY
Oh, yeah. Clyde Buntler, you’re under arrest for
violating section...um...section...

He fumbles though his pockets, finding the warrant.

HARVEY
Section 103c of the Fish and Game Act of 1973.

BUTOWSKY
Yeah, that.

CLYDE
You guys are FBI agents?

BUTOWSKY
You’ll wish we were, scumbag!

He flashes a badge: a bass beneath the Stars and Stripes.

BUTOWSKY (CONT’D)
Department of Fish and Game!
(to Harvey)
Book him!

HARVEY
Sure thing, McGarrett.

BUTOWSKY
Don’t push me, or you’ll end up in the Alaska field
office...again!

Clyde looks dumbstruck. Life as he knew it just ended.
INT. MAIN CONFERENCE ROOM IN NEW BUNTLER BUILDING - DAY

Wright and the Buntler board watch a TV news report.

ON THE TV SCREEN:

A FEMALE NEWSCASTER, 30, blonde and chipper.

Behind her, an animated graphic: a smoking Clydster towed by a truck. A lizard sticks its head out the window, with a cartoon cloud of dialogue coming from the mouth: “HELP ME!”

FEMALE NEWSCASTER
And in the latest installment of the Clydster automobile saga, CEO Clyde Buntler has been arrested in a federal sting operation.

The image cuts to low-resolution footage (shot through a wall mirror). A caption reads “SURVEILLANCE VIDEO.”

CLYDE
I snuck the lizards into LAX in the trunks of my cars...which are now sitting in a warehouse nearby.

Back to the newscaster.

FEMALE NEWSCASTER
The lizards in question are of the rare Sailfin variety and fetch over ten thousand dollars apiece.

INT. MAIN CONFERENCE ROOM IN NEW BUNTLER BUILDING - DAY

Wright grins as he turns off the TV.

WRIGHT
This should finally be the end of Clyde Buntler and his damned car.

He crosses to the stock ticker and takes a reading.
WRIGHT (CONT’D)
The publicity is driving Buntler’s stock price into the toilet.

He faces the board, beaming.

WRIGHT (CONT’D)
It’s almost time for us to start buying. We just need to wait for his case to resolve itself.

BOARD MEMBER #1
That could take years!

WRIGHT
Not if someone he still trusts convinces him to take a deal.

INT. FEDERAL PRISON VISITOR’S ROOM - DAY

A GUARD leads Clyde up to the bulletproof glass. He’s surprised to see Max sitting on the other side. They both pick up telephone handsets.

MAX
Hey, Clyde. How’s it going?

CLYDE
Not so good, Max. They say I’m facing a long prison sentence.

MAX
Wow, those must be some really special lizards. (beat) You could take a deal.

Max steals a look at his wrist.

MAX (CONT’D)
Plead guilty to a lesser charge.

Clyde’s eyes narrow as Max reads from his wrist.

MAX (CONT’D)
You’d be out in 18 months.
He looks up and smiles at Clyde.

MAX (CONT’D)
Just don’t shiv anyone!

CLYDE
You seem to know an awful lot about this case, Max.

Max looks down nervously.

MAX
I...I read the papers.

CLYDE
No, you don’t!

Max sweats profusely and wipes his brow. He glances down at his wrist: the sweat has created an illegible ink smear.

MAX
Yeah, well if you don’t take this deal, you could go away for two...

He squints to make out the smeared notes on his wrist.

MAX (CONT’D)
No, 20...five...25 years.

CLYDE
Are you reading crib notes?

Max instantly drops his hands to his sides.

CLYDE (CONT’D)
What the hell is going on, Max?

Max squirms in his chair.

CLYDE (CONT’D)
Who sent you here?

Max stares at him fearfully. Beat. He panics and runs away.
GUARD (O.S.)
Your attorney is here to see you.

Clyde nods, stares at Max’s empty chair, and finally stands.

INT. ATTORNEY-CLIENT ROOM IN FEDERAL PRISON - DAY

Clyde walks in and sees KIP NATHANSON (28, looks 18), a kid in an ill-fitting J.C. Penny’s suit. Kip jumps up.

KIP
Kip Nathanson, Mr. Buntler. I’m your defense attorney.

CLYDE
How old are you?

KIP
Old enough.

CLYDE
For what?

Kip frowns.

KIP
I’m the guy they send when you have no money for a lawyer.

CLYDE
How many criminal cases have you handled?

Beat.

KIP
One...including this one. But don’t worry, I asked my Uncle Morty to help me out. He’s been involved in the legal system for 35 years!

Just then, MORTY NATHANSON (62) enters, looking like a Jersy con man.

KIP (CONT’D)
Uncle Morty!
MORTY

Kid!

They hug.

MORTY (CONT’D)
Finally passed the bar exam, huh?

KIP
Yep! Seventh time was the charm.

MORTY
Atta boy! Took me nine tries.

CLYDE
Great. So you’re an experienced attorney?

MORTY
I, uh, used to be.

KIP
He’s still allowed to do paralegal work in New Jersey and Ohio.

Morty whispers in Kip’s ear.

KIP (CONT’D)
Oh. Just New Jersey.

Clyde stares at them, horrified.

CLYDE
And what was your specialty?

MORTY
Personal injury.

CLYDE
How does that apply here?

MORTY
We’re gonna file a claim against the government for the injuries you sustained from the handcuffs.
CLYDE
What injuries?

MORTY
Lemme see your wrists.

Clyde holds up his wrists. Without warning, Morty scrapes his right wrist with a pen, drawing blood.

Clyde cries out as Morty pulls out a Polaroid camera.

MORTY (CONT’D)
Hold it up.

Morty takes a picture, which WHIRS out of the camera.

KIP
Oh, cool! That’s one of those new automatic Polaroids. I’ve never seen one before.

MORTY
Yeah, these things are great. And the pictures develop real fast.

Uncle and nephew study the photo, waiting for it to develop.

MORTY (CONT’D)
Wait for it. Wait for it. There it is, the million dollar picture!

He and Kip laugh as Clyde studies them with disgust.

Morty holds up his pen.

MORTY (CONT’D)
Lemme see your other wrist.

CLYDE
No!
(beat)
I want to know what defense strategy you plan to use.
Morty and the kid look at each other, clueless.

MORTY
I dunno...How about tax evasion?

CLYDE
What?

MORTY
It worked for Al Capone.

CLYDE
It’s a prosecution, not a defense!

KIP
Maybe we could make that work for us...you know, turn it on its head?

CLYDE
What does that even mean?

Kip looks down, embarrassed.

KIP
...I don’t know.

INT. FEDERAL COURTROOM - DAY

A Law & Order graphic and MUSICAL SFX introduce the scene: “DETROIT FEDERAL COURT, ROOM 315, SEPTEMBER 15.”

Clyde stands before a JUDGE as the PROSECUTOR (40) looks on.

JUDGE
Mr. Buntler, this is a complicated case with serious consequences. You need the competence and experience that your legal team brings to the table.

Clyde looks at the defense table: Kip and Morty struggle to put a film cartridge in the Polaroid, arguing in WHISPERS. Parts lie everywhere. They are oblivious to the proceedings.
Clyde stares at the judge.

    CLYDE
    Really?

    JUDGE
    Motion for the defendant to mount his own defense granted.

He SLAMS the gavel, causing Morty and the kid to look up.

    MORTY
    What happened?

    KIP
    Did we win?

Clyde writes a name down and hands it to Morty.

    CLYDE
    You have only one job now: find this man and tell him to come see me. He’s in the Detroit phone book. Please don’t screw this up!

Morty smiles up at him.

    MORTY
    Come on, you know us.

Clyde considers this and snatches the paper from Morty. He turns to the waiting BAILIFF.

    CLYDE
    Could you do me a favor and call this man for me?

The bailiff studies the piece of paper.

INT. CLYDE’S CELL IN FEDERAL PRISON - DAY

Clyde works intently at a small desk, law books and filled-up legal pads all around him. The guard sticks his head in.
GUARD
You have a visitor.

INT. FEDERAL PRISON VISITOR’S ROOM - DAY

The guard leads Clyde to the window. He picks up the phone.

Reveal the visitor: Wright’s CIA-type guy.

CIA-TYPE GUY
You wanted to see me, Mr. Buntler?

Clyde smiles.

INT. FEDERAL COURTROOM - DAY

Another Law & Order graphic and MUSICAL SFX introduce the scene: “DETROIT FEDERAL COURT, ROOM 315, SEPTEMBER 29.”

Clyde sits with his inept legal team, waiting as the judge confers with his FEMALE CLERK (36). The prosecutor smiles confidently at Clyde as Kip and Morty play tick-tack-toe.

CIA-type guy bursts in and sits with Clyde, whispering. He hands Clyde a yearbook and opens it to an unseen page. Clyde smiles and pats CIA-type guy on the back. They look over at Agent Butowsky, who gloats in the back row of seats.

CIA-TYPE GUY
You gonna call him to the stand?

CLYDE
He’s much too smooth. He’ll hold up well on the stand.
(thinking)
No, we need to call someone who couldn’t even pull off a card trick for a roomful of five-year-olds.

LATER

Max fidgets on the witness stand as Clyde paces back and forth in front of him.
CLYDE
Mr. Buntler, have you ever seen that man before?

Clyde points dramatically to Butowsky.

MAX
N-no.

CLYDE
Your honor, I’d like to introduce Exhibit G into evidence.

He takes the yearbook from CIA-type guy and holds it up.

CLYDE (CONT’D)
The 1956 edition of the East Detroit Community College yearbook.

PROSECUTOR
Objection, your honor. How could this possibly be relevant?

CLYDE
If you’d grant me just a little leeway, I’ll make that clear.

JUDGE
Okay, but don’t waste my time, sir.

MAX
I won’t.

CLYDE
He was speaking to me, Max.

Laughter erupts in the courtroom. The judge SLAMS his gavel.

JUDGE
Order! Proceed, Mr. Buntler.

Max looks at the judge.
CLYDE
He meant me, again, Max.

Clyde hands him the yearbook. Max studies it with dread.

CLYDE (CONT’D)
Please open to page 168, the photo of the East Detroit Community College Male Crooners.

Max follows the instructions.

CLYDE (CONT’D)
Who is the man standing in the left rear corner of the photograph?

Max runs his finger along the right side of the photo.

CLYDE (CONT’D)
The other left, Max.

More laughter and the judge SLAMS his gavel again.

JUDGE
Order!

Clyde watches Max move his finger.

CLYDE
Right there: who is that man?

MAX
...Me.

CLYDE
Very good. Now, please tell us who that is standing next to you.

MAX
Oh which side?

CLYDE
You’re standing on the end, Max. There’s only a person on one side.
MAX
Oh. That’s...Ray.

CLYDE
As in Agent Ray Butowsky, the man you just said you’ve never seen before? The man who orchestrated the sting operation against me?

Max sweats nervously as Butowsky turns ash white and slumps down in his seat, trying to hide.

MAX
Um...

Max looks at his wrist: useless, sweat-smeared crib notes.

CLYDE
Isn’t it true that, far from not knowing Ray Butowsky, you roomed with him for two years and you’re even the Godfather of his children?

MAX
I’m not their Godfather...anymore. Ray’s wife fired me.

More laughter in the courtroom. SLAM goes the gavel.

CLYDE
True or false: Everett C. Wright, CFO of Buntler Motors, the man who’s wanted nothing more than to see me and my car fail miserably so he can purchase all of Buntler’s stock on the cheap...

Clyde points to the back of the courtroom.

CLYDE (CONT’D)
The man presently trying to sneak out of the courtroom...

A BAILIFF grabs Wright.
That man told you to get your friend Ray Butowsky at Fish & Game to set me up. Didn’t he?

Sweat pours down Max’s face.

MAX
Uh...what were my choices again?

CLYDE
True or false?!?

Max looks like a trapped animal as everyone stares at him. Suddenly, he bolts from the stand and runs out a side door.

JUDGE
(to another bailiff)
Go get that idiot.

The other bailiff complies as Clyde watches triumphantly.

MORTY
(whispers to Kip)
Damn, this is a good defense!

LATER

Clyde stands before the judge, with Wright and Max (both in handcuffs) beside him.

JUDGE
Mr. Buntler, I’m dropping the most serious charges against you in light of the compelling case you made for entrapment.

MAX
Thank God!

CLYDE
He was talking to me, Max.

More laughter, another gavel SLAM. Max frowns, disappointed.
Unseen by anyone else, the judge slides open a drawer in his bench and surreptitiously tickles a baby Sailfin lizard.

**JUDGE**

But I am not thrilled with the way you recklessly endangered those cute little guys.

The lizard rolls over and lets the judge rub his belly.

**JUDGE (CONT’D)**

I therefore sentence you to 500 hours of community service at the reptile petting zoo of your choice.

Clyde lets out a sigh of relief.

**JUDGE (CONT’D)**

As for you, Max Buntler, a good lawyer could probably get you off on perjury charges using a stupidity defense.

More laughter.

**JUDGE (CONT’D)**

So I’ll just fine you 50 dollars.

He nudges the baby lizard’s nose. The little lizard grins.

**JUDGE (CONT’D)**

But from now on, you stay the hell away from lizards, mister!

Max nods like a frightened child as a bailiff uncuffs him.

**JUDGE (CONT’D)**

And now, Mr. Wright: you, sir, are going away for a very long time.

Wright snarls at Clyde as he’s dragged away by both bailiffs. Clyde never flinches as his nemesis goes off to jail.
EXT. FEDERAL COURTHOUSE STEPS - DAY

Clyde emerges alone, a free man. A noisy crowd of 40 REPORTERS swarms him.

REPORTER #1
Anything you want to say to the American people, Mr. Buntler?

He stops and thinks about it.

CLYDE
No.

He walks off as Morty and Kip arrive and start taking credit.

REPORTER #2
How did you ever manage to mount such a brilliant defense?

MORTY
I’m a seasoned legal professional!

Reporters SHOUT questions all at once as Clyde leaves.

MARION (O.S.)
One more question, Mr. Buntler.

Clyde turns, surprised as a beaming Marion approaches.

CLYDE
On the record, or off?

MARION
Off.

She grabs him and they embrace like long lost lovers.

INT. UNCLE HOWARD’S OFFICE IN OLD BUNTLER BUILDING - DAY

Howard works at his desk, finally wheelchair-free. Clyde enters sheepishly, unnoticed. He clears his throat.

HOWARD
Clyde!
He jumps up to meet Clyde.

CLYDE
Uncle Howard. You called for me?

An awkward moment passes: Howard might hug him or might not. He lamely takes Clyde’s hand and shakes it.

HOWARD
Um, yeah...Have a seat, son.

CLYDE
You moved back to the old building.

HOWARD
I sold that damned monstrosity back to Holiday Inn... for a dollar.

Clyde chuckles. Long beat. Howard squirms in his chair.

HOWARD (CONT’D)
Listen, son, I...I was wrong. You were right. I’m...sorry.

CLYDE
It’s okay, you went through a lot.

Howard nods regretfully.

CLYDE (CONT’D)
So how’s the company doing?

Howard grins.

HOWARD
Believe it or not, your big engines saved us, Clyde!

CLYDE
How?
HOWARD
Ronald Reagan! With this military buildup, they’re making tanks and armored cars that need horsepower the Big-3 just can’t deliver.

CLYDE
I hated those engines.

HOWARD
But the Pentagon loves them!

CLYDE
Great. So Buntler keeps making the biggest engines in Detroit.

HOWARD
Listen Clyde, even I can read the writing on the wall. If we’re going to survive, we need fuel efficient cars for the 1980’s.

This gets Clyde’s attention.

HOWARD (CONT’D)
We need you, Clyde, to show us how.

CLYDE
Well, I’m flattered, Uncle Howard. (his face hardens) But what would Max’s role be?

HOWARD
Don’t worry about that. Max has been...reassigned.

EXT. BLEAK FACTORY - DAY

Scene Card: “SOMEBWHERE IN EASTERN EUROPE.”

INT. BARE BONES CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Max sits across from six EUROPEAN GUYS in gray overalls.
They hold up two artist’s renditions of a boxy, Yugo-esque compact car labeled in both English (“BUNTLE JOINT VENTURE #62”) and in some language heavy on Cyrillic letters.

EASTERN EUROPEAN GUY #1
Comes in white and black. Pretty - how you say? - spiffy! Eh?

MAX
Come on, you gotta be kidding me!

The Europeans exchange confused glances as a large, hairy-armed WOMAN (28) in a drab grey dress sets down a dented steel tea pot and gives Max a demure, gap-toothed smile.

MAX (CONT’D)
Oh, God!

He puts his head down on the table.

EXT. NICE COUNTRY HOME - DAY

Scene Card: “1990”

Clyde sits on the porch of a beautiful country house (think Upstate New York), being interviewed by a FEMALE REPORTER.

FEMALE REPORTER
We all know how things turned out after you went back. But what made you quit at the top of your game?

CLYDE
Once Buntler became the number two car company in the world, they really didn’t need me anymore.

Two BOYS and a GIRL (8, 6 and 3) come running out the front door and take off, playing and YELLING.

CLYDE (CONT’D)
Not like they need me.

Marion steps out the front door.
MARION
Would you like to stay for dinner?

Before the reporter can answer, a car HONKS.

They look up to see a cab pull to a stop. Max jumps out, dragging suitcases with Eastern Block travel stickers. He drops the bags and runs up, excited.

MAX
Clyde! I’ve come up with an idea that’s gonna change the American car industry as we know it.

He reaches into his pocket and unfolds a large drawing.

MAX (CONT’D)
The Japanese are never gonna be able to touch this baby!

He holds up a drawing that could be the work of a toddler: a boxy behemoth driven by a maniacally-grinning little man running a small Japanese car (Rising Sun flag on the door) off the road.

MAX (CONT’D)
I call it a Sport Utility Vehicle.

CLYDE
Wow, Max. It’s...big.

The cab driver HONKS. Max looks at the cab, then Clyde.

MAX
Uh, can I borrow $86.32...plus tip?

FADE OUT.

SIDEBAR (as credits roll)

INT. CONGRESSIONAL HEARING ROOM - DAY

Scene Card: “NOVEMBER 2008”
A senate hearing room: The Big-3 CEO’s and an older Max Buntler (now 73) sit facing a panel of six SENATORS.

ANGRY SENATOR
What I find most alarming is that the four of you are here today to beg the United States government for tens of billions of dollars...

The Detroit CEO’s squirm uncomfortably.

ANGRY SENATOR (CONT’D)
And I just received word that each of you flew to Washington in your own private company jet! What’s wrong with this picture, gentlemen?

The CEO’s avoid the senator’s glare.

ANGRY SENATOR (CONT’D)
I mean, couldn’t you have at least “jet-pooled” or something?

Silence. Slowly, Max raises his hand.

MAX
I’ll address that, your honor.

ANGRY SENATOR
Senator!

MAX
Right. Sorry, your honor. Anyways...that jetpool idea? That would never work ‘cause I really don’t like these guys.

All the SENATORS stares daggers. Max sweats profusely.

MAX (CONT’D)
No, wait. What I meant was...

He tries to read crib notes on his wrist: sweat-smeared ink.

MAX (CONT’D)
Something about union benefits... No, that can’t be right.
He realizes that even the other three CEO’s now glare at him.

MAX (CONT’D)

Uh...

Suddenly, Max Buntler panics and runs out of the chamber.

FADE OUT.

THE END