

PRINCE OF DESTRUCTION

**The Life of Gilles Villeneuve
by
CHARLES PROSER**

From the Book by Gerald Donaldson

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IN BLACK, A ROAR. A THOUSAND FERRARI HORSES WAKE AND SCREAM. A SLIT OF LIGHT WIDENS. SKY, GRASS, SHAPES MOVING FAST. GLOVES ON CURVE OF WHEEL, SLICE OF WINDSCREEN, RED BONNET SLOPES AWAY. MOVING TOWARD THE LIGHT, ENGINE BLIPPING, VOICES COME TO US; A MELANGE OF CONFUSION. THEN THEY ARE DROWNED IN THE ROAR. WE ARE OUT AND FREE AND ACCELERATING AWAY.

SPEED

THE REVS! SHIFT. FOOT TO THE FLOOR, THROUGH THE GEARS, TURNING IN. STREAMS OF COLORS WHIZZING BY. THE VOICES AGAIN!

GILLES (V.O.)

Ignore them!

DOWNSHIFT THROUGH THE TURN. THEY ARE LOST IN THE ROAR. THEN OUT, FOUR-WHEEL DRIFT, WHEEL CRANKED, THE BANK COMING UP.

GILLES (CONT'D)

Catch it, on the edge.

THE CAR KISSES THE EDGE. BLASTS AWAY. SPEED.

GILLES (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Faster, faster.

ENZO FERRARI (V.O.)

In tune. As one; The car an extension of will. Faster.

THE VOICES AGAIN.

HIS POV - ZOLDER AT 210 MILES PER HOUR

Other images, barely perceived, maybe only memory...they whiz past...blinding us with emotion...

JODY (V.O.)

The Doubts, put them behind, Concentrate!

POV - THE TRACK - AT 200 MILES PER HOUR - THE SHRIEK

ROAR, RATTLING VIBRATION. COMING UP FAST, A CAR, BLOCKING, SLIP INSIDE, DOWNSHIFT, THE CURVE, CUT INSIDE THE CORNER, THEN OUT, AWAY, FASTER, FASTER. VOICES again, the images...

GASTON (V.O.)

Responsibilities...

GILLES (V.O.)

Damn them! Just let me race!

JOANN (V.O.)

The kids.

GILLES (V.O.)
The kids are fine. I love the kids...

MONTAGE
Other drivers...good times...

HUNT (V.O.)
Friends...

GILLES (V.O.)
I have no friends. Just dead ones.

CRASHES

Flaming car parts, tumbling past. Dead drivers...Ronnie Peterson, Cevert...Nikki Lauda's crash.

GILLES (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Dead ones.

JODY (V.O.)
You can't race with anger.

GILLES (V.O.)
The woman!

AIR FRANCE - FIRST CLASS THE WOMAN - COURTNEY

GILLES (CONT'D)
Formula One...

COURTNEY (V.O.)
Oh? What are you, a chemist?

A ROAR.

NIKKI LAUDA (V.O.)
...the craziest devil in Formula One.

THE ROAR EXPLODES INTO CACOPHONY! SEEM TO BE IN A TUNNEL

It's the Monaco tunnel... a pinpoint of light grows at 200 MILES PER HOUR into the bright, gleaming yacht harbor, with Prince Ranier's palace glittering on the hill.

THE ENGINE ROAR IS NOW A CROWD

Hanging from the balconies, hanging from the towers, the spires of exotic yachts...your name...they scream...
VILLENEUVE! VILLENEUVE! VILLENEUVE! VILLENEUVE!

NELSON PIQUET (V.O.)

He's somewhat crazy, but surely a phenomenon. He's does things nobody else can.

THE WALLS OF MARANELLO

Red banners stream down both sides of the wall. The wall is a crowds of fanatical tifosi...the impassioned Ferrari fans. And banners:... "Gilles Forever!!!"

JODY (V.O.)

You're famous. A legend. It comes with a cost.

PIRONI (V.O.)

This one...Helga. She likes you.

Women, Gilles Villeneuve buttons, banners, models of his number 27 car, helmet, books on his career.

JODY (V.O.)

They're using you. They're using your name.

ZOLDERS - THE CHICANE

GILLES (V.O.)

Courtney...Demands..

COURTNEY (V.O.)

I want nothing from you. Just you.

GILLES (V.O.)

Concentrate. CONCENTRATE!

JODY (V.O.)

You can't go out there thinking of other things.

GILLES (V.O.)

There is nothing else. There is only winning and losing.

JODY (V.O.)

Life is more than winning points.

GILLES (V.O.)

World Champion...

FERRARI (V.O.)

The Team.

GILLES (V.O.)

Fuck the team!

FERRARI (V.O.)
 ...so fond of Villeneuve... he's
 one of my family.

GILLES (V.O.)
 Comandatore...Why did he abandon me?

PIRONI, IN THE PITS

GILLES (CONT'D)
 Stole the Race!

JOANN (V.O.)
 I don't trust him!

NIGEL (V.O.)
 Do you feel betrayed?

CLOSE ON GILLES

Trees streaming past in reflection on the visor of his helmet.
 Then reflections of other races...Jarama, the dead spectators,
 Imola...Monaco.

GILLES (V.O.)
 Betrayed, yes. Of course! Maudit!
 Concentrate! CONCENTRATE... The
 engine...

CLOSE ON - THE ENGINE - HIGH PITCHED SCREAM... ON GILLES

GILLES (CONT'D)
 The tires...

CLOSE ON - THE TIRES

A WHINE at the edge of adhesion.

GILLES' POV - THE BIANCHIBOCHT -FAST LEFT HAIRPIN TURN

GILLES (CONT'D)
 Fast left. Set up!

DOWNSHIFT! WHANG! WHANG!WHANG!...

CHEEVER (V.O.)
 ...was always risking more than any
 other driver. That's how he made
 his career.

HIS POV - ON THE CORNER, COMING AROUND THE TURN

A CAR. BLOCKING!

GILLES (V.O.)
Blocking. Move it... move!

JODY (V.O.)
...always wanting to prove himself,
every lap. I never knew him to take
it easy. It was always the maximum.

GILLES (V.O.)
THE VOICES, DAMN THEM. CONCENTRATE.

CAR AHEAD. SHOOT LEFT! THE WHITE CAR SUDDENLY SLIDES LEFT.

GILLES (CONT'D)
NO!

KEKE ROSBERG (V.O.)
...Abnormally brave. To race against,
the hardest bastard I ever knew, but
absolutely fair. a giant of a driver.
He SWINGS IN. He's BLOCKING.

GILLES (V.O.)
COME ON! MOVE OVER!

SWING LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT RIGHT. THERE, RIGHT! JUST ROOM ENOUGH.
SLIP RIGHT. SHIFT ROAR.

JOANN (V.O.)
"Maybe," I thought..."he's crazy..."

GILLES (V.O.)
THE VOICES, DAMN THEM! WHAT?!

THE FRONT CAR DRIFTS OVER, GAP CLOSING,

GILLES (CONT'D)
BRAKE? NO, NEVER!

SWING RIGHT, CAR COMING UP FAST, NO! NO ROOM! PINCHED! REAR
TIRE ZOOMING UP. HIT.

GILLES (CONT'D)
Maudit!

UP. THEN SKY, ROLLING OVER. THE WORLD SPINNING INTO THE PAST

GILLES (CONT'D)
...Fantastique...bonne...

AT LAST. ALL THINGS BEHIND... A SCREAMING CRASH... WHANG!
THE SKY, A FENCE. PARTS FLY BY...INTO WHITE CLOUDS, SCREAMS
SUBSIDE..A RUSHING, A FLUTTERING OF WINGS. THEN... BLACKNESS

BERTHIEVILLE, QUEBEC, 15 YEARS EARLIER - 1967

Aerial above a Pontiac roaring too fast, radio blaring.

INT. PONTIAC GRAND AM

A young Gilles blasts down the highway, singing to the music. He's in his element...speed. 108 miles per hour, flat out. A curve, too soon, too fast. The cars skids, spins, clips a pole and wraps around a second.

GILLES
Maudit! (MOOS-ZI!)

He staggers out and looks at the steaming wreckage.

EXT. GILLES'S HOME

Police arrive at a very modest lower middle class existence.

INT. PARLOR

Gilles' father JEAN, greets them grumpily.

POLICE
You own a Pontiac Grand Prix?

JEAN
It was stolen!

POLICE
And wrecked it, I'm afraid..

Shows him a picture of the car impaled on a pole.

JEAN
My new car?!

He glances at Gilles. Gilles is uncomfortable. Jean gets it.

JEAN (CONT'D)
You will make a report.

POLICE
We have.

JEAN
I will call the insurance. Thank you. What else is there?

The cop looks at Gilles suspiciously, but says nothing.

POLICE
Good day.

He ushers the policeman out.

GILLES
Father...

JEAN
Don't! I don't want to know.

GILLES
I...smashed the car.

His father looks stern. Gilles is shaken.

JEAN
Well, don't tell anyone. They'll
cancel the insurance.

GILLES
I'm sorry father.

JEAN
Do you know what you did?

GILLES
I drifted too far on the corner, I
caught a lip.

His father is very stern.

JEAN
You took the car without permission.

GILLES
Yes.

JEAN
And you destroyed it.

GILLES
Yes.

JEAN
You've learned your lesson.

GILLES
Yes.

JEAN
Just don't do it again.

He looks at Gilles. Gilles says nothing.

EXT. COUNTRY ROADS - TRAVELING - FAST

An MGA duels with a Porsche. They come 'round a turn.

GILLE'S POV

Cows block the road way, both shoulders, both ditches.

INT. MAG

GILLES CRANKS THE WHEEL.

GILLES

Maudit!

EXT. ROAD

THE MGA FLIPS.

INT. MGA - GILLES

Upside down, wheels spinning, he's still trying to steer it, to affect direction by throwing his weight around the cockpit.

EXT. ROAD - THE MGA

UPSIDE DOWN, slides down the ditch, slams into a bank and rocks, enveloped in steam.

INT. MGA

Gilles hangs from belts upside down.

GILLES

Maudit!

He bleeds.

EXT. RURAL QUEBEC - SMALL TOWN AT A CROSSROADS - WEEKS LATER

A dog sleeps in the square. He wakes, ears perk. He gets up, slinks off. Townsfolk notice, listen... A distant WHINE grows into an approaching roar. Villagers put down their papers, lean forward in their rockers. A kid working on a car puts down his tools, moves to the street, wiping his hands on a rag. Young girls stop playing jump rope, listen...turn toward the growing roar.

THEIR POV

A Skoda whips through, clears a hairpin on two wheels and is gone in a cloud of dust.

KID

Gilles!

Townsfolk cheer.

OLD MAN
Gilles encore!

YOUNG GIRL
Bon chance Gilles!

The car is long gone...only settling dust and the ECHOING
roar of the motor fading... An old biddie shakes her head.
The young folks cheer.

DISCO - JOLIETTE, A SMALL TOWN IN QUEBEC - NIGHT

INT. DISCO

Joann, a small-town beauty talks to a friend, Rose.

JOANN
I don't know, he's very quiet. And
he's too short.

She looks at Gilles.

ANGLE - GILLES

He's slight, boyish, nervous and out of place. A boy speaks
to Gilles, indicating Joann.

CHRISTIAN
I told you!

GILLES
She's very pretty. But... I don't
think she likes me.

CHRISTIAN
Sure she does. Look how she's looking.
Ask her to dance. Go on, what are
you afraid of?

GILLES
(not so sure)
Nothing.

Christian pushes him into the room. He moves slowly,
awkwardly.

HIS POV - JOANN

Angelic, vulnerable, provincial. She smiles encouragement.

JOANN
He looks like a boy.

ROSE
Looks can be deceiving.

JOANN

So can men.

ROSE

You're looking for your father. You're primed.

JOANN

Primed? For what?

ROSE

The usual solution. Marriage.

JOANN

Don't be ridiculous. Never!

She looks at Gilles, critically.

NIGHT HIGHWAY - A FAST MUSTANG

INT. MUSTANG

Gilles drives like a maniac. Joann's terrified. She sneaks a glance at Gilles. Behind the wheel, he's in control, confident. She screams over the howling engine.

JOANN

So, what are you interested in, besides cars...?

He looks over, confused.

GILLES

Nothing.

A turn. He takes it at frightful speed. She opens her eyes, looks at him. He looks ahead calmly.

EXT. STREET - LATER

Joann and Rose.

JOANN

It wasn't to impress me. It's just the way he drives.

(stops, turns to her)

I think...maybe...he's crazy.

EXT. JOANN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

HE SCREECHES UP.

INT. MUSTANG

He sits quietly, engine idling, now shy again.

JOANN
You're really good at this...

GILLES
Yeah. I can drive fast.

She kisses him, runs into the house.

QUEBEC ROAD - ANOTHER DAY

They pull up, he gets out, she follows.

JOANN
What is it?

GILLES
Get in the trunk.

She stands there for a beat, resistant.

GILLES (CONT'D)
Quickly.

JOANN
Why?

GILLES
Don't you trust me?

She hesitates, then gets in. He kisses her, slams the lid.

INT. TRUNK - BLACKNESS

Just a thin shaft of light. Then a terrifying ROAR as he starts and GUNS the engine. She's terrified.

EXT. MUSTANG

He floors it, pops the clutch and peels out.

INT TRUNK

She's banged around. Things stop. Silence! WHANG! the trunk FLIES OPEN. She's impaled in brilliant light.

ANGLE JOANN

She blinks in the floodlit night.

HER POV

She sees bleachers. HEARS A DISTANT ROAR...COMING CLOSER.

EXT. TRACK

They are at a track. A race roars. She gets out.

JOANN
Gilles. What?!!!

GILLES
Shhsh. I only had money for one.

JOANN
What am I supposed to do now?

GILLES
Attends-moi, ce ne sera pas long...

JOANN
What?!

He kisses her.

GILLES
Wait for me. I won't be long.

He takes her by the hand and leads her into the infield, to a small bleacher filled with girlfriends and crew.

EXT. MUSTANG

He hops in, belts up, cranks up. turns onto the track. The flag comes down. They are off.

ON JOANN

Shocked beyond belief. He mouth hangs open. She looks around at the other girlfriends, screaming and yelling for their men. At the crew, jumping up and down, shouting driving tips and encouragement as the racers come around the turn at 90 miles and hour and 100 decibels. After a turn or two, Joann finds herself screaming for her man.

EXT. THE TRACK - THE RACE - STOCK - NIGHT

Gilles wins. The crowd roars. It surges toward the cars... She is carried along. She's excited. He's elated. Pretty girls rush his car. Joann's lost in the crowd.

GILLES

He climbs out. He's hugged and slapped on the shoulder. He is pummeled and from a blonde or two...kissed. He looks around then finds...Joann. He moves through the crowd with a lopsided grin. He comes up, about to say something. Joann rushes forward, kisses him fiercely. He kisses back. The crowd takes note. Blondes mumble, look at each other.

THE KISS

Goes on... They swirl, dizzy. They fall back into the car. The horn blares. The crowd cheers.

EXT. DIRT TRACK RACES - MONTAGE

Joann is also drawn to his small-town notoriety. The outlaw edge of someone who drives dangerously fast. As the girlfriend of Gilles, she shares this celebrity.

EXT. QUEBEC COUNTRYSIDE

Rolling hills, brilliant fall leaves, small towns.

EXT. BERTIEVILLE PROVINCIAL CATHEDRAL

A MUSTANG

Horn blaring, screams into the square. Gilles gets out, opens the door. Joann's in a bridal gown. Rose comes up.

ROSE

Are you sure?

She struggles out of the car, moves toward the church. Gilles comes around the car in an ill-fitting and out-of-style suit. Joanne looks at him. He looks small and lost.

JOANN

I don't know.

He smiles, nervously hands her a bouquet. Aside to Rose:

JOANN (CONT'D)

But I need a father for Jacques.

She pats her stomach. They walk up the stairs toward a small crowd of relatives in their baptismal best. Gilles follows looking proud and overwhelmed.

INT. CATHEDRAL

Cold light shafts on the martyrs. It's intimidating.

CHRISTIAN

How do you feel?

GILLES

Terrified.

CHRISTIAN

Don't worry, it's just that it's a new concept for you.

GILLES

What?

CHRISTIAN

Responsibility.

GILLES

I don't know what to do?

CHRISTIAN

When he asks, just say "I do."

GILLES

No, not about that.

CHRISTIAN

Yeah, that's the easy part.

GILLES

I know to race, but I don't know how to get a job.

CHRISTIAN

Don't worry, It'll come to you. She'll see to that.

He looks over at Joann. She smiles nervously, along with her whole family. She hides her baby bulge with her coat.

GILLES

How can I be responsible for a family?

His father steps up.

JEAN

Simple. You have no choice. You're Catholic, she's Catholic. That's all she wrote.

His wife favors him with a glare.

JEAN (CONT'D)

Get a girl pregnant, you marry her, that's the law.

MOTHER

Look! How beautiful she is!

FATHER

Yeah. You could'a done worse.

He takes Joann's hand.

CLOSE ON - HER HAND

EXT. CATHEDRAL - DAY

Her hand. It still tightly clings to his but now it's in the Mustang. The crowd outside the church cheers, throws rice.

INT. MUSTANG

SHE TURNS TO HIM.

JOANN

What now?

GILLES

Just hang on.

He roars away, showering the crowd with pebbles.

EXT. OUTSIDE BERTHIERVILLE - QUIET ROAD, MOMENTS LATER.

No longer quiet. A Mustang streaming tin cans, ROARS by.

INT. MUSTANG - GILLES AND JOANN

JOANN

So, how long you think we'll stay married.

HIS POV - JOANN

She fights fiercely with her bridal veil, sits, wide-eyed and defiant, trying not to let it get sucked out the window by the hundred mile an hour blast...

ON GILLES

GILLES

Maybe...forever!

She smiles and seems to relax for the first time.

JOANN

So, what's your hurry?

GILLES

No hurry.

JOANN

Then, maybe this one time, you could slow down.

GILLES

What do you mean?

She sees he hasn't a clue. This is just the way he is.

JOANN
Nothing. Never mind.

EXT. COUNTRY ROADS

The MUSTANG roars off to the honeymoon at 105 miles an hour.

SPEED - A WHITE HURRICANE

A loud BLATTING ROAR. A blizzard of snow blasts the face.

EXT. QUEBEC - WINTER DAY - SKIMOBILE RACING - NORTH AMERICAN CHAMPIONSHIP

Sideways sliding on ice. Crystals smash into his face, obscuring vision. Rooster-tails of snow whip in his wake.

GILLES

He leans into a power slide, comes up too fast, clips a slower machine and departs into flight, spinning onto the ice at ninety miles an hour, whirling through the pack.

SCATTERING SNOWMOBILES

swerve to avoid him.

GILLES - ACROBATIC

He tucks to spin from the roaring track, extends to slow his spin. Digging, looking, planning, thinking at 90 miles an hour. He skitters across ice, smashes into a hay bale,

GILLES POV -THE SKY ABOVE

Swirling snow...dark figures...A face...Joann.

GILLES

Looks up... smiles.

JOANN

Her face is a mask of horror.

INT GILLES' TRAILER - LATER THAT NIGHT

Gilles wolfs down steak, frites. Joann looks curious.

JOANN
Gilles...

GILLES

Huh,

JOANN

What were you thinking of...?

GILLES

Oh, nothing. More frites?

She just stares. He looks up. She's not satisfied. He shovels in more food.

GILLES (CONT'D)

I was thinking how to control the spin, to miss the machines, how to hit.

JOANN

Weren't you afraid?

GILLES

No time for that. I just wanted to hit right, so I wouldn't be hurt, so I could race again.

JOANN

That's all?

GILLES

At the end...just before, when I had done all I could, there was a moment...serene... a release. Everything was... fantastique! ...Bonne!

EXT. ALBERTA - A RACE

She leans into his cockpit, terrified.

JOANN

Gilles, are you worried?

GILLES

About what?

JOANN

You know. What can happen.

He looks at her. He really doesn't understand.

GILLES

Don't worry?

JOANN

What else can I do?

GILLES

Just... wait for me, I won't be long.

A growing ROAR. She hops out of the way. They are off.

UNDERNEATH A HOUSE TRAILER - NIGHT

Joann crawls in wet mud, thawing frozen pipes with a blowtorch.

JOANN

Wait my ass!

A big glop of frozen slush drops on her face.

JOANN (CONT'D)

Maudit!

INT. TRAILER

She enters and quiets two bawling kids, Jacques and Melanie. Gilles is at the table oblivious. He's holds up a drawing.

GILLES

What do you think!

JOANN

It's cold. We're out of propane again.

(a beat. He's not
really listening.
What's the use!)

What's that?

GILLES

New suspension. Just designed it.
What do you think?

JOANN

Kids are hungry. Can you sell it for
some food?

He looks up, no idea what she's talking about. He looks at the kids. They are shivering, wrapped in blankets. Joann gets up, walks to the bedroom compartment, slams the door.

GILLES

He's shocked. He's so involved he hasn't noticed.

INT. BEDROOM

She's on the bed, crying. He enters.

GILLES

I love the kids. Am I being fair? I thought...They're here with us...what else do they need?

JOANN

You didn't think. You don't.

GILLES

I'll quit, get a real job. We should have a home.

JOANN

Thing is...you don't believe that.

GILLES

Sure...sure I do.

JOANN

What job?

GILLES

I don't know...maybe... mechanic?

JOANN

And a home where, back in Berthieville?

GILLES

Yah...sure..

JOANN

What would you do?

GILLES

Whatever it took.

JOANN

You'd be just another small town failure who used to drive fast.

GILLES

There'd be food. And heat.

JOANN

No. It won't work.

Gilles nods.

GILLES

There's only one way to go...

JOANN

Fast.

SNOWMOBILE - FINISH LINE

Gilles crosses first, the crowd roars. Joann hugs the kids.

JOANN (CONT'D)
North American Champion!!!

Gilles comes up with a trophy, a check. Joann looks at it.

JOANN (CONT'D)
Is that all there is?

Gilles looks at it...disbelief.

GILLES
You're right, there's no money in
this.

She's relieved.

GILLES (CONT'D)
I've got to get a Formula Car!

He walks away. She looks after him.

EXT. QUEBEC - THE TRAILER

Gilles revs a racing car engine.

INT. THE TRAILER

JOANN AND ROSE HAVE COFFEE.

ROSE
But you hate racing!

JOANN
It's not so bad.

ROSE
Are you kidding? Why do you encourage
him?

JOANN
I can't stand to see him miserable.

MANITOBA - GIMLI RACE TRACK

Rain clouds. Gilles and Joann are covered with oil and dirt. They look at the opposition: giant transporters, mechanics in outfits, gleaming toolkits. Aloof sponsored drivers look over with pity and contempt. Joann looks at Gilles covered with grease, a rusty wrench in his hand.

GILLES

Maudit! We've got no chance.

Gilles looks up at the darkening rain clouds.

EXT. TRACK - THE RACE

Torrential downpour, visibility zero, a non-sponsored car blasts through hesitant competition. Gilles wins.

EXT. THE PITS

A competitor comes up. Gilles is still on his winning high.

DRIVER

Great race, Villeneuve! Gilles, how can you drive in this?

GILLES

What do you mean? I love the rain!

DRIVER

I mean...there's NO traction!

GILLES

Sure there is... a lot more than with snowmobiles.

The mechanics pack their beautiful tools and look at this dirt ball in awe.

INT. MOTORHOME - MANITOBA - DEAD OF WINTER

Joann looks at a document, aghast.

JOANN

Gilles, what have you done?

GILLES

I had to.

JOANN

You mortgaged the motorhome!

GILLES

...uhh yes. To buy the car!

JOANN

But Gilles, we don't own the motorhome!

OFF GILLES...

MONTAGE - FORMULA ATLANTIC RACES

Gilles crashes or wins. He crashes and wins. Conflicting emotions play on Joann's face; terror, excitement, dread, victory, defeat. She grows to like her celebrity status around the track. She times his laps and shows off the kids to the crowds. Gilles loves the kids. They sit in the cockpits as he works on the cars. Other times, he looks right past them, as he mentally prepares for a race.

EXT. OLD MONTREAL

Beautiful old Victorian/Edwardian architecture, narrow streets and coffeehouses.

INT. - A TRENDY OFFICE

From behind a big desk, Gaston Parent is a Quebecois Damon Runyon. Short with gut and goatee, he's a shrewd judge of character, an entrepreneur. But now...his jaw's dropped in disbelief.

GASTON

You want what?

GILLES

Twelve thousand dollars.

GASTON

For what?

GILLES

To enter a race.

GASTON

A race?

GILLES

Formula Atlantic.

GASTON

Is that a horse?

GILLES

I race cars. And snowmobiles.

GASTON

Is there money in that?

GILLES

I've won everything there is in North America.

GASTON

Don't you get money when you win?

GILLES
This is the biggest race of my life.

GASTON
Twelve thousand dollars to enter a
race?

GILLES
Yeah.

GASTON
That's an extremely.. bad idea.

GILLES
The formula one guys will be there.
The top drivers in the world. I can
beat them.

Parent studies Gilles. His eyes are tearful. Parent watches.
The rest of Gilles' speech is lost in the ROAR OF ENGINES.

EXT. TROIS RIVIERES - QUEBEC - THE FORMULA ONE RACE

NIGEL ROEBUCK does a standup for the CBC.

NIGEL
...a street race, a place to be seen
and get noticed as Formula 1 heroes
race lesser known North Atlantic
champs.

INT. THE PITS

Gilles looks at the F1 drivers with envy. Joann's intimidated.

JOANN
Gilles, that's James Hunt, the world
champion, that's Laffite, Rene
Arnoux... You sure you're ready for
this?

GILLES
We're broke, I've got to be.

JOANN
You can't...

He doesn't let her finish.

GILLES
I've won everything in Atlantic.

JOANN
These guys are Formula One.

GILLES

Yeah, this is my chance.

Suddenly, a driver stands next to him. Didier Pironi, a handsome European, interrupts.

PIRONI

You're Villeneuve? I am Pironi.

No reaction. Gilles has heard of Pironi, but doesn't know what to say. Pironi's smooth, arrogant, charming.

PIRONI (CONT'D)

They're talking about you in Europe.

GILLES

Oh, yeah?

PIRONI

Yeah...Ferrari...

GILLES

(shrugs)

I've heard nothing.

Pironi glances at Joann. She stiffens. Pironi walks away. Gilles watches him, then turns to Joann.

JOANN

Don't take chances.

GILLES

What do you mean? You know.

He laughs, kisses her, whispers

GILLES (CONT'D)

Wait for me, I won't be long.

THE PITS - QUALIFYING

A crewman looks up from his stopwatch to see Gilles shooting through the corner backwards.

CREWMAN 1

Who the hell is that?

CREWMAN 2

27, the Ford. Villnova.

INT. COCKPIT

Gilles whips the car around in a cloud of smoke, keeps right on going.

INT. THE PITS - THE CREWMAN

CREWMAN 1

What... the hell was that!?

CREWMAN'S POV - FROM THE PITS

The crewman looks at his watch. His jaw drops.

CREWMAN 2

I don't know, but it only cost him a second!

An engineer shakes his head and laughs.

ENGINEER

Look! He spins and knows exactly what the car is doing. Watch him!

Nigel takes notice and moves forward next to them, leaning on the pit wall.

ENGINEER (CONT'D)

He never loses sight of where he is.

NIGEL

He's good, huh?

ENGINEER

He's the only driver I've ever seen who can do that!

EXT. THE RACE - STOCK - GILLES' CAR

In opposite lock, slides the corners, using every inch, scrapes a wall, tires smoking, sparks flying. Photographers lean over, trying to focus on the furious contest. Suddenly, a HOWL! They look up. Gilles in full lock, slides sideways toward them. They scatter, but he catches it, inches away.

VICTORY LAP

Wildly cheering spectators weep with joy. One of their own has won, the Fleur de Lis of Quebec on the car. Gilles pulls up to Gaston who grins proudly.

GILLES

Surprised?

GASTON

Not at all. I'm a great judge of character. You're a Canadian hero. Now I'm going to sell you like a can of beans.

IN THE PITS

Gilles walks past Jody Scheckter and Ronnie Peterson, two of the fastest drivers in the world. They look at him curiously. He nods and keeps walking. When they aren't looking, he sneaks a glance at his heroes. A tall Briton, James Hunt, speaks to a CBC crew. His eyes follow Gilles.

HUNT

I drove a good race. Not as good as HE did. Who is he?

REPORTER

Villeneuve, our Atlantic champion.

HUNT

He's quite marvelous.

The Canadians are surprised.

REPORTER

Is he really that good?

HUNT

He must be. He beat me.

Hunt's called to the phone by a mechanic..

MECHANIC

Teddy Mayer, McLaren team.

Hunt takes the phone, holds his ear against victory noise.

HUNT

Yes, hello. Fine Weiner. Yes, Quite!
Finished third... yes... say, I've
just been beaten by this chap
Villeneuve. Heard of him? No, well.
you've got to get hold of him, he's
really magic!

SILVERSTONE - BRITISH G.P. F1 RACE - A BLUR!

Trees, grass, sky, track, trees, grass sky, track,
treesgrassskytrack. Howl! Trees coming up fast.

INT. COCKPIT

Gilles is in a rapid spin, working like mad. Downshift.
WhaaWhaaaWhaaWhaa. Fifthfourththird secondfirst.
Trees,grass,sky... slows. He catches it, pops the clutch,
swerves back, rockets away. Upshift WhaaWhaaWhaa.
Firstsecondthird forthfifth. Gaining, into a curve, Rear
kicks loose. Opposite lock, rear comes around. He loses it.
A BLUR! Trees, grass, sky, track, trees...

IN THE PITS

The McLaren mechanics are dismissive.

MECHANIC 1
What the hell's he doing?

MECHANIC 2
Good thing it's last year's car.

Cognoscenti shake their heads at the antics of this unknown.

COG 1
Shouldn't be here.

COG 2
Doesn't know what he's doing.

INT. PRESS AREA

Home of cynicism. Journalists argue.

FRANCO
Way over his head. Dangerous!

DIETER
He's spun nineteen times.

They look to Nigel Roebuck, a respected judge, who stares thoughtfully...

NIGEL
You notice anything?

DIETER
He's backwards a lot.

NIGEL
He spins only once at any corner.
He's finding his limits by exceeding them. Intelligent.

DIETER
Yeah, if he lives through the learning process.

INT. THE PADDOCK

Gilles and Joann sew sponsor patches on his suit. Journalists and crowds cluster around better known drivers. Villeneuve is unknown, but ecstatic.

NIGEL
Your first big race?

GILLES

Yeah.

NIGEL

How's it feel?

Gilles grins, taps his heart, his gesture for a thrill.

EXT. THE RACE - STOCK

A roaring, screeching battle.

CU - NIGEL - STAND UP

THE RACE ROARS BY IN B.G.

NIGEL

Andretti and Scheckter duel with an unknown number 40 McLaren right up there with the best in the world. A new driver, Gilles Villeneuve...

EXT. THE TRACK - TRAVELING MONTAGE

ROUND AND ROUND.

NIGEL (V.O.)

He spins many times, but qualifies. He tests his limits, taking chances, finding the maximum speed... for himself, the track, the car.

THE STANDS

The crowd's on it's feet, searching their programs.

FAN

Who's in the 40 McLaren?

INT. COCKPIT

Gilles looks at his temperature gauge...way into the red.

GILLES

Engine's going to blow!

INT. THE PITS

CREW CHIEF ON RADIO.

CREW CHIEF

Come in. Now!

EXT. PITS

He pulls into the pit. The crew scramble. Gilles sits in the cockpit, gesturing frantically as the other cars whiz past. A mechanic pops out, screams in his ear.

MECHANIC

Nothing wrong with the engine. It's the fucking gauge!

Gilles pops clutch, screams out in a cloud of smoke, laying rubber, scattering mechanics.

THE RACE

Gilles ROARS UP, rejoins the leaders and holds with the famous - a triumph in itself.

THE PRESS AREA - THE PHONES - AFTER THE RACE

In the B.G. drivers do interviews. Gilles speaks quietly to Nigel. In the F.G. an Italian journalist is on the phone.

LINI

Hello, yes, Franco Lini at Silverstone. May I speak to Commendatore Ferrari.

CLASSICAL ITALIAN VILLA

Cut stone and red tiles, graceful arches, exquisite gardens. Horrible noise.

WIDER SHOT

The villa sits... in - THE MIDDLE OF A TEST TRACK Red cars whiz by. Ferrari's. The twelve cylinder HOWL at 1400 rpm...shakes the olives from the trees.

INT. THE CLASSICALLY AND RICHLY APPOINTED VILLA

A door opens on a room filled with TVs monitoring the test track. A functionary, MORTARA, hands a videotape to a silver-haired figure seated before video screens.

MORTARA

Commendatore...

Without looking up, the figure accepts the tape.

FERRARI

Grazi.

EXT. MOSPORT RACEWAY - TORONTO

Gilles accepts third place trophy. Parent's in the crowd, talking to Teddy Mayer, the McLaren manager. Gaston's expression is grim. Out of the celebration, Gilles is called away. Gilles beams in the victory rush. Mayer's solemn.

MAYER

Gilles, if some team makes an offer,
don't let us hold you back.

GILLES

I...I don't understand.

MAYER

I don't intend to keep your option.

Gilles is stunned. As he walks away, an aide arches a quizzical eyebrow. Mayer mumbles.

MAYER (CONT'D)

Too many broken cars. He costs too
much.

EXT. BERTHIEVILLE - DEAD OF WINTER

GILLES (V.O.)

Hello, Gaston?

INT. GENERAL STORE

Gilles is on a pay phone in the corner.

GILLES

...Any news?

INT. PARENT'S OFFICE - MONTREAL

PARENT SITS BEHIND HIS DESK.

GASTON

No Gilles. Nothing. I'm sorry.
(listens for a beat)
Gilles, face reality. This is a
rich man's game.

EXT. YARD

Gilles sits in his car, holding his helmet, moping. Joann comes out, hands him a Pepsi sits.

GILLES

I have one trade, racing driver.

JOANN

We'll get by...

GILLES

We're in debt. You need a more stable future. The kids...

The phone rings. Joann puts her hand on his arm, then rests her head on her hand...looks up at him, sadly. The phone keeps ringing...finally, she gets up and goes inside to it. He can see her through the window answering. He looks around at the bleak landscape, bare trees, grey skies, winter approaching...

INT. TRAILER

Joann's puzzled, straining to hear a faraway voice.

GILLES' POV

She slides open the window, calls to him.

JOANN

Gilles...

GILLES

What?

JOANN

Long distance,

GILLES

Who?

JOANN

I don't know. Somebody speaking English...with a foreign accent.

GILLES

What...foreign accent?

A long beat as she listens on the phone. Then she covers the mouthpiece and hollers out the window....

JOANN

I don't know, Italian, I think.

ALITALIA AIRLINES - STOCK - AT 35,000 FEET

INT. FIRST CLASS

The stewardess offers Champagne. Gilles shakes his head.

GASTON

You're not having champagne?

GILLES
No, thank you.

GASTON
It's free!

GILLES
Makes me sick.
(to the stewardess)
A Pepsi, please.

GASTON
(Disbelief)
I only got into this because I thought
everyone in racing drank champagne.

GILLES
Guess I'm different. Can you really
make this happen?

GASTON
If Ferrari calls you, I can. How
badly do you want it?

GILLES
Ferrari?! You kidding?

GASTON
Then don't say a word. Leave
everything to me.

GILLES
How many racing contracts have you
negotiated?

GASTON
Counting this?

Gilles nods.

GASTON (CONT'D)
One.

Gaston smiles, pats Gilles' arm, glances at Gilles' outfit;
jeans and a ratty old coat.

GASTON (CONT'D)
That what you're gonna wear?

GILLES
What's wrong with it?

A beat.

GASTON

Oh, nothing.

GILLES

One thing...no way anybody's going to stop me from doing what I like because of racing.

GASTON

What?

GILLES

A surgeon uses his hands, but he goes skiing or whatever. I don't want anybody trying to run my life. I want to be my own man.

GASTON

Okay Gilles. You'll be your own man. I promise. Just let me handle things, Okay?

EXT. MARANELLO, ITALY - SCUDIERI FERRARI - HEADQUARTERS

Mortara drives Parent with Gilles asleep in the back. They drive into the compound, down a street to a door in a wall. The door opens, they drive in.

INT. DUSTY OLD OFFICE

Dirty cases full of trophies... A table, a few chairs.

GILLES

Jesus! Like an audience with the Pope.

They sit. The Old Man comes in. He hands them a paper. Gaston glances at it, hands it to Gilles.

INSERT - AGREEMENT

...for Gilles Villeneuve to race for Ferrari.

GASTON

Let's talk about the terms.

GILLES

(Grabs him for a whisper.)

He wants me to drive?

GASTON

Just let me handle it.

Gilles is out of his head! He whispers to Parent.

GASTON (CONT'D)

Shut up.

He starts to negotiate, Gilles whispers in his ear.

GASTON (CONT'D)

Take it easy.

He's nervous, keeps whispering.

GILLES

Let's take the deal.

Parent isn't signing fast enough.

GASTON

There's...one thing.

Ferrari sits silently, calmly. Smoke drifts upward. A beat. Gaston continues.

GASTON (CONT'D)

Gilles wants to own his own person.

Ferrari looks at Parent.

FERRARI

Are you a lawyer?

GASTON

No.

Ferrari turns to Gilles.

FERRARI

Are you a lawyer?

GILLES

No.

FERRARI

Very well..

A long beat. Gilles sweats bullets.

FERRARI (CONT'D)

Gilles can own his own person.

Secretary Della Casa scribbles.

FERRARI (CONT'D)

Anything else?

GASTON

Gilles cannot race if his family's not here. I want expense money for the family to be at every race.

The old man is silent. Gilles twitches.

FERRARI

No.

He gets up, turns away. He looks out the window.

FERRARI (CONT'D)

We don't want to deal with children.
(turns back. Stares through them.)

If an accident happens we've got enough to deal with... the wife, without children.

GILLES

Why should an accident happen?

Ferrari looks off, speaks very softly.

FERRARI

Every time a driver takes off, we write him off. When he comes back... it's a bonus.

GASTON

Gilles doesn't race unless his family's there.

The Old Man gets up, leaves. Gilles pleads.

GILLES

Jesus Christ, don't say any more. Let's just sign this. Let's get this over.

GASTON

Take it easy.

GILLES

Easy!!!???

Ferrari comes back. Parent starts again.

GASTON

I want 50 per cent of the sponsorship on the car.

Gilles is aghast. He whispers frantically...

GILLES

What are you doing?! Are you crazy?!

He glances furtively at the Italian. Ferrari is thoughtful.

FERRARI

Uh, uh. He gets up again. Goes to the window.

FERRARI

It's never been done.

GASTON

It's time to start.

Gilles groans and puts his head in his hands.

EXT. SCUDIARI FERRARI - MOMENTS LATER

They walk out. Parent proudly goes over the deal.

GASTON

Seventy Five thousand to drive, 25
per cent of the car, plus \$15,000
for the family.

GILLES

But we didn't get a contract.
Nothing's signed.

GASTON

Don't you understand? You wanted to
be your own man. You don't even know
what you asked for. And he
misunderstood. He just gave you the
right to own yourself, to keep all
the money from endorsements on your
suit. You crazy Canuck! He must really
want you. He just gave you what no
other driver has ever gotten. You'll
be rich.

GILLES

I just want to drive.

Gaston slaps him on the back, hugs him.

GASTON

Don't worry. Don't worry about a
thing!

EXT. MODENA - A RESTAURANT - THAT NIGHT

INT. RESTAURANT

Gilles and Parent enter with Mortara. Gilles is worried but diners turn and look. The owner rushes up with a menu...he thrusts it into Gilles hands, whips out a pen with a flourish. Gilles is confused.

OWNER

Your autograph, Senior Villeneuve,
per favore.

Gilles looks at Parent.

GILLES

I've been a Ferrari driver for an
hour. How do they know?

GASTON

Better get used to it.

An incredible woman comes up with a menu and a pen. She just smiles at him and holds it out. The view of her breasts is spectacular. She slips him a phone number. He looks at it curiously and turns to Gaston. Gaston grins.

GASTON (CONT'D)

See, it's real.

EXT. FIORANO TEST TRACK - MORNING

Ferrari and other dapper Italians watch, sipping espresso.

EXT. TRACK

Gilles takes off and spins into a field. The car wing mows grass. He swings back onto the track and keeps going as if nothing happened.

EXT. INFIELD

Parent looks at Ferrari's team manager, Piccinini. He frowns. Gaston sneaks a look at Ferrari. He is smiling.

TELEPHOTO

A black horse prances on a yellow field. Pan up a scarlet bonnet to Gilles in the cockpit of a 312 T2 Ferrari...at speed. 200 MILES PER HOUR.

MONTAGE - GILLES' CRASHES

Gilles blasts by. He takes a corner in classic Villeneuve fashion; sideways. He slides off, slams into a wall.

INT. COCKPIT - GILLES - TIME CUT

Villeneuve, hands flailing on the wheel.

HIS POV

THE WORLD REVOLVES MADLY.

EXT. THE RACE

The spinning car leaves frame. A tremendous crash. Wheels and other parts come bouncing by.

INT. THE PITS

ALDO

He's a madman!

BENITO

Way over his head!

FRANCO

Doesn't belong here!

EXT. THE FERRARI - TIME CUT

Spinning. Gilles catches it. Without missing a beat, he shifts into gear and tears away! The car zips under a banner: Japanese Grand Prix.

GILLES' POV

Ahead, a Tyrrell brakes for a turn.

THE FERRARI

Coming up fast, Gilles doesn't brake. He hits the car and is launched into the air.

A TREMENDOUS CRASH

He spins off into the crowd. Chaos, screams, sirens. All hell breaks loose.

EXT. THE PITS - MOMENTS LATER

Gilles walks up, ashen-faced, stunned. Joann runs to him.

JOANN

Gilles, what happened?

GILLES

I think I might have hit some people.

EXT. THE PITS - LATER - DESERTED

In moonlight Gilles sits with Joann...stunned.

GILLES

They were in the wrong place. They weren't supposed to be there.

JOANN

It's a dangerous sport, people are killed all the time...by fate, luck...

GILLES

By their own stupidity. Wrong place, wrong time, nothing anybody can do about it. Drivers take the greatest risk, but everybody takes some and those two, for whatever reason, took too much.

Joann hugs him. She drapes a jacket over him.

INSERT - NEWSPAPER

"Villeneuve kills two at the Japanese Grand Prix. Is he too fast? Is he too reckless? Should he be banned from the sport?" Hands fold the paper and stuff it under the seat.

INT. AIRPLANE

Gilles and Joann look out the window. A crowd awaits.

EXT. NICE AIRPORT - DAY

Gilles is mobbed by journalists, mikes thrust in his face. People scream in many languages.

MAN

Hey, it's the 'Pilot!'

Gilles is confused.

GILLES

What?

But others are hostile, insulting too.

TIFOSI 1

Yeah, the 'Crazy Overtaker!'

TIFOSI 2

Hey, Air Canada!

TIFOSI 3

Crazy Canuck! You're driving over
your head?

PAPARAZZI 6

Six crashes in your first six races.
Is Ferrari going to replace you?

PAPARAZZI 2

What about those two Japanese you
killed?!

Joann squeezes his hand. Gilles pushes through the crowd.

GILLES

I'm sorry they died. It wasn't my
fault. They shouldn't have been there.
It was a restricted area.

He stalks off.

EXT. AIRPORT - AT THE LIMO

Franco Lini approaches sympathetically.

LINI

Gilles, is this your last chance
with Ferrari? Will you race at
Monaco?

GILLES

Mr. Ferrari hasn't made any
change...far as I know.

ANGLE - STREET

Red-faced TIFOSI, fanatical Ferrari fans, wave banners. Gilles
waves. One screams.

TIFOSI 4

Hey you crazy Canuck?

TIFOSI 5

Why don't you quit and make room for
an Italian driver?

EXT. MONTE CARLO - TWILIGHT - GRAND CORNICHE

The limo winds down the beautiful high road. Monaco is a
gleaming symbol of the riches and glory of success.

INT. LIMO

Gilles drives. The driver sits in back, sipping champagne.

JOANN
Keep your eyes on the road.

GILLES
Look, how beautiful it all is.

JOANN
The road. It's treacherous.

GILLES
It's nothing to worry about.

JOANN
You're going too fast.

GILLES
That... just isn't possible.

JOANN
It only takes a instant.

GILLES
...to wind up living here...

JOANN
We're foreigners.

GILLES
To wind up living...like this.

JOANN
To wind up over the edge.

GILLES
We'll wind up, here. On top of the
mountain.

She points to the harbor.

JOANN
Or there. In the ravine.

EXT. MONACO GRAND PRIX - QUALIFYING TRIALS

The T3 hurtles around the corner defying gravity and other
laws of physics.

THE FERRARI

Right angles to the road, it screams centimeters from the
barriers.

THE MICHELINS

spewing smoke, Forghieri's motor screaming near disintegration. Gilles seems completely out of control.

THE COCKPIT

Barely protruding above the plexiglass windscreen of number 12 Gilles' helmet is cocked, gloved hands whirling on the wheel as he struggles to avoid the inevitable.

EXT. MONTE CARLO STREETS - CBC STANDUP - NIGEL

NIGEL

Somehow, at the last possible instant, milliseconds before the T3 caroms into the rails or spins to bite its tail, Gilles catches the spectacular slide. Winding off opposite lock to point the front at the St. Devote hairpin, he smashes into third, fourth, fifth, catapults sideways down the pit straight in a roar of noise that shakes the foundations of Monaco.

EXT. THE PITS

Gilles screams past. The Ferrari pit becomes animated again ...a collective sigh of relief. Heads shake in disbelief.

ALDO

One more lap. He hasn't crashed yet.

VITO

Give him time.

BENITO

2.0432. Fastest time ever.

FORGHIERI

How long can he possibly keep it up?

ALDO

How long can the car?

FORGHIERI

My car!

PICININI

Keep your eyes on it. Last time we'll see it in one piece.

EXT. CASINO SQUARE

The HOWL of twelve cylinders at their limit, the SQUEALS of tortured radials echo off the walls of the Casino.

INT. COCKPIT

His foot flat to the floor, hands sawing away.

GILLES

careens over the hill SIDEWAYS, on full opposite lock.

GILLES

The front of his car points into the Monegasque constabulary, the rear threatens forcible entry into the cafe.

AT THE CORNER

Brave photographers cower behind rails to witness the phenomenon, but their pictures are blurred, notes indecipherable.

HARDNOSED MARSHALS

Stand their ground. It's a macho thing.

GILLES

Screams right at them, sideways, out of control.

THE MARSHALS

Gilles is about to plunge into them. At the last second, they abandon their positions. They run.

THE FERRARI'S LEFT REAR WHEEL

Kisses the barrier.

THE T1

In a shower of sparks he roars off at unabated speed to attack the corner at Mirabeau.

MARSHALS

Slowly, they reappear...awed, but happy to be alive.

MARSHALL 1

Merde!

MARSHALL 2

Couchon blue!

THE FERRARI HOWL...AGAIN.

INT. COCKPIT

His foot flat to the floor, hands sawing away.

EXT. THE RACE

Gilles careens over the hill, on full opposite lock. The front of his car points into the Monegasque constabulary, the rear threatens forcible entry into the cafe.

AT THE CORNER

Photographers cower behind rails to witness the phenomenon, their hands are shaky, pictures blurred.

GILLES

Screams right at them, sideways, out of control.

THE MARSHALS

They duck at the last second, unable to believe Gilles is not about to plunge into them. Again they abandon their positions. They run.

THE FERRARI'S LEFT REAR WHEEL

Kisses the barrier.

THE T1

In a shower of sparks Gilles roars off at unabated speed to attack the corner at Mirabeau.

MARSHALS

Slowly, they reappear...awed.

MARSHALL 1

Merde! They get up slowly, look at each other, shaking their heads. The FERRARI HOWL...AGAIN.

INT. COCKPIT - GILLES

His foot flat to the floor, hands sawing away.

EXT. THE RACE

Gilles careens over the hill, on full opposite lock. The front of his car points into the Monegasque constabulary, the rear threatens forcible entry into the cafe.

AT THE CORNER

Photographers cower behind rails, snapping away.

GILLES

Screams right at them, sideways, out of control.

THE MARSHALS

They duck at the last second, unable to believe Gilles is not about to plunge into them.

BRITISH PHOTOG.

Shit!

GERMAN PHOTOG.

Sheiss!

JAPANESE PHOTOG.

Dame desu!

HARDNOSED MARSHALS

They run.

MARSHALL 2

Merde!

THE FERRARI'S LEFT REAR WHEEL

kisses the barrier. within a millimeter of the first time.

THE T1

In a shower of sparks he roars off at unabated speed to attack the corner at Mirabeau.

MARSHALS AND PHOTOGRAPHERS

Slowly, they reappear...awed, but happy to be alive. After the third time and the fourth and the fifth they understand it is some superhuman combination of wildness and precision, They get to their feet talking in tones of awe and wonder.

MARSHALL 2 (CONT'D)

Merde...?!!!

GERMAN PHOTOG.

Superhuman.

BRITISH PHOTOG.

Who is that guy?

JAPANESE PHOTOG.

Villeneuve.

FROM BALCONY'S OVERLOOKING THE RACE.

Fans look straight down into the cockpits as they ROAR past.

FAN

...Villeneuve...

EXT. BLEACHERS

In the crowds...growing murmurs.

ON YACHTS, ANCHORED IN THE HARBOR...

The TV plays softly as aristocrats sip champagne and cluster around.

ARISTOCRAT

...Villeneuve.

ON THE BEACH

Topless beauties, lean on an elbow to hear the commentary.

BEAUTY

Villeneuve...!

MONACO - AERIAL - FOLLOWING THE RACE.

GROWING murmurs

Villeneuve....Villeneuve..

THE CORNER.

Photographers check the barrier. Tire marks...One leans down to closely inspect.

BRITISH PHOTOG.

Dozens of them. Not an inch apart.
This guy is ...

A HOWL.

They jump back behind the barricade. As Gilles comes around the corner sideways and does it again.

AT THE CORNER - NIGEL - STAND UP

NIGEL

Monaco is an impossible place to
race, the most dangerous circuit,
(MORE)

NIGEL (CONT'D)

winding up, down and around the narrow confines of the old town. These streets are difficult to negotiate in normal motoring, let alone in F1 cars. A racing machine is too big, too fast for this track. But Gilles Villeneuve seems to enjoy it.

ANGLE - GILLES

In heaven at 200 MPH. Nigel's commentary continues over...

A MONTAGE

NIGEL (V.O.) (CONT'D)

For two days of qualifying the spectacular Villeneuve performs in front of an increasingly appreciative audience, now able to get a close-up view of his style around a track where it's possible to look right down into the cockpit to what racing heroes are made of. On television they'd viewed his troubles with their hearts in their mouths. His accident-about-to-happen reputation attracted the ghoulish. In Monaco he executes wild spins, has many scary moments but his phenomenal car control wins over fans. They recognize his flair, his courage, his passion. They respond dramatically.

MONACO - MONTAGE

The yachts, the streets, the cafes where they watch on television. Clustered around radios at the beach...In the balconies and the penthouses of the rich and famous... ..lull in the cacophony of engine noise a new sound is heard, a human sound... a rising chant from thousands of voices echoing around the yacht-filled harbor. It comes from onlookers hanging over the wrought-iron balconies of the apartments above the pit straight and from packed grandstands around the crowded harbor, from sailors clinging to the masts of boats, from throngs sitting on the hillside, even from the walls of the palace itself..

VOICES

Gilles! - Gilles! - Gilles!

Souls are stirred, passions inflamed, adulation evolves. Cheering grows louder from thousands of Ferrari fanatics.

INT. PITS

Gilles leaves the pits. The fans crowd in for a closer look. They reach out to touch him. They tug at his suit. He walks more briskly. A beauty approaches. She smiles seductively.

BEAUTY

Ciao, Gilles!

GILLES

Hello...Ciao..

A maniacal fan presses forward.

FAN

Bonjour, Gilles!

GILLES

Bonjour.

FAN

Guten Tag, Gilles!

GILLES

Yes, Guten tag.

People peer into his face and are surprised to see...

PRETTY GIRL 1

How small he is.

PRETTY GIRL 2

But he drives like a superman.

PRETTY GIRL 1

He looks so young, vulnerable.

PRETTY GIRL 2

He's so shy. Not aloof like the others. He looks so innocent.

PRETTY GIRL 1

I like him.

GILLES

Suddenly mobbed by the crowd. It surges forward. Programs are pressed to him. He signs carefully at first, then in a scrawl as he's engulfed. Finally, he makes a break for it, walking fast, then sprinting to escape the pursuing throng.

GILLES

Lost in the crowd. Mobbed. Surrounded. Overcome.

JOANN

Pushes through, finds him. He grabs her. They dive behind the huge red transporters and duck behind the Michelins to ponder their first glimpse of superstardom.

GILLES

They didn't even let me finish writing my name, They just wanted to touch me.

JOANN

It bother you?

He shakes his head.

GILLES

No. It's great. They like me. They love the sport, especially Ferrari.

THE RACE

Gilles races well.

THE PITS

Jacques, Melanie cheer. Joann logs laps.

JOANN

He can do it! He's going to do it!

Even Forghieri gets excited.

EXT. THE RACE

Gilles' Ferrari tears down the straightaway into the Loews tunnel. A tremendous CRASH! It doesn't come out.

ANGLE - AMBULANCES

Sirens. Marshals and medical techs rush in.

THE PITS

ALDO

The tunnel, that's where Bandini burned to death.

Joann reacts, but Parent is there to comfort her. Suddenly Forghieri turns...

FORGHIERI

Villeneuve!

Gilles is there, roughed up but unhurt. Joann hugs him. Forghieri, now relieved, continues his rage...

FORGHIERI (CONT'D)

You've done it to me again...!

INT. THE PITS - LATER

The destroyed T3 hangs on a wrecker, tire flattened.

GILLES

The damn tire deflated, look, look at it!

PICININI

Gilles. Do something different for a change, finish!

Gilles just points to the deflated tire.

EXT. SCUDERI FERRARI - THE TRACK - THE VILLA

AS THE CROWD NOISE FADES...

INT. FERRARI INNER SANCTUM

Ferrari screens Monaco footage. Picinini wrings his hands.

PICININI

Comandatore, he's now destroyed eight cars. We can't build them fast enough.

FERRARI

We can't build them strong enough...for him. He's the Prince...of Destruction.

PICININI

Sir, please...let me call De Angelis, he's an Italian.

FERRARI

No. Ferrari builds drivers as well as cars. They call Villeneuve crazy... I don't care. Sometimes they call me crazy too. We stick with him.

Ferrari rewinds the video, re-watching the crash.

FERRARI (CONT'D)

This Piccolo Canadienese reminds me of Nuvolari.

MONZA - NIGHT - AT A BAR

Drivers, women and journalists are all turned away when Gilles and Joann walk in. There's a moment of silence.

GILLES AND JOANN

They feel out of place. The women are very sophisticated. They glance at Joann as if to say who's this with the new driver. She feels their stares.

JOANN

Gilles, you go ahead. I want to check on the kids.

Hunt and Ronnie Peterson turn, smile. Gilles is shy. A bear of a man comes up. Gilles recognizes Jody Sheckter.

JODY

Hey, Air Canada!

(he grins)

Come on, I'll buy you a drink. You were the fastest out there for fifty laps.

PETERSON

Yeah,

(laughs)

Too bad the race was sixty.

They slap his back, welcome him to the ranks. A beautiful, dark-haired girl turns from the bar. She puts her hands on Gilles as she slides by. He turns and looks at her. She looks back expectantly, smiles. Peterson notices. He winks at Gilles.

GIRL

Welcome to Formula One.

Gilles smiles, but shyly turns away. The girl waits a beat, then moves on to another driver. Gilles looks relieved.

MONZA - ITALIAN GRAND PRIX - NEXT DAY

The Tifosi go mad as Gilles rockets away. Behind, the circuit erupts in flames and smoke. In a chaos of crashing cars a Lotus is enveloped in a fireball. Peterson trapped inside. Hunt runs back from his wrecked McLaren, dives into the flames and drags Peterson out as a marshal sprays them with an extinguisher. Gilles comes around, sees the grid in flames, slows, stops.

THE CRASH

Peterson is conscious but in great pain from shattered legs. He's rushed to hospital. Gilles sits in his Ferrari. Someone comes up.

OFFICIAL

Peterson, only broken legs...

The race restarts...they are off. Andretti and Gilles duel around the first lap side by side. Next time around Gilles is in the lead and the ecstatic Tifosi nearly drown out the sound of the cars.

INT. THE PITS - NEXT MORNING

Gilles walks up.

GILLES

Hey. How's Peterson? Silence.

They look at him, turn away. He walks by journalists...they turn away mumbling...

DIETER

Didn't make it.

Gilles wanders the pits to find Hunt packing.

GILLES

Is it true?

HUNT

He's dead. Bone marrow embolisms entered his bloodstream... caused an aneurysm in his brain.

EXT./INT. THE MOTOR HOME - LATER

He walks past Joann in the door.

GILLES

I've never been in a race where a driver was killed. He was the quickest around. He had so many accidents... never hurt. Then he has a stupid accident in the middle of the pack and kills himself. How come he's dead? What happened? What's the reason?

Joann moves to him, hears children outside, looks out the window at them. He shakes his head.

GILLES (CONT'D)

I know there's danger, but it's not in the front of my mind. It's in the back. It's part of the job. I accept it. One of these days I will hurt myself very, very much. I don't think of dying, but... it IS part of the job.

He feels something, looks up. Jacques is in the doorway looking at him, fear in his eyes.

EXT. MONTREAL - CANADIAN GRAND PRIX

On an island in the river against the Montreal skyline. Gaston Parent, arm around Gilles, walks him to the grid, Parent is beside himself with excitement.

GASTON

Win this one. For me, and for your bank account.

GILLES

I just want to finish well. Nobody wins his first grand prix at home!

On the grid, Gilles sits in the car and sinks into his per-race concentration. He thinks for a moment about Peterson and all the things that could happen, then he puts it out of his mind. Trudeau, the prime minister leans over.

TRUDEAU

Bonne chance Gilles.

Gilles doesn't even notice. The flag drops. They're away.

THE RACE

Brilliantly, Gilles and Jarier fight for the lead. Then, a loud explosion! Smoke pours from the engine. It limps into the pits. Fans in the background roar. As Jarier passes Joann, she is jumping up and down in excitement.

JOANN

That's it! Gilles has the lead! Mon Dieu! I don't believe it!

EXT. THE RACE

Gilles crosses the line. The crowd goes berserk. They hand him the flag. He holds it up for the victory lap. He's manhandled out of the car, hustled to the podium. Scheckter grabs him in a bear hug

JODY
Great race Gilles!

Joann is jumping.

JOANN
You did it, you did it! How does it
feel?

GILLES
Terrible. I was holding back. Those
last laps were torture. All kinds of
noises in the car. I had to drive
like an old woman. I wanted to put
on a show for the people.

JOANN
But you won, you won!

THE STANDS

O Canada plays. The national anthem. Tears streaming down
their faces, the crowd goes mad but Gilles is bewildered.

GILLES
I can't believe it.

GASTON
Believe it. You're a hero. Now I
can sell you like a can of beans.

GILLES
Not exactly the image I had in mind.

He looks over at Sheckter. The big, tough, Jewish South
African champion is called The Bear. His famous grouchy
disposition is a cover for a tremendous sense of humor. Gilles
sees in his eyes, new respect.

MONTAGE

A friendship based on good-natured competition in everything.
They fight, Gilles mimicking his broad Africaans accent and
Jody responding in broken Quebecois French.

GILLES (CONT'D)
Fuck you, you argue just for the
hell of it.

JODY
No, Black is white!

GILLES
No it isn't!

JODY

Fuck you! Stand up Nigel!

NIGEL

Jody, now the veteran,
(Jody just laughs)

You were the wild man when you broke
in. You were almost banned for being
dangerous. Now you're five years
ahead in wisdom.

JODY

Yeah, I got it in a flash.

NIGEL

When was that?

JODY

When Cevert got killed at Watkins
Glen.

MONACO

A giant motor home with Quebec licence plates winds up the
Grande Corniche, pulls up in front of an elegant villa.
Monagasques stand aghast at this awkward, clumsy construction
passing in front of their elegant villas.

INT. MOTOR HOME

Joann is uncomfortable.

JOANN

Gilles, did you see our neighbors?
They were laughing. These are not
our kind of people. The women are
not friendly. And the way they
dress... I'll have to get a whole
new wardrobe. What do you think?
Should I put the kids in school or
are we going home.

GILLES

I don't know.

JOANN

Will we be here next year?

GILLES

I don't know. Sheckter's coming to
Ferrari. One of us has to go,
Reutemann or me. Reutemann's won six
races. I've only won one. Some of
the press still don't like me.

JOANN

What about Mr. Ferrari? He shrugs.

EXT./ INT. SCUDIERI FERRARI - THE OFFICE

Villeneuve and Parent pace. The door opens. The Patriarch sits imperially, a single piece of white paper on the stark blackness of the desk. At a nod, a factotum hands the paper to Parent. Gilles pulsates with apprehension. Parent looks at the paper and grins. Ferrari speaks in French.

FERRARI

Congratulations, my son. you will drive with Sheckter next season.

EXT. FIORINO TEST TRACK - WINTER

The T3 zooms the course. In the pit, they check watches, shake their heads. He's slow. The door to the inner sanctum opens. Ferrari steps out as Gilles pulls in. Forgheri rushes up to Gilles.

FORGHIERI

What's wrong with you? Your times are awful.

Ferrari steps up. The crew cringes. Mumbled excuses.

ALDO

Bad tires...

Scheckter takes Gilles aside.

JODY

Gilles, what do you think?

He shrugs noncommittally. Jody presses.

JODY (CONT'D)

What do you think?

GILLES

Car is a piece of shit.

JODY

What are you going to tell the old man?

GILLES

That's what I'm going to tell him.

JODY

Well, try to put it diplomatically.

Ferrari approaches, inclines his head quizzically; "Well?"

GILLES

Car's a piece of shit.

Shocked silence. Some glance at Ferrari. The Comandatore bursts out laughing, puts his arm around Gilles.

FERRARI

Come with me, my boy.

Picinini and Forghieri look at them with mixed emotions.

FERRARI (CONT'D)

If Gilles says the car is a piece of shit, the car is a piece of shit.

Jody just shakes his head.

UNDER THE OLIVE TREES

Tall, white-haired, elegant; a legend in dark glasses; the sad old man speaks of his passion.

FERRARI (CONT'D)

You know the jokes.

GILLES

Yeah, 'Who's more important in Italy, the Pope or Ferrari?

FERRARI

The glory of Italy! A godfather figure, they say. But he cares more for machinery than people. The press accuses me of being a devil, eating my own sons because so many Italian drivers have been killed in Ferraris. For many years I have refused to hire an Italian driver. You remind me of Nuvolari. He was slight...had the common touch, but he drove like a madman...with spectacular style. He spoke what he thought. It's refreshing. I am always treated with reverence. That is good. But, while they are bowing and scraping, everyone is afraid to tell Ferrari the car is no good. You tell me in no uncertain terms.

Gilles shrugs.

GILLES

How else can I get the best car?

Ferrari nods.

FERRARI

In you I see the passion. If you live long enough, you will be a great driver, perhaps as great as he was...

Usually aloof, mysterious, Ferrari now opens up to Gilles.

FERRARI (CONT'D)

My son Dino's death has left a ... a void. I make regular visits to Dino's shrine. Sheckter will be our senior driver. But Ferrari has no number one and two. We decide after the race. If you're fast enough, you will be number one.

EXT. FIORANO - MONTAGE

At first, Jody underrates Gilles. But he can't approach the times Gilles does. When he learns more about the car, he becomes very competitive. And he realizes Gilles is a very good driver; a good man. They become very close friends.

GILLES

Jody, the cars are shit. Why are you here?

JODY

I need a serious shot at the championship. Ferrari will give it to me.

TV INTERVIEW

FORGHIERI

Gilles and Jody? It's the best team I ever had in my life. When we have car troubles they don't complain. They work to help. They come up with ideas to improve the car. Whoever is ahead, the other helps. It's a very professional team. Jody was like Gilles early in his career. He's a fighter, but a fighter who understands what it takes to win the Championship. It's the best combination of drivers and personalities in my eleven years with Ferrari.

NIGEL

Some teams designate number one and two drivers.

FORGHIERI

Ferrari prefers to have them fight it out and let the race results decide supremacy.

NIGEL

That can lead to ego problems.

FORGHIERI

And top performances.

FERRARI INTERVIEW

FERRARI

...Of course if there is a championship situation we may ask a driver to sacrifice in the interest of the team. I would hope in that case, that the drivers will play for the team...

EXT. THE TRACK

Nigel does a stand-up with Sheckter.

NIGEL

How do you think you'll get along with Gilles?

JODY

Oh, he'll learn a lot from me.

He turns, makes a face off camera. Gilles laughs, makes a rude gesture in return.

JODY (CONT'D)

We have the same orders: whoever is in front, stays there. If we are ahead of everybody, we hold our positions. Gilles and I are honest with each other. We're living together and although I want to win.

NIGEL

You don't want to get into a fight with somebody in your own house.

JODY

Sometimes it's tough. But we have to trust each other. You can trust somebody when you're just having a drink with them, but the trust runs much deeper under wartime conditions. And when you're racing you're at war.

EXT. DIJON - THE FRENCH GRAND PRIX - STOCK

The classic battle with Arnoux. They go round banging wheels. Off the track, back on. They spin and continue, throwing sparks. They cross the line inches apart with Gilles ahead. Ecstatic, they jump out of the cars and embrace, laughing.

INT. PRESS AREA

Drivers watch a video replay. They cheer like schoolboys. Jody comes in, finds Gilles, grabs him in a bear hug.

JODY

Congratulations, ...don't ever do that again!

GILLES

Fuck you, Jody, you used to drive like this! They called you a 'menace' too, remember!

JODY

Yeah, I used to drive like you when I started. Now I'm just trying to save my life.

GILLES

I want to win.

Jody takes him aside, suddenly serious.

JODY

Look, racing is a romantic thing to you, but for me it's a business...a deadly one. You've got to stay alive to win. You've got to grow up.

GILLES

Yeah, when did you grow up?

JODY

At Watkins Glen. Cevert hit the rail and slid along on his head. I was the first one there. Horrible sight. I puked. He was very dead. After that I became careful.

He walks off leaving Gilles looking.

MONTAGE - ZANDVOORT HOLLAND - DUTCH GRAND PRIX

Gilles comes around the corner too fast, hits the barrier, wrecks his car, tries to continue in the wreck. He zooms by on three wheels, dragging the fourth, sparks flying. He comes into the pits, hopping, screaming at Forgheri.

GILLES

Fix the goddamn fucking car!

Forgheri looks at the wheel hanging by a thread and throws up his hands. Voices from the press;

REPORTER (V.O.)

Blind madness!

COLUMNIST

Inconceivable habitual exhibitionism!

JOURNALIST

Stupid, dangerous behavior!

EXT. VILLA

Ferrari sits in the garden, a cup of espresso on his knee. He looks up calmly, responding to a journalist.

FERRARI

Nuvolari won the 1935 Czechoslovakian Grand Prix on three wheels. For me.

EXT. MONACO GRAND PRIX

12 Ferrari screams around the Hairpin, hits a rise and launches into the air. The engine howls. The car smashes to the pavement in a burst of tire smoke, zips out of sight. Number 11 Ferrari appears and hits the rise. You can hear the engine back off as Scheckter eases up.

EXT. THE PITS

Forghieri tears his hair as Gilles limps in with a smoking engine.

INT. THE PITS - LATER

Gilles sits forlornly in front of his broken car.

GILLES

You have all the luck.

JODY

Not luck, the way I drive. You like to entertain the crowd... make the engine scream..the tires smoke. I like to finish races. Score points. I want to win the championship.

Joann walks up.

GILLES

Where's Jacques?

JOANN

He had a headache. I had to take him home.

EXT. LAKE COMO

A custom-made Abbate cigarette boat roars at full speed, bouncing off the waves.

INT. COCKPIT

Gilles is having a great time. Joann clings for life, an arm around each kid, trying desperately not to get bounced off the boat.

EXT. ABBATE BOAT - LATER

Back in the harbor, they slow. Joann is furious.

JOANN

I don't understand you! Kill yourself, but don't kill the kids!

GILLES

What are you talking about?

JOANN

They were terrified. Did you see it?

GILLES

They were excited.

JOANN

Jacques is in tears. He's terrified of your racing and now you do this.

GILLES

It's just speed. He has to get used to it if he's going to be my son.

INT. THE PITS - MONZA - ITALIAN GRAND PRIX

Gilles walks to the car. Forghieri stops him.

FORGHIERI

Remember the team rules. Whoever's in the lead stays there. We don't want to knock each other out of the race.

GILLES

Okay, Mauro...No problem.

EXT. THE GRID - THE START

Jody rockets out ahead, Gilles cuts in, lap after lap. Tifosi go mad. Ferrari's run one and two. Gilles sits on Jody's tail. Then he pulls up to the side. They go into a curve nailed together.

INT. THE PITS

FORGHIERI SCREAMS,

FORGHIERI
What the hell is he doing!?

EXT. THE RACE

Gilles pulls alongside Jody again, as if to pass. Jody turns, alarmed. Gilles grins, gives a little wave. Jody laughs. Gilles drops back.

FINISH LINE

Tifosi go crazy. Jody, Gilles, one and two.

VICTORY PODIUM.

Jody and Gilles stand in front of delirious Tifosi waving banners, chanting Villeneuve. Jody looks at Gilles.

GILLES
You won, why are they yelling at me?

JODY
They've never seen you pull up before.

They embrace, hold the trophies aloft. Jody raises Gilles' arm in triumph.

JOANN

Her joy is restrained. Gilles is making it big but there's a growing rift between them. She's lost and increasingly unhappy in this high-pressure existence. He has success, adulation, but there's tension. Gilles is triumphant, but at what cost?

EXT. FERRARI TEST TRACK - WINTER TESTING

A T5 screams around and pulls into the pit. Scheckter jumps out livid, screaming,

JODY
Not only is it the ugliest car I
have ever seen, but it's a big piece
of shit!

Forgheri leans down.

FORGHIERI

These are ground-effect skirts. They glue you to the track. You should be faster than ever.

JODY

Well I'm not.

Forghieri walks off.

FORGHIERI

Maybe it's you.

INT. VILLA FERRARI - INNER SANCTUM

Ferrari views spy footage of other cars as Jody, Gilles and others enter. Gilles is pissed. Jody is calm and analytical.

JODY

It's a bad year. The cars eat rubber.

GILLES

They have bad ground effects. Look...

He indicates the competitor's cars on the screens.

JODY

Everybody else has gained speed. We've taken the T4 and modified the front. It's worse than the old car.

Ferrari turns to Forghieri.

FERRARI

We must do better.

FORGHIERI

Ground effects, it's a whole new technology. These things take time.

Gilles can't take any more.

GILLES

Okay, you drive these things for the next few years!

He kicks over a chair, walks out.

MONTAGE - RACE

They don't finish.

EXT./INT. SCUDERIA FERRARI - PRESS CONFERENCE

Reporters cluster around Ferrari who shakes off a question.

FERRARI

A Formula One car has 8,200 parts.
Everything must work perfectly.

REPORTER

Is your 'Prince of Destruction' too
hard on those parts?

FERRARI

We are fond of Villeneuve and Sheckter
They both have the same urgent needs.

GILLES - STAND UP

REPORTER

You were unlucky.

GILLES

Each driver makes his luck. I still
have something to learn. But I'm a
better driver than I was a year ago.
I'll be better a year from now. I'm
smarter than I was. I didn't spin as
often.

REPORTER

Will you drive more... cautiously?
Gilles thinks...

GILLES

I will never ease off, except when I
am first. Winning isn't the only
thing.

DIETER

Blasphemy.

NIGEL

Heresy!

GILLES

The fun's in the racing, not just
the results.

NIGEL - STAND UP CLOSE - CBC

NIGEL

The self-involvement at world-class
level is all consuming. Testing, the
race, team politics.

(MORE)

NIGEL (CONT'D)

Drivers are under a microscope, every facet of their lives examined in the press. For Gilles, total involvement is natural. But his family retreats beyond his focus. Many drivers don't have families for this reason. Gilles is an anomaly. The pressures have to build.

EXT. FRENCH RIVIERA - DAY - OFF-ROAD IN GILLES' BRONCO

The kids are bounced about. They pull up, Joann furious.

JOANN

That's it. You're too dangerous. They're terrified. They don't go out in this. And they certainly don't go up in the helicopter.

Gilles is surprised.

GILLES

Why not?

EXT./INT. MONACO - RECEPTION

Gilles is greeted as a prince. Jody and Pam move easily through the admirers. Joann tags along.

GILLES

What's the matter?

JOANN

The way they look at me. The way they speak to me. I just... feel out of place.

GILLES

You'll get used to it.

JOANN

I don't think so. Racing's taken you into the stratosphere. But what about me?

GILLES

You are my wife.

JOANN

That's not enough. There's no accomplishment, no growth. I feel isolated... dependent.

GILLES

You are dependent. On me. And I depend on you.

JOANN

I need more. And two young children need a father.

She stomps out. He looks at Pam.

PAM

Are you unaware of the changes, or just ill-equipped to deal with them?

GILLES

I'm a good father, a good provider. I give them a good life..

PAM

You also want total control and a perfect family.

GILLES

Yes, of course.

Jody takes her aside. He is furious.

JODY

What are you doing?

PAM

Just trying to talk to him.

JODY

Don't do that. He needs to think...to concentrate.

PAM

He needs to think of his family, of Joann.

JODY

If he does that at 200 miles per hour, they won't have a father...or a husband. Now leave him alone. You want to bother someone, bother me. I can take it.

PAM

Are you sure?

JODY

Of course. I am the wily veteran...

EXT. FIORANO - THE TRACK - TESTING

Gilles, Jody and Gaston, walk across the tarmac.

JODY

You broke it again! You stupid son
of a bitch, why didn't you take it
easy?

GILLES

Fuck you. You race your way, I'll
race mine!

GASTON

You two argue about anything and
everything: a girl, the tires, the
car, the sunset.

GILLES

No, we don't.

JODY

Yes we do. Come on.

They stop in front of a new Agusta Helicopter.

GILLES

Come on, get in.

JODY

You know how to fly this?

GILLES

Hey, how hard could it be?

GILLES winks at Gaston. The color drains from his face.

EXT. AERIAL - ABOVE ITALY

Gilles flies Jody and Parent. Coming into Monaco, a red
WARNING LIGHT flashes. Jody goes nuts,

JODY

What the hell's that mean?

Gilles turns.

GILLES

No problem. Not important.

JODY

Not important!?

The light flashes as Gilles drops down at the airport.

GILLES
Wait here. I'll clear customs.

Gilles goes in to sign papers. Jody pulls out the manual.

GASTON
What are you doing?

JODY
Looking something up.

GASTON
What?

JODY
Flashing red lights.

GASTON
Well. What's it say?

JODY
It says the battery is overheating
and might explode. You've got thirty
seconds to land!

Gilles comes back. Jody tears into him.

JODY (CONT'D)
Villeneuve, the fuckin' battery is
kaput! You aren't gonna take off and
kill us all!

GILLES
Take it easy, there's no problem.

JODY
No problem!!!?

They take off.

EXT. ITALIAN BORDER - COASTLINE

Over the sea, the light starts flashing.

JODY
Villeneuve, what the fuck are you
doing? Stop!

GILLES
Okay.

He turns off the engine. They drop - zzzzzz. They plunge
like a rock toward the sea.

JODY
 Jesus Christ! What the hell are you
 doing? Turn it back on!

GILLES
 Okay.

He does. The engine catches. They gain altitude. Gaston and
 Jody breathe again.

Gilles turns the engine off. They drop, screaming. At a
 thousand feet, he turns it on again.

JODY
 Gilles! Are you crazy!

GILLES
 I don't think so.

JODY
 What are you doing, you lunatic?!!

GILLES
 Cooling the battery.

He turns it off again. They drop, screaming. They rise and
 drop all the way into Monaco. Jody's having a heart attack.
 He gets out of the copter white-faced, staggers away.

GILLES (CONT'D)
 What's the matter?

JODY
 Fuck you, Villeneuve, I'll never get
 back in that goddamn thing again!

GILLES
 That's no attitude...

EXT. GRAND CORNICHE - ABOVE MONACO

In the Ferrari 308 Gilles blasts along full out while
 complaining to Gaston about Joann.

GILLES
 She's impossible! She refuses to let
 me fly the kids in the helicopter.

GASTON
 I can't imagine why. By the way,
 did I mention that you are doing a
 hundred and forty?

Gilles just looks at him.

GASTON (CONT'D)

Can you blame her? You know your problem? You're having too much fun to worry about mortality...

GILLES

In my line of work, the problem is when I worry about it.

EXT. GRAND CORNICHE

Gilles goes through the tollbooth at 50 mph and throws money at the machine. The guards know him and yell

GUARD

Bonjour Gilles!

He blasts away.

EXT. FURTHER ON THE GRAND CORNICHE

A big curve flat out in fifth, 145 mph, they hit ice.

GASTON

I'm going to die, but at least I go sitting next to one of the best drivers in the world.

Gilles smiles at him. Gaston watches Gilles as they spin, He goes from fifth to fourth, third, second as they...whip, whip, whip...do three revolutions. Gilles catches the spin, pops the clutch, roars off. He's a superhuman. He taps his heart and laughs. Gaston is a frozen mask.

EXT. IMOLA RACE TRACK - TESTING.

GILLES HOPS OUT OF THE T4.

GILLES

Oh shit. I forgot.

GASTON

What?

GILLES

Jody's coming for supper at eight o'clock back in Monaco.

PIRONI

Gilles, it's 4:30!

GILLES

Yeah, we've got to go.

THE FERRARI 308

They hop in. Whanggg! Gilles floors it. His foot never leaves the floor. Parent sits eyes closed. He can't look.

THE FERRARI 308

On curves...a guard rail and a truck, Gilles squeezes between them, an inch on each side. Whew! Gilles looks over,

GILLES (CONT'D)

No time to lose.

PIRONI

It's a five-hours, even at this speed.

GILLES

No, three and a half!

He speeds up. Parent fights a scream.

EXT. AUTOSTRADA

They come to a toll gate. He grabs a handful of change, opens the window, throws it at the box. Whanggg! Downshifts.

GILLES

He sits very relaxed, driving with one hand on the wheel, looking for a candy with the other.

GASTON

feeds him candies.

GASTON

I'll do the candy. You keep both hands on the wheel!

EXT. NEXT TOLLGATE

POLICE

Fifteen cops stand before a tollgate, waving white sticks with reflectors to stop the car.

INT. COCKPIT

Gilles slams on the brakes, goes sideways.

ANGLE - TOLLBOOTH

They SLIDE UP, stop at the feet of the head cop. Mad as hell, he looks at Gilles who is serene.

GILLES

He pulls out postcards with his picture, pulls out his passport and driver's license. He hands them to the cop.

COP

He looks at the cards.

COP
Oh ho! Villanova!

COP 2
Villanova!?

Policemen crowd around. Gilles signs the cards, closes the window and takes off at the same speed...Whanggg!

INT. VILLA VILLENEUVE

Parent brings a triple cognac to his mouth. His hands shake so badly he spills it down his shirt. Joann smolders.

JOANN
You have small children and should be more careful. He shrugs.

EXT. GRAND CORNICHE - SOMETIME LATER

Parent is a passenger with Gilles in Jody's Ferrari; Jody at the wheel. They come into a tunnel doing 220 kph. Suddenly lights flash in front. Disaster!

THEIR POV

A police car's stopped in one lane, another vehicle blocks the other.

GASTON

GASTON
It's over!

Jody glances over. Gilles glances back. He smiles at him, looks strangely calm. No time to brake. At the last second Jody jerks the wheel, they scrape through the tunnel with centimeters to spare. Gilles compliments Jody.

GILLES
Very nice.

JODY
Thank you.

PARENT'S FACE

Frozen in horror.

EXT. PETROL STATION

Jody pulls in. Gaston runs to the bathroom to throw up.

ANGLE - JODY

He rolls down the window. Jody's the World Champion. The attendant just looks at him and pumps gas.

ANGLE - PASSENGER SIDE

Villeneuve lowers his window, the guy sees him.

ATTENDANT

Hey! Villanova!

A crowd gathers.

JODY OPENS THE DOOR, SHOUTS:

JODY

You bastards! I'm World Champion,
not him!

INT. COCKPIT

He gets back in the car. They BLAST away.

JODY

Can you believe this? I'm the champ
but what's the point. Nobody even
seems to know it. I'm going as fast
as I can and I'm finishing 25th.
After all these years, all these
dangers I'm risking my life to be
25th!

GILLES

What can you do?

JODY

I'm thinking of packing it in.

GILLES

That's fine for you, you've been the
champion.

JODY

You might consider it too? Considering
the chances you take.

GILLES

I'm the fastest driver in the world.
I can be the champion.

JODY

Not in that car you can't.

EXT. WATKINS GLEN - U.S. GRAND PRIX

Gilles spins, crashes and is out.

EXT. NIGEL - STAND UP.

NIGEL

Villeneuve's approach is possibly too passionate, too instinctive to ever bring him a world championship, but it does explain why he is worshipped like no other driver.

EXT. PITS

Gilles wrecked car is pulled in.

NIGEL (V.O.)

Last year, in points Gilles was the second-best driver in the world but he was the racer of the year. He led in total winning laps. He had five quickest laps. He led in seven of the fifteen races but only won three. Jody led in only four races but also won three. But he won the championship and now retires.

EXT. FINISH LINE

JODY COLLECTS 11TH PLACE.

NIGEL (V.O.)

The difference between the World Champion and the runner-up came down to that most fundamental racing truth: to finish first you have to first finish. Will Gilles drive with more thought than passion? will he change his style? We will see.

EXT. WINNER'S CIRCLE

Jody makes a grand exit from the Ferrari, stepping out of the cockpit and walking down the nose. Mechanics spray him with champagne. He hugs Gilles. The crew gives him a Ferrari scarf.

JODY

Give it to him, he'll need it.

ALDO

For good luck. He wraps it around Gilles' neck.

EXT. MONACO HARBOR - YACHT BASIN

A fabulous yacht rides at anchor. A launch pulls up. Gilles boards and is greeted by James Hunt. The yacht is filled with topless Riviera Gamines. Gilles is embarrassed. They are all over him. A beautiful one approaches. Hunt rescues him, hands him a Pepsi and leads him to the rail for a talk.

HUNT

Gilles, what's wrong this year?

GILLES

The cars just aren't competitive. Didier Pironi sidles up, a beautiful woman on each arm.

PIRONI

Salut Gilles. How are you doing?

GILLES

As you can see.

PIRONI

You should join a French team. We're winning. Ferrari's too old. The Italians just can't build modern racing cars. Hunt doesn't like Pironi.

HUNT

You're not just saying that because you're contracted to Ligier?

Didier stares at him. A gorgeous girl sidles up to Gilles, gives him a big smile. He looks her over appreciably. Pironi interrupts the moment in feigned innocence.

PIRONI

Why Gilles...where's Joann?

Gilles gives him a hard look.

GILLES

With the kids.

Pironi leans in conspiratorially.

PIRONI

Hey, you're entitled... you're a famous racing hero.

EXT. VILLA - IN THE HILLS OF MONACO.

Swimming pool, gardens, picture windows overlooking the bay.

INT. VILLA VILLENEUVE - KITCHEN

GASTON

He's giving you trouble? How?

JOANN

Spending lots of money, giving Jacques a hard time. He's too irrational. His demands...

GASTON

What demands?

JOANN

Towards me.

GASTON

The car's no good. He isn't winning. Next year will be better.

Gilles thunders up.

EXT. VILLA

Gaston and Joann rush to greet him. Gilles leaps out, holding an Agusta badge, excited.

GILLES

Gaston, great news, I've just met with a guy from Agusta. If I wear his patch I get four hundred thousand dollars off on the helicopter!

GASTON

Helicopter!?

(takes Gilles aside)

Gilles, you have a lot of expenses, maybe you should put it off for a year.

GILLES

Hey, what makes you think I'll be here next year.

He laughs, slaps him on the back. Glances at Joann, hops in the car. Parent glances at Joann. Gilles peels out.

GILLES (CONT'D)

Gaston, take care of it. I've got testing.

He thunders off.

INT. FIORANO - PRESS CONFERENCE - A WEEK LATER

Pironi sports a Ferrari cap as he answers questions.

PIRONI

Well, of course, the number-one driver
is the stud.

They shout queries.

DIETER

How'd you get out of your contract
with Ligier?

He just smiles..maybe a wink.

NIGEL

Is it true you breached your contract?
Didier doesn't respond.

INT. CBC

In a TV stand-up, Nigel Roebuck reports,

NIGEL

Ferrari says he makes engines with
wheels on them. For the 1981
car...it's true.

MONTAGE OF 1981 RACING - NIGEL CONTINUES

NIGEL (CONT'D)

The V6 engine is the most powerful
in Grand Prix, but the chassis is
the worst, making the prancing horses
unruly to handle. Their power makes
them hard to pass but the other cars
do that often enough to relegate
Villeneuve to seventh in the
standings, but the number 27 Ferrari
sweeps the opposition in the sheer
spectacle sweepstakes. The 28 Ferrari
is also driven with vigor. Pironi
shows he's the teammate of Villeneuve.
The rivalry...surprise...is a friendly
one.

EXT. POST RACE INTERVIEW CLIPS

PIRONI

Yes, your teammate is the one you're
compared to.

GILLES

..Yes, I suppose. You are both racing the same machine, in a way, your partner is your biggest competitor.

INT. A RACING CAFE - LATE NIGHT

Drivers, crew, reporters and others on the circuit, sit, talk, argue and drink.

DIETER

Never liked him. Not at all.

LINI

Ah, you're just used to Gilles and Schechter. Pironi comes from a different background. He's a Parisian. His father owns a construction firm. Money was never a problem.

DIETER

Easy to become a driver, if Daddy's money can pay for all your pranged cars.

LINI

He won Formula Renault. Daddy couldn't help him with that. There are plenty of rich kids who never learn to drive fast.

DIETER

And plenty more poor.

RALPH

Feeling sorry for yourself, Dieter? Want to be in the winner's circle with all the F1 ass?

DIETER

Wouldn't mind, chum. That's why I like Gilles. He did it the hard way. On talent.

NIGEL

Pironi has talent. He won the European title, the Monaco F3 event, showed well in F2 and Formula Atlantic, won at Le Mans. He won the Belgian GP.

DIETER

And he has such a romantic approach to racing...

INT. PRESS CONFERENCE - PIRONI

PIRONI

I am honoured to drive for Ferrari.

ANGLE - THE PEANUT GALLERY

The more cynical press roll their eyes, pretend to gag.

PIRONI (CONT'D)

I was very emotional on my first meeting with the old man.

ANGLE - GILLES

Watching...

EXT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Gilles and Joann walk out, followed by Pironi and his girlfriend, Catherine. Gilles is effusive.

GILLES

He's great, huh? He's going to be a great teammate.

From her look, Joann has reservations. Pironi, ever the charmer, gives Gilles a goodbye hug, kisses Joann.

PIRONI

Goodnight. See you in Guadeloupe. Joann watches Pironi depart. Gilles opens the door for her.

GILLES

What's the matter?

JOANN

I remember the way he looked at me in Montreal. He's a schemer. Remember, he broke his contract to go with Ferrari.

GILLES

You're too hard on him. We get along well.

JOANN

That's your judge of character? How you get along with him?

GILLES

You're too suspicious of everybody.

JOANN

I'm realistic.

GILLES

It's just because you think you don't fit in. He slams the car door, gets in and peels out into the night.

EXT. GUADELOUP CLUB MED

Gilles is with Joann, Didier with Catherine and others. They swim and play with dune buggies. Gilles wind surfs. He calls to Joann to join him. She waves no. She doesn't want to. She goes back to her book. Another girl, young...very pretty. Notices this. She gets up and splashes through the surf to hop onto his board.

WINDSURFER - GILLES

He pulls the girl up, they wobble, trying to find balance. She throws her perfect bikinied body at him. She throws her arms around him as he catches the wind and pulls away.

THE BEACH

Joann looks on.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - LATER

A fight.

GILLES

Women pay too much attention to me. You know how it is.

JOANN

But I don't have to watch it.

GILLES

What can I do. Sit and be miserable like you?

JOANN

You have a family. You have children.

GILLES

You're jealous.

JOANN

I'm furious.

GILLES

...only because you feel you cannot compete.

She walks out on the balcony and watches the sunset.

INT. LOBBY

Gilles, carrying bags, runs into Pironi.

PIRONI

Where you going, Gilles?

GILLES

Home. Monaco. ...Joann is uncomfortable here.

PIRONI

With us? Why?

GILLES

I don't know.

EXT./INT. MONTE CARLO - OPULENT RESTAURANT

Joann walks through. A haughty, overdressed woman backs into her. Although it's not her fault, Joann, steps back, mumbles an apology. The woman cuts her dead.

WOMAN

Je suis desolee. Je ne comprend
..."joual."

Joann reddens, walks over to her table. She sits with Pam Scheckter and Jody.

ANGLE - THE BAR

Chic patrons seem to patronize Joann.

BLONDE

Joann Villeneuve. The racer's wife.

BRUNETTE

He's so charming. But what does he see in her?

BLONDE

She's certainly not up to the sophisticated racing set.

BRUNETTE

Well, she is a provincial...

RED HEAD

You hear that accent?

BLONDE

Yeah, so does everyone else.

RED HEAD

Quebecois. Subtly denigrated by Mm.
Otero and her friends.

BRUNETTE

Yes, and you know how subtle those
women can be.

They smirk to themselves.

ANGLE - JOANN'S TABLE

Pam is commiserating with her.

PAM

Well, the life of a racer's wife is
never easy.

JODY

Now that he's such a celebrity it
has to become more difficult.

Joann speaks angrily.

JOANN

I met him when he was just a kid. I
didn't marry a racing driver. I didn't
marry a star. I married a guy from
Berthierville who didn't even have a
job. To the public he's a superman.
But Gilles has insecurities.

PAM

Of course he does, dear. They all
do.

Jody makes a face at her. She laughs and kisses him.
Jealously, Joann watches their easy interaction. The waiter
brings the phone to the table.

JOANN

Guess who?

INT. VILLA

GILLES

What are you doing? It doesn't take
two hours to eat.

RESTAURANT

They can hear him screaming through the handset. She's
embarrassed. She puts the phone down, continues.

PAM

He IS extremely demanding.

JOANN

It wasn't so bad in the beginning

PAM

Looks like it's getting worse.

JOANN

What can you expect? Whenever he demands anything, it's handed to him on a silver plate.

JODY

He's one of the top drivers in the world. So he's treated like a prince. What do you expect?

EXT. THE RESTAURANT - SHORT TIME LATER

Gilles pulls up. Jody intercepts him, grabs him by the arm and walks him off. He speaks to Gilles as a friend.

JODY

You have a choice as a racing driver to be either a nice relaxed family man where your wife bosses you around... Or you try to be a winner doing everything you know to maximize your chances.

GILLES

Yes. You have to be selfish.

JODY

But you are selfish outside racing. You spend a lot of time with your toys...less with your family. Being a racing driver's wife is a horrible job. You have to get your kicks out of being pretty in the pits. You're the star racing driver's wife, but you're the star of nothing.

GILLES

There are plenty of women who want to do it.

JODY

Because of the stardom. But it's a horrible, lousy job.

GILLES

Is that why you invited her to your party...alone?

Jody's taken aback, defensive...hurt.

JODY

You were out of town.

GILLES

And you let her have too much to drink?

JODY

For godsake, she's an adult, Gilles. Sometimes you treat her like she's a child...or one of your toys.

Gilles stomps off, angry.

EXT. THE VILLA

Gilles stands on the cliff with an engineer.

GILLES

I want a swimming pool here, a garage there.

ENGINEER

They have to be blasted out of solid rock!

GILLES

So?

INT. KITCHEN

Through the window, Gilles and the engineer in the B.G.

JOANN

Suddenly, he's a millionaire. It's crazy. Money has no meaning to him...\$185,000 for a boat?!

GASTON

He says it's not fast enough.

JOANN

He added 700-horsepower engines. The police won't let him start it in Monaco. The motors are so loud he has to go out to sea to start them up.

Gilles comes in. Parent greets him.

GILLES

Bonjour Gaston.

GASTON

Bonjour Gilles. I see you're still spending money.

GILLES

(unrepentant)

Never had it before.

GASTON

I guess it changes everybody.

GILLES

I can afford to buy toys. Whatever I want, I just go out and buy it. It's fun. Why not? Joann just looks at him.

EXT. MONACO GRAND PRIX

Qualifying, Gilles astonishes everyone by clocking second.

NIGEL

With their throttle delay, the turbos aren't suited for Monaco's short straights. The chassis also works against him.

REPORTER

Then, how does he do it?

Nigel just shrugs.

INT. THE PITS

Gilles ROARS by. His little boy holds his ears.

JOANN

What is it, Jacques?

JACQUES

Momma, my head.

She gets up, gathers her things. Gaston looks at her.

JOANN

He has another headache.

GASTON

Does he get them often?

JOANN

When Gilles races Jacques becomes upset. She looks at Melanie. She cheers for her dad.

JOANN (CONT'D)

Will you stay with her?

GASTON

I'll bring her home after the race.

EXT. THE RACE - STOCK

Jones pulls into the pits. Gilles is now just six seconds behind and begins to lessen the interval, pushing harder, sending the fans into hysterics of screaming, hooting airhorns, wailing yacht sirens and waving flags. Joy explodes as the Ferrari passes the Williams and takes the checkered flag.

INT. PRESS ROOM

NIGEL

Le Petit Grand Homme is again the hero.

ANGLE - GILLES

GILLES

My car was very hard to drive. The suspension is too stiff. I ache all over. It was the most tiring race of my life but I am very happy with this win. My brakes started to go. I had to be very brutal with the car but it lasted okay. I am very lucky today.

He looks around. For the first time..no Joann.

INT. VILLA VILLENEUVE

Joann gives Jacques medicine as they sit at dinner. She speaks softly to Gilles, trying not to argue in front of the children. But they listen.

JOANN

Jacques has nervous headaches. He has difficulty in school. It's the pressure you put on him. You are very demanding. He has to be perfect.

GILLES

He's my son, he'll be more than perfect.

GILLES (CONT'D)

CRASH!

They look up. Jacques has dropped his glass of milk.

EXT. JARAMA - SPANISH GRAND PRIX

Gilles sits in an ill-handling Ferrari.

GILLES

It's like a hopeless fast red Cadillac. It wallows all over the place. I thought for sure I am going off the road. And yet, the chassis is incredibly forgiving. I can get so sideways I am almost looking over the rollover bar! And still it comes back.

NIGEL

It uses up tires at an alarming rate.

GILLES

Look out for me in the first few laps. After that, the tires will be screwed and that will be that.

THE RACE - STOCK

While his followers corner as if on rails, Gilles's tired tires afford him ever more precarious purchase. He dodders drunkenly through the curves then surges ahead on the straights. His virtuoso performance creates a concertina effect as the queue behind him closes up in the corners, falls back on the straights, then squeezes in behind again.

EXT. NIGEL - STAND UP

NIGEL

The tires are screwed but, under the blazing Spanish sun, his drive ranks with the most sensational ever seen.

INT. THE PITS

The crew and Joann watch Gilles' on monitors jumping and screaming. Tension is electric as the final laps reel off. Gilles has only to lose concentration, fumble a gear change, slide a millimeter off line... Again the Ligier emerges from a tighter hairpin abreast the Ferrari. Gilles holds off a desperate challenge and takes the checkered flag.

INT. THE PITS

MAURO JUMPS DOWN, EXULTANT.

FORGHIERI

Gilles was fantastic, a marvel! I'd like to see who has the courage to criticize him now. Like nobody else...he has a rage to win!

EXT. THE PADDOCK

Carlos Reutemann pulls in. The cameras push up.

CARLOS

It was the greatest drive I've ever seen. That chassis is awful. His driving was just unreal. To get that car around 80 laps without making a mistake is an achievement. To do it when you are leading and under constant pressure is unbelievable!

EXT. VICTORY PODIUM

The exhausted winner is crowned by King Juan Carlos. Pironi walks Gilles away.

PIRONI

It was ridiculous. It was like a train.

GILLES LAUGHINGLY AGREES,

GILLES

Why didn't they pass me? They could run rings around me if they wanted to.

PIRONI

They couldn't. You held them off.

GILLES

It was very hard. I had to take many big chances. It was the best race of my life.

INTERVIEW CLIPS

FERRARI

Villeneuve? He made me live again the legend of Nuvolari.

NIKKI LAUDA

Villeneuve?..I like everything about him, although...

REPORTER

Yes, some question the risks he takes.

NIKKI

Yes. He's the craziest devil I ever came across in Formula 1.

EXT./INT. MILAN HOTEL

Pironi walks into the lobby with three beautiful women. The sophisticated Parisian is not above playing Mephistopheles. Gilles looks up at the gorgeous blondes.

GILLES

Salute Didier, you are doing well, I see.

PIRONI

Not so well, Gilles.

GILLES

How so?

PIRONI

This one, Helga... She likes you!

INT. MEETING ROOM - THE HOTEL

Gilles and Joann sit around a table with sleek Euro-businessmen. One pitches Gilles a grandiose new scheme.

BUSINESSMAN

Ferrari is old school. You can't win with him. We have the money. We have a factory. We can build competitive cars...a generation beyond anything on the track today. We can make you champion. It will be "Team Villeneuve".

INT. LOBBY

As they walk out, he turns to Joann,

GILLES

Well?

JOANN

I don't know...

GILLES
You are suspicious, for a change...

JOANN
Just a feeling. Something's not right.

GILLES
You're negative.

JOANN
I'm realistic. Who are these men?

GILLES
Ferrari is not competitive. Who knows
when it will be... the politics..
the Commadore... I need a car. I
can win with!

He stomps away. Sadly, embarrassed, she follows.

ANGLE - LOBBY

Pironi's sitting with Picinini. They watch... and listen.

AIR CANADA - FIRST CLASS - IN FLIGHT

Gilles avoids eye contact and the harassment of fame, but cannot ignore COURTNEY, the woman sitting next to him. She's glamorous, sophisticated, self-assured, sexy...

GILLES (CONT'D)
...oh, Formula One...

COURTNEY
Oh, you are a chemist.
(he laughs)
What is it?

GILLES
Nothing. It's just...such a relief.

COURTNEY
What is?

GILLES
That you don't know anything
about...what I do.

COURTNEY
I'm sorry. Must be important.

GILLES
No. Not at all.
(a beat)
Only to me.

Relieved of his fame, he can relax and talk. He finds himself trying to charm her. It's refreshing. And when he makes her laugh, he knows she is laughing with him, not playing up. He finds himself unexpectedly, tremendously excited. And he feels a response in her. No fame, no pressure, just mutual attraction.

INT. MONTREAL AIRPORT

Gaston sees Gilles with the beautiful, chic blonde.

GILLES AND COURTNEY

He's entranced. He sees Parent and excuses himself as she glides away. Parent watches.

GILLES

Hello Gaston. How are things?

GASTON

How is she?

He just glances hard at him, walks on. Gaston catches up.

GASTON (CONT'D)

Who is she?

GILLES

Oh, ah...no one. Someone I met on a plane.

GASTON

Quite beautiful...elegant.

GILLES

Oh, you wouldn't believe. And smart and...she runs a business, travels the world...fits in, handles herself, always at ease... Everything that...

GASTON

(interrupts)

And how is Joann? And the kids?

GILLES

Fine, fine.

GASTON

They are at home?

GILLES

Jacques gets headaches... when I race.

GASTON

Home life, he. Remember what they say about we... Quebecois...and the way we keep our women.

GILLES

Barefoot, pregnant and in the kitchen.

GASTON

Yes, hard to be world class in the kitchen.

Gilles tries to ignore the not-so-subtle undertext.

INT. GASTON'S CAR - MOVING TOWARD THE CITY

GILLES

So, what do you think of Team Villeneuve?

GASTON

Gilles, what's the rush?

GILLES

We can't wait. They're signing the lease on the factory.

GASTON

Your name's worth a lot. Wait. Until you see the color of their money.

GILLES

(adamant)

I want to go ahead.

GASTON

(hurt)

Okay, do what you want.

GILLES

I will.

INT. CAFE - NEXT MORNING

Gaston waits at a table. Gilles walks up with Courtney on his arm. She greets Parent, then excuses herself. Gilles watches her depart.

GILLES

You don't approve.

GASTON

Some men can do it. Other drivers. Not you. You're too honest.

(MORE)

GASTON (CONT'D)

You can't. It affects your concentration. Am I right?

GILLES

This and all the other things. It's harder and harder to concentrate.

GASTON

Do you want that? Is it worth it?

GILLES

I don't know.

GASTON

To stay alive, you'll have to make a choice.

GILLES

Don't worry. I can blow off steam in other ways.

EXT. GRAND CORNICHE

Gilles and Didier liven up their trips to Fiorano with high-speed games...a contest to determine which is the greater daredevil. The Ferrari 308's in top gear, Pironi, foot to the floor, without touching the brake for as long as possible, while the co-pilot times him.

PIRONI

Okay, the guy who keeps it up the longest is the winner.

Gilles is passenger as they blast along. Faster faster, hanging on the curves, blasting around giant lorries, swooping into hairpin tunnels...Kicking gravel off the cornice to crash and rattle down into the chasms below. Pironi pushes it...to impress...to intimidate. Gilles munches candy and looks totally unconcerned. Finally, Pironi starts to wilt. He looks over at Gilles. Gilles looks composed.

EXT. GAS STATION - LATER

PIRONI HANDS HIM A PEPSI.

PIRONI

You were afraid?

GILLES

Of course, I just don't show it.

INT. THE Paddock

THE PRESS IS SUSPICIOUS.

NIGEL

How are you two getting along?

PIRONI

Famously. We have a lot in common.

NIGEL

Really?!

GILLES

Absolutely.

EXT. SCUDIERI FERRARI

The new car is rolled out to a proud Ferrari and the press.

NIGEL

The 126C2 cars are a technological leap forward that brings the team closer to their competition in chassis design. Forghieri looks after the powerful turbo engines and transmissions, Postlethwaite is bringing new carbon-fibre construction methods to Maranello. One of the first things Postlethwaite noted is just how remarkable it was that Villeneuve was able to win with the inferior 126C.

INT. TALKING HEAD

POSTLEWAITE

Brilliant, just brilliant! Quite out of this world. I know how bad that car was.

EXT. THE TRACK - TESTING

In practice, Pironi knocks Stuch's car off the track. Stuch comes into the pit screaming.

STUCH

You frog mother! You idiot. What do you think you're doing out there. Where the fuck you learn to drive?! Pironi is stone cold. Gilles takes up his defense.

GILLES

Joachim...take it easy. It was an accident.

STUCH

Accident?!!

GILLES

Yeah, he didn't mean it.

STUCH

Yeah!? Don't be so sure!

Stuch stalks off. Pironi looks at Gilles. Gilles smiles at him, shrugs, mugs at Stuch's retreating back. Some of the crew have seen the exchange.

EXT. THE TRACK - QUALIFYING

Didier has trouble, spins, crashes.

INT. PRESS ROOM - LATER

PERONI TALKING HEAD

PIRONI

It's nothing...a sore knee, from the accident...

Gilles takes Nigel to one side.

GILLES

Didier's had a really bad time. It was a huge accident. It scared him. Don't give him a hard time for being slow.

NIGEL

Really?...

GILLES

Yeah...

NIGEL

Most teammates never miss an opportunity to score off each other. Why are you saying to give him a break? It's very generous.

GILLES

It's nothing. We're good friends.

NIGEL

(nods uncertainly)
You worried about something?

GILLES

Only two sets of qualifying tires. I have to take desperate chances in slower traffic. You come out cold, you go slow and then you go banzai for one lap to set a bloody time. Christ! It's dangerous! You find someone in your way, you can't lift off if you're on a quick lap. All you can do is hope he's looking in his mirrors.

MONTREAL - OLD TOWN - ELEGANT PIED A TERRE

Gilles and Courtney sit picking at food. They are not dressed. A fur coat lies on the bed. Under Courtney's eye Gilles tries to muster the courage to eat an oyster.

COURTNEY

Come on, I thought you were brave. He takes the challenge, tries to get it down, gags but manages to swallow it. She studies him thoughtfully.

COURTNEY (CONT'D)

This is a whole new world for you, yes?

GILLES

Yes.

She puts her hand on his face. He covers hers with his, draws her to him. They knock over the champagne as they fall into bed.

EXT. MONACO - A BEAUTIFUL DUSK.

Yacht lights twinkle on the sea. Cafes cast a rosy glow.

EXT. VILLENEUVE VILLA

SIT IN GATHERING DARKNESS.

INT. VILLA - LIVING ROOM

Gilles sits on a couch in the darkened villa looking at twilight over the harbor. Joann comes up and puts her arm around him but he doesn't respond. She sits on the couch and looks out at the view. Silence, just the ticking clock and birds twittering. Finally the tension becomes too much.

JOANN

Look, this is not normal, lets just get a divorce.

GILLES

No, no, you're the only person I
love. You're the only person I want.

JOANN

You're not happy. I am miserable.

GILLES

No. No divorce.

JOANN

Just...Consider it.

MONACO - THE CLASSIEST RESTAURANT.

Gilles arrives, to find Gaston at a table for two. Drinks
arrive. Gaston hands Gilles a paper.

GILLES

What's this?

GASTON

Just a draft.

GILLES

Of what?

GASTON

of...a divorce settlement.

Gilles reads the statement. He tears it into tiny pieces.

GILLES

I love her. I just can't live with
her. All we ever do is fight.

GASTON

Your marriage...you were just kids.
You've been through tremendous
changes.

GILLES

It's just...she's nothing like
Courtney.

GASTON

Believe me, my friend. I know. From
hard experience. Living with another
person is not the answer. Everybody
changes. It's your ability to adapt
that makes a relationship work.

More drinks arrive.

GASTON (CONT'D)

What about the kids? The Church?
You just came back from the Caribbean,
how was that?

GILLES

Actually had a good time.

GASTON

So, maybe it could work after all.

GILLES

Yes, maybe.

GASTON

What are you going to do?

GILLES

I'm going to...to try.

THE VILLA - GILLES' WORKSHOP - DAYS LATER

Gilles fools with a model of a new racing car. It sports the logo Team Villeneuve. Then Joann brings in the newspaper. Without a word, she shows him the headline: Didier Pironi marries Catherine Beynie. The best man at their wedding is Ferrari team manager Macro Piccinini. Gilles is stunned.

JOANN

You weren't invited.

GILLES

Just an oversight.

But he grows quiet.

JOANN

I don't think Pironi is what you
think he is.

GILLES

(snaps angrily)

I don't care what you think!

JOANN

Gilles how can you be so blind.

GILLES

He's my teammate. Like Reuteman.
Like Jody Schecter.

JOANN

No. Not like that. He'll do anything
to get ahead.

GILLES

I don't care. I just want to put everything out of my mind and concentrate on racing.

EXT. IMOLA - THE SAN MARION GRAND PRIX

NIGEL

Testing in preparation for the upcoming San Marino Grand Prix. The Ferraris are quickest. Pironi is fastest.

GILLES SENDS THE TIFOSI HOME HAPPY WITH ONE OF HIS 360-DEGREE SPINNING PERFORMANCES.

INT. THE PITS

Gilles is surrounded by hordes of admirers. Besides the usual Forza Gilles and Viva Villeneuve banners, there's a large sign that reads Dio Perdonna ... Gilles No - God Forgives ... Gilles Does Not.

EXT. STAND UP

NIGEL

The Ferraris can't match the Renaults. Arnoux is on pole and Prost beside him. Gilles' time gets him third on the grid. Pironi is fourth. In trying to achieve his position, Pironi has a big accident. Number 28 Ferrari goes off the road backwards into a barrier at high speed and wipes out.

INT. THE PITS

Pironi brushes by Nigel, yells at Forghieri.

PIRONI

I don't know why! It suddenly snapped out of control! Maybe suspension failure, maybe a tire. I'm not sure.

Pironi strides into the paddock, pushes through impatiently.

PIRONI (CONT'D)

I need the spare car.

A mechanic looks up.

ALDO

You already blew two cars.

But Pironi's already hopping into the cockpit.

ALDO (CONT'D)
Hey, that's Gilles' spare!

Impatiently, Pironi motions the crew to push him out. They look to Picinini, but he turns away.

EXT. THE PADDOCK MOMENTS LATER

Gilles pulls in, sees Pironi take off in his spare car. He looks at the crew with disbelief, then looks at Picinini. He slams his helmet to the ground.

GILLES
That's my spare! What's going on?

EXT. THE RACE - NEXT DAY - A 60 LAP BATTLE

THE FLAG DROPS. THEY'RE OFF.

MONTAGE - STOCK AND COMPUTER-ENHANCED

NIGEL
Arnoux powers away in the lead with Prost in tow. But the Ferraris overtake the Renault before the first lap is finished. Prost retires with piston failure on lap 7 and the San Marino Grand Prix becomes a three-car race. The three front runners are separated by less than a second when the French machine spews smoke, then flame and the Italian cars take over. Hordes on the hillsides roar as Maranello's finest circulate nose-to-tail. Their idol in number 27 is on his way to another win. Then 28 usurps the lead. Three laps later it's 27 in front again despite having been rudely chopped by 28 on the corner at Tosa. The fans love it. The home team's putting on a show.

INT. THE PITS

The pit board 'SLOW' sign is shown to Villeneuve and he promptly eases off to save the cars and fuel. But Pironi speeds up surprisingly, cuts in and takes the lead. In the pit, the reaction is instantaneous.

ALDO
What's he doing? Gilles had the lead!

BENITO

He's just playing. Like Gilles did with Jody at Monza. He'll back off. Villeneuve scrabbles sideways through the chicane and presses after Pironi hard. On lap 58 he moves alongside Pironi and is again cut off.

THE CROWD

A murmur passes down the ranks. The crowd senses...

FAN

This...is serious!

INT. THE PIT

Joann is outraged.

JOANN

He passed Gilles again! He can't do that! It's against the rules.

She looks around frantically.

JOANN (CONT'D)

Where's Mauro... Where's Forghieri?

PICININI

He's not here.

He walks off. Another crewmember fills her in.

ALDO

Something with his family.

JOANN

Well, Who's going to tell him to stop?

She looks over at Picinini, but he looks away.

EXT. THE RACE

NIGEL

Lap 59, one to go. Villeneuve dives into Tosa ahead of Pironi and takes the lead.

EXT. THE RACE

Number 27 slows as they go past the pits on their

NIGEL

The final lap. Villeneuve is backing off to save his engine. To make sure he finishes. Pironi will pace him to the finish line.

Then, as they speed toward Tosa at 180 mph, number 28 suddenly pulls out of the slipstream of 27 and chops in front in a brutally aggressive move that leaves the crowd gasping. There is neither room nor time for a response. The cars cross the finish. Pironi wins! The crowd strangely hushes...

EXT. THE VICTORY PODIUM

Pironi waves to the crowd in triumph, but Gilles won't look at him. He won't speak to Picinini. The manager speaks to Joann. She listens and then joins Gilles.

JOANN

They want you to join him up there.
(he's too furious to
speak. She insists.)
Stand up there. You came in second.

GILLES

I won't stand next to him!

JOANN

You won second place. It's your right!
Gilles!

THE WINNER'S PODIUM

Gilles joins Pironi, but his expression shows fury and despair, frightening in its intensity. Nigel tries to talk to him, but Gilles stalks off.

EXT. PADDOCK

Gilles walks straight to his helicopter and takes off. In his anger, he nearly forgets Joann. As he pulls away he sees her running to the edge of the pad. He drops the collective and settles back onto the field. She hops in. He roars off and flies away to Monaco.

POST RACE INTERVIEW - NIGEL AND REPORTERS

Pironi's jubilation is muted. He makes a lame defense in front of a knowledgeable and resentful crowd of journalists..

PIRONI

We both had engine problems.

NIGEL

What about team orders?

PIRONI

There were no team orders.

NIGEL

The Ferrari standing orders. No racing between the team for number one.

PIRONI

Gilles knows that the 'Slow' sign means only to use your head. It means keep your eye on your brakes, your tires, your fuel. It certainly doesn't mean 'don't win'.

NIGEL

Apparently Gilles feels differently...

PIRONI

I hope Gilles won't bear me any rancour. Time heals all wounds.

Pironi leaps down and pushes through the crowd..

DIETER

Time wounds all heels.

INT. MONACO - THE REPORTER'S CAFE/BAR

Nigel is on the phone to Sheckter.

NIGEL

I don't blame him for being angry. Pironi stole the race. But what frightens me is that he's saying that at the next race he'll beat him. He's adamant that he'll never speak to him again. You talk to him He'll listen to you.

INT. MONACO - JODY'S PENTHOUSE

Jody is hesitant.

JODY

I don't know. We haven't spoken in months. I don't think he's listening to anyone these days...

NIGEL

Please... Try.

EXT. BALCONY - JODY'S PENTHOUSE

Jody and Pam sit at breakfast. Jody reads Autosport;

PAM

What's it say?

JODY

"Bad Blood at Maranello." Nigel's
byline. He quotes Gilles.

(QUOTING)

'I have declared war. I'll do my own
thing in the future. It's war.
Absolutely. War!'

PAM

Go. Go see him.

EXT. MONACO - SUNSET

BEAUTIFUL AS EVER.

INT. THE VILLENEUVE VILLA

Darkened living room. Open bottles of single malt scotch.
Gilles paces. Scheckter just listens.

GILLES

All the times I have obeyed slow
orders at Ferrari. I sat on your
tail the whole way at Monza knowing
it was my last chance to win the
championship. I hoped like hell you
would break! But I never thought of
breaking my word. Or team orders.
Jody just pours them another. He
says we had engine problems, there
were no team orders? My engine was
perfect. There were team orders!
Jody hands him the drink. When Rene
blew up I took the lead and we got a
'slow' sign. That means 'hold
position.' Imola was my race. I was
in front when Arnoux dropped out. If
it had been the other way around,
tough luck for me. I would not have
tried to take the lead away from
him. Jesus, we've been living
together for a year and a half! I
thought I knew the guy! I trusted
him!

JODY

Now you know. It was one race.

GILLES

I was coasting those last 15 laps.
He was racing.

(MORE)

GILLES (CONT'D)

I think I've proved that if I want someone to stay behind me... he stays behind.

JODY

You're just mad. It'll pass.

GILLES

I'd have been mad at myself if I'd been beaten. Second is one thing, but second because he steals it, that's something else!

EXT. MARANELLO - FERRARI'S VILLA

Reporters respectfully hound the old man.

LINI

Commendatore Ferrari would you make a statement?

The old man sighs.

FERRARI

Pironi did not interpret the pit signals correctly. I WELL UNDERSTAND VILLENEUVE'S DISAPPOINTMENT. I agree with him.

INT. THE VILLENEUVE VILLA - TIME CUT

JOANN

Jody's done background research on the promoter...

Gilles turns to him, grim...

JODY

He misrepresented himself. He doesn't have the money. The group is using your name to secure it. They're using... you.

Gilles looks at Joann.

GILLES

I should have listened to you, trusted your judgment. You're the only person I can trust, Joann.

He turns back to her.

JOANN

Maybe we should try again...

He embraces her, kisses her.

GILLES

And again. And again. I need you! I need your support.

He turns to Jody.

GILLES (CONT'D)

And yours. I'm sorry.

JODY

You're embarrassed, that's all. You got along with me because I let you be quicker while I concentrated on winning the Championship. After I won, I coasted through the second year and never threatened your stardom. Pironi hurt your pride.

GILLES

The way he did it makes it worse.

JODY

You were naive. Yes, you must trust people but you must also keep your hand on your gun. You don't always have to be the fastest in the world.

GILLES

I just hate to get beaten.

JODY

That's the problem. You put yourself under pressure.

(puts his arm around him)

Gilles, I know the dangers of blind rage. The sport is dangerous enough without having one's judgment impaired. Anger can kill you. I used to get really upset in practice. I tried too hard and took chances. There's only a few laps and it's real dangerous. When you roll the dice often they're going to come up craps sometime. I learned. But you just don't care. You hold your foot down. I know what you're going through. I know you must put it behind you.

((He looks hard at Gilles.))

Am I getting through?

Gilles just stares at him.

EXT. ZOLDER GRAND PRIX TRACK - BELGIUM - CBC STAND UP

NIGEL

The Grote Prijs van Belgie begins with practice at the Omloop Terlamen Zolder. Attention concentrates on the Ferraris. The Villeneuve/ Pironi controversy is the talk of Formula One.

INT. THE PITS

Tension in the pit. Gilles goes about his business, looking preoccupied. Nigel gives him a copy of the story.

NIGEL

I'm sorry. I had to write the truth...

GILLES

I'm glad it's in print. Thanks for doing it fairly.

Pironi comes into the pits. Gilles sees him.

GILLES (CONT'D)

Let's get out of here.

They walk to the car.

NIGEL

The car?

GILLES

Undriveable on these tires. I scared myself. The steering locked as I was going through the Terlamenbocht.

NIGEL

And the track?

GILLES

Traffic problems, tremendous speed differentials.

NIGEL

How bad is it?

GILLES

Very bad. Every time I'm on a quick lap I come cross someone going slowly.

(MORE)

GILLES (CONT'D)

It's crazy having only two sets of tires. You're forced to take fantastic risks.

INT. THE Paddock

Gilles is on the phone. A revving engine drowns out what he says, but the conversation is difficult and emotional.

INT. HOTEL ROOM

Courtney packs her bags, leaving the coat.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY

She leaves the key and walks out into the street.

INT. THE Paddock

Gilles notices strange attitudes in the pits. The crew look at him funny. He senses a conspiracy. He's distracted, preoccupied. Has the crew, has Forghieri, Piccinini...has Ferrari turned against him? They turn back to the car.

INT. COCKPIT

Aldo is bolting the five point harness to the frame. Forghieri checks it.

FORGHIERI

Aldo, put a bigger washer on that.

ALDO

Benito, do you have a number five?

INT. THE Paddock GARAGE

In the darkness, Gilles is on the phone with Joann.

EXT./INT. VILLENEUVE VILLA

Joann pins Melanie's dress and juggles the phone..

JOANN

...A beautiful dress for her first communion. She looks like an angel. Gilles...how are you?

GILLES

I'm fine. I'm okay.

JOANN

Gilles, don't worry about things. Don't think about... anything. Okay?

GILLES

You were right, I should have listened.

JOANN

About what?

GILLES

About Pironi, the team ...everything.

JOANN

Gilles. Put it out of your mind. You have to concentrate.

GILLES

You're right. I'll be alright.

JOANN

It doesn't matter. None of it matters. Just you and the car. Your skill and the car. Just think of that and of us. Promise?

GILLES

Yes, I promise.

JOANN

And one other thing.

GILLES

Yes?

JOANN

I love you. I always have. Right from the time you first scared the hell out of me in Berthierville.

He laughs.

GILLES

I love you too.

Someone calls his name.

GILLES (CONT'D)

The car's ready. I have to go.

JOANN

A dieu...'Go with god.

GILLES

Attends-moi, ce ne sera pas long...

He sits in the car in the darkened garage buckling his harness.

GILLES

As he pulls on the helmet...he mutters something.

GILLES (CONT'D)

Wait for me, I won't be long.

Forghieri leans in...

FORGHIERI

What, Gilles?

But Gilles doesn't respond. He wasn't speaking to him.

BLACK - A ROAR A THOUSAND FERRARI HORSES WAKE AND SCREAM. A SLIT OF LIGHT WIDENS. SKY, GRASS, SHAPES MOVING FAST BEYOND SLIDING DOORS. GLOVES ON CURVE OF WHEEL, CURVE OF BONNET SLOPING AWAY. MOVING TOWARD THE LIGHT, ENGINE BLIPPING, VOICES...A MELANGE OF CONFUSION. THEN THEY ARE DROWNED IN THE ROAR. WE ARE OUT AND FREE AND ACCELERATING AWAY.

FORGHIERI (CONT'D)

Yes Commandatore...qualifying. Fifteen minutes left. Pironi's faster. Gilles is slower, just over 200 kph.

SPEED, REVS, SHIFT, FOOT TO THE FLOOR, THROUGH THE GEARS, TURNING IN TOWARD STREAMS OF COLORS WHIZZING BY. VOICES AGAIN, IGNORE THEM. DOWNSHIFT THROUGH THE TURN AND THEY ARE LOST IN THE ROAR. THEN OUT, FOUR-WHEEL DRIFT, WHEEL CRANKED, SLIDING TOWARD THE BANK... CATCH IT, ON THE EDGE, BLAST AWAY. THE BALANCE, THE FLOW. SPEED. FASTER FASTER. IN TUNE, AS ONE, THE CAR AN EXTENSION OF WILL. FASTER, THEN VOICES AGAIN, THE DOUBTS, PUT THEM BEHIND, CONCENTRATE.

THE PITS

More cars take to the circuit to qualify.

NIGEL

Fifteen minutes to go. Gilles is on his last set of tires.

FORGHIERI

I'm calling him in. His tires are finished. He's done three fast laps. He's close to Pironi's best time. Nothing more he can do. He knows it.

Gilles ROARS by. Mauro shows the 'IN' signal on the board.

ALDO

He coming in?

BENITO
He's going over 250 kilometers per
hour!

ALDO
That's Gilles!

EXT. TERLAMENBOCHT CORNER - 225 KILOMETERS PER HOUR

Gilles comes over the hill and into the left curve. A WHITE MARCH appears in front of him.

ANGLE - THE WHITE MARCH

Jochen Mass's cooling his tires, moving slower than the oncoming Ferrari. He sees Gilles, expects him to pass on the left. He moves right. He can't believe it when Gilles roars up.

ROAR, RATTLING VIBRATION. COMING UP FAST, A CAR, BLOCKING, SLIP INSIDE, DOWNSHIFT, THE CURVE, CUT INSIDE THE CORNER, THEN OUT, AWAY, FASTER, FASTER.

The VOICES again, the images...

GASTON (V.O.)
Responsibilities...

GILLES (V.O.)
Damn them! Just let me race!

JOANN (V.O.)
The kids.

GILLES (V.O.)
The kids are fine. I love the kids...
Other drivers...good times...

HUNT (V.O.)
Friends...

GILLES (V.O.)
I have no friends, just...

CRASHES
Flaming car parts, tumbling past.
Dead drivers...Ronnie Peterson,
Cevert...Nikki Lauda's crash.

GILLES (V.O.)
...dead ones.

JODY (V.O.)
You can't race with anger!

GILLES(V.O.)

Formula One...

COURTNEY

Oh? What are you, a chemist?

A ROAR.

NIKKI LAUDA (V.O.)

...the craziest devil in Formula One.

THE ROAR EXPLODES INTO 200 DECIBEL CACOPHONY! SEEM TO BE IN A TUNNEL

It's the Monaco tunnel... a pinpoint of light grows at 200 MILES PER HOUR into the bright, gleaming yacht harbor, with Prince Ranier's palace glittering on the hill.

THE ENGINE ROAR IS NOW A CROWD

Hanging from the balconies, hanging from the towers, the spires of exotic yachts...your name...they scream...VILLENEUVE! VILLENEUVE! VILLENEUVE! VILLENEUVE!

NELSON PIQUET(V.O.)

He's somewhat crazy, but surely a phenomenon. He's does things nobody else can.

THE WALLS OF MARANELLO

Red banners stream down both sides of the wall. The wall is made up of crowds of fanatical Tifosi...the impassioned Ferrari fans. And banners:... Gilles Forever!!!

JODY (V.O.)

You're famous. A legend. It comes with a cost.

WOMEN...

PIRONI (V.O.)

This one...Helga. She likes you.

Villeneuve buttons, banners, models of his number 27 car, helmets, books on his career.

JODY(V.O.)

They're using you. They're using your name.

COURTNEY (V.O.)

I want nothing from you. Just you.

GILLES (V.O.)
Concentrate. Must CONCENTRATE!

JODY (V.O.)
Life is more than winning.

GILLES (V.O.)
World Champion...

FERRARI
The Team.

GILLES (V.O.)
Fuck the team!

FERRARI (V.O.)
...so fond of Villeneuve... he's
one of my family.

GILLES (V.O.)
Commandatore... Why did he abandon
me?

PIRONI

GILLES (CONT'D)
Stole the Race!

JOANN (V.O.)
I don't trust him!

NIGEL (V.O.)
Do you feel betrayed?

CLOSE ON GILLES

Trees streaming past in reflection on the visor of his helmet.
Then reflections of other races...Jarama, dead spectators,
Imola...Monaco.

GILLES (V.O.)
Betrayed, yes. Of course! Maudit!
Concentrate! CONCENTRATE! The
engine...

CLOSE ON - THE ENGINE - HIGH PITCHED SCREAM... ON GILLES

GILLES (CONT'D)
Tires...

CLOSE ON - THE TIRES

A WHINE at the edge of adhesion.

HIS POV - THE MARCH BLOCKING!

GILLES (CONT'D)
Blocking. Move it... move!

JODY (V.O.)
Had to prove himself, every lap.
Never knew him to take it easy. Always
the max..

GILLES (V.O.)
THE VOICES, DAMN THEM. CONCENTRATE.
CAR AHEAD. SHOOT LEFT!

THE WHITE CAR SUDDENLY SLIDES LEFT.

GILLES (CONT'D)
NO!

HE SWINGS IN. HE'S BLOCKING.

GILLES (CONT'D)
COME ON! MOVE OVER!

SWING LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT, RIGHT.

GILLES (CONT'D)
THERE, RIGHT! JUST ROOM ENOUGH.

SLIP RIGHT. SHIFT ROAR.

JOANN (V.O.)
"Maybe," I thought..."he's crazy..."

GILLES (V.O.)
THE VOICES, DAMN THEM! WHAT?!

THE FRONT CAR DRIFTS OVER, GAP CLOSING,

GILLES (CONT'D)
BRAKE? NO, NEVER!

SWING RIGHT, CAR COMING UP FAST,

GILLES (CONT'D)
NO! NO ROOM! PINCHED!

REAR TIRE ZOOMING UP. HIT. THHWWWUMPFFT!

GILLES (CONT'D)
Maudit!

UP. AIRBORNE. FLOATING...

THE FERRARI

Airborne for a hundred meters, then it slams into the earth, buckling the front of the car in on Gilles. But the energy isn't dissipated. The accident goes on and on.

GILLES

AIRBORNE. THE WORLD REVOLVES. SPEED, CARS, RACES WON, CROWDS, CHEERS, PEOPLE, JODY, FERRARI, FORGHEIRI, JACQUES, GASTON, MELANIE ...JOANN.

THE CAR

catapults high into the air. It cartwheels horrifically. It hits an earth bank, becomes airborne again, ricochets back on the circuit. The spinning projectile nearly lands on the March. Mass is just able to swerve to avoid being crushed.

IT WILL BE A BIG ONE. HE KNOWS. AIRBORNE, IN MID-SPIN, HE REACHES AND TURNS OFF THE IGNITION TO PREVENT FIRE.

THE CRASH

The Ferrari disintegrates. Pieces fly in all directions.

INT. COCKPIT - THE FIVE-POINT HARNESS.

A 25 cent washer lets go. The safety harness parts.

GILLES

Flies out of the car in a graceful parabola. The car pieces fall away and he is free.

UP. THEN SKY, ROLLING OVER. THE WORLD SPINNING INTO THE PAST. HE HAS DONE ALL HE CAN, THERE IS A MOMENT...SERENE... A RELEASE. EVERYTHING IS...

GILLES (V.O.)
...Fantastique...bonne...

AT LAST. ALL THINGS BEHIND... SOUNDS OF A SCREAMING CRASH... WHANG! THE SKY. A FENCE. PARTS FLY BY...INTO WHITE CLOUDS SCREAMS SUBSIDE...A RUSHING, A FLUTTERING OF WINGS. THEN...

BLACKNESS

EXT. THE CRASH - SLOW MOTION - ACTUAL FOOTAGE

Gilles is hurled through the air to plow through fencing. Gilles' helmet flies off and rolls to rest some distance away from his body.

THE TRACK

Jochen Mass stops and rushes over to the gathering crowd. Didier pulls up, runs toward the crash. Mass turns him around and leads him away.

INT. VILLA VILLENEUVE - KITCHEN

Joann's baking cookies. She turns. Jody's there. The look on his face! She says nothing, just puts her hand to her mouth to stifle a scream.

INT. HOSPITAL - BELGIUM

As in a dream...the SOUND...FAR AWAY.

SURGEON

Nothing more we can do.

JOANN

Try and operate, do something, anything!

DOCTOR

You have to make the decision...

JOANN

What?!

SURGEON

To cut life-support...

JOANN

(SCREAMS)

NO! You're crazy!

EXT. MARANELLO - FERRARI'S VILLA

The Old Man stands alone in the dappled shade of the olive trees. We hear the SOUND of a tumultuous press conference that took place a few hours earlier. Cameras click and grind. Reporters clamor for his attention...

LINI (V.O.)

Commendatore, do you have a statement?

The Old Man speaks sadly. MOVE IN SLOWLY to his face.

FERRARI (V.O.)

He left us because of something... incomprehensible. His fatality has deprived us of a great champion, one that I loved very much.

(MORE)

FERRARI (V.O.) (CONT'D)

My past is scarred with grief: father, mother, brother, son. My life is full of sad memories. I look back and see my loved ones. And among my loved ones I see the face of this great man, Gilles Villeneuve.

EXT. THE TRACK - ZOLDER

Nigel drives past the circuit alone. It's the emptiest place in the world. After all the activity and intensity, there's not a soul about. It's dead. Nothing but litter. And, parked out there...Gilles' helicopter. Then it hits him. Very hard. He bursts into tears, wipes his eyes to see the road...

NIGEL (V.O.)

We're not supposed to cry when racing drivers get killed. But Gilles was very important to me. A friend. The one bloke in racing who made it worthwhile. He was the last person who had the totally uninhibited joy of driving a racing car. Villeneuve was driving with a great deal of emotion. He threw caution to the wind. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred you can get away with it. But today... I'm sure when Gilles felt his Ferrari take off, his last thought was anger, plain and simple, because he knew that he'd spoiled that one quick lap.

EXT./INT. VILLA VILLENEUVE - CHILDREN'S BEDROOM

Jody checks on the sleeping children. When he sees Melanie, he starts crying. She has a picture of her dad with her. She holds it in her arms.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Pam covers Joann who has fallen asleep on a couch.

JOANN

She's asleep, but her face is animated, her lips are moving.

BACK IN TIME - QUEBEC

A young Joann, in the stands at some provincial Quebec raceway as Gilles screams around a turn. Her voice over...

JOANN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Maybe, I thought, he's a little bit
crazy.

THE DREAM - SOMEWHERE IN EUROPE

Gilles sits in the Ferrari on the grid. He smiles back at
her. His prayer...the last words to her before every race...

GILLES
Attends-moi, ce ne sera pas long...
Wait for me, I won't be long.

EXT. THE STARTING GRID AT IMOLA - RACE DAY - AERIAL

From overhead... CLOSE ON...

NUMBER 27 PAINTED IN RED on the asphalt. A Racing Car comes
into frame. We follow it. It too, is number 27, but it is a
modern car. Painted on the cockpit side is the
name...Villeneuve...Jacques Villeneuve.. The crowd roars,
the engines SCREAM... as...They're off!

PRINCE OF DESTRUCTION

THE LIFE OF GILLES VILLENEUVE

BY
Charles Proser

FROM THE BOOK
By

GERALD DONALDSON

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