

THE HUMAN STOPGAP

Episode One - Seconds from Eternity

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. INDIANAPOLIS MOTOR SPEEDWAY — DAWN

A Subtitle Appears Below: "INDIANAPOLIS MOTOR SPEEDWAY 1966"

A gray Indianapolis morning.

The enormous oval sits nearly empty.

Grandstands rise like walls around the track. The asphalt is cold and dark. The silence is almost unnatural.

Then —

The distant ROAR of an engine. A race car flashes past.

Another. Faster. The sound builds.

STEVEN OLVEY (23) tall, intense, stands at the inside wall watching as the cars blur by.

OLVEY (V.O.)

When I first started working at Indianapolis, it wasn't as the race car driver I dreamed about, it was as a medical student. My father diverted my career right before college from speed demon to doctor.

Open wheeled race cars scream through the turn.

OLVEY (V.O.)

My medical training was limited and I eventually realized I knew absolutely nothing about what happens to the human body moving at 200 mph and then suddenly stopping against an immovable object.

The crowd roars.

OLVEY (V.O.)

Little did I know my obsession with saving race car drivers would make me the STOPGAP until physics was to be respected.

FLASHBACK:

EXT. INDIANAPOLIS MOTOR SPEEDWAY – GRANDSTANDS

A Subtitle Appears Below: "Steven Olvey Age 12 – 1955"

A YOUNG STEVEN OLVEY, age 12, sits beside his FATHER in the grandstands. He is fascinated. His eyes follow the cars. His father points toward the track. Steven watches, completely absorbed.

OLVEY (V.O.)
My father brought me to the
Speedway when I was a boy. To me,
it was magnificent. The noise. The
speed. The drivers. They seemed
almost invincible.

Several race cars pass.

INT. RACE CAR – DAY

CU- Driver's face as car speeds past the grandstands.

Young Steven smiles.

OLVEY (V.O.)
But something strange happened
every time I picked a favorite
driver like Bill Vukovich Sr. My
favorite driver would be killed on
the track.

A sudden image – a race car against the wall. Smoke. Crowds standing. A red flag. The sound disappears. Only the image remains. Then a new crash and then another.

OLVEY (V.O.)
And it happened over and over
again.

EXT. INDIANAPOLIS MOTOR SPEEDWAY – RACE DAY

A Subtitle Appears Below: "Steve Olvey Medical Student 1966"

The grandstands are packed. Spectators sweat beneath the sun. Children wave flags. Men drink beer. Women hold umbrellas over their heads. A young OLVEY (26), now a medical student, moves through the infield medical area. He carries a basic medical bag. Nothing about his duties suggests the kind of trauma taking place only yards away.

OLVEY (V.O.)
At first, they didn't put me out
there with the drivers.
(MORE)

OLVEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
They put me in the infield. My job
was to take care of the spectators.

INT. INFIELD MEDICAL AREA - DAY

A SPECTATOR sits on an examination table. His face is bright red. Olvey checks him.

OLVEY
You've had too much sun.

The man looks embarrassed.

SPECTATOR
I thought I was doing pretty good.

Olvey gives him a look. Another spectator enters. Then another. Sunburn. Dehydration. Heat exhaustion. A cut.

Someone who has had too much beer. A minor fight. Olvey treats them one after another.

EXT. INFIELD - INDY RACE COURSE

The engines ROAR.

OLVEY (V.O.)
People would sit in the sun for
eight, ten, sometimes twelve hours
because they didn't want to miss a
second of the race. They'd ignore
the warning signs. They'd get
dehydrated. They'd get sick and
that's what I was treating.

Another ENGINE ROARS.

Olvey, depressed, looks toward the track as he offers a bottle of water to a spectator.

EXT. INDIANAPOLIS MOTOR SPEEDWAY - TRACK - CONTINUOUS

A car enters a turn. The speed is terrifying.

OLVEY (V.O.)
While I was treating those sunburns
and heat exhaustions though, the
real emergencies were happening out
there.

A car loses control. It slams into the wall. Metal explodes.

The crowd gasps.

EXT. TRACK — MOMENTS LATER

FIREMEN race toward the wreck. They carry equipment. They fight fire. They work to free the driver. No awareness of his neck flopping from side to side. Olvey watches from a distance.

His expression changes.

OLVEY (V.O.)

The first people on the scene were the firemen. They knew how to get a man out of a wrecked car. They knew how to fight fire. They knew how to cut through twisted metal. But they weren't trauma physicians. There were no physicians riding with them. No sophisticated trauma protocols. No system designed around the first critical minutes after a catastrophic crash

A driver is carried away. Olvey watches.

EXT. INDIANAPOLIS MOTOR SPEEDWAY — MEDICAL AREA — DAY

The DRIVER is placed on a gurney. Basic oxygen equipment. Basic supplies. An ambulance waits.

OLVEY (V.O.)

The ambulance was little more than a converted station wagon. A gurney. An oxygen tank. And whatever medical knowledge the people inside happened to have.

Olvey watches the ambulance disappear.

EXT. INDIANAPOLIS MOTOR SPEEDWAY — INFIELD — DAY

Olvey stands near the medical response area. He watches the track. Then watches another accident response. He looks frustrated. He approaches RACE OFFICIALS.

OLVEY

We need a doctor out there!

The official looks at him.

OFFICIAL
We've got medical people.

Olvey gestures toward the track.

OLVEY
Not close enough, you don't.

The official walks away. Olvey watches him go.

MONTAGE

- Olvey treating another spectator.
- A driver being removed from a wreck.
- A fire truck racing toward the track.
- Olvey shaking his head at the treatment the injured drivers are receiving.
- Another race car screaming through a turn.
- Another crash.

EXT. INFIELD - INDY TRACK

Olvey approaching race officials.

OLVEY (V.O.)
I kept asking. I kept pestering. I kept telling them that somebody needed to get to these drivers immediately. Eventually, they gave me the chance.

EXT. INDIANAPOLIS MOTOR SPEEDWAY - INFIELD - DAY

A Subtitle Appears Below: "Dr. Steve Olvey 1969"

Olvey stands beside a response vehicle. He is no longer simply treating spectators. He is now positioned to respond to accidents. He looks toward the track. For the first time, he is close.

OLVEY (V.O.)
Finally, I was in position. I had wanted this. I thought this was what I had been waiting for. I was going to save these drivers.

A beat.

OLVEY (V.O.)
When, actually, I was about to
discover how little I actually
knew.

EXT. INDIANAPOLIS MOTOR SPEEDWAY — RACE DAY

Cars thunder around the oval. The crowd is enormous. Olvey watches.

Suddenly—

A CRASH.

Olvey and the response team move in.

EXT. TRACK — CRASH SITE — CONTINUOUS

Firemen work to extract the driver. Olvey approaches. He looks inside the wreck. Metal. Glass. Smoke. A human being trapped inside.

OLVEY (V.O.)
One of my early on-track responses
came during the 1969 race. I
remember the extraction. I remember
trying to assess the driver. I
remember how quickly the situation
went from bad to worse. The firemen
laid the driver on the ground. I
panicked as I search through my
tiny medical bag for a stethoscope.

OLVEY
Hey! I need some help here!

FIREMAN #2
What? You're the doctor!

Olvey is still searching his black bag.

Another fireman taps Olvey on the shoulder.

FIREMAN #1
Hey, Doc. He stopped breathing. I
think he's dead.

Olvey is dumbfounded. He rocks back and sits on the track with a thud. The firemen quickly scoop up the driver and slip him into the ambulance.

FIREMAN #2

Come on, Doc. You have to get off the track. They'll be starting the race up again!

INT. MAKESHIFT MEDICAL FACILITY - DAY

Olvey stands alone in the medical tent. The Marion County Coroner, track officials, USAC representatives and the medical director examines the dead driver. There are no obvious wounds to his body.

OLVEY (V.O.)

My first day and I let a driver die, but why did he die? I didn't see any trauma on his body at all.

The driver is covered up. His helmet is laid on his chest. Olvey walks over and examines the helmet. The left side is bashed in about four inches. He then lays the helmet back down.

OLVEY (V.O.)

All my training as a doctor and I felt helpless. I felt all I was good for was treating heat strokes, but this was a different world. If I was going to help these drivers, I needed expert advise.

The dead driver is wheeled out of the tent. Over the track loud speakers an announcement is made that Eddie Sachs had been mortally wounded. Olvey examines the helmet one more time.

EXT. INDIANAPOLIS MOTOR SPEEDWAY - TRACK

MONTAGE - - 1970s

A Subtitle Appears Below: "INDIANAPOLIS MOTOR SPEEDWAY 1970's"

The ROAR of engines. Smoke drifts across the track. The sharp smell of methanol and burning rubber fills the air.

EXT. TURN 3 - DAY

A race car SLAMS into the wall. Metal SCREAMS. Debris flies.

OLVEY arrives by truck with his small medical bag.

Behind him, a group of FIREMEN -- older track veterans -- arrive in their firetruck, carrying extinguishers and stretchers.

They reach the wreck.

FIREMAN #1

Doc...his legs don't look good.

Olvey drops to his knees. The driver's legs are twisted at unnatural angles, boots still strapped in the foot-box.

OLVEY

We need to cut him out. Careful
with the feet.

The firemen exchange glances. One shrugs.

FIREMAN #2

We usually just pull'em.

Olvey looks up sharply.

OLVEY

Not this time.

CUT TO:

Another crash. Thick smoke billows from the cockpit.

Olvey is already there. A driver's hand is crushed against the steering wheel -- fingers bent the wrong way.

FIREMAN #3

Just yank the glove off.

OLVEY

No. Stabilize first. We don't know
what's broken underneath.

Olvey works quickly, wrapping the hand while the firemen stand back, uncertain.

CUT TO:

A car fully engulfed in flames. The driver is unconscious, head slumped forward.

One fireman starts to remove the helmet roughly. The driver's head bobs back and forth. The driver is unresponsive. Olvey is shocked. Another dead driver.

OLVEY (V.O.)

When I imagined life as a track doctor I thought I would be these drivers' savior. No more deaths. The reality is quite different. That wall is unforgiving and these cars are death traps.

FADE OUT.

EXT. INDIANAPOLIS MEMORIAL HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Everything seems quiet from the outside.

INT. HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT

A completely different world. Fluorescent lights. Doctors. Nurses. Patients arriving rapidly. Olvey stands at the side of a patient suffering from traumatic injuries. Blood pressure is checked. An IV is started.

OLVEY (V.O.)

So I went to the emergency room. If I was going to save these drivers, I had to learn from people who dealt with trauma every hour of the day.

A NURSE walks up to Olvey.

NURSE

Can I help you, sir?

OLVEY

Who's the best trauma doctor here?

The nurse scans the ER.

NURSE

That would be Dr. Clark, but his shift doesn't start until 8 A.M.

Olvey checks his watch.

OLVEY

Thanks. I work at the track in the medical department.

(MORE)

OLVEY (CONT'D)

Do you mind if I just watch? I'll stay out of the way.

NURSE

I can't allow that. If you wanna see Dr. Clark you can come back tomorrow morning.

Olvey nods and exits the ER.

EXT. INDIANAPOLIS MOTOR SPEEDWAY - PIT LANE - DAY

A car rolls to a stop under its own power. The driver climbs out, removes his helmet himself, and grins at the small crowd that has gathered. He flexes his neck once, then twice.

Olvey is already moving toward him with his black bag.

The driver waves him off without looking, then falls to the ground, his limbs go rigid, jaw locked. Foam at the corner of his mouth.

Olvey hovers over the driver. He notices his pupils are fixed.

OLVEY (V.O.)

These drivers think they're invincible, but sometimes God has other plans for them.

INT. HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM - DAY

A harsh fluorescent wash. A accident victim is rapidly wheeled in.

FIREMAN #5

Car accident victim. He's lost a lot of blood. Might have several broken bones.

Nurses move with practiced impatience. The ER is not heroic. It's busy. Olvey stands near the doorway, out of the way, holding a notepad. He looks out of place in his Speedway shirt and soot-streaked slacks.

ER - DR. DAVID CLARK, early 40s, sleeves rolled up, eyes sharp, sees him.

DAVID CLARK

I hear you were looking for me.

OLVEY

Desperately. I'm a doctor myself,
but my experience is no match for
steel being destroyed from hitting
a wall at 200 miles per hour.

They both watch the accident victim being worked on.

DAVID CLARK

Two hundred miles per hour? Wow. I
bet this one was about thirty and
look at the damage.

OLVEY

So you see my problem?

DAVID CLARK

You got a war on your hands. You
are more then welcome to learn as
much as I know. How much time can
you afford to devote to this?

OLVEY

As much as needed.

Clark nods like that's acceptable. A NURSE cuts the patient's
shirt away with shears. Another starts an IV. Someone calls
out a blood pressure.

NURSE

Eighty systolic.

DAVID CLARK

Get fluids running.

Olvey stands back and starts to write; "fluids" and
underlines it. Olvey watches intubation and watches the
patients chest rise and deflate.

DAVID CLARK (CONT'D)

Breath sounds?

NURSE

Left's not there.

DAVE CLARK

Needle.

Olvey's pen pauses. He looks up.

OLVEY

Needle where?

Clark glances at him, half-second.

DAVID CLARK
Chest. Second intercostal. Right
now!

Clark moves fast. The needle goes in. Air releases. The patient's oxygen improves. Olvey stares. He's absorbing.

OLVEY
You do that a lot?

DAVID CLARK
Every day.

OLVEY
What's the best way to learn?

DAVID CLARK
Library. Emergency Room Medicine.
Read everything you can. Come in
here and gets your hands bloodied.
I'll introduce you to all the ER
docs. They might even put you to
work.

OLVEY
What about a neurosurgeon? No
helmet can protect against the G-
forces from a sudden stop from 200
miles per hour.

DAVID CLARK
We have all the bells and whistles
to do what we can. I don't think I
caught your name.

OLVEY
Dr. Steven Olvey.

After a handshake the doctors part ways. Olvey surveys the chaos of the scene. More patients stumble into the ER.

EXT. INDIANAPOLIS MOTOR SPEEDWAY - PIT LANE - DAY

INT. MAKESHIFT MEDICAL FACILITY -

A younger driver, still in his suit, chest rising in shallow, irregular pulls. No blood on the fabric. No deformity in the limbs.

EXTREME CLOSE-UP - PUPILS

Flashlight on eyes - Pupils are unresponsive to the light.

OLVEY (V.O.)

The skull is a closed box. Once the pressure starts, there is nowhere for the brain to go.

OLVEY (V.O.)

I had read the sentence in a textbook. I had never watched the sentence finish.

Olvey uses two fingers to close the eyelids of the driver.

INT. INFELD HOSPITAL - NIGHT

A single lamp burns. The driver on the cot keeps asking the same question in a flat voice: whether his arm is still attached. Olvey tests the grip. The right hand closes. The left does not.

OLVEY (V.O.)

There is no film, no machine that can show the cervical spine clearly.

Olvey rolls two towels lengthwise, tapes them along either side of the neck, and ties the whole arrangement with gauze from the limited stock.

The driver tries to sit up. Olvey's palm settles on his sternum and stays there until the effort stops.

They load him in an ambulance.

OLVEY (V.O.)

He's gonna live to see another day and sometimes that's the most we can hope for. We'll eventually find out how much damage has been done to his future life.

EXT. INDIANAPOLIS MOTOR SPEEDWAY - BACKSTRETCH - DAY

The car crashes against the inner wall, parts flying, steam lifting from the radiator. The steering column has folded across the driver's chest like a bar. Each breath is shorter than the last.

Olvey is first to the cockpit. He works a short pry bar into the gap, trying to buy millimeters of space without letting the metal spring shut again.

The bar slips. The column shifts the wrong direction. The breathing stops as if a switch has been thrown.

The firemen cut the column free afterward. The result is the same.

OLVEY (V.O.)

For a few seconds I thought I had
this one under control, but the car
had other plans.

INT. METHODIST HOSPITAL ER — NIGHT

Olvey is still wearing the shirt he had on at the track. The driver who left the Speedway alive is open on the table. Dark blood wells from places the external examination never suggested.

The senior resident works without commentary. Olvey holds retractors and keeps the field clear. He watches the monitors flatten in stages.

When it is finished, the resident strips off his gloves and leaves the room without looking at anyone.

OLVEY (V.O.)

In the hospital they still called
me a student. At the track they had
already started calling me Doc.
Neither word matched what was
happening on the table.

EXT. GARAGE AREA — DUSK

Olvey sits on an empty drum at the edge of the light. The crushed helmet rests across his knees.

He turns it slowly, thumb tracing the deep inward fold on the left side, as if the shape itself might still explain the man who had worn it. Engines continue somewhere beyond the fence. No one stops to speak to him. Mechanics and drivers pass in ones and twos, heading home. A few lift a hand in his direction. One driver walks by with his own helmet tucked under his arm, fingers moving absently across the shell as though reassuring himself it is still whole.

OLVEY (V.O.)

This is not only blood and bone.
It's arithmetic written at two
hundred miles an hour. Velocity
meeting mass meeting an immovable
wall, and the sum was always the
same: another body cooling under a
sheet. I stood between the equation
and its final answer. A stopgap.
Nothing more. And the machine I was
asked to protect was the most
intricate ever built;

EXT. INDIANAPOLIS MOTOR SPEEDWAY - RACE TRACK

A race car hits the wall hard.

CU - Extreme slow motion - A driver's head is bounced from
side to side.

OLVEY (V.O.)

soft, closed, intolerant of the
slightest error. One hard strike
and the brain begins to destroy
itself from within. I had to learn
its language faster than the next
car could reach the wall.

EXT. METHODIST HOSPITAL - NEUROSURGERY OFFICE - LATE
AFTERNOON

CU - PLACARD - DR. Arthur Klein

The room is small and cluttered with journals, a view box,
and a single human skull on the shelf. DR. ARTHUR KLEIN, mid-
fifties, shirtsleeves rolled, sits behind a desk that has
seen better years. Olvey stands, still in the clothes he wore
at the track. Klein does not offer a chair at first. He
studies the younger man the way he might study a film.

DR. KLEIN

You brought me a helmet with a four-
inch gash and a driver who never
woke up. What exactly do you think
I can tell?

OLVEY

I need to understand what happened
inside that driver head at the
moment of impact.

Klein gestures to the chair. Olvey sits. Klein picks up a pencil and draws a rough circle on a prescription pad.

DR. KLEIN

The skull is a rigid box. Fixed volume. Brain, blood, cerebrospinal fluid. If anything extra appears—blood from a torn vessel, swelling from the shear forces—something else has to give. Usually it is the brain itself, pushed downward through the tentorium or the foramen magnum. Once that happens, the centers that keep a man breathing stop.

He shades a small area on the drawing.

DR. KLEIN (CONT'D)

We can sometimes evacuate a clot if we are lucky enough to find it in time.

DR. KLEIN (CONT'D)

We can give hypertonic solutions, elevate the head, hyperventilate if we have a ventilator that works. Steroids are being tried. None of it is reliable. Most of what we do is wait and watch the pupils.

OLVEY

And if the pupils are already unequal when I first arrive at an accident?

Klein sets the pencil down.

DR. KLEIN

Then the conversation is largely over. We do not have a window into the box. Angiography can show a large vessel shift, but by the time we arrange it, the damage is usually done. There is no scan that will give us the answer in minutes. We are still practicing in the dark.

He looks at Olvey for a long moment.

DR. KLEIN (CONT'D)

You are seeing these injuries at the moment of creation.

(MORE)

DR. KLEIN (CONT'D)

That is an unheard of advantage.
Most of us only meet the patient
after the equation has already been
solved. You are standing inside the
equation.

Olvey's eyes move to the skull on the shelf.

OLVEY

How long before we stop losing them
to things we cannot even see?

Klein almost smiles, but it does not reach his eyes.

DR. KLEIN

When someone invents a way to look
through bone without opening it.
Until then, you will keep bringing
me helmets, and I will keep telling
you the same inadequate story.

He slides the prescription pad across the desk. The crude
drawing of the closed box sits between them.

DR. KLEIN (CONT'D)

Learn the story anyway. It's the
only one we have. Maybe you'll be
able to teach us. You just might be
able to discover something we
haven't thought of.

Olvey walks over to the window.

OLVEY

That's an interesting concept.

DR. KLEIN

Which one?

OLVEY

That I'm in the equation. That I
have the opportunity, far beyond my
skills at the moment, to rectify a
massive head injury seconds after
it occurs.

DR. KLEIN

You are in, I would say, the most
unique medical situation since the
Civil War.

OLVEY

Are you kidding?

DR. KLEIN

Medically the Civil War was the largest human laboratory in human history. Thousands of wounded humans with hundreds of eager and imaginative doctors. I'm not saying they were experimenting, but surgery on the human body did radically change in 1868. Two years after the war ended.

OLVEY

Trial and error?

DR. KLEIN

That is all they had. If the first patient died, I bet number twenty survived.

Klein picks up the skull off the shelf and places it on the desk.

DR. KLEIN (CONT'D)

Bottom line...the results of a head injury on the track can mean death, paralysis, a headache or absolutely nothing. You need to determine the possible outcome in the moment and determine the best course of action and do it in thirty seconds. How you learn these skills is up to you. What's your job on the track anyway?

OLVEY

To save the lives of these drivers because no one else could.

Klein knocks over the skull and it rolls across the desk.

DR. KLEIN

Then do it!

Olvey turns around just in time to catch the skull as it rolls off the desk.

EXT. OLVEY'S HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

A modest kitchen. Clean but tired. A wall clock ticks. Loud in the silence. Olvey, still in his track pants and shirt, stands at the sink, scrubbing his hands long after they're clean. The water runs.

His wife, LYNNE OLVEY, late 20s, thin, attractive, enters and sits at the table with a cold cup of coffee. Ashtray full. She watches him for a moment.

LYNNE
You're home early.

Olvey shuts off the water. Doesn't turn.

OLVEY
Last patient cleared.

LYNNE
Methodist again.

He finally faces her.

OLVEY
Two-cars. One fire.

LYNNE
There's always a fire.

She pushes the cup away.

LYNNE (CONT'D)
You weren't on call.

OLVEY
They still don't know what to do with them when they land.

LYNNE
And that makes them yours?

OLVEY
Someone has to stay.

LYNNE
Someone always does. You're just the one who never leaves.

A beat.

LYNNE (CONT'D)
I hear the phone, and I already know.

OLVEY
If I don't answer there's a chance a driver could die.

LYNNE
And when you do answer?

OLVEY

Some of them still die. I'm not a miracle worker.

She looks at his hands.

LYNNE

You smell like someone else's shift.

OLVEY

It's a hospital.

LYNNE

Is it the nurse?

He stiffens.

OLVEY

There is no nurse.

LYNNE

There's always a nurse when a man stops coming home.

OLVEY

I'm trying to keep people alive, Lynne.

LYNNE

And who's keeping you alive?

Silence. The clock ticks.

OLVEY

Come with me.

She looks up.

LYNNE

Where?

OLVEY

The track. Tomorrow. Practice. I want you to see the moment it breaks. Not just what it does to me after.

LYNNE

You're asking me to see these drivers die in your arms.

OLVEY

I'm asking you to stop guessing.

She studies him for a long moment.

LYNNE

And when I don't wanna see it
anymore?

OLVEY

Then we'll know together.

She exhales.

LYNNE

You're buying the earplugs.

OLVEY

Deal.

She stands, reaches for her coat, then stops.

LYNNE

If I do this Steven, you don't
vanish on me while you're still
standing in the room.

OLVEY

I won't.

She holds his eyes, deciding.

LYNNE

Then come to bed.

He nods. She turns off the light.

EXT. INDIANAPOLIS MOTOR SPEEDWAY — TURN 4 — DAY

A single car snaps sideways at the exit of the turn and
climbs the wall. The impact is sharp and final. The right
side of the car collapses inward. Debris scatters across the
apron. The car drops and slides to a stop in a trail of
sparks.

Olvey arrives in a firetruck, medical bag in hand. The safety
truck arrives seconds behind him. Smoke rises from the
crushed footbox.

The driver is still belted in, head hanging forward. A
fireman checks for breath.

FIREMAN

He's breathing, shallow.

They cut the belts. Olvey stabilizes the helmet with both hands while the firemen lift the driver onto the stretcher. The helmet stays on.

INT. INFIELD MEDICAL FACILITY — MINUTES LATER

The driver is on the cot. His fire suit has been cut open down the chest. He is alive but not truly conscious.

Olvey works quickly with the limited tools he has.

He shines a penlight into each eye.

CU — PUPILS

The right pupil shrinks. The left reacts slowly and remains larger. He notes the difference — a classic early sign of rising pressure inside the skull.

OLVEY

Name. Tell me your name.

No clear answer. Only a low sound.

Olvey places his fingers in the driver's hands.

OLVEY (CONT'D)

Squeeze.

The right hand closes weakly. The left does not move.

He presses hard on the sternum. The driver winces and tries to push the hand away with his right arm only. The left side of the body stays silent.

Olvey lifts both arms and lets them fall. The left arm drops faster and heavier, another sign that the left side of the brain is being affected.

He checks the pupils again. The left is larger than it was two minutes earlier. The injury is progressing.

Olvey elevates the head of the cot with folded blankets.

OLVEY (V.O.)

One of the few things I can do is
to try to reduce pressure inside
the skull.

He starts oxygen by mask from the small tank on the wall. He keeps the jaw positioned so the tongue cannot block the airway.

OLVEY (V.O.)

There is no way to see bleeding inside the head. No way to relieve pressure surgically here. No drugs available that can reliably stop the swelling.

Olvey keeps one hand on the driver's wrist, counting the pulse, while his other hand holds the penlight. He is watching for the moment the second pupil fixes and dilates — the sign that the brain is beginning to herniate and death is close.

OLVEY (V.O.)

I could keep the airway open. I could give him oxygen. I could raise his head and watch the pupils change. Everything else — the bleeding, the swelling, the slow crushing of the brain against bone — was happening in a place I could not reach. All I could do was buy minutes and hope the hospital could do more than I could. The left pupil stops reacting entirely.

Olvey calls for the ambulance to Methodist, still holding the jaw forward, still counting breaths, still trying to keep the driver alive long enough for someone with more tools to take over.

EXT. INDIANAPOLIS MOTOR SPEEDWAY — GARAGE AREA — LATE AFTERNOON

A stationary race car sits under the open garage door. The engine is cold.

The cockpit is empty except for a volunteer, a young safety-crew member in a borrowed fire suit strapped into the seat.

Olvey stands beside the car with two firemen. A third man holds a simple wooden backboard that looks homemade. Olvey has only rolled towels, tape, and his hands.

OLVEY

Again. Slow.

He positions himself at the head of the cockpit.

OLVEY (CONT'D)

My hands stay on the helmet the entire time. No one pulls. No one twists. We move him as one piece.

He places both palms on the sides of the volunteer's helmet, thumbs forward, fingers locking behind the neck.

OLVEY (CONT'D)
On my count we release the belts.
Then we slide him straight back. If
anyone feels resistance, we stop.

The firemen nod. One cuts the imaginary belts with a pair of shears. The other supports the torso.

OLVEY (CONT'D)
One...two...three.

They begin to ease the volunteer rearward. Halfway out, the volunteer's chin dips. Olvey immediately tightens his grip and stops the movement.

OLVEY (CONT'D)
Stop! That chin drop is the neck
flexing. We just added movement we
cannot afford. Let's start over.

He resets the volunteer in the seat.

OLVEY (CONT'D)
Again. I'll control the head. You
control the body. Nothing
independent.

They repeat the extraction. This time the head, neck, and torso stay aligned. The volunteer is slid onto the backboard in one continuous motion. Olvey keeps his hands locked on the helmet until the towels are packed tightly on both sides of the neck and taped to the board. He steps back, breathing harder than the short drill should require.

OLVEY (CONT'D)
In a real crash the driver may
already have a broken neck and
still be talking. One wrong twist
and we finish what the wall
started.

The firemen look at the car, then at the board.

FIREMAN
How many times you want to run it?

OLVEY
Until we can do it with our eyes
closed.

He climbs back to the cockpit and resets the volunteer for another repetition, hands already returning to the sides of the helmet.

OLVEY (CONT'D)

We do this over and over until we
get and then we move the car
against the turn four wall.

FIREMAN #2

What's that for?

OLVEY

Then we run to the car and work as
if the car is burning.

FIREMAN #2

Copy that.

EXT. INDIANAPOLIS MOTOR SPEEDWAY — TURN 3 / NORTH SHORT CHUTE
— MORNING

A Subtitle Appears Below: May 14, 1972. Second day of time
trials. Practice.

Jim Malloy's car comes off Turn 3 at speed. The rear breaks loose. He fights it once, then the car snaps and drives hard into the outside wall. The impact is violent and sustained. The right side collapses. The car scrapes and spins, trailing debris, before sliding to a stop in the grass near Turn 4. Smoke rises. The engine dies.

EXT. RESPONSE VEHICLE — CONTINUOUS

The safety truck is already rolling. Olvey rides in the passenger seat, gloves on, bag at his feet. The vehicle brakes hard in the grass. He is out and running before it fully stops.

He reaches the cockpit.

Malloy is still belted in. Conscious. Breathing in short, rapid pulls. Both arms hang at unnatural angles. Both legs are trapped and clearly broken. The smell of burnt fuel and rubber mixes with the sharper smell of scorched skin. His hands and the tops of his feet show fresh burns. Blood runs from under the edge of his helmet.

Olvey locks both hands onto the sides of the helmet, holding the head still.

OLVEY

Jim. Stay with me. Do not move.

MALLOY

(through clenched teeth)

I can't...feel my legs, right.

OLVEY

I know. We're going to get you out.
Slow.

He keeps the head stabilized while firemen cut the belts and work to free the crushed legs. Every movement is measured. Olvey refuses to let the torso or neck twist as they lift him onto the board. Towels are packed along the neck. The fractured arms are immobilized as best as the limited equipment allows. Oxygen is started.

Olvey stays at the head the entire time.

INT. AMBULANCE - MOVING

Olvey rides with Malloy. One hand remains lightly on the side of the helmet. He watches the pupils, the rising chest, the color of the face. Malloy drifts in and out.

OLVEY

Stay awake. Look at me.

Malloy's eyes find him for a second, then slide away again.

EXT. METHODIST HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY ENTRANCE - DAY

The ambulance backs in under the overhang. Doors open. Orderlies and nurses take the board. Olvey walks with them as far as the automatic doors, still calling out what he knows:

OLVEY

Both arms, both legs, burns to
hands and feet, head injury,
possible internal bleeding. He was
conscious at the scene—

The doors close. Malloy disappears into the hospital.

Olvey stops on the concrete. He does not follow.

He stands alone under the overhang as the ambulance pulls away empty. A thin film of track dust still clings to its rear doors. Inside the hospital, the work continues without him.

He waits.

Minutes pass. Then more. Nurses move in and out. A different gurney comes through. No one stops to give him an update.

Olvey sits on the low concrete wall beside the entrance, elbows on his knees, staring at the ground. The morning sun climbs higher. He does not move.

DR. STEVE OLVEY (V.O.)
I had done everything the injury
allowed.

Stabilized the head. Protected the neck. Kept the airway.

Bought him the ride to the only place that might keep him alive.

He looks up at the hospital doors as they open and close again, indifferent.

OLVEY(V.O.)
Four days later he was gone. The
wall had already written most of
the ending. All I could do was
stand outside and wait for the rest
of it to finish.

EXT. INDIANAPOLIS MOTOR SPEEDWAY — MAIN STRAIGHT — SUNSET

The grandstands are empty. Long shadows stretch across the bricks. The sky is deep orange fading to purple. A light wind moves through the catch fence. Olvey and Lynne walk slowly along the edge of the track.

She keeps her hands in her coat pockets. He carries nothing.

They stop near the start-finish line. The silence is almost complete.

LYNNE
You've been quiet since the
hospital.

OLVEY
Jim Malloy will probably not make
it. I held his head the entire time
we took him out of the car. I did
everything right. It didn't matter.

He looks down the empty straight.

OLVEY (CONT'D)

I've learned how to keep a neck
from twisting. I've learned what
unequal pupils mean. I've learned
that a man can talk to you and
still be dying from the inside.
I've learned how little of the
damage I can actually reach.

LYNNE

Then stop.

OLVEY

I can't.

He turns to her.

OLVEY (CONT'D)

These men need the speed the way
some people need air. The cars and
the walls don't care what they
need. Physics always collects.
Someone has to stand between what
they want and what the track will
take from them.

LYNNE

And that's you.

OLVEY

For now. I'm the stopgap. The
temporary measure until the cars
get safer, or the walls get softer,
or we finally understand the brain
well enough to keep it from
destroying itself.

He looks back at the empty track as the last light drains out
of the sky.

OLVEY (CONT'D)

I thought I could close the gap in
a few seasons. I was wrong. This is
going to take years. Maybe longer
than I have.

Lynne steps closer. She doesn't touch him yet.

LYNNE

Then we do it...one crash at a
time.

Olvey nods once, almost imperceptibly. The wind moves through the fence again. Far off, a single safety light comes on above the pit lane.

They stand together on the bricks as the sun finishes going down, two small figures against the vast, indifferent oval.

EXT. INDIANAPOLIS MOTOR SPEEDWAY - DAY - CONTINUOUS

OLVEY (V.O.)

I showed up at the Speedway in '66 thinking I could make a difference. Just a medical student with a stethoscope and a stubborn belief that if I was fast enough, if I cared enough, I could keep these drivers alive.

EXT. INDIANAPOLIS MOTOR SPEEDWAY - DAY

Olvey steps onto the track. He's in a moment of wonderment.

OLVEY (V.O.)

I had no idea how wrong I was. Those first eight years taught me the hardest lesson of my life. Reality at Indianapolis isn't just brutal, it's indifferent.

EXT. RACETRACK - DAY

A 1960's Indy car crashes against the wall. Smoke rising from wreck. Firemen running to the crash. Another crash and another and another.

OLVEY (V.O.)

I thought the enemy was the crash itself. The twisted metal. The fire. The blood. But those were only the symptoms. The real enemies were two things I could never outrun. The first was physics. Unrelenting. Absolute. A car traveling two hundred miles an hour doesn't care about your training or your intentions. Momentum doesn't negotiate. Energy doesn't care how hard you try.

EXT. RACETRACK - RACE CAR COCKPIT - DAY

Driver is unconscious and Olvey is in a state of shock not knowing what to do.

OLVEY (V.O.)

The second enemy was quieter and far more fragile. The human brain. Three pounds of soft tissue that can be destroyed in a fraction of a second by forces the rest of the body somehow survives.

INT. HOSPITAL EXAM ROOM - DAY

CU- Skull X-ray with brain swelling.

Doctors perplexed.

EXT. RACETRACK - DAY

Race car driver pulls himself out of his crashed car, walks a few steps and crumbles to the asphalt.

OLVEY (V.O.)

I watched men walk away from wrecks only to lose them in minutes to the invisible damage inside their heads. Physics and the brain damage were a double enemy that I had no idea even existed when I started.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Olvey is studying medical journals and physics books.

EXT. RACETRACK - DAY

Indy cars zoom past in a blur.

CU- TACHOMETER - REDLINING

Indy cars zoom past in a blur.

OLVEY (V.O.)

All I could do was work alongside these two adversaries who were standing in my way. Respect them. Study them.

(MORE)

OLVEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Try not to fall too far behind as
the speeds kept climbing. Every May
the cars got faster.

EXT. RACETRACK - DAY

Olvey and his team pull an injured driver from a crash with the utmost care and place him on a stretcher. The driver gives a thumbs up as he is loaded into an ambulance.

Every year the window to save a
life got smaller. All I could hope
for was that someday I might pull
even with those two adversaries.
Just even. That was the only
victory I ever allowed myself to
want.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END