

**"RUNNING ON EMPTY"**

A short screenplay by

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FADE IN:

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

A lime green TOYOTA CAMARY HYBRID scoots into a corner big brand gas station. The car slides up to the pumps and stops.

In front of the mini mart, LARRY MARKS, a tired and dirty mid-fifties man sits and watches the hybrid. He smokes a cigarette. His cardboard calling card rests next to him.

CAROL, a seventy something grey lady stands pumping gas into her big Detroit made car. She smacks the side of the pump to make it stop rolling dollars out of her bank account.

CAROL

God damn! Stop already!

The door to the hybrid open, out steps a tall well dressed man exuding confidence and a smile as big as Texas across his face. His name is JACK DILLINGER, a fifty-two year old senator from Texas.

JACK

Well how ya doin' today? Isn't it just a beautiful day?

He holds out his hand to greet Carol. She stares at his outstretched then keeps on pumping gas.

CAROL

Not at these prices... You look familiar. Do I know you?

She snaps her fingers.

CAROL

I do know you. You're that oil guy turned senator from Texas, right?

JACK

Why yes I am. I'm Senator Jack Dillinger from the great state of Texas. From where bouts do you hail?

CAROL

Just around the corner... Do you have time for a question?

JACK

Absolutely.

She slams the nozzle into the pump and slaps her gas door shut.

CAROL

Well senator when in the hell  
are you liars on Capital Hill  
gonna stop this crazy shit at  
the pumps? I can't afford my gas  
on nothin' but a small social  
security check.

A local news van pulls up near the pumps. The side door  
slides open and out jumps a gum chewing twenty something man  
named JOE PEOPLES. He is the camera man. The film is rolling.

JOE

Senator. Senator. Over here!

The senator pats Carol on the elbow then turns to face the  
camera.

JOE

Any comments about the steep  
rise in prices at the pumps?

Jack gets a serious look on his face and steeples with his  
hands.

JACK

It's unfortunate that we have  
seen such a rapid incline in the  
prices at the pump across our  
great nation. An I realize many  
Americans are being hit right  
where it counts... In the pocket  
book. To tell ya the truth it's  
hittin' me and my family hard  
also.

Smiles confidently into the camera.

JACK

So if I have any message to  
deliver to the American people  
it would be that it's time to  
stop dependin' on foreign oil  
and start thinkin' bout drillin'  
for oil right here in America.  
The tundra up in Alaska would be  
a great place to begin. And it's  
time to start drivin' cars that  
make sense.

He point back at his Hybrid.

The homeless man approaches the senator with his cardboard  
sign in hand.

JACK

Like this sweet hybrid...

LARRY

Excuse me... Senator, would you have fifty cents I could borrow?

Jack smiles into the camera. He rummages nervously through his pocket in search of quarters. His hand comes out of his pocket with nothing but a small lint ball.

JACK

I'm sorry but my wife must have cleaned out all my change.

(pause)

You know you look like an American in need of a helping hand? Just as soon as I'm done filling up my hybrid I'm gonna make a call and get you some help.

HOMELESS MAN

Up yours you pompous ass. I think you bastards have done enough.

The homeless man snickers then walks away while the senator is still speaking.

Directs his attention back to the camera and smiles.

JACK

That just eats at my heart. You know I really do understand how hard it is to make it in America these days, what with soaring gas prices and high unemployment... but it really is up to each American to realize that they can live the American dream if they are just willing to sacrifice enough. That's what the fabric of our great nation was built on by our forefathers.

CAROL

Just how much do we have to sacrifice senator?

Jack ignores her question and keeps smiling at the camera. He makes his point with one thumb up like Bill Clinton.

JACK

Get a good education, work hard,  
save your money, and start a  
small business then you will see  
the American dream coming true  
for you.

Carol bites her lip and curls up her fist into a rock hard ball. She comes from left field to land a solid blow to the senator's chin.

CAROL

I hope you die a violent death  
you Texas sized piece of dog  
shit.

JOE

Oh sweet! This is too good.

EXT. STREET - DAY

The lime green hybrid double parks next to a black CHEVY SUBURBAN SUV.

A driver from the SUV jumps out and the senator exits his hybrid. The senator rubs his chin as he slides behind the wheel of the SUV.

The hybrid drives on.

Looking in the mirror to examine his chin a door on the passenger's side opens. Larry jumps in and slams the door shut.

He points a small caliber gun at the senator.

LARRY

Ok Dillinger drive.

JACK

What?! Get the hell outta my  
car!

A shot is fired and hits the senator in his left leg.

The senator thrashes in the drivers side in pain.

JACK

Are you crazy!

LARRY

Do you think I am playing a  
game? Now fuckin' drive or I'll  
shoot you again!

Dillinger throws the SUV into gear and it moves down the road.

JACK

You know people will be expectin' me back on the hill in a half hour.

LARRY

Well Jack I guess their gonna miss you.

(pause)

You politicians are all alike. Tongues like devils and deceptions by the country mile.

(pause)

Trying to dupe the people by pretending to drive a hybrid. You make me sick! Now senator I'm sick and tired of begging for my food and wondering where I'm gonna sleep at night. I'm just plain tired of being bent over a barrel. Now I'm gonna teach you about being bent over a barrel.

EXT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE - DAY

Rats run across the floor. A low wattage light bulb illuminates a small area. Water drips somewhere out of sight.

Jack stands with his arms stretched side by side to a rope and wench at each end. His tie hangs loose and blood stains his pant leg where he was shot.

JACK

My leg feels numb. Can't we get help? I've got cash. If you help me it's yours.

He swings a single hanging light in a slow circle. A card table is lit up as it swings. On the table are several torture items; a chain saw, kitchen knife, cork screw, walnut cracker, broken glass chunks, a car battery, and a bottle of methyl ethyl ketone.

LARRY

How do you like my table? It's all for you.

JACK

Wait! Did you hear me I've got cash!

Larry takes out his beat up wallet and pulls out several pictures. He shows them one by one to the senator.

LARRY

Oh this was a good picture.  
It's... It was my daughter before  
she got sick and we had no  
insurance to help her. She died  
screaming in pain from the  
disease that ate away at her  
body.

Drops the picture to the floor.

HOMELESS MAN

And this... This was my beautiful  
wife. She left me after I lost  
my job over at the auto factory.  
And that... that was our home  
before I lost it to the bank.

Drops the picture to the floor.

LARRY

All gone senator. And you  
fuckers on Capital Hill did  
nothing to help me and millions  
of Americans in need.

JACK

If you would have called I could  
have helped you find help.

LARRY

Liar!

He grabs the methyl ethyl ketone and squirts it into the  
senators wound. Jack screams in severe pain.

Larry composes himself.

LARRY

I felt a lot of pain the past  
few years... Now it's your turn to  
feel some pain.

He reaches over and picks up the chain saw.

Jack loses patience and pulls hard to get out of his arm  
restraints.

JACK

Fuck! When I get outta here I'm  
gonna kill you Texas style. Son  
of a bitch!

LARRY

Senator the only thing you'll be  
killing is time in hell. Now  
shut up! Or...

The cord is pulled on the chain saw. Nothing happens. More pulls then nothing. Larry take off the gas cap.

LARRY

Well look at that no gas. Shit I guess your death is going to be more painful than I thought.

Jack pulls hard on the arm restraints again.

JACK

Ahhh fuck! Let me go you homeless piece of shit.

Larry walks over to the wench at one arm and starts to tighten it. He switches to the other side and tightens that side.

The senator cries out in excruciating pain. His arm pops out of the socket. Larry stops tightening.

LARRY

Now Jack do you know who is in control?

JACK

God damn my arm. My arm!

A barrel is rolled into the light. It is an oil barrel.

LARRY

Like I said... I got you over a barrel... and soon you'll be in pieces inside the barrel.

He finds an old rag on the floor and stuffs into Jacks mouth. Jack spits it out.

LARRY

Ok you fuck you want to scream. Well let's scream!

The nutcracker is placed over the senator's index finger. Larry twists down the screw as the senator screams out. A loud pop is heard as the bone in his finger shatters.

Tears stream down the senators pain stricken face. He begins to mutter a prayer.

LARRY

Prayer. Now there's a good laugh. Didn't help me and sure as hell aint gonna help you.

He picks up the kitchen knife.

LARRY

My daughter tore and punched at  
her cancer ridden body right  
here just before she died.

The knife is plunged into the senator's upper abdomen. Blood gushes out from under his un-tucked shirt. He loses consciousness.

Larry squirts the methyl ethyl ketone all around his hanging body. He takes out a cigarette and lights it then tosses the match on to the floor.

A flash of white hot flames erupt and burns the senator.

He walks slowly away from the burning body carrying his cardboard sign. The warehouse doors open to expose bright sunlight and he walks out.

FADE OUT:

THE END