

DK MEDIA CONSULTING

Title: BARRACUDA

Sub. by: Highland FG

Author: Adam Mason & Simon Boyes

Date Received: 8/16/25

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Read by: Guy Phillippi

Genre: Action

Locale: Mexico, U.S.

Circa: Present

D: Neil Burger (*Divergent*)

C: Anthony Mackie (*Captain America Brave New World*)

S: Adam Mason & Simon Boyes (*Misconduct*)

P: Image Movers - Robert Zemeckis company (*Flight*), Highland (*Land of Bad*)

B: TBD

LOG LINE: As a man retrieves a kidnapped teen girl to return her to her family in the U.S., the two are chased for 104 miles by a Mexican cartel leader and his men because the rescuer killed the leader's brother during the rescue.

COMMENT SUMMARY: A fast-paced story with intense action and suspense, this also does a good job in developing the two main characters as they face the dangers of their journey.

	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Originality of Premise			x							
Execution of Premise		x								
Story Structure		x								
Dialogue			x							
Characters		x								
Pacing	x									
Commercial Appeal		x								

(Rated 1-10, 10 being Excellent.)

Suggested Rating: I-G-----PG-----PG-13-----R-----NC-17-I

(Based on the script)

For violence, sexuality, substance abuse, language, adult themes and situations

Uniqueness: Great action entertainment, with a topical issue at the center of the plot.

Positioning/Market Appeal: A very good addition to the action sub-genre of a hero protecting an individual, this has the type of story that should entice those who enjoy tales similar to *John Wick*. A recognizable cast will add to the appeal.

Similar Movies: *John Wick*, *Taken*, *Drive*

(The script notes that the story will play out in real time.)

It's the roughest part of Torreon, a "bad news" Mexican town that sits 104 miles from the U.S.-Mexico border. In his beat-up 1999 Audi RS4, American KARL CARTER, 28, pulls up outside a warehouse club that is active, but not really welcoming. An envelope beside him contains a photo of JODIE, 13, and an indication that she can be found in "Room 13." The RS4 trunk is filled with weapons and Karl chooses what he deems appropriate. A BOUNCER checks him at the door, but whatever Karl chose doesn't set off the metal detector. Inside, the music is overwhelming, as is the presence of SECURITY GUARDS. Noting a door marked "Privado," Karl sees he needs a pass card to get through it. Following a Bouncer into the bathroom, he he swiftly takes advantage of the Bouncer's distraction with a line of coke. Subduing, Karl takes his pass card.

This gets Karl through the Privado door. Quickly noticed by a GOON, Karl has to fight the guy, which proves to be tougher than anticipated. Their fight is pure "street violence," which Karl is much better at. Once he dispatches the Goon, Karl hustles to room 13. Inside is Jodie, now 17, drugged up and wary of Karl, who has to subdue ALBERTO NAVARRO, 50s, a man preparing to bed Jodie. Karl injects Jodie with Naloxone to counter the drugs in her system. Alberto recovers during this and shoots at the two, leaving Karl with no choice but to shoot Alberto dead. Hurrying Jodie out of the room, Karl battles very well-armed Goons. The escape takes the two through a room where cocaine is processed for sale.

Outside, Karl discovers his car has been identified, so he takes a conveniently parked 1973 Plymouth Barracuda. Racing away, he's soon in the lead position of a chase. A WOMAN IN A SKULL MASK is the primary pursuer, driving the RS4. Others drive SUVs. Jodie feels her life is in danger a few times, but Karl proves to be quite skilled at the wheel. He even drives through an underground parking lot in reverse. Skull Mask is the toughest chaser to lose. The determination of the Goons make Karl question why they want Jodie so much. She insists she's "nobody." On the other hand, the man he killed in her room is the brother of the area's cartel leader, MAXIM "MAX" NAVARRO, 60s, who is also the owner of the Barracuda. Max calls. He wants the car back and will kill someone Karl loves to make things even regarding Alberto. Then Karl will die a slow death involving a burning tire. When Skull Mask pulls up even with the Barracuda, Karl shows one of his modifications on the RS4. A "kill switch." As her ride stalls out, the best Skull Mask can do is shoot out one of the Barracuda's tires as Karl drives off.

Karl calls FRANCESCO, 40s, a local mechanic who has done work for Karl. He tells Karl to bring the Barracuda in. Then, Karl calls MEREDITH PALMER, 60s, who hired him to retrieve Jodie. With her is Jodie's MOM and DAD, plus Dad's business partner DREW, 50s, and Drew's daughter LIA, 17, who is Jodie's best friend. Overwhelmed, Jodie hangs up. Francesco knows what is up and his wife MARIA prepares supplies for the two. Jodie asks why Karl is doing this. His response is "\$30,000." Seeing Max and his Goons arrive outside, Karl drives off, only to see the Goons execute Francesco and Maria. Much to Jodie's horror, Karl stays long enough to lure the Goons to follow them. The chase takes them through the old town part of Torreon. Skull Mask enjoys the challenge. Karl's driving skills leave the SUVs roaring by his hiding place. There are more though, with a pickup truck causing a brief collision, forcing Karl to shoot his way out of this. He then sends the truck at other pursuers. Karl and Jodie drive out of town, but Jodie needs to pee. Their stop at a diner allows the Goons to catch up. As Karl waits for Jodie, a TV has a news report about them. Outside, two corrupt COPS are by the Barracuda. Karl is shot in the neck (a minor, but bloody wound). Karl kills the two, but Jodie has to pull Karl into the car and take over the driving. She's never had lessons, but is a fast learner.

Karl tells Joie directions to a nearby pharmacy, having her crash through the entrance since it's closed. They gather a variety of items and, once he's patched up, they have to deal with arriving Goons. A cat-and-mouse gun battle breaks out in the pharmacy, with Karl gaining the advantage by turning on the lights to disorient the night vision gear of the Goons. All are vanquished, but then Skull Mask arrives. Karl tells Jodie that the RS4 is bulletproof. Skull Mask reveals she disabled his immobilization unit. She has an advantage until Karl tosses chocolate syrup at the RS4, causing a crash that knocks out Skull Mask.

The Barracuda races away, but the RS4 is soon in pursuit. They're halfway to the border. The plan is for Karl to drop Jodie close to the border. She'll have to get over by herself. Asked why he won't come, he explains he's an escaped convict. All he took to Mexico was his car. He first did jobs for criminals, then realized there was money, and satisfaction, in rescues. He's saved 28 so far. Jodie explains she was abducted when walking with Lia while on family vacation in Cancun. This doesn't add up to Karl, as gangs have money invested in tourist areas, so they don't commit crimes there. Plus, why didn't they also take Lia? They realize their gas tank has a leak, so they stop at a gas station. In the convenience store, GANGBANGERS harass Jodie, only to become more interested in her when they see a TV news report. She fights back, but it takes the arrival of Karl from outside to save her. The Gangbangers are left beaten and bloodied.

Outside, a helicopter gunship arrives and its guns are soon blazing away. The two get away to a motel, where they dive into the pool to hide for a bit, then race through various rooms (a naked couple, a poker game, a meeting of a gunrunner and a drug dealer). In one (the gunrunner's), Karl finds an RPG launcher and uses it to bring down the gunship. Karl then "borrows" an assault rifle. The sun is rising as they return to the Barracuda and drive off. Karl ponders why Lia was left behind, convinced this is an indication that Jodie's dad is behind this. He and Drew run highway weigh stations near San Diego. Jodie calls her dad to ask if there was a ransom demand. He's confused by the question, but Drew takes over and is calm. This indicates to Karl that Drew is the guilty party. Finally, they're a quarter mile from the checkpoint. Karl notes Skull Mask is close behind. He gives her a handgun and she darts out toward the border as Karl provides cover with his assault rifle. Jodie wants him to come with her. He's resigned to this being his last stand.

Goons approach from one side, BORDER PATROL from the other. Jodie runs off after Karl is hit in the shoulder. She sees the Border Patrol back off after a conversation with Max. Though she has a clear path to leave, she decides instead to go to a warehouse once she sees Karl captured and taken there. Max has his men begin the torture with a tire process. Jodie gains access by slipping into the Barracuda as the Goons attempt to tow it. Using her new driving skills, she drives into the warehouse and rescues Karl. With Karl now driving, the two roar across the desert in the Barracuda, taking out Goons as they go. Jodie is quite good with a gun. Skull Mask catches up with a boost of nitrous. Finally, the Barracuda crashes through the border fence. The RS4 follows, only to flip over. Skull Mask is killed by a piece of metal imbedded in her body by the crash. Max and his Goons watch from the other side, only for Karl to take out Max with a very well-aimed shot with a sniper rifle. The two are soon with Palmer, Drew, Lia, and Mom and Dad. Jodie punches Drew. Arranged by Palmer, a SHERIFF arrives to arrest Drew. Karl is also arrested, but tosses the Barracuda keys to Jodie, telling her to fix it up for him.

COMMENTS:

Setting up a story with a distinct time frame ensures intensity to the suspense, and playing out the story with all being presented in real time multiplies the tension for the audience. This measures its time more in the miles to the border than the counting down of the minutes, but the effect on the audience is the same, as the accomplishment of the task is contingent of getting it done and the parameters are clear. Since the cartel Goons are constantly within striking distance, there is no let up of the danger. The moments when all seems safe are fleeting, as most anyone Karl and Jodie encounter becomes an adversary as they learn the news. The battles and chases are exciting, and the script does a great job of developing the two lead characters in the framework of the plot.

Most theories of movie plots are that the structure needs to continually build as the events unfold – with the idea that the danger or other entanglements grow as things move along. There are always exceptions to that rule and this script is a great example of one of them. As soon as Karl engages the cartel at the brothel, the conflict is set. What happens isn't contingent on the action becoming more extreme, as it's clear from the start that Max and his Goons are focused and determined in their pursuit of Karl. There's no need to increase the reasons for the action. While there is a helicopter attack at one point, it comes up mid-story, plays its part, then things settle back to the cars and hand-held weaponry. No action fan will be surprised by its appearance and it is used to merely make the point that Max is comfortable relying on the strength of his usual approach to such problems. The prolonged chase dominates the plot and engages because the audience clearly knows that this is about out-racing and out-battling the Goons, there is no need for anything extra in regards to their goal. At its heart, the script offers a typical "against seemingly insurmountable odds" scenario with no need for anything more. The chase and battles are exciting (with the motel sequence a stand out). If there is a disappointment, it comes with falling for a cliché such as choosing to have Max execute Maria and Francesco in a much too predictable "thing is how ruthless I am" moment. Making a different choice, one that will impact the story later, would make the statement that this isn't going to merely rest on standard turns of the story.

Karl and Jodie carry the characterizations here. For Max is a fairly formulaic "evil" for them to face, and his Goons, are mainly generic. On the cartel side, Skull Mask is the only one who stands out. She has a familiar role as a relentless pursuer, but functions as a singular example of just how determined the cartel killers are. The script doesn't dwell on Karl being motivated by his backstory – he's just a guy who has now taken a better path – while Jodie has the greatest growth between them. She may start out as a "damsel in distress," but rises to the occasion when asked. They make a great team. Overall, action fans could be drawn to this as they have been by *John Wick*.