

DENTS

Written by

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THE SOFT SOUND
OF A MUFFLED
GUITAR PLAYS

FADE IN:

The gleaming headstock of an electric guitar appears, pegs and posts shining. A small glittering cross on a thin gold chain swings from a peg.

The entire Fender Stratocaster comes into view as fast-moving fingers fly over the strings.

INT. BENSON HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

JENNIFER "Jenny" BENSON, a late-teen and normal high school kid, barefoot in pajama pants and T-shirt, sits at the kitchen table, skillfully playing a jazzed-up version of a hymn.

WILLIAM "Bill" BENSON, late-30s, middle-class and likeable with an air of intelligence about him, stands listening with a cup of coffee by the kitchen entrance. He walks in.

BILL

That was her favorite. You play it just like she did.

JENNY

Thanks.

Bill pats her shoulder as he sits down at the table.

BILL

She loved takin' old hymns and juicin' 'em up. Holy Goldie Oldies, she called 'em.

Bill takes a swig and leans back.

BILL (CONT'D)

Why don't you play Mom's other guitar? It doesn't need a plug-in.

JENNY

This was her favorite. I feel close to her playing this one.

Jenny stops. Her eyes begin to tear as her voice wavers.

JENNY (CONT'D)

It's been over two years and I still cry.

BILL
Yeah. We all miss her. Very much.

Jenny wipes at her eyes.

JENNY
Dad, sometimes I hear Sammy cryin'
in his room.

BILL
Sammy has his way of workin' things
out. I'll, uh, talk to 'im.

Bill stares into his coffee cup, his eyes glistening.

BILL (CONT'D)
I wish your mother were here.
She'd know what to do. She always
knew what to do to make things
better.

Jenny lays the guitar on the table.

JENNY
It'll be okay, Dad.

BILL
I wish I had the money to fix the
amp, hon. But with the medical
bills, and the downsizing -

Jenny walks around the table, hugs him as she rests her head
on his shoulder.

JENNY
It's okay, Dad.

BILL
This new job is so far away and
pays so much less. But God will
provide.

Jenny's head jerks up as the moment disappears.

JENNY
Then He better do it quick.

She straightens up and walks away.

BILL
Jen, don't -

JENNY
'Night, Dad.

Bill watches her go.

BILL
G'night, honey.

INT. BENSON HOME - JENNY'S BEDROOM

Jenny closes the door a little too hard, yanks back the covers, and climbs into bed. She scowls at the ceiling.

JENNY
Okay, God. Here's the deal. If
you are really there, I only need
two things. A car and my Mom back.

She rubs her eyes in frustration.

JENNY (CONT'D)
You're real to Dad. You were real
to Mom. Be real to me.

She stretches for the light.

EXT. BENSON HOME - JENNY'S BEDROOM

The window goes dark amid the night sounds of the country.

EXT. BENSON HOME - JENNY'S BEDROOM - DAY

A faint irritating buzz is heard through the window.

INT. BENSON HOME - JENNY'S BEDROOM - DAY

A very loud irritating buzz drones on. Jenny's hand hovers over the clock radio.

EXT. CGI OF THE UNIVERSE

The vastness of space. The faintly outlined, barely visible Hand of God moves through the stars toward a small, lazily spinning asteroid.

INT. BENSON HOME - JENNY'S BEDROOM

Jenny's hand triple-smacks the alarm with a vengeance.
Silence.

EXT. CGI OF THE UNIVERSE

The Hand of God delicately catches the little asteroid between thumb and forefinger. The asteroid begins to glow with a crackling blue light as the Hand slides the forefinger over into a flicking position, aims, and shoots it away.

INT. BENSON HOME - JENNY'S BEDROOM

The door explodes inward to reveal the pajama-clad figure of **SAMUEL "Sammy" BENSON**, Jenny's eight-year-old adopted brother, small and wiry with an impish grin, a happy heart, and a constant motor. He is in a super hero stance. He cups his hands and yells.

SAMMY

Get up, Jenny! Rise and shine!

Bill's voice floats down the hallway.

BILL (O.C.)

What else, Sammy?

Sammy stares then the epiphany dawns. He arches his back and takes a huge breath.

EXT. CGI OF THE UNIVERSE

The small asteroid ricochets violently off a bigger one and blazes off.

INT. BENSON HOME - JENNY'S BEDROOM

Sammy jack-knifes his body and screams through cupped hands.

SAMMY

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, JENNY!

He drops his hands to show a huge smile - just as a hurtling pillow erases him from view, disappearing with a "thud".

A ruffled Jenny sits on the edge of the bed, bleary-eyed and bed-headed. She yawns.

JENNY

Thanks, Sammy.

INT. BENSON HOME - KITCHEN

Sammy sits at the table, holding his nose. Bill slides pancakes onto his plate as Jenny walks in.

SAMMY
But she hit me really hard, Dad!

BILL
And what did I tell you the last time you woke her up like that?

SAMMY
You told me to duck.

BILL
And?

Sammy sighs and looks away.

SAMMY
I forgot to duck.

BILL
Pancakes, Jen?

JENNY
Yeah. Thanks.

Jenny plops into a chair. Bill bends down to look her in the eye and nods toward Sammy.

JENNY (CONT'D)
Sorry, Sammy. I put too much on that one. Didn't mean to hurt you.

Sammy looks up with a smile.

SAMMY
That's okay. Happy Birthday!

BILL
Happy birthday, honey. Wow. Eighteen. Mom'd be so proud.

JENNY
And how do ya know that, Dad?

BILL
Because I am. Very proud.

Jenny smiles as she reaches for a fork.

BILL (CONT'D)
 Wait! I almost forgot.

Bill runs to a cupboard. The top shelf is filled with used "number candles". He grabs a "one", an "eight", and a book of matches.

He plants the numbers on Jenny's pancakes and lights them as he and Sammy belt out "*Happy Birthday*".

SAMMY
 Blow 'em out, Jenny!

Jenny takes a deep breath and blows.

EXT. CGI OF THE UNIVERSE

The asteroid bends around a planet and sizzles on.

INT. BENSON HOME - KITCHEN

Sammy claps enthusiastically.

SAMMY
 Awright! Whadcha wish for?

BILL
 She can't tell us, Sammy, or it won't come true.

Jenny scowls.

JENNY
 Doesn't matter one way or the other.

BILL
 Now, hon -

JENNY
 Wishin' and prayin'. They're the same thing, Dad. I wished for a car and I prayed Mom would get better. Nada twice over.

Sammy looks from Jenny to Bill. Bill clears his throat.

BILL
 I know that -

Jenny holds up a hand. There's an awkward silence. Sammy breaks it by sliding a small, poorly-wrapped box across the table.

SAMMY
Happy birthday, Jenny!

She opens it.

JENNY
But, Sammy, this is your favorite.
I can't take this.

SAMMY
I want you to have 'im. You can
put 'im in your car when ya get
one. Kinda like a mascot.

Jenny holds up a smiling blue plastic whale with a dent in its side.

JENNY
This is really cool, Sammy. I'll
take good care of 'im.

Sammy looks at Bill and giggles. Jenny looks at Bill.

JENNY (CONT'D)
What?

Bill slides a small, neatly wrapped box across the table. Jenny picks it up, shakes it, and unwraps it. She pulls out a set of car keys.

JENNY (CONT'D)
Oh, Dad! I dunno what to say!
Where is it?!

BILL
It's out by the barn. But -

Sammy flies around the table just as Jenny jumps out of her chair. He bounces off her and disappears with a thud.

BILL (CONT'D)
Now, honey, it's more of a, uh,
project. We'll have to get it
running and -

He's talking to an empty kitchen.

EXT. CGI OF THE UNIVERSE

The asteroid hurtles toward Earth. It hits the atmosphere and becomes a burning red. It explodes into a shower of small, red-hot rocks that quickly change to a glowing blue.

EXT. CGI OF THE CLOUD

The small rocks disappear into a huge anvil-headed cloud. It blinks with flashes of blue light.

EXT. THE CAR

Jenny and Sammy skid to a stop.

SAMMY

Wow. Your very own car, Jenny.

JENNY

Yeah.

SAMMY

And it's blue. Like your whale.

They stare at a very dusty, severely-faded blue 1965 Rambler American (noted as "the Car"). It's missing two hubcaps. It looks tired. Very tired.

JENNY

Yeah. It's blue. And it's - old.

SAMMY

C'mon! Let's start it up!

Sammy bolts to the passenger side, flings open the door and leaps into the front seat. He is enveloped in a cloud of dust.

Jenny carefully opens the driver's door, fans her hand as she climbs in.

INT. THE CAR

She settles behind the wheel. Glancing over she sees a dusty disco ball hanging from the rearview mirror.

SAMMY

Start it (cough) up, Jenny!

Jenny turns the key. The starter growls. Nothing. She pumps the gas and turns the key. More growling. She stomps the pedal furiously and turns the key.

EXT. THE CAR

KABOOM! Black smoke shouts out of the back of the car.

INT. THE CAR

Jenny ducks and covers her head. Sammy goes up, comes down and generates more dust. Both kids fan the air and cough.

SAMMY

Might need a little work.

JENNY

Ya think, Sam?!

Bill's face appears in the driver's window. The kids jump. Jenny rolls down the window.

BILL

I traded Adam Lehnerz some bookkeeping work for the car. It's been in his barn since "*disco died*".

He points at the disco ball.

BILL (CONT'D)

I know you hate riding the bus with the little kids when all the guys your age have their own rides.

Bill forces a smile and shrugs.

BILL (CONT'D)

It may take awhile before you can drive it to school but -

JENNY

Dad, it's fine. We'll get it running and - and it'll be fine.

INT. THE CAR

Sammy bounces across the seat, raising dust.

SAMMY
I'll get the paper towels and the
spray stuff!

Sammy hits the door. Jenny smiles at Bill.

JENNY
I'll get the shop vac from the
barn.

EXT. THE CAR

Bill opens the door with a flourish and a bow. In the background, Sammy is already half-way to the house. He trips and falls, rolls, pops back up and runs.

INT. BENSON HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Jenny and Sammy stare out the rain-streaked window. The table holds dirty plates and a half-eaten birthday cake.

JENNY
What a weird storm. It came out of
nowhere.

Bill nods over his coffee cup.

BILL
Take a bath and the phone rings.
Wash your car and it rains.

Sammy looks thoughtful.

SAMMY
What happens if I clean my room?

Jenny looks at him wild-eyed.

JENNY
The world as we know it will *END!*

The power goes out followed by heavy, rapid pounding noises.

SAMMY
But I didn't clean my room!

BILL
It's hail! Get a flashlight and
get in the basement. Now!

EXT. CGI OF THE CLOUD

The cloud flashes blue as it hurls hailstones that crackle with blue fire towards the Car.

EXT. BARN

The glowing hail slams into the Car. On impact, the crackling blue fire transfers, sliding serpentine around the Car, then dissolving away.

The rain and thunder instantly stop. The sun appears to illuminate the Car in an "other-worldly" glow.

The Benson family approaches the Car.

BILL

I thought it would last longer.
When it hails like that it -

JENNY

Oh, no!

The Car has numerous little round dents all over it. Jenny runs her hand over the hood. Sammy shrugs.

SAMMY

What's a few more dents? Hey,
that's what we oughta call it.
Dents!

Jenny shrugs and reaches into her pocket for the whale. She hands it to Sammy.

INT. THE CAR

Sammy gently removes the disco ball and hangs up the whale.

EXT. THE CAR

Jenny heads for the barn.

Bill pops the hood of the Car and takes off the air cleaner.

BILL

Let's have a look, Dents. Huh. A
one barrel. I have a shotgun with
more barrels than you.

SAMMY (O.C.)

You wanna ride shotgun?

Bill tries to talk through the hood.

BILL
What? No, the carber - never mind.

Bill walks around, opens the door, and climbs behind the wheel. Jenny comes out of the barn dragging the shop vac. She sees him reach for the key.

JENNY
Dad, wait!

Jenny covers her ears and turns away.

INT. THE CAR

Sammy shuts his eyes and covers his ears.

Bill pumps the gas and turns the key. The engine purrs to life. Bill revs it twice before shutting it off.

BILL
Huh. Who would've thought it'd
start after sitting so long! Atta
boy, Dents!

Jenny's amazed face fills the driver side window. Bill looks at her then over at Sammy who gives him the same amazed look. Bill's smile fades.

BILL (CONT'D)
What?

EXT. BENSON HOME - DAY

The school bus stops and the doors open, ejecting a leaping Sammy who flies up the driveway. Jenny steps off and waves to the bus driver.

INT. BENSON HOME - KITCHEN

Jenny walks in and stumbles over Sammy's backpack.

Sammy's fanny is sticking out of the fridge.

JENNY
Samuel William Benson! I almost
fell over your stuff!

The fanny is replaced by Sammy's face chewing a big mouthful.

SAMMY
 Sabby. Weely hungwee.

JENNY
 Get this stuff in your room. I'll
 have dinner ready when Dad gets
 home.

Sammy kicks the backpack up against a wall.

SAMMY
 Can I go sit in Dents?

JENNY
 What?

SAMMY
 Can I go sit in Dents?

JENNY
 Sit in what?

SAMMY
 Duh. Your car! Dents. That's
 what I named him.

JENNY
 Named it. What if it's a girl car?

SAMMY
 Huh. Never thought of that.

JENNY
 Maybe we should call her Ms. Dents.

Sammy nods in agreement.

SAMMY
 But only if it's a girl, right?

JENNY
 Right.

SAMMY
 So can I sit in him - her - it?

Jenny laughs as she moves to the sink.

JENNY
 Yeah. I s'pose so.

Sammy bolts toward the hallway. Jenny yells after him.

JENNY (CONT'D)
 But leave the keys where they are
 and *NO RADIO*. You'll wear down the
 battery. Sammy? You hear me?!

SAMMY (O.C.)
 Yeah-yeah. Thanks, Jenny!

INT. THE CAR

Sammy sits behind the wheel, grips it at "10 & 2", and makes motor and braking noises. He gets bored. He taps the wheel and watches it swing.

He spies the radio, reaches for it but quickly pulls back. He sneaks a peek at the house, ducks down, and reaches for the knob.

(NOTE: "**DENTS**" denotes the actor's *image and voice* while "**DENTS (O.C.)**" is *voice only*. "**The Car**" will be the physical car itself.)

DENTS (O.C.)
 You're not supposed to do that.

Sammy slams back into the driver's door.

DENTS (O.C.) (CONT'D)
 You promised Jenny you wouldn't.

Sammy claws at the door, falls out and disappears. Wide eyes slowly appear over the driver's seat.

SAMMY
 How'd-cha-know-'bout-that?

DENTS (O.C.)
 I know quite a bit, actually.
 C'mon back in. It's okay.

Sammy creeps back in but leaves the door open.

DENTS (O.C.) (CONT'D)
 I suppose you have some questions.

SAMMY
 Ya think?! You're a talking car!

DENTS (O.C.)
 Well - yes. And you're a talking
 boy. So?

SAMMY
Cars don't talk!

A sigh comes out of the radio speaker.

DENTS (O.C.)
I'm talking, correct?

SAMMY
Yeah.

DENTS (O.C.)
Then cars *obviously* talk.

Sammy ponders this.

SAMMY
Oh. That makes sense.

He scoots closer to the radio.

SAMMY (CONT'D)
Who are you, anyways?

DENTS (O.C.)
Do you remember the story of
Balaam's donkey?

Sammy wrinkles his forehead. Then light comes on.

SAMMY
That's when the donkey talked to
the guy, right?

DENTS (O.C.)
Right.

SAMMY
Soooooo, you're a donkey?

DENTS (O.S.)
Not quite. I've got more
horsepower and I seat six.

Sammy leans close to inspect the radio.

SAMMY
So you are...

DENTS (O.C.)
Your name for me, I believe, is
Dents.

Sammy smiles.

SAMMY

Yeah. Oh. Is that okay?

DENTS (O.C)

Personally, I would have preferred something a bit more "regal" but Dents is appropriate, so yeah, it's okay.

Sammy is relieved.

SAMMY

This is soooo cool! A talking car!

DENTS

And I believe I am Jenny's car, correct?

SAMMY

Yeah. You're a birthday present.

DENTS (O.C.)

Thanks for not wrapping me.

Sammy giggles.

SAMMY

So. Why are ya here?

DENTS (O.C.)

To help Jenny understand.

SAMMY

Are you from - outer space?

DENTS (O.C.)

Oh, farther than that. As far as anyone can go.

SAMMY

Really?!

Dents answers him in a Yoda voice.

DENTS (O.C)

Ohhh, truth it is, young Bensonite.

SAMMY

That's pretty good. Can you do something else.

The speaker spouts the pops, garbles, and whistles of an R2 unit.

SAMMY (CONT'D)
 Oh, I get it. You're like - a
 droid!

DENTS (O.C.)
 Whatever helps you understand, kid.

SAMMY
 Cool!

DENTS (O.C.)
 Say, does your family have an old
 computer monitor lying around?

SAMMY
 I don't think so. But I gotta
 tablet'puter from Uncle Bud for
 Christmas. But -

Sammy looks down, his voice sad and quiet.

SAMMY (CONT'D)
 I dropped it in the bathtub after
 Dad told me to keep it away from
 water. It doesn't work anymore.
 But it should be dry by now!

DENTS (O.C.)
 Computers and water. Thaaaaat's a
 mistake. Do ya know where it is?

Sammy starts to get excited.

SAMMY
 Somewhere in my closet. I think.

DENTS (O.C.)
 Go grab it along with some glue.

SAMMY
 What for?

DENTS (O.C.)
 I'll show you a really cool thing
 God can do with mistakes.

Two bounces and out the door, Sammy jets for the house.

SAMMY
 Stay put. I'll be right back!

INT. THE CAR

The radio lights up.

DENTS (O.C.)
Sammy! The door! You didn't -
never mind.

The driver's door clicks shut. The radio crackles with static.

DENTS (O.C.) (CONT'D)
Yes, Sir. He's quite the kid.
Yeah. I hope she does, too, Sir.

INT. BENSON HOME - KITCHEN

Sammy barrels through the hallway past the kitchen.

JENNY
Hey! Sammy, don't -

SAMMY (O.C.)
Sorry! Gotta run!

Jenny starts to take off her apron.

JENNY
What did you do now?

SAMMY (O.C.)
I don't know.

Tying her apron, Jenny turns back to dinner prep.

JENNY
And that, ladies and gentlemen, is
what falling does to brain cells.

Sammy barrels into the kitchen, clutching the computer tablet to his chest, skids, disappears with a thud. He pops up, yanks open a drawer, rummages, and pulls out a tube of glue.

SAMMY
Alright - almost a full tube!

Sammy disappears into the hallway. As the door slams, Jenny's head jerks up.

JENNY
Sammy - and glue!

She turns just as the timer goes off. She looks at the hallway then at the stove. She grabs an oven mitt.

JENNY (CONT'D)
I'm sure his hair'll grow back.
Just like last time.

INT. THE CAR

Sammy lays the stuff on the seat.

DENTS (O.C.)
Excellent, Sammy! Okay. Here's
what we do.

Quick shots of Sammy applying glue to the dash. Sammy *liberally* applying glue to the back of the tablet. Sammy with glue all over him smooshing the tablet onto the dash.

DENTS (O.C.) (CONT'D)
Okay, now we let it dry.

SAMMY
Right. We let it dry.

Quick shots of Sammy sitting behind the wheel and *talking*. Sammy lying down in the front seat and *talking*. Sammy sitting upside down in the passenger seat and - *talking*.

DENTS (O.C.)
Hey, Sammy. Check this out.

Sammy sits up. His eyes almost pop out of his head.

DENTS (O.C.) (CONT'D)
So. Whaddaya think? Can God use
mistakes or what?!

SAMMY
This - is - AWESOME!

INT. THE CAR - TABLET SHOT

Dents, the angel, is late 20's with animated actions and a quirky sense of humor. He's dressed in a bright-colored ball cap, (worn backwards), a loud Hawaiian print shirt, vividly-colored stripped beachcomber shorts, and flip-flops. You can *hear* the colors clashing. He splays his hands and smiles.

DENTS
Cool, huh?

SAMMY (O.C.)

Wow!

DENTS

So, ya wanna talk?

INT. THE CAR

Sammy leans forward in the seat, staring at the tablet.

SAMMY

Sure!

DENTS (O.C.)

You doin' okay? You cry yourself
to sleep a lot.

Sammy sits up to give a squinted stare at Dents.

SAMMY

Who says I do?

INT. THE CAR - TABLET SHOT

Dents gestures and folds his arms before pointing at Sammy.

DENTS

I do. I mean I just did. I did
and I do. And I'm done. Your
turn.

INT. THE CAR

Sammy frowns as his emotions bubble up.

SAMMY

I miss Mom.

DENTS (O.C.)

Why don't you tell your dad or your
sister.

SAMMY

Aw, they miss her, too, and I don't
wanna make 'em sad.

DENTS (O.C.)

So you cry by yourself.

Sammy's eyes start to shine.

SAMMY

Yeah.

INT. THE CAR - TABLET SHOT

Dents pulls over an invisible stool and sits down.

DENTS

Families share things with each other. That's what makes 'em families, Sammy.

INT. THE CAR

Sammy snuffles and rubs his eyes.

INT. THE CAR - TABLET SHOT

DENTS

Family and friends, they talk about stuff.

INT. THE CAR

Sammy sits back with a sigh.

SAMMY

Even the sad stuff?

DENTS (O.C.)

Especially the sad stuff.

Sammy nods.

SAMMY

Okay.

A car horn beeps twice in the distance.

SAMMY (CONT'D)

Dad's home. I gotta go.

INT. THE CAR - TABLET SHOT

Dents hops off the invisible stool.

DENTS

Sammy, it's nice to meet ya and I'm
lookin' forward to meeting Jenny.
And thanks for this.

Dents runs pointed fingers around the inside of the tablet
frame. He bends back and looks up.

DENTS (CONT'D)

Nice fish, by the way.

SAMMY

It's a whale. It's a mammal.

Dent nods.

DENTS

Nice mammal. I like the color and
the dent. Appropriate.

Dent extends his hand.

DENTS (CONT'D)

Thanks again, Sammy.

INT. THE CAR

Sammy hesitantly sticks a finger out to touch the tablet,
moves it up and down.

SAMMY

You're welcome.

Sammy double hops on the seat heading for the driver's door.

DENTS (O.C.)

See ya later, kiddo. And don't
forget to -

Sammy is long gone.

DENTS (O.C.) (CONT'D)

Never mind.

The driver's door clicks shut.