

BLACK MALE

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EXT. STREET - NIGHT

A crisp, cool night. Late.

SUPER: Durham County, North Carolina, 1995.

MALCOLM LEE (20), black, athletic, strides down the street. He wears a Jordan Chicago Bulls jersey, and an Oakland Raiders hat.

Around him, sirens wail out in the urban neighborhood.

A police cruiser whizzes past him. Lights flashing.

Brakes screech!

The cruiser pulls a 180°, and stops right in front of Malcolm, headlights blinding. Over the bullhorn, we hear...

BULLHORN

On the ground!

Malcolm clasps his hands back behind his head. Gets down on his knees. Places his chest against the pavement.

The cruiser door swings open.

DEPUTY, PETE LITTLE (30). Chubby, with a Southern drawl.

Exits the vehicle. Sidearm drawn.

DEPUTY LITTLE

Freeze!

MALCOLM

I'm not moving.

Little approaches Malcolm. Straddles him, placing one knee on his back, while he ties his hands behind him with a zip-tie.

MALCOLM

Not so tight with the plastic.

DEPUTY LITTLE

They're not built for comfort.

(searches him)

You carrying a weapon, anything that might poke or stab me?

MALCOLM

(calmly, defiant)

No, sir.

Little finishes his search. Comes up empty.

DEPUTY LITTLE

Be good, and tell me where you tossed the stuff?

MALCOLM

What stuff?

DEPUTY LITTLE

The cash, jewels, and whatever else you nabbed from that woman.

MALCOLM

I hate to break it to you, but you've got the wrong black male, officer.

DEPUTY LITTLE

I bet...

Little pulls out Malcolm's wallet. Checks his I.D.

DEPUTY LITTLE

...Malcolm.

(keeps his wallet)

Nice to meet you. Now, stay put.

Little climbs off of him. Steps away, shining the light into Malcolm's face.

DEPUTY LITTLE

I swear to god, you run, and I'll beat your ass into the ground. You got me?

MALCOLM

Yeah.

Little holds the light.

MALCOLM

Yes, sir.

DEPUTY LITTLE

Good.

Little walks down the sidewalk. Shines his flashlight into the bushes. Calls to Malcolm...

DEPUTY LITTLE

Why don't you make it easy for both of us, and tell me where you tossed it?

MALCOLM

I told you, I didn't do nothing.

A car, carrying a WHITE FAMILY, passes by. The driver slows. They stare at Malcolm, lying on the sidewalk, his face pressed against the pavement.

The driver shoots him a pitiful look.

MALCOLM

Wanna tell me, what I'm supposed to have done?

Little turns around. Heads back toward Malcolm.

DEPUTY LITTLE

There was a robbery in the area, and you match the description to a tee.

MALCOLM

What, nigger on the street?

Little shines the light in his face.

DEPUTY LITTLE

Don't get wise.

MALCOLM

You're violating my civil liberties?

DEPUTY LITTLE

Ooh, civil liberties. Pretty fancy words. Maybe you should throw an X onto your name huh, Malcolm?

Malcolm turns his head. Glares at Little

MALCOLM

Fuck you, cracker.

Little grins. Approaches Malcolm.

DEPUTY LITTLE

Now there's the big, tough guy I've been waiting for.

He hoists Malcolm up, and throws him down against the hood of the cruiser. He leans over, whispers into Malcolm's ear.

DEPUTY LITTLE

Come on, I know you did it. I knew you did, before I even pulled up. Now be good, and tell me where you ditched the merch, so I can call this in.

Another car, carrying A COUPLE, passes by. The car slows down. More curious stares are exchanged.

MALCOLM

This is some racist bullshit.

DEPUTY LITTLE
 Ain't it always.
 (spins him around)
 Now are you gonna talk or not?

Malcolm stares back resentfully.

MALCOLM
 I told you. I didn't do --

Little, getting plenty riled now, throws Malcolm into the back of the cruiser.

DEPUTY LITTLE
 I guess we do it the hard way.

He slams the door closed.

Little climbs into the front of the cruiser. Turns; faces Malcolm through the wired barrier.

DEPUTY LITTLE
 You must know how this works. We're going to find it sooner or later.

Little reaches for the radio, but just before he can click on the receiver, a call comes in over the...

DISPATCH (V.O.)
Attention, all units. The suspect in the 10-17 has been apprehended on Fifth and Memorial.

Little is stunned.

Malcolm, triumphant, yells into the cage.

MALCOLM
 I told you, fool! Now get me the fuck out of here.

Little seethes, stares ahead. Clicks on the radio.

DEPUTY LITTLE
 Car #595, Roger that, suspect apprehended.

He places the radio back onto the cradle.

MALCOLM
 Come on, I ain't got all night.

Little exits the cruiser. Opens the door for Malcolm.

DEPUTY LITTLE
 Sorry about the mistake.

Malcolm climbs out. Stands face to face with Little.

MALCOLM

Mistake. You think, I'm some hopped up gangbanger? I go to college. I know lawyers an' shit. I'm going to file a formal complaint. Call the press. Don't think you've heard the last of me...

(reads his badge)

Deputy, Little.

Malcolm turns around. Waves his hands.

MALCOLM

Now, get these shackles off me. I ain't no slave.

Little moves behind him, to release the restraint.

Malcolm takes in a deep breath; smells the air.

MALCOLM

Hoo-whee, I can already smell that shitstorm a' coming.

Little stops; frozen.

MALCOLM

Come on, man. Free me!

Little looks down the empty street. Throws Malcolm back inside the cruiser.

MALCOLM

What is this?

Little slams the door. Steps back inside the car.

INT. POLICE CRUISER - CONTINUOUS

MALCOLM

Let me the hell out of here!

Little puts the car into gear. Drives down the street.

MALCOLM

What? So, now you gonna be making up some shit?

Little picks up the radio.

DEPUTY LITTLE

This is car #595. Frannie, I'm way past my dinner. Put me off the call for twenty would ya?

DISPATCH (V.O.)

All right, you have a good one.

Little puts the radio down.

MALCOLM

What is this? You trying to scare me now?

(beat)

All right, this is some good joke you're pullin'. You've got me.

Little stares through the rearview mirror.

DEPUTY LITTLE

I've got you all right.

EXT. CITY OUTSKIRTS - NIGHT

They drive past all the homes. Away from any trace of civilization. With each passing block, Malcolm gets more and more nervous.

MALCOLM

Okay, okay, I take all that shit back. You think I actually know any lawyers? That was all bullshit.

As Malcolm pleads,

BEHIND HIS BACK

He struggles with the zip-ties. Wrenches his wrists with all his might. The plastic cuts tight into his skin, bleeding.

EXT. SIDE STREET - NIGHT

The cruiser takes a turn onto a gravelly road. Enters an

EXT. ABANDONED DRIVE-IN - NIGHT

The cruiser circles the desolate area. Stops in front of the giant, tattered, white screen.

INT. POLICE CRUISER - NIGHT

Malcolm stares out the window; nervously jokes...

MALCOLM

I think you're about a decade late for the last movie yo.

Little turns off the engine. Looks in the rearview mirror.

DEPUTY LITTLE

You know, you've only got yourself to blame?

CLOSE ON

MALCOLM'S BLOODIED WRISTS

Still, vigorously wriggling.

EXT. ABANDONED DRIVE-IN - CONTINUOUS

Little exits the cruiser. Walks around. Opens the back door.

DEPUTY LITTLE

Out.

Malcolm doesn't move an inch. Stares back at Little.

MALCOLM

No way, psycho. If you're gonna shoot me, then you're gonna shoot me in here.

DEPUTY LITTLE

Move.

Malcolm shakes his head.

DEPUTY LITTLE

I'm not gonna shoot you. Now get the fuck out.

(beat)

Now!

Malcolm, reluctant, climbs out.

Little drags Malcolm away from the cruiser. Throws him down onto the ground. Stands over him.

Malcolm, on his knees, stares up.

The car headlights create a massive shadow of the two men on the giant, white screen behind them.

MALCOLM

What are you gonna do?

DEPUTY LITTLE

Don't talk.

MALCOLM

What are you --

Little kicks Malcolm in the stomach. Punches him in the face.

Malcolm drops to the ground, choking for breath.

DEPUTY LITTLE

You don't learn do you?

Little kicks him again.

DEPUTY LITTLE
You don't speak, got it?

Although Malcolm is winded, he still continues to wrench on the zip-tie. Each moment, closer to squirming one wrist free.

Little steps on his chest. Points his gun at Malcolm's head.

Malcolm spits up some blood, stares up at Little, with a battered, bruised eye.

MALCOLM
I didn't do anything.

Little cocks the trigger. And then...

ACROSS THE INTERSTATE

The lights of a passing semi-truck. It blasts out its horn.

Little turns his head.

Malcolm makes his move. Slides one bloodied wrist free.

MALCOLM SPRINGS ON LITTLE

Wrestling him to the ground. The gun falls to the ground.

They struggle. Each one, crawling, clawing to get a hold of the pistol. Malcolm reaches it first.

He points the gun at Little. Cocks the trigger.

Little backs away, cowering.

Malcolm gets to his feet. Stands over Little.

DEPUTY LITTLE
Please, no... Don't shoot me!

MALCOLM
Shoot you! What, you think because I'm black, I'm some murderer? I'm not going to have your sorry ass for a life on my conscience.
(gestures with the weapon)
Now, cuff yourself to the grill.

DEPUTY LITTLE
What?

MALCOLM
You heard me. Cuff yourself to the grill!

DEPUTY LITTLE
Let's talk about this.

BLAM!

Malcolm fires a round into the dirt next to Little.

MALCOLM
Do it!

Little crawls to the cruiser. Handcuffs himself to the grill of the cruiser.

MALCOLM
Well, officer *Lit-tel*, not such a big man now are you?
(beat)
Now, throw me the keys.

Little digs in his pocket for his handcuff keys. Tosses them at Malcolm's feet.

MALCOLM
Your mace too.

Little tosses his mace cannister.

Malcolm scoops them both up. Paces around Little. Gaining the upper-hand, he relaxes. Can't help, but crack a smile.

MALCOLM
The flip side ain't so much fun now, is it motherfucker?

DEPUTY LITTLE
I was only going to scare you.

MALCOLM
Yeah, I bet you were.

DEPUTY LITTLE
This all went too far. Throw me the keys. You go your way, and I'll go mine.

MALCOLM
Yeah right. You know my name. Where I live. I split, and you'll come busting down my door, accusing me of kidnapping you an' shit.

DEPUTY LITTLE
I wouldn't. I swear. Look, whatever you're thinking. I just want you to know, that I've got a little girl --

Malcolm points the gun in Little's face.

MALCOLM

Don't even.
 (shakes head)
 You think, we all don't have families?

Malcolm paces around the cruiser.

DEPUTY LITTLE

What are you going to do?

MALCOLM

It's not what I'm going to do, it's what you're going to... You are going to get yourself on that wire.
 (points inside the car)
 And tell that whiny bitch on the other end of that radio exactly what you were planning on doing to me.

DEPUTY LITTLE

You're serious?

MALCOLM

Damn right, I'm serious.
 (beat)
 You don't think it's going to look a little peculiar - you and me, out in the middle of nowhere, when you're supposed to be off on your dinner break? I've got a clean record. I go to school. I'll take my chances. I'm not going to let no backwoods, racist, redneck fuck the rest of my life up.

Malcolm snatches the police radio. Pulls it through the driver's window, stretches the cord out. Clicks the radio.

MALCOLM

Yeah, who's this?

A beat later...

DISPATCH (V.O.)

This is the Durham County Police Station, please refrain all communication on this frequency.

MALCOLM

I'd like to, but I have a bit of a problem. This is car #595, and I have a deputy of yours handcuffed to the grill of his cruiser right now... Over.

A longer beat.

DISPATCH (V.O.)
*State your #10-20, and we will
 dispatch units to your location.*

MALCOLM
 Sure, I'll get right on that, but
 first, someone has a little story
 that he wants to tell all of you
 listening right now...
 (points the gun)
 ...Don't you?

Malcolm holds the radio close for Little to speak into.

DEPUTY LITTLE
 This is Deputy Pete Little, badge
 #3140.

DISPATCH (V.O.)
Are you injured, over?

DEPUTY LITTLE
 No... I'm fine.

MALCOLM
 Now, tell'em why you're here.

DEPUTY LITTLE
 I, uh, ummn, was responding to the
 #10-17 in progress, and encountered
 a man in the area, who matched the
 suspect's appearance.

Malcolm shakes his head - *Whatever*

DEPUTY LITTLE
 I detained him, and searched for
 the stolen goods. While he was
 still in my custody the call came
 through, that the actual suspect
 had been apprehended.

Little ponders what to say next.

Malcolm mouths the words - *Say it*

DEPUTY LITTLE
 I, ummn, proceeded to drive the
 suspect to...

Malcolm points the gun menacingly - *Uh uh*

DEPUTY LITTLE
 ...To an isolated location. I then
 told the man to exit the vehicle.

Little hesitates for a moment.

MALCOLM
Tell her the rest.

DEPUTY LITTLE
I then ordered the man to get on
the ground. I... withdrew my
firearm...

MALCOLM
To do what?

Little is silent.

MALCOLM
Say it!

DEPUTY LITTLE
To...

MALCOLM
To kill me?

DEPUTY LITTLE
Yes.

MALCOLM
Then what happened?

DEPUTY LITTLE
He freed himself. Took hold of my
gun. He's now holding me captive.

Malcolm uncocks the trigger. Speaks into the radio.

MALCOLM
You get all that?

DISPATCH (V.O.)
(pause)
Roger.

MALCOLM
We're at the abandoned Drive-In on
Maple. Move your asses.

Malcolm drops the receiver on the seat. Switches off the box.

Malcolm paces about the dirt. A tense silence between them.

Malcolm gazes out across the landscape. We hold for a long
beat. And then, without turning, he says...

MALCOLM
Did you know that Malcolm X's real
name was Little?

DEPUTY LITTLE
Bullshit.

MALCOLM

It's true. He changed it from Little to X. He didn't want to be linked to the ancestry of some former slave owner.

DEPUTY LITTLE

(scoffs)

How many years is it gonna take you people to get over that?

Malcolm turns, stares at Little.

MALCOLM

I don't know. How many would it take you?

Little doesn't answer. Doesn't like the question.

Malcolm stares up at the stars.

MALCOLM

You watch Star Trek?

DEPUTY LITTLE

What?

MALCOLM

Star Trek. Captain Kirk. Chekov. Spock. The Enterprise. Beam me the fuck up.

DEPUTY LITTLE

What about it?

Malcolm sits on the dirt across from Little. Looks up.

MALCOLM

You know, one day, in the future, everything is going to even out. There will be cameras everywhere. Up in space, looking down on all of us. When that happens, the only folks that are going to be going to jail will be the ones actually committing the crimes. And all that crooked Rodney King, Mark Furhman shit won't fly anymore... And people like you, people who think the rules don't apply, because of the color of your skin, or the color of your uniform. Well, your days of playing cowboy dress-up will be all over.

Little stays silent. Looks up at the stars.

MALCOLM

And then maybe, when the oppressed of this world aren't so oppressed anymore. Who know, what we might be capable of?

(turns to the large, white screen)

And one day, you won't have to go to the movies to see a president, who looks like I do.

DEPUTY LITTLE

(chuckles)

In your dreams, Malcolm.

Malcolm shakes his head.

MALCOLM

Do you even know what dreams are? Progress. The problem with so many of you around here, is that you're not interested in progress. You all want everything to stay just like it always is, and always has been.

(beat)

No dreams.

The faint sound of sirens in the distance.

MALCOLM

Here they come.

DEPUTY LITTLE

Here they come, all right.

They both look over to the road, where a stream of flashing red and blue lights are barreling down on them.

Malcolm places Little's firearm on the ground, away from both of them.

A fleet of police cars enter the theater. They converge upon them. A dozen doors fly open, as the officers emerge. All with their guns pointed at Malcolm.

Over the cruiser's bullhorn, an officer instructs...

BULLHORN

Hand over the weapon, and move away from the officer.

Malcolm lifts his hands up. Walks slowly toward the officers.

MALCOLM

The weapon is on the ground. I'm not armed.

Several officers rush him. Tackle him to the ground.

AT THE CRUISER

Another white officer, SIMPSON, approaches Little. Bends a knee, whispers into Little's ear, as he takes out his keys and releases him.

SIMPSON

What the fuck have you got yourself into Pete?

DEPUTY LITTLE

I'm gonna need a decoy.

ACROSS THE LOT

Malcolm is lifted off the ground by two officers. One looks down at Malcolm's bleeding wrists. Whispers to the other...

OFFICER

He's already bleeding.

The other officer harshly handcuffs Malcolm.

OFFICER 2

So, we'll say he struggled.
(clamps it tight)

MALCOLM

Oww! Hey, I'm the innocent one remember?

As Malcolm is being pulled away, he sees

DEPUTY LITTLE

Already walking free toward him. Massaging his sore wrist.

MALCOLM

Hey! What the - why's he free?
(looks around)
You all deaf? Didn't any of you hear what he said?

And then,

FROM ACROSS THE LOT

Officer Simpson jumps up. Calls out to everyone...

DEPUTY LITTLE

Gun!

Using his pointer stick, Simpson lifts up a small 22 caliber pistol.

MALCOLM

Can't believe his eyes. He wrenches the officers holding him.

MALCOLM
What's that shit?

The officers escort Malcolm into the back of a cruiser.

DEPUTY LITTLE
What's it look like? You're in it
deep now.

MALCOLM
I'm in --
(screams out)
I didn't do anything!

The officer slams the car door in Malcolm's face.

Malcolm stares out the window. As Little walks past him --

WE MOVE INTO SLOW MOTION

They trade looks. Malcolm, desperate - Little, humbled.

OS we hear...

DEPUTY LITTLE (V.O.)
...I was in the vicinity of the 10-
17, when the assailant waved me
down. I thought that he might need
help, directions, or something. I
lowered my window, and that was
when he displayed the pistol.

VOICE (O.S.)
That would be the 22 Beretta that
was found at the scene?

DEPUTY LITTLE (V.O.)
Correct. The assailant then entered
my patrol car, and at gunpoint,
forced me to drive to the abandoned
theater. And that's...
(pause)
That's when he made me make that
incredible call to dispatch.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Little sits across from a panel of three well dressed suits.

SUIT 1
And were you ever told why he
wanted you to give such a bizarre
statement?

DEPUTY LITTLE

No idea. He had obviously been radicalized. Political revolution. Paranoid theories. He was talking crazy most of the time. I was never sure what he would do from one moment to the next.

SUIT 2

So, although he displayed erratic behavior, you never saw any signs of mental illness. Nothing to suggest that Mr. Lee would resort to such extremes.

DEPUTY LITTLE

No ma'am. Nothing to indicate that he would...

SUIT 2

Hang himself in his jail cell.

Saddened, Little looks down on the floor. Lifts his head up.

DEPUTY LITTLE

No. And I take full responsibility for that lack of foresight.

SUIT 1

Thank you for your testimony Deputy Little. I know it can't be easy going through such a traumatizing incident again.

Little stands, faces the three suits.

DEPUTY LITTLE

Just doing my duty.

Little exits the room.

The suits proceed to sign and file their paperwork.

FADE TO BLACK.

TITLE:

"If you're not ready to die for it, put the word "Freedom" out of your vocabulary -- Malcolm X

The End.