

RED SUMMER

An original screenplay

by

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Based on historical events

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FADE IN

INSERT: Grainy WWI FILM CLIP OF AFRICAN AMERICAN SOLDIERS IN COMBAT.

NARRATION: NOVEMBER, 1918, THE GREAT WAR WAS OVER. THREE MILLION AMERICANS FOUGHT IN EUROPE, 200,000 WERE AFRICAN-AMERICAN. MORE THAN 2,000 MADE THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE.

INSERT: Grainy WWI FILM CLIP OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN SOLDIERS DECORATED BY FRENCH GENERALS.

NARRATION: A GRATEFUL FRENCH GOVERNMENT AWARDED THEM MEDALS FOR VALOR.

INSERT: Grainy FILM CLIP OF WWI BLACK SOLDIERS PARADING IN NEW YORK CITY.

NARRATION: THESE BLACK WARRIORS RETURNED HOME WITH LOFTY EXPECTATIONS.

INSERT: STILL PHOTO OF A BLACK MAN LYNCHED BY A GLOATING MOB.

NARRATION: INSTEAD, DESPITE THEIR SACRIFICE THE RECEPTION THEY RECEIVED WAS NOT WHAT THEY EXPECTED.

INSERT: BRIEF FILM CLIP OF 1918 MASS CIVIL DISORDER.

NARRATION: 1918 SET THE STAGE FOR *THE RED SUMMER* OF 1919. A SUMMER OF VIOLENT LABOR STRIKES, RACE RIOTS, AND THE RISE OF MURDEROUS ANARCHY.

A BLACK SCREEN

RUMBLING of distant artillery.

SUPER: MAY, 1918 - ARGONNE FOREST, FRANCE

FADE IN:

EXT. FRANCE - ARGONNE FOREST BATTLEFIELD - DAY

A funereal battlefield, torrential rain. The earth is desolate, lacking color, life. Shattered trees are the remains of a once dense forest.

Rotting bodies hang in a seemingly endless cat's-cradle of barbed wire. Unburied dead lie in contorted shapes. Only rats scurry openly. A network of deep angled trenches marks the American lines.

EXT. AMERICAN TRENCH - ECHO COMPANY - DAY

Soldiers exchange of gunfire with an unseen enemy. Men wade thru ankle-deep water carrying supplies, stretcher bearers carry dead and wounded.

INT. COMPANY COMMAND BUNKER - CONTINUOUS

It's lit by a small lamp. The furnishings are crude. A desk, a chair, a field phone. A sleeping niche is carved out of the dirt wall. An officer studies colored lines on a map pinned to a wall.

CAPTAIN EMMETT BRONSON (34) is the CO. A practical, no-nonsense man. Fair minded, good natured, a realist. He's seen death before but not on a such a cataclysmic scale.

An EXPLOSION, a near miss. The bunker shakes. Tendrils of dirt trickle down, ignored. Like all who've endured combat Bronson's accepted that he's a dead man waiting for the moment.

He doesn't notice the canvas across the entrance pushed aside and someone's entered.

MAN (O.S.)
(southern accent)
Sargent McNair reportin' sir.

Bronson's focused on the map.

BRONSON
Stand easy Sargent.

Bronson jots notes on a pad, then turns.

BRONSON (CONT'D)
So Sargent...

BOOKER MCNAIR (26) is dripping wet, tall, handsome, muscular, and black. The son of a share-cropper, he grew up enduring the outrages of Jim Crow South. He's a witness to lynchings, beatings, burned churches, and also the rise of Black pride, political activism, and civil rights.

The two men stare at each other.

MCNAIR
(smiles knowingly)
Happens a lot with white folks.

BRONSON
Not sure what you mean Sargent.

McNair pulls some papers out of his shirt, hands them over. A blood stained dressing is wrapped around one arm.

MCNAIR

My orders sir.

Bronson flips through the papers.

BRONSON

Booker McNair?

MCNAIR

Friends call me Books sir.

BRONSON

(absently)

How's the arm?

MCNAIR

Sir, no disrespect (beat) but what am I doin' in a white outfit?

BRONSON

You're here because I asked Battalion for someone who knows this area. I'm just surprised that you're--

MCNAIR

A Negro?

BRONSON

(nods at the file)

A Negro from Mississippi with a college education.

McNair looks slightly embarrassed.

BRONSON (CONT'D)

Not the answer you expected?

MCNAIR

Lincoln University sir.

BRONSON

In Pennsylvania?

MCNAIR

Yes Sir.

BRONSON

Play any sports?

MCNAIR
(surprised)
Football scholarship, quarterback.

As an afterthought he pumps his fist.

MCNAIR (CONT'D)
Go Lions.

Bronson suppresses a smile.

BRONSON
I need a man for a tough mission.
Quick thinking, cool under
pressure.

MCNAIR
Sir.

Bronson eyes-up Booker for the job.

BRONSON
Smoke if you like Sargent.

MCNAIR
Never touch 'em Sir.

Bronson lights one up, turns to the map and motions McNair to lean-in.

BRONSON
This is Le Chesnay. The brass is
planning a major offensive and
needs to find a weak point in
Jerry's lines.

MCNAIR
Sir, last week my squad was on
recon at the Le Chesnay canal.
Jerry beat us up bad, I don't think
it's a weak point.

BRONSON
Thanks for your military insight
Sargent. I'll pass that on to
Battalion but I'm sure they'll
insist we go anyway.

MCNAIR
We, Sir?

BRONSON
My last lieutenant was killed
yesterday, so it's me, you, and my
last non-com, Sargent Bransfield.

MCNAIR
But Sir...

BRONSON
Are you gonna be a problem?

MCNAIR
A better place may be here (points)
at Chaville, just north of Le
Chesnay. We passed it when we were
fallin' back and there wasn't a
Jerry in sight.

BRONSON
Our orders are to reconnoitre Le
Chesnay (beat) but we can check out
this... Chaville.

Bronson pulls out a pocket watch on a gold chain.

BRONSON (CONT'D)
It's almost fifteen hundred. Report
back here at twenty three hundred.
We'll have to move fast so drop
everything but your sidearm and
trench knife. Questions?

MCNAIR
No Sir, twenty three hundred.

McNair salutes turns towards the doorway.

BRONSON
Sargent...

McNair turns.

BRONSON (CONT'D)
Just for the record, I don't give a
god damn what color you are. You do
your job and we're absotively okay.

MCNAIR
Yes Sir.

Booker pulls the canvas open.

BRONSON
University of Chicago.

MCNAIR

Sir?

BRONSON

We played Lincoln "U" in an exhibition game in oh six.

MCNAIR

Before my time Sir.

Bronson calls up some long lost humor.

BRONSON

Well (beat) we lost. Go Maroons.

McNair smiles a very likable smile, turns and leaves.

EXT. AMERICAN TRENCH - 11 PM - SAME DAY - NIGHT

Dense fog. Men smoke, sleep, stand sentry, find a modicum of comfort.

An occasional flare creates a moonscape of otherworldly shadows. Sporadic gunfire. Bronson steps from his bunker, his face blackened. He checks his watch as McNair hustles up.

BRONSON

You're two minutes late. I was beginning to think I was stood up.

MCNAIR

Sorry sir, there was a sniper.

BRONSON

(unemotionally)
Probably the one that got Sargent Bransfield.

MCNAIR

Dead?

BRONSON

Jerry's very good.

MCNAIR

So it's just us?

BRONSON

I'm down to three very green corporals who are scared shit-less.

MCNAIR

The smaller the group the quieter.

BRONSON
 (sarcastically)
 Glad you agree Sargent.

Bronson turns to a nearby soldier.

BRONSON (CONT'D)
 Corporal Daly.

A soldier peels off the line. ERIC DALY, (18) his boyish, face makes him an unlikely soldier. His uniform has a clean newness.

CORPORAL DALY
 Yes Sir?

BRONSON
 The Sargent and I are goin' out.
 Pass the word to hold fire. We
 should be back in about ninety
 minutes. I'll fire a red flare so
 don't fucking shoot us. Got that?

Daly swallows.

CORPORAL DALY
 Yes Sir, ninety minutes, red flare,
 don't fucking shoot you.

Bronson removes his pocket watch and hands it to Daly.

BRONSON
 If I don't make it back.

Daly swallows hard.

CORPORAL DALY
 (nervously)
 You'll be back Sir... right?

BRONSON
 (softly)
 Pass the word son.

DALY
 Good luck Sir.

The order is passed along the trench. Bronson and McNair check their weapons. McNair looks at Bronson and points to his own face.

MCNAIR
 Oh natchu-ral.

BRONSON

Funny.

Bronson nods at McNair and they move up into the fog.

EXT. NO-MAN'S LAND - CONTINUOUS

A slight rise. Ahead is a field of barbed wire. They crawl past a shell hole with slimy water. An arm sticks up. Gagging on the stench they move through an opening in the wire.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF LE CHESNAY - LATER - NIGHT

At the edge of a canal. Ahead is a medieval-era town, lit up, crawling with Germans. Trucks carrying men and supplies stream through the main square. Bronson scans the town with binoculars.

BRONSON

(whispering)

Le Chesnay sure ain't a weak point.
That's at least a regiment.

Bronson hands the binoculars to McNair who scans the town.

MCNAIR

Behind that church.

McNair points to a camouflaged observation balloon tethered to the steeple.

BRONSON

Good eyes. Son of a bitch it's in
the perfect spot to direct their
artillery.

Bronson puts the binoculars away.

BRONSON (CONT'D)

Okay, we got what we needed.

Bronson looks at McNair, trying to decide something.

BRONSON (CONT'D)

What say we check out that other
place?

MCNAIR

It's about four miles north along
the canal. There's plenty of cover.

BRONSON

Lead on Sargent.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF CHEVILLE - LATER - NIGHT

The fog's lifted, clouds hide the moon. The town's deathly still. Lights show in a few houses. A dog BARKS far off.

BRONSON
(whispering)
Quiet as a graveyard.

MCNAIR
This could be what Battalion's
looking for Sir.

BRONSON
No sign of troops or vehicles or
(glancing at McNair) balloons.

Bronson scans the town again and he's satisfied.

BRONSON (CONT'D)
(whispering)
Okay, let's get outta here.

EXT. NO-MANS LAND - 30 MINUTES LATER - NIGHT

They low-crawl over the broken landscape. Bronson checks a compass and points.

BRONSON
About a half mile.

They come to a broad field of barbed wire. VOICES whisper in German. Slithering into a shell crater they peer over the top. A few yards away are two Germans in a fox hole.

ON THE AMERICANS

Bronson looks for a safe route, points to one side and they crawl out. Bronson's boot snags some barbed wire. The wire springs back with a TWANG. The Americans freeze, press into the mud.

The Germans are alerted. They move warily towards the sound. Rifles raised, moonlight glints off bayonets.

Bronson draws his pistol, taps McNair on the arm and motions. McNair pulls out his trench knife. Bronson follows his lead.

The Germans are very close. They pause at the wire, backs to the Americans. Clouds move across the moon. Bronson rises behind one, throws a hand over the Hun's mouth and thrusts his knife deep.

The German GROANS, slumps. The other German whips around. Too close to aim he thrusts his bayonet at Bronson.

McNair's knife comes up and deflects the bayonet. Bronson grabs the rifle, McNair tackles the German and they tumble into a shell crater.

From inside the crater are MUFFLED sounds of a furious but brief struggle. A hand claws up and over the top. Bronson rolls out, McNair follows.

BRONSON (CONT'D)
(whispering)
Thanks, I owe you.

Bronson gathers himself, McNair falls back, clutches his side, he GROANS softly.

BRONSON (CONT'D)
(whispering)
Shit.

Bronson pries McNair's fingers away, rips his shirt open.

MCNAIR
(whispering)
Fucker got me with my own knife.

BRONSON
Hard to see with that oh natu-ral
skin of yours, but you'll live.

Bronson rips the dirty bandage off McNair's arm.

BRONSON (CONT'D)
(whispering)
This is gonna hurt but it's all
there is.

Bronson stuffs the rag into the wound. McNair grimaces soundlessly. Bronson looks at him with new-found esteem.

BRONSON (CONT'D)
(whispering)
You're tougher than I thought
Sargent.

MCNAIR
(whispering)
You didn't have to grow up in the
deep South... sir.

BRONSON
(whispering)
You can revel me with tales of
your childhood after we get back.

EXT. NEAR THE AMERICAN LINES - LATER - NIGHT

They crawl to an up-sloping field. Bronson taps McNair on the shoulder and points ahead.

BRONSON
(whispering)
We're okay, our lines are over the
crest.

MCNAIR
(whispering)
Flare gun.

Bronson pats his pockets, looks at McNair with alarm.

BRONSON
(whispering)
Fuck.

MCNAIR
(whispering)
That's not good. Let's get closer
and call out.

BRONSON
(whispering)
Jerry's English is pretty good.

MCNAIR
(whispering)
Can't wait for daylight, we're
sittin' ducks out here.

A flare lights. They lie flat until it burns out. Bronson gestures to McNair and they resume crawling.

EXT. NEAR THE AMERICAN LINES - CONTINUOUS

They stop near the crest.

MCNAIR
(whispering)
Now what?

Bronson rises to a half crouch.

BRONSON
 (shouting)
 Hey, I'm an American officer.

A SHOT rings out, a bullet WHIZZES past Bronson, he hits the ground.

AMERICAN SOLDIER (O.S.)
 (with Southern accent)
 Sure ya're Fritz. Ya'll try that a-gin.

BRONSON
 (shouting)
 God dammit, I'm with the one twenty ninth.

More SHOTS. A flare lights. McNair rises up, Bronson pulls on his arm.

BRONSON (CONT'D)
 Not yet.

McNair jerks free and stands tall. He wipes mud off his face. In the light of the flare he's in plain sight of the Americans... and the Germans.

MCNAIR
 (shouting)
 We're American yuh damn Yankee cracker.

McNair stiffens, expecting a bullet.

SOLDIER (O.S.)
 (shouting)
 Holy shit he's a nigra, come on in.

The two men run for it. The Germans open fire. Bullets KICK up dirt. They throw themselves over the crest to the safety of the reverse slope. They're out of breath. McNair manages to speak.

MCNAIR
 What I tell you 'bout this here oh natchu-ral skin.

They stare at each other. McNair pokes a finger through a bullet hole in his shirt. The tension melts. They break into uncontrollable laughter.

BRONSON
 You're fucking crazy.

McNair winces, grabs at his wound.

MCNAIR
But we're here.

BRONSON
Let's get you to the medics.

MCNAIR
(shouting)
We're comin' in.

INT. COMPANY BUNKER - TWO DAYS LATER - DAY

Bronson talks on a field phone. Sargent McNair enters.

BRONSON
Yes sir, it's in my report.

Bronson hangs up the phone.

BRONSON (CONT'D)
Hello Sargent, how's the wound?

MCNAIR
All patched up Sir.

BRONSON
That was Battalion. The Major was impressed with my report.

MCNAIR
Outstanding Sir.

BRONSON
Look Sargent (beat) you saved my life and the mission. I won't forget that.

MCNAIR
Just doing my job Sir.

BRONSON
I'm recommending you for a citation. Not for saving my ass, that's between you and me. Exposing yourself to enemy fire was incredibly stupid (beat) and incredibly brave.

MCNAIR
But what about you Sir?

BRONSON

(grinning)

Me? I was awarded a serious ass-chewing. Captains aren't supposed to do that shit.

MCNAIR

(grinning)

Well, if anyone should ask me you done good Sir. You got us back in one piece.

BRONSON

You mean you got us back in one piece.

MCNAIR

Team effort Sir.

Bronson gets serious.

BRONSON

I can use a good sergeant, but--

MCNAIR

It's against regulations to mix coloreds and whites. God-Almighty-General-Black-Jack-Pershing himself can't change that.

BRONSON

I'm really sorry.

MCNAIR

Even if I could stay the men were grumbling when I showed up (beat) and we already got one war going on.

A few awkward beats.

MCNAIR (CONT'D)

There is something the Captain could do.

BRONSON

Name it.

MCNAIR

I always wanted to fly, but they don't allow Negroes in the Air Corps. When I saw that observation balloon it hit me. I'd like to put in for a transfer to a balloon outfit. Closest thing to flying.

BRONSON

The life expectancy of a balloon
observer is very short.

MCNAIR

Could you write me a
recommendation?

BRONSON

Well I guess I owe you that much.
I'll write it up and send it over
to your C-O.

MCNAIR

Appreciate that Captain.

It's time to get on with the war.

BRONSON

If you're ever in Chicago look me
up, least I can do is stand you to
a steak dinner.

MCNAIR

Not much chance of me ever
travelin' all that way but I thank
you Sir.

Bronson writes on pad, tears off a page and hands it over.

BRONSON

One never knows.

McNair looks at the paper.

MCNAIR

Chicago Police Department?

BRONSON

I'm a captain there too.

McNair tucks the paper inside his bible. Bronson reaches out
and they shake hands. McNair stares at his hand.

MCNAIR

I've never touched a white person.

BRONSON

Don't feel any different than you.

MCNAIR

No Sir, it don't.

BRONSON

Well good luck Books, and keep your
head down.

MCNAIR

You too Sir.

McNair salutes, turns away and walks out. Bronson stares
after him for a few beats then goes back to the war.

FADE TO:

SUPER: UNION CHURCH MISSISSIPPI 16 MONTHS LATER

EXT. RURAL FARMLAND - DAY

A rickety pickup truck bounces along a road. It kicks up
clouds of dust. McNair's in the back, a handkerchief to his
face. The truck passes fields and decrepit houses, then a
large stand of trees.

McNair bangs the side of the truck. It pulls to the side and
he jumps off. The truck pulls away and he's left in a cloud
of dust. The dust settles, a ramshackle house comes into
view.

EXT. FARM - CULTIVATED FIELD - CONTINUOUS

JACOB MCNAIR(60ish), Booker's father. He strains at a plow
pulled by an old mule. The son of a slave, he's farmed the
White man's land all his life. He learned that for a black
person to survive in the land of Jim Crow he must know and
keep in his place.

ON THE DUST CLOUD

It's caught Jacob's attention. He shades his eyes, strains to
see. A figure comes into view. Jacob's unsure. He drops the
reins and walks hesitatingly towards the figure. Recognition
sets in, his pace quickens.

ON MCNAIR AND JACOB

They stop a few feet apart. Emotions build, no words are
necessary. They come together, embrace.

INT. FARM HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - LATER - NIGHT

A peaceful night. Booker's still in his uniform, sits with
Jacob.

Note: Jacob's dialogue is spoken in African-American English with a Southern accent.

JACOB
Good to have ya home son.

MCNAIR
Good to be back.

JACOB
How'd you come by dem medals?

MCNAIR
They ain't nothing Daddy, everyone got 'em.

JACOB
You ain't everyone.

Booker's uncomfortable talking about the war.

MCNAIR
How long Mama been away?

JACOB
Oh 'bout a munt. Her sista okay so she be home soon.

MCNAIR
Sorry I couldn't write Daddy, we were on the boat and all...

JACOB
You and dem otha' black boys?

MCNAIR
There was almost a thousand of us going over.

JACOB
How many be comin' home?

Booker's eyes get wet, he looks off.

MCNAIR
How's the crops this year Daddy?

JACOB
Got duh best cotton in a long time. Put in fifteen mo' acres of cawn.

MCNAIR
That's great Daddy, real great.

There's a pause.

JACOB
Whachew gonna do now?

MCNAIR
Thought I'd stick around.

JACOB
Yo Mama'd like that, an' I could
use the help for sure. Ol' Mary
ain't what she used tuh be.

MCNAIR
(chuckling)
That mule's tougher than an oak
tree.

JACOB
She be slowin'. Gonna be callin'
dat glue man one of these days.

MCNAIR
Daddy I have my Army pay and I made
some money playin' poker.

Jacob sidesteps the offer, pulls out a pipe, fills it, lights
it, draws deeply.

MCNAIR (CONT'D)
You still smokin' that Old Timey?

JACOB
(defensively)
I don'ts drink and I don'ts run wit
no womens. Yo' Mama don't mind me
havin' a bowl now and den.

MCNAIR
So, what about me helping out?

JACOB
I dunno son. You didn't go tuh
school just so's ya'll can work
someone else's land.

MCNAIR
There's nothing here for me other
than the land. We talked about me
teaching but there ain't a black
kid around with more'n a fifth
grade education.

Jacob pulls on the pipe, exhales slowly.

JACOB

Ifin it's the land then let's go
see Mista John tomorruh. He gots
some land he wants tuh sell.

Booker seethes.

MCNAIR

That old pecker wood still alive?
He's been promising you a piece of
land for as long as I can remember.
He's a lying Cracker with a boot on
a black man's neck.

JACOB

(sternly)

Watch you words boy. Ain't safe tuh
even think dat way.

MCNAIR

Safe? You want to see what safe is?

Booker pulls up his shirt revealing a grisly scar. Jacob
reaches out and gently touches it.

JACOB

Oh lawd...

MCNAIR

If I wanted to be safe I wouldn't
have gone off to war.

JACOB

Dat what dem medals for?

MCNAIR

(melancholy)

Don't matter. I did what had to be
done. Other black boys weren't so
lucky.

Jacob stares off.

JACOB

(resigned)

Black folk been dyin' 'cause of the
White man fer long time. Nothin's
changed.

MCNAIR

'bout time it did.

JACOB

Tomorruh we'll talk to Mista John.

MCNAIR

Sure Daddy.

JACOB

It's late boy, you go on in and get some sleep. I'll be in soon.

MCNAIR

Alright Daddy, 'night.

Booker leans over, kisses his father's head and goes inside. Jacob draws on the pipe, pulls a rag from his pocket and wipes his eyes.

EXT. THOUSAND OAKS FARM - NEXT DAY - DAY

Booker and Jacob walk up a long driveway. Booker's in his uniform, Jacob's in his Sunday suit. Ahead is a dilapidated Greek Revival house.

In the center of the yard is a tall flag pole. An ill wind keeps a battle-worn Stars-and-Bars of the Confederacy unfurled. Booker looks at it scornfully.

They mount the steps of a wide porch shrouded in vines and dead leaves. Booker looks around curiously, then pulls the door bell.

A black man, GEORGE THOMAS, (60's), peers through the glass and opens the door.

GEORGE

Now Jacob you knows deliveries go to the back.

JACOB

(proudly)
George, we here tuh see Mista John
(beat) on business.

George looks them over.

GEORGE

Okay, wait here.

He closes the door.

JACOB

See, ain't like you said.

The door opens, an old man in moth-eaten, stained clothes squints at them. JOHN FRANKLIN, 80s, steps out. An ex-Reb, he always swore he'd die for his beloved land.

He limps from a Yankee bullet in his hip, a reminder he says of The Lost Cause. The old man leans on a cane and steps onto the porch.

JOHN FRANKLIN
Uncle Jacob?

JACOB
Yes sir, morning Mista John.

JOHN FRANKLIN
(pointing at Booker)
Who's this here nigra fella?

JACOB
He my son Booker suh, just back from the war.

Franklin eyes Booker.

JOHN FRANKLIN
He that little boy used to ride that ol' mule o' yours?

JACOB
Yes suh Mista John. He all growed up now, got him some medals too.

Franklin looks deprecatingly at Booker.

JOHN FRANKLIN
Hmmm... he's still a boy.

Booker seethes, mumbles to himself. Franklin leans in.

JOHN FRANKLIN (CONT'D)
What's that boy?

Over Franklin's shoulder Jacob shakes his head violently. Booker struggles to regain composure.

MCNAIR
(loudly)
Said mornin' Mister John, nice to see you again.

JOHN FRANKLIN
Bet yo' black ass it is.

Franklin turns to Jacob.

JOHN FRANKLIN (CONT'D)
What is it you want Uncle?

JACOB

This year be good to me, and Booker here gots some Army money. We was thinkin' maybe buyin' some of dat land you always talked 'bout sellin'. That raggedy stuff next to our place.

Franklin's surprised.

JOHN FRANKLIN

Is that right?

JACOB

Yes suh Mista John.

JOHN FRANKLIN

(suspiciously)

So you, wanna buy land, from me?

JACOB

Yes suh. I be workin' yo' land likes always, and Booker work dem extra acres.

Franklin ponders the proposition.

JOHN FRANKLIN

So if'n you was to own land next to mine, then we'd be neighbors?

JACOB

(reassuringly)

Yes suh Mista John. But you don'ts have to worry, we real quiet folks.

Franklin sneers and looks them over for a long beat.

JOHN FRANKLIN

Tell ya what, I'll stop by your place later today with some paperwork.

JACOB

If it ain't too much trouble Mista John that'd be just fine, right son?

MCNAIR

(fuming)

Sho' nuf would Mista John.

JACOB

Yes suh, thank you suh.

Booker and Jacob turn to walk away.

JOHN FRANKLIN

Ah, Jacob...

JACOB

Yes suh?

Franklin wags an arthritic finger at Booker.

JOHN FRANKLIN

I don't like nigras wearin'
uniforms. Make sure your boy gets
some farm clothes, hear?

Jacob and Booker exchange stares. Booker's teetering on the edge, Jacob's eyes plead for calm.

JACOB

Straight away Mista John.

Jacob grabs Booker's arm and pulls him along, he shrugs off Jacob's grip.

MCNAIR

I shoulda choked that bastard.
Why'd you let him talk like that?

JACOB

'Cause nothin's changed since you
gone. You 'spect white folks gonna
smile, pat you onna back and say
"Welcome Home Mister McNair suh,
thank you very much suh"?

MCNAIR

That was the war to save democracy,
and we saved it for black folks
too.

JACOB

Take more'n a war to change our
world son. Didn't happen in 'sixty
five, ain't gonna happen in
'nineteen neither.

MCNAIR

I don't accept that.

Jacob nervously hustles Booker along.

JACOB

Boy, that kinda talk get us kilt.
But today gonna be a big day for
us.

EXT. MCNAIR FARMHOUSE - HOURS LATER - LATE AFTERNOON

Booker and Jacob sit on the front porch. Booker's wearing his old farm clothes and looking morose.

Franklin's car pulls up in a cloud of dust. George gets out, nods to Jacob, walks around and opens the rear door. With an effort, John Franklin gets out.

Jacob and Booker walk to the car.

JACOB
(excited)
'Afternoon Mista John.

Franklin holds a handkerchief to his nose.

JOHN FRANKLIN
Sure is dusty.

JACOB
Yes suh. County ain't got 'round
tuh pavin' yet.

ON THE ROAD

Another car approaches. Jacob and Booker stare at it curiously, Franklin wears a smug look.

A police car pulls up behind Franklin's. A man gets out. Sheriff NESTOR JENKINS (50's). A cliché of a Southern sheriff: red neck, big belly, perpetually sweating. Booker and his father exchange worried looks.

MCNAIR
Why's he here?

Franklin pushes past them and walks to the Sheriff. The Sheriff wipes his bald head.

SHERIFF
God damn hot John.

JOHN FRANKLIN
Never mind, you got the papers?

Franklin and the Sheriff talk quietly. The Sheriff hands a paper to Franklin. He reads it they walk to Booker and Jacob.

JOHN FRANKLIN (CONT'D)
(smiling)
How 'bout we take a walk, just tuh
be sure we're talkin' 'bout the
same thing.

Franklin and the Sheriff walk off. Franklin turns to his driver.

JOHN FRANKLIN (CONT'D)
 George, stay with the car.
 (he pokes the air with his
 cane)
 An' clean off that dust, hear?

GEORGE
 Yes sir Mister John.

Franklin and the Sheriff walk ahead, followed by Booker and Jacob.

EXT. BACK ACREAGE - CONTINUOUS

An overgrown piece of land. Jacob waves his hand around.

JACOB
 That be it Mista John, 'bout fity
 acres.

Franklin looks around, squints at his Confederate flag in the distance.

JOHN FRANKLIN
 'Fraid we ain't gonna be doin' any
 business today.

MCNAIR
 But Mister John, you said--

JOHN FRANKLIN
 (testily)
 I said I'd see you this afternoon
 with some paperwork. Sheriff...

The Sheriff shoves a paper at Jacob. He stares at it like it was a rattle snake.

JACOB
 (embarrassed, softly)
 Can't read, Mista Sheriff suh.

The Sheriff pushes the paper at Booker, he reads it.

MCNAIR
 (furious)
 What the hell.

SHERIFF JENKINS
 (menacingly)
 Best mind your tone boy.

JACOB
What it be son?

MCNAIR
(staring at Franklin)
An eviction notice.

JACOB
What dat?

Franklin grabs the paper, waves it in Jacob's face.

JOHN FRANKLIN
(mockingly)
Dat be you gots tuh gets offa dis
here land.

JACOB
But Mista John--

JOHN FRANKLIN
Sheriff.

SHERIFF JENKINS
(menacingly)
That papuh says you have twenty fo'
hours to vacate this man's private
property.

Jacob doesn't comprehend. Franklin points a shaky finger at Jacob.

JOHN FRANKLIN
You ain't buying any land today or
any other day. I'll be damned 'fore
ah'll ever have a nigger for a
neighbor.

JACOB
(dashed)
But Mista John, you be knowing me
for--

JOHN FRANKLIN
Don't you dare lecture me.

Franklin SLAMS his cane on Jacob's head. Jacob drops, Booker lunges at Franklin and punches him to the ground.

The Sheriff pulls his gun. Booker grabs his wrist, the pistol falls. Booker drops the Sheriff with one blow. Franklin's on one elbow struggling to pull a gun from his belt.

Jacob picks up the Sheriff's gun. Franklin has his gun out, pointed at Booker, his palsied hand shakes.

Jacob SHOOTs. Franklin jerks back, reflexively pulling the trigger. The shot hits the Sheriff. Franklin and the Sheriff lie still.

BOOKER

Daddy!

Booker props his father against the fence, pulls a rag from his pocket and presses it against the wound. Booker glances at the bodies. Blood fans out under Franklin's head.

MCNAIR

The Sheriff's okay, the bullet grazed his head. Looks like that old bastard finally got to die for his land.

JACOB

(lamenting)

Oh Lawd, we dead mens fo' sure.

Booker holds up the paper.

MCNAIR

This ain't even legal. Look here Daddy it's signed by Judge Porter.

Jacob's regained some composure.

JACOB

Porter be dead ten years.

MCNAIR

Exactly.

Jacob looks over at Franklin.

JACOB

(mournfully)

Why he didn't jest say no?

MCNAIR

That ain't the way of white folks Daddy. They have to make a point to keepin' us down.

Booker leans over Franklin and spits.

JACOB

What dat for?

MCNAIR

That's for disrespectin' my uniform.

Jacob looks at Franklin, he leans over and spits.

JACOB
An' dat's for disrespecting my son.

MCNAIR
(with gallows humor)
We keep this up people gonna think
he drowned.

Booker takes the rag and wipes Franklin's pistol. He puts the gun in Franklin's hand and grabs the eviction notice. They head off towards the house.

FROM A NEARBY CLUMP OF TREES

Franklin's driver George watches the two men run off.

EXT. MCNAIR FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER - DUSK

Jacob watches at the window and Booker paces. A train whistle SOUNDS faintly.

JACOB
We gots to turn ourselves in.

MCNAIR
That's crazy Daddy. There ain't a
lawyer within five hundred miles
that'll help us. We'd be dead 'fore
morning.

JACOB
Then you gots to run.

MCNAIR
I'm not gonna leave you.

JACOB
I be an old man no ones care a lick
'bout. Work farm ain't no harder
than dis here place.

MCNAIR
We can hitch a ride to--

JACOB
I'll jest slow ya down son. You get
somewheres safe, somewheres you can
get help.

MCNAIR
Where's that?

JACOB
 Yo' Mama used to read a Colored
 magazine came every munt. She read
 me sometin'...

Jacob goes to the stove and digs through a pile of old
 papers. He holds one up.

JACOB (CONT'D)
 Here it be.

INSERT MAGAZINE COVER WHICH READS: "THE DEFENDER"

BACK TO SCENE

Jacob flips through the pages.

JACOB (CONT'D)
 She said a bunch of black folk got
 together an' help other black folk.

INSERT AD WHICH SHOWS: TWO BLACK MEN IN SUITS SHAKING HANDS
 AND "CONTACT THE WALKER PROJECT, 287 6TH STREET, CHICAGO"

BACK TO SCENE

MCNAIR
 Chicago's a long way's off.

The train whistle BLOWS louder. Jacob pushes Booker.

JACOB
 Please son, get goin'. Dat sheriff
 gonna be back.

Booker hesitates, he's torn, emotions run high.

JACOB (CONT'D)
 I'll be okay. If'n you help yo'self
 you be helpin' me too.

MCNAIR
 What about Mama?

JACOB
 You gots her address, you write her
 'bout me. Tell her don't come back
 'til she hear from you.

The whistle BLOWS, it's closer.

MCNAIR
 Dat's yo' ride, and takes that
 uniform.

Booker grabs his duffle bag. He hugs his father. Tears run down his face.

MCNAIR (CONT'D)
This ain't right Daddy.

JACOB
I be countin' on you tuh make it right.

Booker shoves some food into the bag.

JACOB (CONT'D)
Got yo' bible?

Pats his shirt pocket.

MCNAIR
Always.

JACOB
Lawd watch ova you son.

They embrace, Booker runs out.

EXT. BEHIND THE FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Booker races through the trees. Far away are SOUNDS of tracker dogs. Booker charges deeper into the woods.

EXT. TRAIN TRACKS - CONTINUOUS

Booker's hiding near the train tracks. The headlight of a freight gets brighter. The train passes and he runs for it.

One locked freight car after another rolls past, his desperation grows, he runs faster. An open car comes along. He puts on a burst of speed, throws his bag inside and reaches for the handle, inches away.

With a last ditch-effort his fingers grab the handle but his legs give out. He stumbles. Beneath him the steel wheels reflect the moonlight.

Strong hands shoot out, grab his wrists, pull him up. His head slams against the door frame.

CUT TO BLACK

INT. FREIGHT CAR - LATER - NIGHT

Booker sits in the open doorway. Behind him some hobos roast potatoes over a makeshift stove. The car is littered with chunks of coal, empty sacks, and other debris.

The hobos pass a bottle and engage in whimsical banter. He glances at them, one looks at him and holds up the bottle invitingly.

Booker grins, looks away, at ease with the gentle rocking of the train and the hobos, indifferent to the color of his skin. He takes out his bible, opens it.

A paper flutters out. He grabs it and holds it up to the glow from the stove.

INSERT - THE PAPER, which reads:

Emmett Bronson
Chicago Police Department
1718 State Street

If you make it through this
nightmare come see me, that's
an order."

BACK TO SCENE

He looks away, oddly nostalgic for the white man who befriended him for an act of comradeship. His demeanor changes. He crumples the paper. He hesitates, unsure, he tucks the paper in the bible.

A hobo approaches. JOE (?), in ragged clothes with an almost toothless, friendly smile peeking out of a scraggly beard. He holds out a blackened potato on a stick.

HOBO JOE

Hey there Johnny, hungry?

MCNAIR

No thanks.

HOBO JOE

Mind if I sit?

MCNAIR

(indifferent)

Free country.

HOBO JOE

So's they say. Name's Joe.

Joe plops down in the doorway and chews on the potato. They ride in silence for a few beats.

HOBO JOE (CONT'D)
Where you headed?

MCNAIR
Chicago.

HOBO JOE
Chi-town, hog butcher for the world.

Booker's instantly drawn to the man.

MCNAIR
You know Sandberg?

HOBO JOE
Heard him once in a thee-ater in Kalamazoo.

Silence for a few beats, Joe quotes Sandberg.

HOBO JOE (CONT'D)
"Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat,
Player with Railroads, the Nation's
Freight Handler, Stormy, husky,
brawling, City of the Big
Shoulders."

MCNAIR
"And having answered I turn once
more to those who sneer at this my
city, and I give them back the
sneer and say to them"

In a flourish.

MCNAIR/HOBO JOE
"Come and show me another city with
lifted head singing so proud to be
alive and coarse and strong and
cunning."

The hobo's applaud.

HOBO JOE
That's pretty good Johnny.

MCNAIR
The name's Booker.

Joe holds out his hand, he and Booker shake.

MCNAIR (CONT'D)
 You know, this is the second time
 I've ever touched a white man.

HOBO JOE
 When's the first?

MCNAIR
 Awhile back, somewhere else.

HOBO JOE
 Don't feel no different than any
 other man.

QUICK FLASHBACK - CAPTAIN BRONSON'S BUNKER

MCNAIR
 Never touched a white man.

BRONSON
 Doesn't feel any different than
 you.

BACK TO PRESENT

HOBO JOE
 What's in Chicaga, a woman?

MCNAIR
 (scoffs)
 No sir, me and my daddy are in
 enough trouble. There's some folks
 up there that can help us.

Joe scratches his head.

HOBO JOE
 Chicaga's not a good place for the
 likes of you.

MCNAIR
 (offended)
 How's that?

HOBO JOE
 There's trouble brewin'. It's about
 the Color Line and you're on the
 wrong side.

MCNAIR
 Meaning?

HOBO JOE
 Ain't you heard? There's riots all
 over.

(MORE)

HOBO JOE (CONT'D)

White folks killing black folks,
blacks killin' whites, in Floridee,
Texas, Oklahoma. It's all headed
north.

MCNAIR

Got no choice.

HOBO JOE

We always got choices, just gotta
try to make the right ones.

MCNAIR

That's the trick.

HOBO JOE

Your daddy must be real proud of
you though, for what you did over
there.

Joe nods at McNair's Army duffle bag.

INSERT THE BAG WHICH SHOWS: McNair's name and unit stencilled
in block letters.

BACK TO SCENE

MCNAIR

That's the other time and place.

HOBO JOE

If you're on the run you might
think of ditching that bag, what
with your name and all.

MCNAIR

Who said I was on the run?

Joe looks around, the other men are bedded down.

HOBO JOE

Ordinary man don't hitch a freight
like you did just to tag a free
ride.

MCNAIR

Mind if I ask what you did before
you took to this (he waves his
hand) life?

HOBO JOE

Fact be, I was a teacher...
literature.

Booker smiles knowingly.

MCNAIR
That explains Sandberg.

Joe looks away wistfully.

HOBO JOE
(sighing)
That was long ago in another place
for me too. This (waves his hand)
is my life now.

They ride in silence, each lost in far-off thoughts.

HOBO JOE (CONT'D)
It's gettin' late, I'll turn in.

MCNAIR
Okay, 'night Joe.

Joe picks up a few lumps of coal and drops them in the stove.

HOBO JOE
That'll take some of the chill off.

Joe settles in. Booker finds a spot and drifts off to sleep.

INT. BOX CAR - NEXT DAY - DAY

Booker's sleeping. Joe nudges him with his foot.

MCNAIR
Wha...?

HOBO JOE
Easy there friend, we're comin' up
on Kankakee, time to off-load.

The hobos are gathered at the open door. Booker touches a lump on his head and groans.

MCNAIR
Why?

HOBO JOE
End of the line for us. The Bulls
will be checkin' the cars.

MCNAIR
(alarmed)
How do I get to Chicago?

Joe holds up a thumb and pans his arm. Booker jumps up.

MCNAIR (CONT'D)
Shoot, when's the train stopping?

HOBO JOE
Ha, it don't stop until Chicaga.
Just ahead's a curve see (makes a
sweeping gesture) the train slows
jest enough and you're on the fly.

Booker looks around for his bag. Joe hands him a burlap sack.

HOBO JOE (CONT'D)
Better off with this.

He searches inside.

HOBO JOE (CONT'D)
It's all there.

MCNAIR
(embarrassed)
Sorry Joe.

HOBO JOE
You watch yourself Booker.

MCNAIR
(grinning)
You too Joe.

The train slows, Joe looks out.

HOBO JOE
Don't stop fightin'. Catch ya on a
southbound.

The brakes grab with a metallic SHRIEK, Booker's thrown to
the floor.

Back on his feet, the car's empty. On the floor is a wrinkled
two dollar bill under a lump of coal. He picks up the money
and grins. He leans out and sees the hoboes scurrying off. He
waves the bill.

MCNAIR
(shouting)
Catch you on a southbound Joe.

Booker searches for a good spot, he throws the sack out and
jumps.

EXT. CHICAGO - 6TH STREET - DAYS LATER - DAY

SUPER: CHICAGO

A disheveled Booker walks slowly. He stops in front of a building, pulls out a folded magazine, checks it, and walks to the door. He tries it, it's locked.

To one side is a metal box with buttons. He runs his finger down and stops at a name. He presses the button, a tinny voice answers.

WOMAN (O.S.)
Can I help you?

Puzzled, he looks around.

WOMAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Hello?

McNair looks up, nothing.

WOMAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
(annoyed)
Push the button and talk.

He holds the button down.

MCNAIR
My name's McNair. I'm from
Mississippi and I'm in trouble.

Seconds later the door BUZZES, it opens, he steps inside.

INT. BUILDING - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

A dingy space lit by a single bulb.

MCNAIR
Hello?

WOMAN (O.S.)
(shouting)
Third floor.

INT. BUILDING - THIRD FLOOR LANDING - CONTINUOUS

A woman waves at Booker from a half-open door. He walks to her and she looks him over.

ANNA THORNLEY (26), a striking black woman. She's sharp, no-nonsense, not much interest in niceties. Her family escaped the Jim Crow South in the first Great Migration but she's old enough to know Segregation and it shaped her character.

MCNAIR
Thanks for--

She points a pistol at him.

ANNA
Put your hands up and turn around.

MCNAIR
What?

WOMAN
(authoritatively)
Do it.

He complies. Anna pats his pockets, her hand pauses near his crotch. She looks up at him and raises an eyebrow.

MCNAIR
Satisfied?

ANNA
(titillatingly)
Very much...

She gestures at the bag.

ANNA (CONT'D)
What's in there?

MCNAIR
Clothes n' stuff... my bible.

She opens the door and walks in. He follows.

INT. OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

She throws the bolt.

MCNAIR
What the hell's going on?

She eyes him for a few beats then lowers the gun.

ANNA
With the riots and all I can't be too sure of anyone.

MCNAIR
I got nothing to do with any riots.
I'm here because of my father.

She gestures at a chair.

ANNA
My name's Anna Thornley, I'm the director of the Walker Project.

MCNAIR

Booker McNair. I'm named for Doctor
Washington.

He sits down, still miffed. She sits at her desk, a very
disinterested look on her face.

ANNA

So Booker, you're from Mississippi?

MCNAIR

Union Church, about fifty miles
east of Natchez.

ANNA

How'd you get here?

MCNAIR

Jumped a freight and walked from
Kankakee.

ANNA

(surprised)
Kankakee? That's sixty miles.

MCNAIR

Felt like seventy.

ANNA

What's with the uniform?

MCNAIR

I was in the Army... in France.

Suddenly she's interested.

ANNA

And how do you think we can help?

MCNAIR

My daddy's in big trouble back
home.

ANNA

How big?

MOS he leans oh her desk and recounts his plight.

FADE TO:

INT. ANNA'S OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

He sits back.

ANNA (CONT'D)

That's big.

MCNAIR

It was self-defense and I need someone to come with me to tell 'em that.

Anna leans back and eyes him dispassionately.

MCNAIR (CONT'D)

(angry)

Look, we just wanted a piece of damn land.

Anna stares at him, he persists.

MCNAIR (CONT'D)

All that Cracker had to do was tell us the land wasn't for sale. But he had to rub his Jim Crow bull shit in our faces.

Anna remains quiet. He pounds his fist on her desk.

MCNAIR (CONT'D)

Well say something god-damn it.

She eyes him for a few seconds.

ANNA

I may be able to help.

MCNAIR

Maybe? What the hell's that?

ANNA

I can make some phone calls, try to find out what happened to your father.

MCNAIR

That's a start.

ANNA

Your Mama was mistaken about our purpose here. What we do is raise Negro awareness, publish newsletters, magazine articles, provide public speakers, things like that. We don't have lawyers.

Booker's deflated.

MCNAIR

So I came all the way for nothing?

She eyes him up again, reluctant to go further.

ANNA

What'd you do in France, unload trucks?

MCNAIR

I was in the three sixty ninth New York infantry. I fought in the Argonne Forest for six months. After that I flew airships.

ANNA

You were in the Harlem Hellfighters?

MCNAIR

(proudly)

We did more than bring jazz to Europe.

Anna looks at his ribbons and continues to ponder something.

ANNA

So you went there, fought bravely, saved the world for democracy, and came home to...

He struggles for the words that finally spill out.

MCNAIR

The same shit I've been handed my whole life.

ANNA

Well you ain't alone. Like Doctor Dubois said, we all still livin' behind the veil of racism.

MCNAIR

Where's all this talk goin'?

Anna takes a deep breath.

ANNA

My organization has connections to people who... take a more active approach to empowering the new American Negro.

MCNAIR

Are they lawyers?

Anna walks to the window and opens it. The breeze is welcoming. She turns back to him, under her thin, summer dress her nipples are erect. She walks behind him, her hand rests a bit too long on his shoulders.

ANNA

I like you Booker. I'll make some phone calls. In the meantime you're kinda ripe, so let's get you a room and a bath. Got any money?

MCNAIR

Army pay.

ANNA

Good. Here's the address of a decent Colored hotel.

Anna scribbles on a piece of paper and slides it across. Her tone is warm now, friendly.

ANNA (CONT'D)

You get cleaned up, get some sleep. I'll call you in a few days.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Do you have a gun?

MCNAIR

Do I need one?

ANNA

It's only a matter of time before trouble gets here.

MCNAIR

I'm don't want to be part of any more trouble than I'm in already.

She gets up and opens the closet, takes out a paper bag and hands it to him.

ANNA

Trouble gonna find you big boy. Better safe than sorry.

He reaches inside and pulls out a revolver. He expertly checks the gun, hands it back to her.

MCNAIR

I just want to help my daddy.

ANNA

(indifferent)
It's your ass.

MCNAIR

I'll be waitin' for your call, and
thanks.

Anna rests her hand on his arm.

ANNA

There's something going on,
something dangerous. Stay close to
the hotel, okay?

He tips his hat and walks out. Anna walks to the door and
looks into an empty hallway. She grins and shuts the door.

INT. POLICE HEADQUARTERS - BRONSON'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

Bronson's at work at a very cluttered desk. The walls are
covered with police memorabilia and photographs. The war's
changed him. His hair's gray, he's lost weight. He rises
slowly, limps to a bookcase and coughs hard.

He opens a book and flips the pages. The phone rings, he
limps back to his desk, grabs the phone.

BRONSON

Special Operations, Bronson.

He listens for a few seconds.

BRONSON (CONT'D)

Yes, now's good.

Bronson walks to the window and stares out, he's
apprehensive.

His office door opens and the Chief of Operations walks in.
MICHAEL MAHAR, (40's), Irish, barrel chested, slightly out of
shape in an ill fitting cop suit. Like most Irish, he has
much of the Old Country in him.

BRONSON (CONT'D)

'morning Chief.

Bronson motions him to a chair, he also sits.

CHIEF MAHAR

How air ye Emmett?

BRONSON

Good sir.

Mahar squirms, then clears his throat.

CHIEF MAHAR
 (enthusiastically)
 Say, did you see the Cubbies won
 yesterday?

An uncomfortable silence, Bronson breaks the ice.

BRONSON
 It's the Doc's report.

The Chief looks like his dog just died and averts his eyes.

BRONSON (CONT'D)
 But I feel fine sir. I can't run
 like I used to but I'm okay with
 limited duty.

CHIEF MAHAR
 Doc says yer lung's gettin' worse.
 You're a field officer Emmett and
 the Department's got it's
 regulations (beat) no exceptions.

BRONSON
 (defiantly)
 I'll appeal.

The Chief exhales loudly.

CHIEF MAHAR
 Yer the youngest captain in the
 Department. The youngest recipient
 of the Department's Medal of Honor,
 yer unit is a model for other
 police departments. Fer sure it's a
 mighty testimony to you as a cop.

BRONSON
 Chief I have good years left. Maybe
 I can be (grasping) an advisor or a
 special assistant.

CHIEF MAHAR
 Son, duh ye really want to finish a
 stellar career gettin' coffee for
 some Commissioner? Take the
 pension... enjoy what time the good
 Lord has in mind for ye.

The Chief slides a folded paper across the desk.

CHIEF MAHAR (CONT'D)
 I'll give ye 'til the end of the
 month to clear yer cases.
 (MORE)

CHIEF MAHAR (CONT'D)

With yer record here and what you did in France, the pension board gave you a seventy percent award.

BRONSON

(dejected)

Very generous.

CHIEF MAHAR

I'm sorry Boyo, yer just another casualty of the war, but thanks God you came home in one piece.

BRONSON

Every man who served left a piece of themselves over there, some more than others.

CHIEF MAHAR

I'm truly sorry Emmett, I wish it didn't have to be this way.

Mahar walks to the door, turns back.

CHIEF MAHAR (CONT'D)

Oh, Johnson needs to see ye.

BRONSON

What about, tickets to the Police League Fund?

CHIEF MAHAR

(chuckling)

I know, I know, but he's the mayor's nephew.

BRONSON

I got nothing to lose at this point.

CHIEF MAHAR

(angry)

Look at the state of you. You're a cop and don't you ever forget it.

Bronson knows he's crossed a line.

BRONSON

Sorry sir, I'll see him right away.

CHIEF MAHAR

You know yer like a son to me.

Mahar walks out. Bronson holds his head in despair.

INT. POLICE DEPARTMENT - OUTSIDE JOHNSON'S OFFICE -
CONTINUOUS

Bronson nods at a secretary and stops at a closed door.

INSERT LETTERING WHICH READS: "P. Johnson"

"Deputy Chief for Public Events"

BACK TO SCENE

BRONSON
(to self)
Fuckin' bureaucrat.

He takes a deep breath, knocks, and enters. The deputy chief's sitting at a very clean desk. He looks up from a magazine.

INT. DEPUTY CHIEF JOHNSON'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Deputy Chief PETER JOHNSON (30's) is the nephew of Mayor Bill "Big Bill" Thompson. He has a semi-no-show job. The walls of his office have mounted fish and fishing gear. It's well known that hero cop Bronson and political hack Johnson are not mutual admirers.

BRONSON
You wanted to see me?

Johnson yawns, gestures at the chair. Bronson sits, amused at the piscarian decor. Johnson jumps right in.

DEPUTY CHIEF JOHNSON
Has there been any recent episodes
of civil unrest?

BRONSON
What? No.

DEPUTY CHIEF JOHNSON
That would be "no sir."

BRONSON
No... sir.

DEPUTY CHIEF JOHNSON
Any outside agitators?

BRONSON
No... sir.

DEPUTY CHIEF JOHNSON
What do you know about anarchists?

BRONSON

We have some locals. Mostly Wops, Bohunks from Eastern Europe, Socialists, and the like, they're harmless. They give out flyers, have rallies, nothing violent.

DEPUTY CHIEF JOHNSON

Any unrest in the Negro community?

BRONSON

There's a strike at Duraso Packing. Negro scabs crossed a picket line, there was a bit of a scuffle, a few of 'em got mashed pretty good.

Johnson looks preoccupied. Bronson brings him back.

BRONSON (CONT'D)

What's this about... sir?

DEPUTY CHIEF JOHNSON

You're aware that the president's coming here in six weeks.

BRONSON

I am now.

DEPUTY CHIEF JOHNSON

He's coming here to support the Mayor for re-election.

At the mention of the Mayor, Bronson shifts uncomfortably.

DEPUTY CHIEF JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Mayor Thompson has a very strong interest that the president's visit goes smoothly. That means no protests, no picketing, not so much as a stray mutt crapping on a sidewalk. And no trouble with our Negro constituents. The Black Belt is to be kept in line.

BRONSON

(testily)

I have twenty two men in my squad. How do I keep forty thousand people "in line"... sir.

Johnson slams his hand on his desk.

DEPUTY CHIEF JOHNSON

Don't get smart with me mister.

BRONSON
 (mock seriousness)
 Sorry Chief. I'll give instructions
 to my men regarding the Mayor's
 concerns and I'll put the Dog Pound
 on high-alert for strays.

DEPUTY CHIEF JOHNSON
 If that's an attempt at humor it's
 not working. The Mayor's reelection
 is very important so get on this.
 Despite your heroic exploits in
 France don't fuck up your very
 ample pension. I'll be expecting
 daily updates, in person.

Johnson flips open his magazine. Bronson gets up and walks
 stiffly to the door, but not quite finished.

BRONSON
 Out of curiosity Sir, where was it
 that you served?

DEPUTY CHIEF JOHNSON
 (flustered)
 I don't owe you any god-damn
 explanation.

Bronson snaps his fingers.

BRONSON
 Right, the battle of Chicago's
 Scrap Metal.

Johnson's infuriated.

DEPUTY CHIEF JOHNSON
 Get out of here before (beat) I
 have you arrested.

Bronson sneers and leaves.

INT. POLICE DEPARTMENT - OUTSIDE CAPTAIN BRONSON'S OFFICE -
 MINUTES LATER - DAY.

Bronson walks to his secretary, MISS ELLEN.

MISS ELLEN
 Chief Johnson just called.

BRONSON
 (annoyed)
 What now?

MISS ELLEN
Are you retiring?

BRONSON
Seems that way.

MISS ELLEN
Well it's been postponed.

BRONSON
(mildly surprised)
Huh.

He grins and goes into his office.

INT. CAPTAIN'S BRONSON'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Bronson picks up the phone and calls his deputy, JEREMY, an affable young cop with smarts and lots of promise.

BRONSON
Jer, I want an all hands meeting
this afternoon, three o'clock.

JEREMY (V.O.)
That's short notice Cap, not all
the boys are around.

BRONSON
We have a major event headed our
way so I need everyone.

JEREMY (V.O.)
Let's see... fifteen are on or off
duty, five on leave, and O'Day's
sick.

BRONSON
Okay, have the duty men report
here, call back the five on leave
and send an ambulance for O'Day.

JEREMY (V.O.)
This must be big.

BRONSON
Three sharp.

INT. POLICE DEPARTMENT - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Bronson's at a podium. In front are 21 officers and one sitting in the back wearing a surgical mask.

BRONSON

You have your assignments. You'll be given full briefing packages. Questions?

A hand goes up.

OFFICER

What about the beaches?

BRONSON

Good question. I'll assign a team to the Negro beach at Twenty Ninth. If there's gonna be trouble it'll start there. Anything else?

No questions.

BRONSON (CONT'D)

Our job is to keep eyes and ears open for problems that could escalate. We don't want another Haymarket Square riot. Dismissed.

Bronson chats with the men as they leave. A SNEEZE comes from the back of the room.

BRONSON (CONT'D)

(shouting)
O'Day, take care of that cold.

INT. MONARCH HOUSE - LOBBY - TWO DAYS LATER - DAY

Booker walks into a shabby lobby. His uniform is clean and he looks refreshed. A desk clerk dozes behind the counter. Booker approaches him, taps the bell. The clerk half opens his eyes.

CLERK

Ummm...

MCNAIR

Three ten, any calls?

The clerk turns to a bank of cubbyholes, pulls out a note and slides it to him.

CLERK

Came yesterday.

MCNAIR

(sarcastically)
Yeah thanks, maybe it's not important.

He reads the note.

MCNAIR (CONT'D)
You got a phone?

The clerk points. Booker walks to the phone and clicks for the operator.

MCNAIR (CONT'D)
Wentworth four two two.

Seconds later Anna comes on the line.

ANNA (V.O.)
Walker Project.

MCNAIR
It's McNair.

There's a pause at the other end.

ANNA (V.O.)
Oh, Booker. I (beat) have some news
about your father.

MCNAIR
Is he alright?

ANNA (V.O.)
Can you come to my office?

MCNAIR
What's wrong?

ANNA (V.O.)
Why don't you come in.

MCNAIR
I'm on my way.

Booker hangs up and runs towards the front door. The clerk comes alive as he runs past.

CLERK
Hey, that fi' cent.

INT. CHICAGO - TROLLY CAR - LATER - DAY

Booker's squeezed in with black maids and tired-looking black factory men.

EXT. CHICAGO - STREET - CONTINUOUS

The trolley approaches an intersection. The traffic cop up in his box raises the "Stop" sign and the trolley stops.

INT. TROLLEY CAR - CONTINUOUS

The passengers wait quietly, Booker's anxious. Three white thugs, one tall, one scrawny, one beefy, bang on the front door.

ON THE DRIVER:

He opens the door.

DRIVER

Sorry, this car's full.

The men jump in and give the passengers the once over.

BEEFY THUG

There's plenty of seats.

DRIVER

Next car's in ten minutes.

SCRAWNY THUG

Fuck that.

Beefy Thug and Scrawny Thug past the driver and pull two people from their seats. There's SHOUTS and a scuffle.

EXT. THE TRAFFIC COP - CONTINUOUS

He raises the "GO" sign, the trolley doesn't move. The cop looks down at the driver and waves him on.

AT THE TROLLEY DOOR:

Tall Thug see's the cop and runs off.

INT./EXT. TROLLEY - CONTINUOUS

The scuffle escalates, more passengers join in. Booker pushes the back door open and runs to the front. He reaches in and pulls the two thugs out.

EXT. TROLLEY CAR - CONTINUOUS

The cop's on the street. Booker has Beefy Thug pinned with one foot and Scrawny Thug in a headlock. Passengers cheer him on. The cop throws Booker against the trolley. A crowd of passing Whites closes in and Beefy Thug runs off.

COP
 (with Irish accent)
 What the bloody hell's goin' on?

The crowd closes in, The driver elbows his way to the cop. Riders are pressed against the windows, nervously watching the scene unfold.

DRIVER
 It wasn't his fault Paddy.

The cop eyes the driver, then Booker. He becomes aware of the crowd closing in and looks cornered.

DRIVER (CONT'D)
 This guy and his pals wanted seats
 an' I told 'em I was full. They
 started pulling my passengers out,
 then this soldier boy got in their
 way.

The cop eyes Booker's uniform.

COP
 You in the Army or sumtin'?

MCNAIR
 I was discharged a few weeks ago.

The cop turns to Scrawny Thug.

COP
 What's your side of this Boyo?

SCRAWNY THUG
 We was just tryin' to get on and
 this nigra started pushin' us
 around.

The cop looks at the driver who shakes his head no. The crowd is agitated.

SCRAWNY THUG (CONT'D)
 He's lyin' I tell ya.

The cop turns on Scrawny Thug.

COP
 Well you just wind your neck in.

Scrawny Thug backs off. The cop eyes Booker who's backed against the trolley in a defensive stance. The cop pushes Scrawny Thug away.

COP (CONT'D)
Get on with ya, feck off.

He glares at Booker and runs off. The cop looks scared and grabs Booker.

COP (CONT'D)
Get back in soldier boy.

The cop pushes Booker onto the car, the crowd surges. The cop grabs the driver.

COP (CONT'D)
(hissing)
Get this feekin' thing outta here.

The driver jumps in and closes the doors. The cop spins around, prepared for the worst.

COP (CONT'D)
Get back, there's nuttin' to see here.

The trolley moves off but the crowd remains agitated. A bottle smashes against the trolley. The cop herds the mob away.

COP (CONT'D)
(loudly)
Move along now... it's just a wee thing.

The crowd grudgingly disperses. The cop takes off his hat and wipes his head with a handkerchief.

INT. ANNA'S OFFICE BUILDING - 30 MINUTES LATER - DAY

Booker bounds up the stairs. Anna's waiting at the door. He rushes in.

MCNAIR
Sorry, there was an incident on the trolley.

A sinister looking man sits off to the side. His hat is pulled low.

MCNAIR (CONT'D)
Who're you?

ANNA
A friend.

MCNAIR
What news?

Anna and the sinister man exchange glances.

MCNAIR (CONT'D)
 (alarmed)
 What?

Anna's behind her desk and looks solemnly at Booker.

ANNA
 I've been in touch with some people
 in Jackson. They made some
 inquiries.

MCNAIR
 How's my Daddy?

An uneasy silence. The man looks at his hands.

ANNA
 Your father was taken to the jail
 in Union Church. A mob attacked the
 jail so the deputies moved him.

She pauses.

ANNA (CONT'D)
 A few miles outside of town some
 men forced the deputies off the
 road.

Booker's breathing is louder, his eyes blink rapidly.

ANNA (CONT'D)
 Do you have to know?

MCNAIR
 Yes.

Anna throws a glance at the stranger, he nods slightly.

ANNA
 He's dead Booker, he was lynched.

Booker inhales sharply, stiffens. His hands clench, unclench.

ANNA (CONT'D)
 (sarcastically)
 The deputies couldn't identify any
 of the men, said it was too dark.

He grabs the arms of the chair, his face flushed.

MCNAIR
 (animal yell)
 Ahhhh.

The chair splinters. Anna jumps back, shocked and exhilarated by the raw power. The stranger remains seated, nonplussed.

ANNA

Booker I'm sorry. His struggle is over.

He's BREATHING heavily, his hands tightly balled.

MCNAIR

(monotone)

All this over some dirt. Doctor Washington was right, I shoulda just got a job teachin' black kids how to survive in the white mans' world.

The stranger stands. ANDREAS SERRA, (40) Italian immigrant and anarchist. His slight build disguises his ruthlessness. His hair is slick, wavy, his clothes slovenly. He has a scar over his right eye. He owns a print shop, a front for a group connected to the militant anarchist group Red Fist.

He commiserates with Booker.

SERRA

My friend, accept my condolences.

Booker looks up through watery eyes.

MCNAIR

Who're you?

Serra pulls a chair over.

SERRA

(softly)

My name is Andreas Serra. I came to U-S from Italy. I fought in the Italian Army in the Argonne too, we are brothers in arms.

Serra points to the scar above his eye, taps a fingernail against his eye and it makes a CLICKING sound.

SERRA (CONT'D)

This is what I got for saving the world for democracy. What did you get?

Booker sucks back his sobs.

SERRA (CONT'D)

Your people have been victims for centuries.

(MORE)

SERRA (CONT'D)

You and me were duped into saving Europe for capitalism, not for democracy.

MCNAIR

I don't understand.

ANNA

The U-S loaned the Allies billions, but the war was not going well for the Allies. A German victory would default those loans and wreck our economy. President Wilson could not let that happen.

Their words come faster.

ANNA (CONT'D)

He promised he'd never send American boys to fight a European war--

SERRA

And he broke his promise after his reelection.

Booker looks frantically from one to the other.

ANNA

It was all about capitalism.

Their pace quickens.

ANNA (CONT'D)

The only way to save the economy was to save Europe from the Hun. The only way to do that was for America to enter the war.

SERRA

You, me, Anna, your father, all of us were played for what you Americans call "suckers".

Booker looks lost.

ANNA

You know how to handle yourself, six months in the trenches you said.

SERRA

Join our fight against a corrupt government that has kept the Negro a slave for a hundred and fifty years. Join our fight against a system that pays a working man thirty cents an hour while his capitalist overseers make millions.

The barrage of words gains momentum.

SERRA (CONT'D)

You and I have bled for a false cause that took my eye and your father. It killed millions so rich white men could keep their boots on the necks of the poor.

Anna and Andreas move in. Booker looks from one to the other, unsure what to think, what to say.

SERRA (CONT'D)

Join us, avenge your father and those who have no voices.

Anna's voice is soft, emotional, pleading.

ANNA

We want to change how things are, eliminate corrupt governments, establish a world order where all are truly equal.

Booker stands and paces. Anger replaced grief. Anna and Andreas exchange hopeful glances. Booker strides to the closet, whips the door open and reaches inside. He turns around, holding the gun she offered him.

MCNAIR

I don't know anything about trade, and I sure as hell never voted. But I do know that what they did to my daddy was as wrong as anything could be. This is for him.

He tucks the gun in his waistband. Anna and Andreas smile evilly.

EXT. DOWNTOWN CHICAGO - BRIDGE - LATER - DAY

A grief-stricken Booker stares off. Boats ply their cargos. Cars and wagons move noisily past. He suffers as an indifferent world moves on around him. The sounds fade, he hangs his head.

MONTAGE - MOS MCNAIR'S CHILDHOOD MEMORIES

- Booker rides a mule while Jacob plows a field.
- Jacob and Booker playfully splash water from a rain barrel at each other.
- Jacob and Booker clear rocks from a field.
- Jacob and Booker hunting.
- Jacob smoking a pipe in a rocking chair telling stories to a wide-eyed young Booker.

BACK TO SCENE:

Tears run down Booker's cheeks.

EXT. CHICAGO - LAKE MICHIGAN - 29TH ST. BEACH - DAYS LATER - DAY

The beach is packed. A thick rope, the Color Line, divides the White and Colored beaches.

Four young Negroes, ordinary boys, PERCY, NAT, LOUIS, JAMES, all 14, build a makeshift raft. Nat struggles with a log.

NAT

Dats's the last one.

They tie the log to the raft and admire their work.

LOUIS

Lookin' good.

Percy's nervous, he tests the ropes.

PERCY

You knows I can't swim.

LOUIS

Whatchu cryin' 'bout? We ain't goin' out far.

NAT

Look, you fall in an' we'll save you.

Percy's not convinced.

LOUIS

Don't you worry, let's go.

Each one grabs a corner and they muscle it into the surf.

ON THE WHITE SIDE

A group of men watch with amusement. Two of them walk to the water's edge and taunt the boys.

MAN
(shouting)
You goin' back to Africa?

NAT
(shouting)
We sure wish we could Mister
Crackerman.

The boys LAUGH loudly and paddle out.

MAN
Think you're funny nigger? Come
back here and we'll give you a trip
to somewhere.

The man gestures like he's been hung. The boys are out of ear shot, their laughter carries across the water. The men seethe and throw stones at the raft. The boys taunt them as they drift off.

INT. BAR - ONE WEEK LATER - NIGHT

Andreas, McNair, and another man, GUNTHER FRANKS (30) sit in a back room with other men. Franks is a rabble-rouser. An unemployed laborer, he was fired for agitating to unionize his shop. An ardent supporter of the Russian Revolution, he's ruthless and will prove it at every opportunity.

ANDREAS
(adamantly)
I am not in favor of this.

FRANKS
John Duraso's a union buster who
pays the lowest wages in
Packingtown. Three of his workers
died in his filthy meat plant last
week. He exploits the workingman
and he's been to the White House.

ANDREAS
He bought his way in. He has no
political connections.

FRANKS

The embalmed meat he sells has sickened thousands, but nothing comes of it. How is that unless he's got connections? What does Anna say?

ANDREAS

She's not part of this.

FRANKS

(agitated)

You're soft Andreas. Exploiters of the working class must be taught a lesson. There's a strike at Duraso Packing right now, it's the perfect time.

Andreas looks around the table. One by one they nod their approval. McNair's attentive to the argument.

ANDREAS

(reluctantly)

I approve.

FRANKS

Good. Duraso goes to his club for lunch every Tuesday. We'll be there next Tuesday.

MCNAIR

Why not just picket his factory?

FRANKS

(angrily)

Be quiet, you got a lot to learn.

McNair rises threateningly, Andreas pulls him back.

ANDREAS

He is my responsibility.

FRANKS

(threateningly)

I'll remember that.

A chilly silence, Andreas looks around the table.

ANDREAS

We are done here. We will meet at the usual place Tuesday morning. Do not all leave together.

EXT. BAR - CONTINUOUS

Andreas and McNair walk out. Gunther catches up to Andreas and confronts him. McNair steps in.

ANDREAS (CONT'D)

It's okay, wait at the trolley stop.

Booker hesitates, Andreas nods and Booker walks on.

ANDREAS (CONT'D)

Well?

FRANKS

Who's this Negro?

Andreas pulls away.

ANDREAS

I met him through Anna. His father was lynched by a mob. He has skills.

FRANKS

But who is he, where's he from?

ANDREAS

(defensively)

I recruited him personally and I don't like being interrogated.

FRANKS

Your personal endorsement isn't enough.

ANDREAS

He was in the Army in France and flew airships. He's good with a gun and wants revenge on a system that murdered his father. Is that enough?

Frank's demeanor softens. He contemplates.

FRANKS

Airships, really? I'm gonna keep a close eye on him.

ANDREAS

As you will.

Andreas walks out. Franks has a sly grin on his face.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Andreas goes to Booker who's still bristling.

MCNAIR

What the hell's wrong with him?

ANDREAS

His brother was American but fought for the Fatherland. He was killed at Verdun. Gunther blames all governments for the war.

MCNAIR

(bitterly)

Well at least his bother had a fighting chance.

ANDREAS

We have our own reasons for what we do.

The lights of a trolley appear.

ANDREAS (CONT'D)

I don't want you to have a part in what we have planned. You have much to learn and I have many things for you to study.

MCNAIR

I'm ready.

The trolley stops and they board. The trolley moves off.

EXT. THE BAR - CONTINUOUS

A man steps out of the shadows. He watches the trolley, takes a small book from his coat and makes a notation.

INT. CAPTAIN BRONSON'S OFFICE - NEXT DAY - DAY

Bronson's in conversation with one of his men. A pile of folders on his desk.

SQUAD MEMBER

Right after that they all left. The late trolley picked up the last two at ten fifteen.

Bronson taps his fingers on the desk.

BRONSON

And one of them was a Negro?

SQUAD MEMBER

Yes sir. We've been watching this bunch and they usually meet at a print shop on South Michigan. It's a cover for a non-violent Commie group.

BRONSON

You didn't recognize the Negro?

SQUAD MEMBER

My beat isn't the South Side, and you know they all look the same.

BRONSON

Can that crap. Just get his description out to the squad.

SQUAD MEMBER

Yes sir.

BRONSON

What about the others?

The cop opens a folder.

SQUAD MEMBER

Andreas Serra. Wop immigrant, no wife, no kids, a loner. Served four years in the Italian Army. He owns the shop.

He opens another folder.

SQUAD MEMBER (CONT'D)

Gunther Franks, American Kraut from Detroit. Troublemaker. Union organizer. No visible means of support. He did five years in Joliet for armed robbery and missed the war.

BRONSON

Huh. And the others?

The man holds up the files.

SQUAD MEMBER

Nobodies more or less. Ex-union flunkies, malcontents, a few out-of-work veterans.

BRONSON

How's this Negro mixed in? I'd never connect this bunch with racial causes, they have their sights set higher.

SQUAD MEMBER

(shrugging)

I never seen anything like this. He and Serra did look tight.

BRONSON

I'll brief the Deputy Chief. Check with the other guys on that I-D and put a tail on the Negro. I want to know where he's going and who he's meeting. Leave the files with me.

SQUAD MEMBER

Right Captain.

The man leaves. Bronson picks up the phone.

BRONSON

Miss Ellen, I need to see Chief Johnson.

INT. DEPUTY CHIEF JOHNSON'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

BRONSON

So that's what we have, curious but not an obvious threat.

DEPUTY CHIEF JOHNSON

There's ten thousand bars in Chicago. Why do these guys go all the way to Cicero (beat) for a beer (beat) at ten o'clock?

BRONSON

It's odd. I put one of my men on the Negro. We'll get it figured out.

DEPUTY CHIEF JOHNSON

I'm guessing it's more than they like the pretzels. You'd better figure this out, your pension's on the line.

BRONSON

Is that all?

DEPUTY CHIEF JOHNSON

Yes.

Bronson leaves, Johnson opens a drawer, takes out a fishing magazine and flips through the pages.

INT. SOUTHSIDE PRINT SHOP - ONE WEEK LATER - NIGHT

A meeting. Andreas, Gunther, and other men around a table. A signal KNOCK on the door. Andreas gestures to one of the men. The man pulls out a pistol and cautiously opens the door. Another man enters.

FRANKS

Our target is the owner of Duraso Meat Packing. Duraso recently went on strike and management hired scabs to cross the picket line.

The men GRUMBLE.

FRANKS (CONT'D)

(voice rising)

This man, this exploiter of the working class, must be taught a lesson. He--

ANDREAS

Gunther!

Franks throws a nasty look at Andreas and continues.

FRANKS

Every Tuesday he has lunch at the Sullivan Club at exactly twelve thirty. Tomorrow we'll be there to greet him.

Satisfied MURMURS from the group.

FRANKS (CONT'D)

This is the plan...

EXT. CHICAGO - RESIDENTIAL AREA - DAY

People stroll past a stately brick building behind a wrought iron fence.

INSERT A SMALL BRASS PLAQUE THAT READS:

"SULLIVAN CLUB, PRIVATE"

BACK TO SCENE

Luxurious cars pull to the curb and discharge men wearing formal attire and arrogant demeanors. They chat amongst themselves.

An ice truck stops at the curb. The driver walks to the back of the truck and unloads blocks of ice. He peeks around the truck as cars pull up and drop off riders.

Moments later a luxurious car stops at the club. The ice man glances at the car, then reaches into the truck.

ON THE CAR

The chauffeur opens the rear door. Out steps a middle-aged man in a fashionable suit.

ON THE ICE TRUCK

The ice man is manipulating something inside the truck.

ON THE CAR

The chauffeur helps a bubbly young girl out. She's about 10, smartly dressed in a sailor-suit dress and white patent leather shoes. She takes the man's hand.

ON THE ICE TRUCK

The ice man closes the rear door and walks away quickly.

ON THE CAR

The chauffeur gets back in and drives off. The man and the girl chat with other men on the sidewalk.

ON THE ICE TRUCK

People stroll by, stare curiously at the pile of melting ice.

There's flash and the truck disappears in a mighty EXPLOSION. A cloud of dust and smoke obscures the scene.

MOS debris rains down. Gradually the SOUNDS of falling rubble is heard. People stumble into the street, shocked, bleeding, clothes in tatters. Bystanders approach warily, then the SCREAMS begin.

The dust clears, the carnage comes into view. The front of the club is a smoking pile of bricks and splintered wood. Bodies and body parts lie about. Water spurts from a broken pipe. A gaping hole and smoking, twisted metal is all that remains of the truck.

EXT. THE SULLIVAN CLUB - ONE HOUR LATER - DAY

A ghastly scene. Firemen on a ladder struggle to remove a body tangled in overhead wires. Medics aid the injured. A row of covered bodies fills the sidewalk.

MOS Captain Bronson and a uniformed cop walk among the bodies. The cop reads from his notes and gestures, but Bronson's attention is on the bodies.

They come to a body smaller than the others. From under the sheet is a leg with a blood spattered white patent leather shoe. Bronson gently covers the leg.

EXT. CHICAGO - STREET - SAME DAY - DAY

Booker walks up to a kid hawking newspapers.

NEWSPAPER BOY

(shouting)

Getcha papuh, fifteen dead in
Sullivan Club explosion. Papuh.

Booker's flabbergasted. He grabs a paper from the boy and opens it. The boy stretches out his hand.

NEWSPAPER BOY (CONT'D)

Two cents mista.

McNair absently hands him a coin. He scans the paper then crumples it.

INT. MONARCH HOUSE - LOBBY - MINUTES LATER - DAY

Booker's on the phone with Anna.

MCNAIR

I need to talk to Andreas.

ANNA (V.O.)

I have no idea where he is.

MCNAIR

(irate)

Don't give me that. Fifteen dead?

ANNA (V.O.)

Take it easy. Is anyone there?

MCNAIR

I'm at my hotel, of course there
are.

ANNA (V.O.)
Then keep your voice down, don't
mention any names.

MCNAIR
I thought they were just going to
picket the guy.

ANNA (V.O.)
Calm down (beat) hold on a second.

He looks around nervously.

ANNA (V.O.)
Stay in your room until you hear
from me.

MCNAIR
(whispering)
It better be soon. I didn't come
here to be a party to murder.

ANNA (V.O.)
Don't call again. When I contact
him I'll send someone over.

MCNAIR
Okay, room three ten.

INT. THE WALKER PROJECT OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Anna hangs up the phone and looks at Andreas.

ANNA
He's really upset. Said he thought
it was just going to be picketing.

ANDREAS
Our Negro has much to learn.

ANNA
He might not have the stomach for
what has to be done.

ANDREAS
He is perfect for our needs and can
be turned. It's even more important
now that he be indoctrinated to our
cause.

Andreas stands.

ANDREAS (CONT'D)

I will watch him closely, but he cannot know too much for now. He has to be won over and that is my job.

ANNA

What do I tell him?

ANDREAS

Tell him nothing for now. Let's see what the police do.

Andreas walks out.

INT. POLICE DEPARTMENT - CONFERENCE ROOM - SAME DAY - DAY

The Big Brass, Emmett, his squad, and others gathered in a large conference room. It's a grim meeting. Bronson stands at the lectern.

BRONSON

We're working this as an anarchist attack. Eyewitnesses put the bomb in an ice truck making a delivery. We have an earlier report of a stolen ice truck and for sure there's a connection. Chief?

Mahar stands and turns to the group. His face is steely hard.

CHIEF MAHAR

We have fifteen dead citizens, including the owner of Duraso Meat Packing and his daughter. The president's due here in less than a month so I want every available officer and detective on this one.

GROUP

(overlapping)
Yes sir.

The men chatter amongst themselves as they leave.

CHIEF MAHAR

(loudly)
Bronson, stick around.

DEPUTY CHIEF JOHNSON

What about me chief?

CHIEF MAHAR
Captain Bronson.

DEPUTY CHIEF JOHNSON
(put-off)
Well I think that as the--

CHIEF MAHAR
(firmly)
Just Emmett.

Johnson smirks at Emmett and walks out.

BRONSON
Sir?

Mahar pins Bronson with a steely stare.

CHIEF MAHAR
I'm don't think I'm getting the
whole story on this.

BRONSON
I wouldn't hold anything back
Chief, but we don't have any firm
leads yet.

The Chief is deep in thought.

BRONSON (CONT'D)
These mutts are a cancer that has
to be cut out. We'll do everything
it takes to get them.

CHIEF MAHAR
The Mayor is all over me on this,
so if something comes up I need to
know.

BRONSON
Absotively Chief.

INT. MCNAIR'S HOTEL ROOM - LATER - DAY

Booker paces anxiously.

MCNAIR
(muttering)
Two god-damn days and nothing.

He goes to the window.

MCNAIR (CONT'D)
 (muttering)
 Where is that guy?

He paces.

MCNAIR (CONT'D)
 (muttering)
 I can't stay here.

He strides to the closet, pulls out his clothes and stuffs them in the sack. He grabs his from the chair. A wrinkled paper falls out and he picks it up.

Insert - THE PAPER, which reads:

"CAPTAIN EMMETT BRONSON
 CHICAGO POLICE DEPARTMENT
 3016 S. MICHIGAN AVENUE"

A voice in his head speaks.

BRONSON (V.O.)
 "If you're ever in Chicago look me
 up."

BACK TO SCENE

A sense of calm comes over him. He's resolved.

EXT. POLICE HEADQUARTERS - 1 HOUR LATER - DAY

Booker's dressed in his Army uniform. He walks up to a formidable looking building.

INSERT CORNER STONE THAT READS: "CHICAGO POLICE HEADQUARTERS"

BACK TO SCENE

He rubs his hands on his pants and walks in.

INT. POLICE HEADQUARTERS LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

People stare curiously at him but he's amazed at the ornate lobby. People step out of an elevator. Booker walks to it and with some uncertainty gets in.

INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

The ELEVATOR GIRL gives him a hard look.

ELEVATOR GIRL
 (icily)
 Floor?

MCNAIR

I'm looking for Captain Bronson.

She slams the door shut, the elevator jerks up and he grabs at the hand rail.

MCNAIR (CONT'D)

(innocently)

Never been in one of these.

The girl glances at him but doesn't reply. The car stops at different floors. People get on and off, stare oddly at him.

ELEVATOR GIRL

Six.

The car stops. The girl opens the door and points to the corridor.

ELEVATOR GIRL (CONT'D)

Down the end, on the right.

MCNAIR

Thanks.

INT. CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

He walks to a door the end of the corridor.

INSERT LETTERING ON DOOR which reads: "SPECIAL OPERATIONS - CAPTAIN E. BRONSON"

BACK TO SCENE

Her opens the door.

INT. SQUAD ROOM - CONTINUOUS

He's hit by a wall of NOISE. People talking, phones ringing, typewriters clattering. He steps in, the sounds stop and are replaced with hard stares. He approaches two cops.

SWARTHY COP

What you want boy?

MCNAIR

I'm looking for Emmett Bronson.

One cop eyes winks at the other cop.

BALD COP

(sarcastically)

You reportin' a stolen watermelon?

The two cops crack up. Booker bites his lip, his hands clench.

MCNAIR

I know him from the war.

BALD COP

Really? The battle of dem 'ol cotton fields?

The two cops laugh louder, other cops join in. Booker fumes.

BRONSON (O.S.)

Books.

Booker spins around. The LAUGHS abruptly stop. Bronson limps towards Booker with a big grin on his face. They shake hands.

BRONSON (CONT'D)

This is a surprise.

Booker looks around at the glaring faces.

MCNAIR

Not to me.

Bronson follows Booker's eyes around the room. He puts his arm on Booker's shoulder.

BRONSON

(loudly)

Listen to me everyone.

One could hear a parking ticket hit the floor.

BRONSON (CONT'D)

This man is Sargent McNair. He's a good friend of mine. We served together in France and I expect you to treat him with respect, got that?

Bronson stares hard at the people in the room who now look surprised and shocked. Booker stifles a smile. Bronson escorts him to his office.

INT. CAPTAIN BRONSON'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The two men size each other up for a few seconds. Bronson coughs, struggles to catch his breath.

BRONSON (CONT'D)

(recovering)

It's good to see you Books. You want something? Coca-Cola?

MCNAIR

No thanks.

Booker gestures at Bronson's leg.

MCNAIR (CONT'D)

What's that all about?

BRONSON

(nonchalantly)

Oh, some Jerry shrapnel. Put me down for a couple of weeks.

MCNAIR

And the cough?

BRONSON

Gas attack.

MCNAIR

Sorry to hear that sir.

BRONSON

(dismissively)

Well I made it back, and knock off the "sir" crap, it's just Emmett and Books now.

MCNAIR

Right (beat) Emmett.

BRONSON

And what about you? Did you ever get to fly?

MCNAIR

I got a transfer to the Observation Corps thanks to your endorsement.

BRONSON

Well good for you Books. What brings you to Chicago?

MCNAIR

It's a long story, and not a good one.

Bronson's grin disappears. There's an awkward silence.

BRONSON

I'm in the middle of a major investigation. You heard about the bombing?

Booker shifts uncomfortably.

MCNAIR
 (poker-faced)
 Yes, it's uh (beat) terrible news.

BRONSON
 So I'm up to my ears in shit right now. Where are you staying? I'll pick you up and we can have dinner. I owe you a steak.

MCNAIR
 I'm at the Monarch House, Forty Third and State. There's a phone in the lobby, Calumet four one two.

Bronson writes it down.

BRONSON
 Okay, seven good?

MCNAIR
 Seven's fine.

They get up, Bronson walks him out.

INT. SQUAD ROOM - CONTINUOUS

They stop at the two cops who harassed Booker, now looking very contrite.

BRONSON
 You two, put your jackets on.

All activity stops.

BRONSON (CONT'D)
 Escort Sargent McNair to the trolley stop, and you'd best be smiling from ear to ear.

THE TWO COPS
 (overlapping)
 Yes sir.

Bronson turns to Booker.

BRONSON
 We'll catch up tonight.

The cops and Booker leave. The room is silent.

BRONSON (CONT'D)
 (loudly)
 Okay people back to work, we got a
 murder case to solve.

INT. MONARCH HOUSE - LOBBY - SAME DAY - NIGHT

Booker waits for Emmett. The telephone rings at the desk. The clerk answers then shouts at Booker.

CLERK (O.S.)
 Yo boss, you got a call.

Booker takes the call on the house phone.

MCNAIR
 This is Booker.

ANNA (V.O.)
 It's me.

MCNAIR
 (angry)
 'bout time.

ANNA (V.O.)
 Can you come by my office tonight?

MCNAIR
 No, I ran into an Army pal.
 Tomorrow morning?

A few beats.

ANNA (V.O.)
 Okay, ten is good.

Booker hangs up the phone.

ON THE FRONT DESK

Emmett walks in, looks around and sees Booker.

BRONSON
 Books.

They shake hands. The clerk is astonished.

MCNAIR
 (grinning)
 You're late. I thought you were
 going to stand me up.

BRONSON

Ha, that's a good line.

Bronson slaps him on the back and they walk out. The clerk, mouth agape, leans over the desk and watches them leave.

INT. RESTAURANT - 30 MINUTES LATER - NIGHT

Emmett and Booker at a table next to a busy kitchen. The place is full of white people who gaze at them with disdain.

ON ANOTHER TABLE

There's a commotion. A diner argues with the waiter, points angrily in the direction of the two men. He stands up, the waiter stares helplessly as the party storms out.

MCNAIR

Almost like being back home.

BRONSON

Ignore them, they're fools.

The flustered waiter approaches the table.

TOM

Good evening Captain, nice to see you again. Care for a drink?

BRONSON

I'll have my usual Tom... Books?

Booker's never had this experience

MCNAIR

Guess I'll have (beat) a beer?

TOM

(disparagingly)
A beer for the soldier.

Emmett notices the waiter's tone.

BRONSON

You know what, I'll have the same as my pal here.

TOM

Certainly.

Emmett looks at McNair.

BRONSON

Let's order. Two steaks with the works?

MCNAIR

Sounds good.

BRONSON

Two top sirloins, medium well, baked potatoes, string beans... and creamed onions.

Emmett leans towards Booker.

BRONSON (CONT'D)

They have the best damned creamed onions.

Tom moves off. Booker's still taking in the place.

BRONSON (CONT'D)

So, what have you been up to?

MCNAIR

Well my transfer came through. At and at first I was in balloons, then airships. I started as a mechanic and by the time Jerry was kaput I was flying the damn things.

BRONSON

But only officers could be pilots.

MCNAIR

They were short on pilots so I just slipped into the seat. No one said anything 'bout it so I kept flying. After the Armistice I caught the Spanish Lady, ended up in a Frog hospital in Paree. Got home about a month ago.

BRONSON

Well I'm glad it all worked out. A smart guy like you didn't belong slugging around in the mud.

Tom arrives with drinks, ignores Booker.

TOM

Steak's coming right up Captain.

Tom walks off, Bronson scowls slightly.

MCNAIR

How about you Emmett?

BRONSON

I went back on the line and we got hit with gas (beat) chlorine. You know how that goes... flat ground, high humidity. It rolled in, caught us in the trenches. I was lucky (beat) fifteen of my boys weren't.

MCNAIR

Hey (jovially) what about that kid, the one who was scared shitless the night we went out?

BRONSON

(somber)

Corporal Eric Albert Daly. When the gas hit he ran into the medical tent and put gas masks on the wounded. He was overcome...

Bronson chokes up.

BRONSON (CONT'D)

He was eighteen. Three days later that fucking war ended. His parents accepted his Medal of Honor.

Both men reflect silently. Booker breaks the mood, raises his glass.

MCNAIR

Here's to all the boys that came home, and all the Daly's that didn't.

They down their beer.

BRONSON

So, what brings you to Chicago?

Booker is somber.

MCNAIR

Remember I told you about my Daddy and the farm.

BRONSON

(smiling)

Sure.

Tom arrives with the food.

TOM
(icily)
Enjoy the dinner.

BRONSON
Okay, dig in.

Booker shifts in his seat as Bronson cuts into his steak.

MCNAIR
I'll need another beer.

Bronson gestures at the waiter and Booker tells his story.

FADE TO:

INT. RESTAURANT - 30 MINUTES LATER - NIGHT

Bronson, expressionless, sits rigid, the food untouched.

MCNAIR
And here I am, a fugitive. What's next?

BRONSON
Something stronger than beer.

MCNAIR
So I'm fucked?

BRONSON
Let's take the easy part first. You didn't participate in the bombing. All you did was attend a couple of meetings where something was discussed, but nothing about a criminal act.

MCNAIR
Right.

BRONSON
So there's no conspiracy charge.

MCNAIR
Okay...

BRONSON
What happened back home is out of my jurisdiction. I'd have to check if an arrest warrant was issued.

MCNAIR
And if there is?

BRONSON

I'd have to arrest you and you'd be sent back to stand trial.

MCNAIR

(deadly earnest)

That's a death sentence. I'd never make it to any trial.

BRONSON

Books I'd never arrest you because I know you didn't kill anyone. Any warrant to that effect would have to be bogus.

MCNAIR

What do I do?

Bronson's lost in deep thought.

BRONSON

I got an idea, but we can't talk here.

Tom approaches and sees the uneaten food.

TOM

Something wrong with your meal Captain?

BRONSON

Uh, no. Tell the chef something came up, police business.

Bronson drops money on the table and they leave.

INT. BRONSON'S OFFICE - 1 HOUR LATER - NIGHT

Bronson's checking messages on a teletype. Booker looks over his shoulder anxiously.

BRONSON

I went back three weeks, there's nothing.

MCNAIR

But a white man's dead. That doesn't just go away.

BRONSON

It would if they took the easy way out and just went after your father.

(MORE)

BRONSON (CONT'D)

They'd never risk the possibility you'd get a chance to tell your story, especially with that bogus eviction paper.

MCNAIR

But what about Franklin?

BRONSON

Who else saw you there?

MCNAIR

Just Franklin and the Sheriff.

BRONSON

With Franklin dead it's between the sheriff and you. The bullet that killed Franklin came from the sheriff's gun. He'd have to explain that. Best to just let it go Books.

MCNAIR

I can't let it go, that's my home.

BRONSON

Okay, but I need to talk to you about the people you're mixed up with.

MCNAIR

I'm finished with them.

BRONSON

Not so fast. You're on the inside of a bunch of thugs and that's worth a million bucks to me.

MCNAIR

How's that?

BRONSON

The president's coming to Chicago to campaign for the mayor. He'll give a speech and probably have a motorcade.

MCNAIR

You think they'd try something?

BRONSON

Possibly, but I don't have the evidence to arrest them, yet. You weren't there when they discussed the bombing, so there's no witness.

MCNAIR

Where do I fit in?

BRONSON

I don't have time to get one of my men inside, but you're there already.

MCNAIR

And that means...

BRONSON

You go along. If they're planning something I need to know about it.

MCNAIR

What happens to me?

BRONSON

If there's any arrests I'll vouch for you as my inside man.

Booker thinks it over.

BRONSON (CONT'D)

Are you in?

MCNAIR

They gave me a gun.

BRONSON

You have it?

He pulls back his jacket.

BRONSON (CONT'D)

Good, keep it so everything looks normal. Do whatever they ask and check in with me every couple of days.

MCNAIR

Is this official?

Bronson ponders the question.

BRONSON

Be right back.

He walks out and returns with a thick book he puts on the desk.

BRONSON (CONT'D)

Raise your right hand, put your left hand on the bible.

Booker goes along.

BRONSON (CONT'D)

Do you solemnly swear to support
and defend the Constitution of the
United States and the state of
Illinois against all enemies.

MCNAIR

What?

BRONSON

Say yes.

MCNAIR

Yes.

BRONSON

Now you're a deputy. How're you
fixed for money?

MCNAIR

I'm okay for awhile.

BRONSON

Stay close to your hotel. There's
something in the air and it's not
the stink from Packingtown. There's
an uneasiness about folks.

MCNAIR

Yeah, I had a run-in with some
punks on the trolley and a white
crowd that got real angry.

BRONSON

And one more thing. You were seen
in Cicero last week.

MCNAIR

What? How?

BRONSON

We've been watching them for a few
months. One of my guys spotted a
Negro. I didn't know that was you.

Booker tries to explain but Bronson holds up a hand.

BRONSON (CONT'D)

It's okay, you're my man on the
inside now. Just don't get paranoid
if you see someone tailing you.

MCNAIR

Thanks for telling me.

BRONSON

And do exactly what they ask of you.

MCNAIR

You still owe me a steak dinner.

BRONSON

We'll get this all straightened out and get justice for your daddy.

MCNAIR

I'm not sure there's such a thing for black folks.

BRONSON

Maybe we can change that.

Emotions rise, they shake hands.

BRONSON (CONT'D)

Come on, I'll drop you.

INT. POLICE DEPARTMENT - BRONSON'S OFFICE - NEXT DAY - DAY

Bronson's at his desk as Jeremy walks in.

BRONSON

'Morning Jer.

JEREMY

'Mornin' Cap, I have the Duraso evidence bag.

BRONSON

Let's see.

Jeremy empties the bag on the desk. Bronson sorts through it.

BRONSON (CONT'D)

Not much to go on.

JEREMY

Look close.

Bronson takes out a magnifying glass. Small metal objects catch his eye.

BRONSON

Pieces of a watch?

JEREMY

It's the mainspring and balance
wheel from a Waltham watch.

Bronson's impressed. He pulls a familiar gold pocket watch
from his coat.

BRONSON

My father's Waltham. He was a
conductor on the Wabash Line. This
was never off by even a minute in
forty years.

JEREMY

They're so reliable the War
Department contracted with Waltham
for... get this... time-delay fuses
on artillery shells.

Jeremy's pleased with himself.

BRONSON

(astonished)

How the fuck do you know that?

JEREMY

Two years in the Fifteenth Field
Artillery Regiment.

BRONSON

So whoever made that bomb must have
known about the Waltham fuses?

JEREMY

Everyone knew. When I was in the
Argonne we transferred thousands of
time-delay shells to the Eye-ties.

Bronson's face lights up.

BRONSON

Wait a second.

Bronson grabs a file, flips through it and pokes a page.

BRONSON (CONT'D)

Here it is, Serra's immigration
application. He stated that during
the war he was in an Italian
artillery outfit, in the Argonne
Offensive. He could have had access
to that kind of fuse.

JEREMY

Sure, but lots of guys were in the Argonne in 'eighteen, including me and you. This is very slim.

BRONSON

It's all we have.

JEREMY

There's more. There's a partial serial number on the wheel.

Bronson's fired-up.

BRONSON

Contact the families of the victims. Find out if any of the deceased owned a Waltham.

JEREMY

Good idea Cap.

BRONSON

That's what I get paid for.

BRONSON (CONT'D)

And call Waltham. Find out what you can on that serial number.

JEREMY

Right away.

Jeremy gathers up the parts. Bronson has a coughing paroxysm. Jeremy goes towards him, Bronson puts a handkerchief to his mouth and waves Jeremy off.

BRONSON

I'm (gasping) okay.

JEREMY

I should maybe see the Doc?

Bronson waves him off.

BRONSON

No, get that info.

JEREMY

Will do Cap.

BRONSON

You did good today.

JEREMY

That's what I get paid for.

Jeremy leaves. Bronson looks at the blood-stained handkerchief with foreboding, tosses it in the waste basket.

INT. OUTSIDE ANNA'S OFFICE - SAME DAY - DAY

Booker knocks. Anna cautiously opens the door.

ANNA
Hello Booker.

He steps in, his hand stuffed deep in a pocket.

MCNAIR
We have to talk.

Anna sees his hand. She walks quickly behind her desk, opens a drawer and reaches inside.

ANNA
(nervously)
Drink? I have a bottle around here
somewhere...

ON THE DRAWER

Her hand rests on a pistol.

MCNAIR
No thanks (removes an empty hand)
it's kinda early.

Anna relaxes.

ANNA
I know you're very upset about what
happened. But this is war, innocent
people get hurt. You're as much a
victim as those fifteen people.
Your schools are shit, you can't
afford doctors--

He holds up his hand.

MCNAIR
Save your breath. You're telling me
what I've known my whole life.

Booker paces.

MCNAIR (CONT'D)
I had time to think. My whole life
I had to go along with how it was.
(MORE)

MCNAIR (CONT'D)

But after France a lot of us are thinking that goin' along-to-get-along isn't going to change anything. I see now that the only way to change things is through violence, and the only way black folks will get justice is to take it. The time to wait for things to chance is over.

Anna's pleased at her new convert.

ANNA

You're a good man. Our cause needs people like you.

MCNAIR

So what's next?

ANNA

We have something big planned. The bombing was a test to see how the police would react.

MCNAIR

And?

ANNA

Nothing so far. We need to send a louder message and for that we need money.

MCNAIR

(chuckling)

Whatcha gonna do, get a bank loan?

Anna's not laughing. Booker stops smiling.

MCNAIR (CONT'D)

No, you're not gonna hit a bank?

Anna smiles.

MCNAIR (CONT'D)

When?

ANNA

When all eyes will be on a distinguished visitor.

MCNAIR

And that's...

ANNA

The man who promised he'd never
send American boys to fight a
European war.

He mulls it over.

MCNAIR

(incredulous)
Wilson?

ANNA

He's coming here.

MCNAIR

Well I guess that would be the
perfect time.

ANNA

Let's take a walk.

EXT. CHICAGO STREET - 20 MINUTES LATER - DAY

Anna and Booker stroll. The few white people outside stare
icily at them. From O.C. come derogatory remarks but they
keep walking.

MCNAIR

So here we are.

Anna looks around.

ANNA

(voice lowered)
It's all set. People will be
distracted by the president.

MCNAIR

That's crazy. What do you know
about robbing banks?

ANNA

Nothing.

They walk on.

MCNAIR

What's my part?

Anna checks around again.

ANNA

You're the driver. You do okay and
we'll have bigger things for you.

MCNAIR

I'm in.

They walk on.

MCNAIR (CONT'D)

Look Anna, I'm getting tired of eating alone and...

ANNA

(grinning)

Well, you finally asked.

MCNAIR

Got a lot on my mind.

ANNA

You're very tempting (sighing) but I never mix pleasure with business.

MCNAIR

No exceptions?

She has a coquettish look.

ANNA

Not even for you, big boy. Anyway, I have a very jealous fiance.

MCNAIR

(jokingly)

What is he, a gangster?

ANNA

No, he works in a bank.

He's speechless. She kisses him on the cheek and walks off.

ON MCNAIR

A black car paces behind him. Oblivious, he walks on. The sedan slowly passes then accelerates away.

EXT. CHICAGO STREET - CONTINUOUS

The black sedan pulls to the curb. The driver gets out, goes to a police call box and makes a call.

INT. DEPUTY CHIEF JOHNSON'S OFFICE - ONE HOUR LATER - DAY

Bronson and Jeremy meet with an impatient Johnson.

DEPUTY CHIEF JOHNSON
Where's your investigation?

BRONSON
We've been following the Negro but
he's done nothing.

DEPUTY CHIEF JOHNSON
So you've got what, a lazy niggra
anarchist?

BRONSON
I'm not sure what his role is. He's
been seen with a Negress. Could be
a friend, possibly a call girl. We
don't know her.

DEPUTY CHIEF JOHNSON
And the rest of the gang?

JEREMY
We're watching the print shop but
it's quiet. We're following up a
lead on parts of a watch recovered
at the crime scene.

DEPUTY CHIEF JOHNSON
(disbelief)
A broken watch? That's what you
have so far? It's been two weeks
and you got shit.

BRONSON
The family posted a twenty five
thousand dollar reward.

Johnson glances at the clock.

DEPUTY CHIEF JOHNSON
And?

BRONSON
Nothing. They also hired Pinkerton
and we've been in contact with
them, nothing there either.

Johnson fidgets in his chair, checks the clock.

DEPUTY CHIEF JOHNSON
Did it occur to you that you may be
watching the wrong bunch? There's
no activity, no claim of
responsibility, no anonymous call
to the newspapers.

BRONSON
 (evasively)
 Could be they're laying low, maybe
 planning something else.

DEPUTY CHIEF JOHNSON
 Isn't that what you're supposed to
 be finding out? The president's
 here in a week.

Before Bronson can answer Johnson glances at the clock and
 sighs.

DEPUTY CHIEF JOHNSON (CONT'D)
 I have to go, I have an engagement.

Johnson gets up.

DEPUTY CHIEF JOHNSON (CONT'D)
 (angrily)
 Put on extra men if you have to. I
 need something more than a hooker
 and a busted watch. Do your job for
 Chrissake.

Bronson doesn't rise to the bait.

DEPUTY CHIEF JOHNSON (CONT'D)
 We're finished here.

INT. OUTSIDE JOHNSON'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Bronson pulls Jeremy aside.

BRONSON
 Never mind him, you keep an eye on
 the print shop, I'll handle the
 Negro?

JEREMY
 But Johnson said...

BRONSON
 He's an ass hole, I report
 directly to Chief Mahar.

JEREMY
 You da boss, boss.

INT. BRONSON'S OFFICE - LATER - SAME DAY

A knock on the door, Jeremy walks in.

BRONSON
Anything on the watch?

JEREMY
Only one victim owned a Waltham and it was at the jewelers. Waltham's still checking their records for the partial serial number.

BRONSON
So it had to be part of a timing mechanism.

JEREMY
The lab tested the parts for explosive residue and it came back positive for dynamite.

BRONSON
That cuts it. Stay on that serial number, I'll tell the Chief what we have.

JEREMY
Yes sir Cap.

INT. ANNA'S OFFICE - SAME DAY - EVENING

Anna, Franks, and Serra in a heated conversation.

ANNA
I say tell him everything.

FRANKS
I don't trust him.

ANDREAS
I said I vouch for him.

FRANKS
That's not good enough. All we know about him is his story, which could be faked.

ANNA
For what purpose?

FRANKS
To infiltrate us.

ANNA
Really? Since when do the police employ Negroes except for cleaning their offices?

FRANKS

It's because of that he'd have the perfect cover.

ANDREAS

For now we are using him as a driver, that's all. He does not know we are going after a bank.

ANNA

(sheepishly)
Not exactly.

Andreas and Franks turn to her.

FRANKS

(softly)
What?

ANNA

(defensively)
I told him our plans and that he'd be the driver.

Franks moves threateningly towards Anna.

FRANKS

You stupid bitch.

ANNA

He told me he's one hundred percent committed to the cause.

FRANKS

When did you tell him?

ANNA

Yesterday. He was upset over the bombing. He came to my office and we talked about it. I told him about the bank and he's with us.

FRANKS

(angrily)
So you say. What else did you tell him?

ANNA

Nothing else.

Andreas steps in.

ANDREAS

It is all right. He knows nothing about which bank, the time, the rendezvous point. The president will be here in a week and the men are ready.

FRANKS

(threateningly)
Don't tell him anything else understand, nothing.

ANNA

Yes, I understand, I'm sorry.

ANDREAS

Enough. Tell everyone to keep out of sight and stay off the telephone until we meet at the rendezvous.

INT. POLICE DEPARTMENT - CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

Chief Mahar and Captain Bronson are briefing the squad. Behind the dais is a large city map with thick red line.

BRONSON

Monday's the big day. This is the presidential route (points to red line). You'll be in street clothes along the route. Sharpshooters will be on the roofs and the Secret Service will be with the president.

Bronson turns to Chief Mahar and he steps up.

CHIEF MAHAR

We haven't found any connection to the president's visit and the Duraso bombing. You've been given photos of the suspects, keep yer eyes and ears open and do yer job.

BRONSON

Report back here Tuesday morning at seven for a final brief.

The men file out.

CHIEF MAHAR

Emmett, stick around.

The room's empty. Chief Mahar closes the door.

CHIEF MAHAR (CONT'D)
Who's the Negro?

Bronson's caught off guard.

BRONSON
Sir?

CHIEF MAHAR
I have me sources too Emmett.

Emmett give in.

BRONSON
His name's Booker McNair. We served together in France. He's on tough times and came to me for help.

CHIEF MAHAR
A Negro war buddy? How'd that come about?

BRONSON
I'll have to tell you the whole story.

CHIEF MAHAR
Okay, I've a bottle of Bushmills in me office.

INT. CHIEF MAHAR'S OFFICE - LATER - NIGHT

An almost empty whiskey bottle sits on the desk.

CHIEF MAHAR
That's an incredible story. If I didn't know you Emmett I'd think ye were shell shocked.

BRONSON
He's innocent sir, I know it.

CHIEF MAHAR
I trust yer judgement, and unless a warrant comes through he's just another snitch as far as I'm concerned. What's he told ye about these guys?

BRONSON
They're planning to rob a bank to coincide with the president's visit.

CHIEF MAHAR

And our plan?

BRONSON

I've got it covered Chief.

CHIEF MAHAR

Details.

BRONSON

Everyone will be off gettin' a glimpse of the president, so the financial district should be empty. Once we find out the bank we'll cordon-off the street and close-in. The Negro's one of the drivers and he'll surrender straight away.

CHIEF MAHAR

Why'd ya keep me in the dark?

BRONSON

I couldn't take a chance on anyone. If word got out McNair's cover and our case would be blown.

Without warning Bronson COUGHS. He pulls out a handkerchief and covers his mouth. The coughing stops. Bronson quickly stuffs the handkerchief in his pocket.

CHIEF MAHAR

That was bad.

Bronson's sweating and a bit wobbly.

CHIEF MAHAR (CONT'D)

Can't the doc can give you something?

BRONSON

(jokingly)
Coca-Cola helps, even after they took out half the cocaine.

CHIEF MAHAR

Get yerself home and get some rest.

BRONSON

My neighbor made me some chicken soup.

CHIEF MAHAR

Best medicine on earth, after a good Irish single malt.

Bronson gets up and walks to the door.

CHIEF MAHAR (CONT'D)
I'll see you back here Tuesday for
the briefing.

BRONSON
Right sir.

INT. CHICAGO - RADIO STATION - CONTROL ROOM - TUESDAY - DAY

In a windowless room a man sits at a console of dials and gauges. Thick wires snake across the floor, disappear into the wall. A speaker hangs on the wall. On the other side of a glass partition a man sits in the Broadcast booth.

INT. BROADCAST BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

EUGENE HALLOWAY (35), the announcer, sits at a desk. He's wearing headphones. A large microphone is in front of him.

A green light on the wall turns red. Through the glass the engineer points at him.

HALLOWAY
(enthusiastically)
Good morning ladies and gentlemen,
this is your announcer, Eugene
Halloway.

IN THE CONTROL ROOM the engineer nods and gives a thumbs-up.

HALLOWAY (CONT'D)
It's an historic day for
Chicagoans. The President's
motorcade is scheduled here in just
about an hour and W-K-Y-J is making
broadcast history. Our reporter
Herb Hartley will be talking to you
live from an aeroplane two thousand
feet over the parade route.

EXT. 2000 FEET ABOVE CHICAGO - CONTINUOUS

A biplane circles. On the side of the plane are large block letters:

INSERT LETTERING: "WKYJ RADIO"

BACK TO SCENE

HERB HARTLEY (30s) is in the rear seat in a heavy flying suit. He's very nervous and clutches a microphone like it's a lifeline to earth. A long wire antenna trails from the plane.

INT. BROADCAST ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Halloway glances at some papers.

HALLOWAY

So stay tuned folks, we'll be back after this message from our sponsor, the Bohemian Brewing Company. Remember, for the best beer in town try a Bohemian.

In the Control Room the engineer gives the "cut" sign.

EXT. QUIET SIDE STREET - CHICAGO - CONTINUOUS - DAY

Bronson and McNair sit in Bronson's car. Behind the car a cop in plainclothes checks the street.

MCNAIR

They're gonna pick me up at my hotel in forty five minutes.

BRONSON

I'll follow you from there. After they enter the bank we'll block the street. When they come out we'll close in.

MCNAIR

Anything on the warrant?

BRONSON

Nothing. I told my chief about you. He's agreed to go along.

MCNAIR

Thanks Emmett, I appreciate that.

BRONSON

Let's just get through today.

MCNAIR

Right.

Bronson checks his pocket watch.

BRONSON

It's almost time.

McNair holds out his hand and Bronson shakes it.

BRONSON (CONT'D)

Good luck Books, keep your head
down.

MCNAIR

Same to you.

Books gets the all clear sign from the cop, gets out of the car and walks off. The cop gets in and they drive away.

EXT. MONARCH HOUSE - 30 MINUTES LATER - DAY

Booker's waiting outside. A sedan pulls to the curb. He walks to it. Franks and two other men are inside.

MCNAIR

Where's Anna and Andreas?

FRANKS

Change of plans. Get in.

MCNAIR

Look, Anna said--

Franks points a gun at McNair.

MCNAIR (CONT'D)

What the fuck?

FRANKS

(emphatically)

Get in.

MCNAIR

Sure, sure. Take it easy.

He sits in the back. The man next to him pulls out a gun.

MAN

Relax boy.

ON THE STREET

They drive off. Bronson keeps pace a few cars behind.

INT. FRANKS CAR - CONTINUOUS

MCNAIR

Where we headed?

No reply. Booker looks around for some kind of landmark.

ON THE CAR

Continuing out of town the buildings get smaller and farther apart. Silence. Booker glances out the rear window.

MAN

Looking for somethin'?

MCNAIR

No, just curious.

INT. BRONSON'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

COP

Cap this ain't right.

BRONSON

I know. Better drop back.

The car slows, opening the distance. The landscape has changed. City buildings are replaced by small houses, trees, and farmland.

INT. BRONSON'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

BRONSON (CONT'D)

Where this guy going?

The cop looks around.

COP

This leads to the air field.

BRONSON

(frustrated)

What the hell's out there?

COP

Aeroplanes?

Bronson throws him a disapproving look. The cop shrugs.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF CHICAGO - AIRPORT - LATER - DAY

Franks car approaches a cut off.

INSERT LARGE SIGN WHICH READS: "CHICAGO MUNICIPAL FIELD"

BACK TO SCENE

The car turns into the entrance. There's a collection of buildings and Franks stops at a large hanger.

EXT. AIRPORT ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

Bronson's car stops.

BRONSON
Well what the fuck.

COP
Maybe your boy pulled a fast one?

BRONSON
(defensive)
I know this man better than most.

COP
Well after all he is a... you know.

BRONSON
No, I don't know, so shut up. Let's
find the office.

EXT. AIRPORT HANGER - FRANKS CAR - CONTINUOUS

The men get out of the car. Franks takes a long case out of the trunk. The men hold guns on Booker and follow Franks to the door.

FRANKS
Stay here and watch him.

Booker protests, the man presses the gun into his back. Franks walks into the hanger.

INT. HANGER - OFFICE AREA - CONTINUOUS

A man in oil stained coveralls is behind a desk listening to a radio. He looks up and waves Franks over.

MECHANIC
Hey, did you hear about the riot at
the niggra beach?

FRANKS
No.

MECHANIC
Nigger kids got into a fight with
some whites at the Color Line. One
of the kids drowned and there's a
bunch of whites runnin' around with
guns.

FRANKS

Too fuckin' bad, turn that off.

The mechanic forgets the news and confronts Franks.

MECHANIC

Hey, this area is off-limits.

Franks points at a large window.

VIEW THROUGH THE WINDOW

A massive building. Inside is a tethered blimp.

FRANKS

That's impressive. Never seen one close up.

IN THE HANGER

The blimp fills the hanger. Silver colored fabric gives it the look of a bloated metal cigar. A motor with a large propeller is attached to a gondola on the bottom of the blimp. The airship rests gently on a dolly with oversized tires.

MECHANIC

The airport's closed. You'll have to leave.

FRANKS

I'd like to borrow it, how much?

The man glances at the airship and chuckles.

MECHANIC

You can't borrow it, that belongs to the Goodyear Rubber Company.

FRANKS

I just need it for a couple of hours.

The man grows testy.

MECHANIC

I said we're closed.

Franks pulls out a gun.

MECHANIC (CONT'D)

Whoa, easy there mister.

FRANKS

So, how about it?

MAN

That thing's forty feet high.

FRANKS

And filled with hydrogen gas. Let's take a walk.

EXT. AIRFIELD - OFFICE BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Bronson pulls up to the office. He gets out and leans into the car.

BRONSON

I don't see them. Park around the back.

Bronson walks to the office door, it's locked. He bangs on the door, nothing. He goes back to the car.

BRONSON (CONT'D)

There's a farm house a couple of miles back. Get to a phone and call for backup.

COP

Where you goin'?

BRONSON

To find those guys.

COP

Cap you'd better wait.

BRONSON

It'll take an hour to get more men and by then it could be too late.

COP

Cap...

BRONSON

Get going.

The cop puts the car in gear and drives off.

INT. HANGER - CONTINUOUS

Franks, Booker, the two men, and the mechanic walk up to the airship.

FRANKS

Okay, fire it up.

MECHANIC
I can't do that.

FRANKS
Why not?

MECHANIC
I don't know how.

FRANKS
Then you're no use to me.

Franks shoots the mechanic.

MCNAIR
Jesus Christ!

Franks turns to Booker.

FRANKS
You're the back-up pilot, get in.

MCNAIR
I'm not sure I can fly this thing.

FRANKS
You have a choice, fly that or
(gesturing at the body) join him.

Booker shrugs and walks to the gondola.

MCNAIR
You have to cast off the lines or
we're gonna have a very short trip.

Franks gestures to his men and they move off. Franks follows Booker up a ladder into the gondola.

INT. GONDOLA - CONTINUOUS

Booker checks out the controls. Franks stands over him, the gun at his head. Booker looks at Franks.

MCNAIR
If you shoot me who's gonna fly
this?

FRANKS
That won't be your concern, will
it?

IN THE HANGER

The men untie the ropes.

IN THE GONDOLA

Franks checks his watch.

FRANKS (CONT'D)
It's time, let's go.

Booker throws some switches and pulls some handles. The engine starts and the prop turns. He grabs the oversize steering wheel and the airship slowly moves out.

Suddenly there's a weight on the ladder. Franks strides to the door and Bronson's head appears. Franks holds him at gunpoint.

MCNAIR
Don't shoot.

Franks gun is on Bronson.

FRANKS
Who the fuck are you?

BRONSON
I'm a cop.

Franks looks at McNair and steps towards him.

ON BRONSON

He glances at McNair and shakes his head no. Franks turns back, puts his gun inches from Bronson's head.

FRANKS
How'd you get here?

Before Bronson answers.

FRANKS (CONT'D)
Never mind, I can use you as insurance.

Franks pulls Bronson inside. Franks pats his waist, removes his gun. Emmett leans back, breaths heavily.

FRANKS (CONT'D)
What's wrong with you?

Bronson leans on the wall.

BRONSON
It's...

MCNAIR
He got gassed... in the war.

FRANKS
 Huh, another one of Wilson's
 suckers.

Franks turns to McNair and points with the gun.

FRANKS (CONT'D)
 Take it up.

MCNAIR
 We have to get clear.

Franks looks out the window. He leans out the window at his
 men.

FRANKS
 (shouts, gestures)
 Keep pulling... good... good.

ON THE MEN

They struggle with the lines. Booker applies power, the
 airship clears the hanger. Franks throws the ladder out and
 closes the door. The airship rises.

MEN (O.S.)
 (shouting)
 Wait.... Franks... wait.

Franks leans out and waves playfully as the SHOUTS become
 indistinct.

FRANKS
 So much for dead weight.

MCNAIR
 Where to?

Franks points out the window.

FRANKS
 There.

INSERT: SKYLINE OF CHICAGO

BACK TO SCENE

MCNAIR
 Back there?

Franks raises his gun.

FRANKS
 Just do what I tell you boy.

He turns to Bronson.

FRANKS (CONT'D)
Now for you copper.

BRONSON
Whatever you got planned you'll
never make it. Police are all over
the streets.

FRANKS
Where we're going we don't need
streets. Say (beat) how did you get
here?

Bronson and McNair exchange glances. Franks looks at McNair.

FRANKS (CONT'D)
How'd you know he was in the war?

BRONSON
He works for me.

FRANKS
The Hell you say. I never seen a
niggra cop.

BRONSON
He's (beat) undercover.

FRANKS
What cover?

Realization hits Franks. He stares hard at McNair.

FRANKS (CONT'D)
(furious)
You lousy rat. I told that Wop you
couldn't be trusted.

Franks lunges at Booker, Bronson jumps Franks. They fall to
the floor. McNair reaches to help and the airship drops
erratically. McNair grabs the wheel and regains control.

Franks stuns Bronson with punch and swings the gun back to
McNair.

FRANKS (CONT'D)
Lucky for you I need you to fly
this thing.

Franks looks out the window, points to a tall building in the
distance.

FRANKS (CONT'D)

Over there, that tall building next to the bridge.

INT. WKYJ STUDIO - BROADCAST ROOM - SAME TIME

From the wall speaker:

EUGENE HALLOWAY (V.O.)

We now return you to our live broadcast two thousand feet over the parade route. The next voice you'll hear is our high flyin' reporter, Herb Hartley.

Halloway turns to the control room. The Engineer points to the speaker. There's STATIC over the commentary.

HERB HARTLEY (V.O.)

(shouting)

This is Herb Hartley reporting along with my pilot, Charlie Blaine. The president's car is moving along Michigan Avenue. The crowds are cheering the president and Mayor Thompson.

Moments later.

HERB HARTLEY (V.O.)

Get us down closer Charlie.

Long beat, more STATIC.

HERB HARTLEY (V.O.)

(moaning)

Not so fast Charlie... oooh... who's god damn idea was this.

The speaker CRACKLES with STATIC. Hartley's recovered.

HERB HARTLEY (V.O.)

The motorcade is approaching the DuSable Bridge. Ladies and gentlemen off to my left is an amazing sight, a sliver airship is moving over downtown. It's the Goodyear Air Express riding majestically toward us like some great feather.

INT. AIRSHIP GONDOLA - CONTINUOUS

Franks opens the long case. He takes out a wicked looking rifle. Booker's occupied flying and doesn't notice.

Franks lovingly rubs his hand along the weapon. He digs into the case, takes out a telescopic sight and snaps it onto the gun. Then McNair sees the gun.

MCNAIR
What the hell?

FRANKS
Just keep flying.

EXT. OVER LAKE MICHIGAN - BEACH - SAME TIME

Far below a mob chases a group of Negroes. Fires burn in nearby buildings.

INT. AIRSHIP GONDOLA - SAME TIME

Franks leans out the window.

FRANKS (CONT'D)
(amused)
Looky there, they're chasin' a bunch of your people.

Franks leans out the window and shouts.

FRANKS (CONT'D)
(gleefully)
Ha, kill 'em all.

MCNAIR
(infuriated)
You son of a bitch.

Booker rises. Franks points the gun at Booker as he struggles to control his anger. Ahead, the city is near. A biplane approaches them. Franks taps McNair on the shoulder and points.

MCNAIR (CONT'D)
I see it.

ON THE AIRPLANE

It nears the airship. The man in the rear seat waves.

INT. AIRSHIP GONDOLA - CONTINUOUS

Franks waves back.

FRANKS

Take it down a little.

McNair looks suspiciously at Franks. Franks nudges him with the pistol.

FRANKS (CONT'D)

Do it.

McNair adjusts the controls and the airship moves down. Franks loads a bullet in the rifle.

FRANKS (CONT'D)

Hold it steady.

EXT. OVER THE PARADE ROUTE - CONTINUOUS

The airship hovers above the street. The crowd CHEERS the VIP car moving slowly along the street.

INT. AIRSHIP GONDOLA - CONTINUOUS

Franks braces against the window and aims. He lowers the rifle and makes some adjustments to the sight.

EXT. CHICAGO - STREET - FINANCIAL DISTRICT - SAME TIME

An imposing building with massive bronze doors. A sign is mounted over the front door.

INSERT SIGN THAT READS: FIRST CHICAGO TRUST BANK

INT. BANK - CONTINUOUS

Anna enters and walks past a guard chatting with a customer. Andreas and two men in overcoats enter. They nonchalantly walk to a desk and fill out forms. The guard gives them a passing glance.

INT. AIRSHIP GONDOLA - CONTINUOUS

McNair peers out the window and realizes what's happening.

MCNAIR

Don't do it.

Franks swings the rifle at McNair.

FRANKS

Sit down boy. You should thank me, he killed lots of your kind.

MCNAIR

I got nothing against that man.

FRANKS

We can argue the point later, just
fly this damn thing.

Booker sits down and Franks turns back to the window. Unseen by Franks, Bronson opens his eyes.

FRANKS CONT'D) (O.S.)

A little to the left.

Booker adjusts the controls. Franks concentrates on his target. Bronson rises up, his movement covered by the NOISE from the engines.

THROUGH THE TELESCOPIC SIGHT

People riding in an open-top car, smiling, waving. A black "X" wavers on a distinguished man in a top hat.

FRANKS (O.S.)

Steady...

The "X" centers below the hat.

FRANKS (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Hold it...

ON BRONSON

He gathers his feet under him. McNair sees the move and turns the wheel hard over. The airship drops, Franks is thrown off balance. Now! Bronson throws himself at Franks. He hits him as Franks shoots. The SHOT goes wild. They struggle, the rifle falls out.

FRANKS (CONT'D)

(screaming)

You fucker.

He grabs Bronson and they fall. McNair struggles to control the gyrating airship. Bronson's gun slides past, he grabs it but he's no match for Franks.

Bronson has a coughing fit, Franks wrestles the gun away. McNair sees it's all or nothing and throws himself at Franks.

They struggle for the gun. It goes off. Bullets shatter instruments, windows. Another shot tears into the floor and a small fire ignites.

INT. WKYJ STUDIO - BROADCAST ROOM - SAME TIME

From the wall speaker:

FRANK HARTLEY (V.O.)
The airship is... hold it ladies
and gentlemen, it's burst into
flame!

INT. AIRSHIP GONDOLA - CONTINUOUS

The two men stop struggling and stare in horror at the flames. Bronson's slumped on the floor. Franks goes into panic mode. He's frantic for a way out. Smoke fills the gondola. Booker crawls to Bronson and leans close.

MCNAIR
Can you stand?

Bronson pushes him away, coughing.

BRONSON
I've had it (beat) get outta here.

MCNAIR
No way you're gettin' out of that
steak dinner.

Bronson gestures weakly to leave. More smoke fills the gondola.

MCNAIR (CONT'D)
There should be parachutes
somewhere.

Booker crawls to a small door, whips it open and pulls out two parachutes. Franks rushes him, rips a chute from his hands and disappears into the smoke.

INT. BANK - LOBBY - SAME TIME

Anna approaches a Teller, smiles, and hands him some money. His hand briefly rests on hers.

TELLER
Good morning miss.

ANNA
Good morning.

INT. AIRSHIP - GONDOLA - SAME TIME

McNair reaches into the compartment and gropes around for another chute. He panics, then finds one. He pulls it out and stumbles to Bronson.

MCNAIR
If the fire reaches the gas bag
we're done for.

He helps a swooning Bronson into the harness.

FRANKS (O.S.)
 (frantic)
 How does this fuckin' thing go on?

McNair dons his chute, helps Bronson to the door. He presses a metal "D" ring into Bronson's hand.

MCNAIR
 Clear the door, count to five, then
 pull this, got it?

Bronson nods feebly, Booker pushes him out.

INT. BANK - LOBBY - SAME TIME

Andreas is at a desk glancing anxiously from the guard to Anna then to his accomplices.

AT THE TELLER'S WINDOW

TELLER
 Good day miss.

She shoots him a quick air kiss and walks off. She pauses under the skylight and purposely drops a handkerchief.

ON ANDREAS

It's the signal. He walks briskly to the Teller, his hand reaches into his coat.

AT THE TELLER'S WINDOW

The Teller nods. Andreas slides a note to the Teller and pulls out a gun. A shadow darkens the skylight.

INT. AIRSHIP - GONDOLA - SAME TIME

The smoke is suffocating. McNair steps into the doorway. He throws a look back and the flames have spread.

MCNAIR
 (to self)
 Time to go Books.

EXT. THE AIRSHIP - CONTINUOUS

Booker falls away as flames blow out of the gondola. Inside the skin of the airship is an eerie orange glow. The fabric covering is burning, the metal framework buckles.

INT. WKYJ STUDIO - BROADCAST ROOM - CONTINUOUS

From the wall speaker:

FRANK HARTLEY (V.O.)
(horror-struck)
I have to get this Charlie. Oh it's
burning and falling, it's crashing.

INT. AIRSHIP GONDOLA - CONTINUOUS

Franks is on fire, he somehow makes it to the door. A SURGE of flame blows him out and he falls into the spinning prop.

The blades slice into the parachute bag. The shredded chute streams behind him in a long silky ribbon. His flaming body hurtles to earth.

INT. WKYJ STUDIO - BROADCAST ROOM - SAME TIME

From the speaker:

FRANK HARTLEY (V.O.)
And it's coming apart and falling.
Oh, I have to catch my breath.

INT. BANK - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Something CRASHES through the skylight. A battered, smoking body dangles from ropes caught in the broken skylight.

The ropes give way, the body THUDS to the floor. There's a flash high up. Panic sets in, patrons scream, scatter. Debris falls through the skylight. A man at a desk is crushed by a hunk of metal.

ON ANNA

She's mesmerized by a bright orange glow from above. A mass of flame crashes onto the skylight and EXPLODES. She's engulfed in flames and seems to melt into the floor.

IN THE LOBBY

A wall of flame races across the carpeted floor igniting people and objects. Those who are able run, stumble, crawl mindlessly to safety.

AT THE TELLER'S WINDOW

Andreas leaps onto the marble counter and claws frantically up the framework. The Teller backs away. A chunk of metal bounces off the counter, crushes the Teller, knocks Andreas behind the counter.

He struggles to rise, the flames cover him. He trips over the twisted metal and staggers blindly through a doorway.

INSIDE A SMALL ROOM

Andreas is a human torch. He careens off furniture, flails in a slow motion dance-of-death. He emits a high-pitched SCREECH and crashes through a window, his burning legs hang inside.

INT. BANK LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

It's wall-to-wall flames. Furniture, chairs, drapes, anything that can burn feeds the inferno. The only sounds now are the roar of the flames and glass shattering. From outside come the WAIL of sirens.

EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET - SAME TIME

Flames and black smoke shoot from the shattered skylight. Horrified passers-by stare at two parachutes floating down.

FADE TO:

INT. CHICAGO - HOSPITAL - NEXT DAY - DAY

Somber policemen gather in a hallway. Booker and Chief Mahar sit near a small room. A chaplain waits nearby. A somber doctor approaches and the cops gather around, their faces ask an unspoken question.

CHIEF MAHAR

Doc?

DOCTOR

He inhaled a lot of heat and smoke.

The doctor shakes his head side to side. Booker sucks in a breath.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

Are you Booker?

MCNAIR

Yes.

DOCTOR

He asked for you. You too Chief.

INT. HOSPITAL - BRONSON'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Booker and the Chief enter Bronson's room. He's lying comfortably, an oxygen mask over his face. His hair is singed, his breathing shallow.

MCNAIR

Hello Emmett.

Bronson eyes flutter open. He smiles at his friend and pulls off the mask.

BRONSON
(weakly)
Hello Books.

MCNAIR
Doc says you're gonna be fine.

BRONSON
Sure...

MCNAIR
You still owe me that steak.

Bronson coughs.

CHIEF MAHAR
Emmett...

BRONSON
Hello Mike.

Bronson struggles to speak.

BRONSON (CONT'D)
What happened after...

MCNAIR
You landed in a roadster. Good thing the top was down.

Bronson manages a smile.

BRONSON
Franks?

MCNAIR
His 'chute didn't open, bad break.

BRONSON
(satisfied)
Huh.

CHIEF MAHAR
We can go over all that after you get outta here. The guys at the airport spilled their guts. We rounded up the gang and cleared the Duraso case. Thanks to you the president is unharmed.

Bronson tries to rise, he's desperate to tell the Chief.

BRONSON
It wasn't just me... Booker...

CHIEF MAHAR
Easy Emmett.

BRONSON
He cleared the case, he saved my
life.

The Chief puts a hand on his shoulder.

CHIEF MAHAR
I know, I know, lie still son.

The chaplain edges in. Bronson's eyes flutter, his voice is faint. He grabs Booker's arm, pulls him close.

BRONSON
(fervently)
Books... you can change... things.

Booker grasps his hand tightly for a few beats. Bronson's grip relaxes. The Chief crosses himself. The chaplain rushes to the bed.

EXT. CHICAGO - DOWNTOWN - ONE WEEK LATER - DAY

A grim procession is underway. A sea of blue uniforms march behind a hearse carrying a flag-draped coffin. A funeral dirge echoes from the buildings. Booker, in uniform, marches behind the coffin. Smoke rises from parts of the skyline.

INT. CHICAGO - D.A.'S OFFICE - DAYS LATER - DAY

Booker sits alone. A woman approaches him.

WOMAN
Please come in Mister McNair.

INT. D.A.'S OFFICE - CONFERENCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

She leads him into a conference room. Sitting there is a white man, District Attorney DUPRE (40's) and a black man, State's Attorney JACKSON also 40's. They make introductions.

DA DUPRE
On behalf of the City of Chicago
I'd like to express our gratitude
for your truly heroic actions
Mister McNair.

ATTORNEY JACKSON

That said, we've asked you here because of your current (beat) situation.

McNair shifts in his seat.

ATTORNEY JACKSON (CONT'D)

At the request of Chief Mahar I've looked into your case.

He holds up an official looking paper. Booker stirs uncomfortably.

ATTORNEY JACKSON (CONT'D)

This is an arrest warrant for you for the murder of one John Franklin and the attempted murder of one Sheriff Nester Jenkins.

MCNAIR

Sir, I can explain.

ATTORNEY JACKSON

Hear me out. Shortly after my office made its initial inquiry this warrant suddenly appeared. The timing made me suspicious and I directed my staff to investigate.

The State's Attorney holds up another official paper.

ATTORNEY JACKSON (CONT'D)

This is a sworn affidavit from a George Thomas, former employee of the late John Franklin. Do you know Mister Thomas?

MCNAIR

Since I was a boy. He was Franklin's house... his driver.

ATTORNEY JACKSON

Mister Thomas swears he witnessed a dispute over some land as described in the warrant. Mister Thomas swears that you acted in self-defense, and that in an ensuing struggle John Franklin accidentally shot Sheriff Jenkins.

FLASHBACK - EXT. MCNAIR FARM - DAY

Jacob and Booker run off. From behind some trees Franklin's driver, George, watches them.

BACK TO PRESENT DAY

MCNAIR

You see my daddy--

The State's Attorney holds up his hand.

ATTORNEY JACKSON

Is this affidavit accurate?

Booker raises his right hand.

MCNAIR

Yes sir.

ATTORNEY JACKSON

Based on this eyewitness testimony I'm quashing this arrest warrant. However, you still must answer it in Mississippi.

MCNAIR

I don't have money for a lawyer.

ATTORNEY JACKSON

We have a plan for that. But I must tell you (softly) son, your father is alive.

It takes a few seconds to register.

MCNAIR

But they told me...

ATTORNEY JACKSON

He was moved to Tupelo and railroaded into a manslaughter conviction. Due to his age he was sentenced to a work farm.

Booker slams his fist on the table.

MCNAIR

Those bastards, they lied to me.

ATTORNEY JACKSON

Given the great injustice done to your family I've arranged for an attorney for you and your father. He will file a motion for a writ of *habeas corpus* and with this sworn affidavit we're confident that you both will be fully exonerated.

MCNAIR
 (sheepishly)
 I'm not sure what that haybe thing
 means, but I'm truly grateful.

D.A. DUPRE
 There's one other thing. Police
 officers and deputies are not
 eligible for rewards. But your
 rather brief swearing-in ceremony
 wasn't proper. Legally you were
 never a deputy, so the Duraso
 reward is yours, twenty five
 thousand dollars.

ATTORNEY JACKSON
 That kind of money could buy a lot
 of farmland.

In his head Booker hears Emmett's last words.

EMMETT (V.O.)
 "You can change things."

MCNAIR
 Or build a good trade school.

The DA slides an envelope to McNair.

D.A. DUPRE
 It's a first class train ticket.
 The men in Captain Bronson's squad
 all chipped-in.

Booker's eyes get watery, he nods his thanks and regains
 control.

MCNAIR
 I appreciate everything you all
 have done for my family. It gives
 me a whole lot to think about.

ATTORNEY JACKSON
 So, what's next for you?

MCNAIR
 I have to explain all this to Mama,
 then get a book of Sandberg poems.

Booker slides the train ticket across the table.

MCNAIR (CONT'D)
 And make my way back home.

EXT. A FOREST - LATER - DAY

MOS a freight train lumbers through a mountainous area. In the open doorway of a box car Booker gestures as he reads from a book to Hobo Joe. The train disappears around a bend.

FADE TO BLACK.

SUPER:

THE GOODYEAR AIRSHIP *WINGFOOT AIR EXPRESS* CRASHED ON JULY 21, 1919 OVER DOWNTOWN CHICAGO, KILLING 10 PEOPLE IN THE ILLINOIS TRUST AND BANK AND 3 AIR CREW (INSERT PHOTO).

THE INCIDENT AT THE NEGRO BEACH STARTED A RACE RIOT ON JULY 27, 1919. IT LASTED A WEEK AND RESULTED IN THE DEATH OF 38 PEOPLE, MORE THAN HALF WERE BLACK (INSERT PHOTO)

IN THE RED SUMMER OF 1919 DOZENS OF ANARCHISTS' BOMBS WERE SENT TO PROMINENT POLITICIANS, JUDGES, AND CORPORATE EXECUTIVES FROM PATERSON NJ TO LOS ANGELES, INCLUDING THE HOME OF THE U.S. ATTORNEY GENERAL (INSERT PHOTO).

IN APRIL 1918 A FEDERAL ANTI-LYNCHING BILL WAS INTRODUCED IN THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES. THE BILL CALLED FOR THE PROSECUTION OF LYNCHERS. AFTER A PROLONGED FIGHT IT PASSED THE HOUSE IN EARLY 1922 BUT A SENATE FILIBUSTER BY SOUTHERN DEMOCRATS DEFEATED IT.

THE "JUSTICE FOR VICTIMS OF LYNCHING ACT OF 2018" UNANIMOUSLY PASSED THE U.S. SENATE ON DECEMBER 19, 2018. IT STILL NEEDS PASSAGE IN THE HOUSE AND A PRESIDENTIAL SIGNATURE.

ROLL CREDITS INCLUDING: Acknowledgement of Mr. Herb Morrison and Chicago radio station WLS for paraphrased dialogue from Morrison's radio broadcast of the crash of the German airship *Hindenburg* at Lakehurst New Jersey, May 6, 1937.