

THE FIRE THIS TIME

by
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EXT. FOGGY HILLSIDE - NIGHT ##BLACK AND WHITE SEQUENCE##

A milky, white fog enshrouds all around us. Slow WIND SFX. We hear a faint CREAKING NOISE, growing palpably stronger as the CAMERA slowly pulls back. Gossamer details begin to emerge through the fog: wet dirt. Gnarled, old tree roots. Lichen.

A faint, discernibly different CREAKING NOISE is heard, rhythmic almost, like a PENDULUM swaying. The fog gently gives way some more, delineating an ancient, gnarled tree, it's old, aching branches bending in the wind. The pendulum noise grows as we pull back further, revealing a CU of a gaunt and bloodied bare foot dangling. CRYING SFX.

Pulling back even more reveals a contorted body hanging from a noose, gently swaying in the breeze. We become aware of more RHYTHMIC SWAYING SFX as we pull back still more until finally we see a whole decrepit forest of hangman's trees with dead bodies dangling from each of them. The CRYING SFX grows stronger.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT ##BLACK AND WHITE SEQUENCE##

We pull back through a window to inside a darkly lit, drab apartment living room. The CRYING SFX gets stronger still.

We continue to see the macabre forest through the window as we pan right to the silhouette of an OLD WOMAN outlined by a lone lamp, sitting in a chair. She has her back to us, facing the window. A plume of charcoal grey smoke billows as she takes a drag from her cigarette. We still can't see her face.

BURNING SFX as we close in on the orange hot coal ash from her cigarette clutched between her gaunt, gnarled fingers. She stares intensely out the window, trembling, seemingly trying to contain her anguish. We PAN further right with her back profile bisecting our window view: To the left, the dangling, hanging bodies; to the right a blighted urbanscape. On the horizon of the urbanscape, a raging fire glows in the distance. We hear the sound of RAINDROPS pattering on the window pane.

The light pattering of the raindrops on the window sill fulminates into a rainstorm as we move up to the elderly woman's face, the rains's shadows playing against the lines on her face as she sobs and turns her head away from the window in disgust. As TITLES END, we pan down to a CU of a lone tear drop that lands on the tarnished cross on the woman's chest.

CUT TO:

EXT. EMPIRE DINE(R) - NIGHT ##BLACK AND WHITE SEQUENCE##

The fusillade of raindrops dance on the waterlogged street, its gutters overwhelmed by the downpour. There is a dismal husk of a building with the neon lettering 'Empire Diner' on it, the r unlit.

A pack of feral DOGS dart past as we see a silhouetted YOUNGER MAN with his back to us, standing under an overhang to protect himself from the rain. He looks early twenties, wearing a hoodie under a thicker jacket. His eyes dart constantly as he nervously lights up a cigarillo, anticipating any movement on the vacant street as he stares at the diner's entrance, head nodded down against the rain.

An old MONTE CARLO pulls up and parks at the curb. An OLDER MAN in an overcoat gets out of the car and hurries inside the diner. Saxophone jazz music is heard as he opens the door.

The man watching across the street takes a deep, final drag off his cigarette, throws it down on the sidewalk, squelches it with his shoe, then deliberately walks towards the bar and opens up the door.

INT. EMPIRE DINE(R) ##BLACK AND WHITE SEQUENCE##

Coltrane's sax on 'After the Rain' is being played, its smooth notes permeate every nook of a place seemingly stuck in time. A CU of dirty beer glasses stacked up in front of a vintage dishwasher. Water drips from a leaky faucet. Steam wells up as the industrial dishwasher is pushed up, the newly-cleaned tray of dishes pushed out, and the dirty tray placed inside. The dishwasher door is slammed down shut, starting the next load.

CU of flames in an old wood stove. A HAND opens it up and throws in a block of wood, the fiery ashes floating on the smoke.

We pass by the leaky faucet. In the background is the older man who had just gotten out of the Monte Carlo in the previous shot. He glances out the window while thumbing through his newspaper and takes careful sips from a freshly poured cup of coffee. He looks up at the mirror facing him, furtively seeing the younger man coming through the door to the bar.

The younger man shakes the water off his soaked jacket as he walks in, searching the faces of a couple of drunken LOCALS as he walks by them. He hesitates for a beat, then walks over to the older man, facing him. The older man is expressionless, not even looking up as he begins to speak.

POPS
I thought you had a date?

The old man briefly glances up and sees the younger man's bruised, puffy right eye.

POPS
You okay?

DEWAYNE
It...don't make any sense.

POPS
What?

DEWAYNE
Nothing. Not a damn thing.

POPS
It never did. Who said any damn thing was supposed to make sense in this world?

The young man looks up through the window at the raging fires burning in the background past the pouring rain.

DEWAYNE
We burned...the QuickTrip burned down.

The younger man cajoles a cigarillo out of its pack and perfunctorily lights it as the older man watches.

DEWAYNE
Don't start with me.

The older man finally betrays the slightest emotion, giving a restrained, tired shrug.

POPS
Well hell. The QuickTrip's burning. Automart's burning. Ray's Liquor store gutted. Looted. Half the Walmart burned down before the police could clear the street so the firefighters could do their jobs. The only grocery store we got within walking distance. Looted. You seen Kim's place?

The younger man locks eyes with the older for a second, then feigns an interest of something out the window.

POPS

I just saw it on the TV before I got here. Hell, I was there when old man Kim set up shop. One of his first customers.

Pops lips curl into a smile.

POPS

His English was so bad, I think it took us a good fifteen minutes to figure out why we was talking past each other. Shit, there I was, pissed off and amazed, staring at this guy who uprooted his whole family and out of all the places in the world he chose to call home was here. Look at his place now. Hiroshima.

The younger man says nothing as Pops carefully takes a sip of hot coffee.

POPS

Found out later he didn't have a choice but to leave his home country.

Pops calculates in his head.

POPS

Forty years?

DEWAYNE

What's that?

POPS

My life. All that energy. The searching for the meaning. Frederick Douglass. Dubois. Frantz Fanon. MLK. Malcolm X. The protesting. Then forty years later being just another lifeless soul all chewed up and spit out into this world like I promised myself I'd never be. How'd it happen?

DEWAYNE

Forty years? This shit's gone on for four-hundred-years. Puhlease.

POPS

Four hundred years?

Pops looks at DeWayne, who's noticeably piqued.

POPS

Look, I know this ain't no game,
but what the fuck are you hoping to
accomplish?

DeWayne's gaze follows the older man's gesture out the window.

DEWAYNE

This shit's gettin' old. Before we
even recover from one loss of life,
another one hits the news.

POPS

Tragedy fatigue. That's what
happens when recorded history gets
sped up. Shit. After this week I
feel four-hundred-years-old.

DEWAYNE

You look it.

POPS

Now you don't start with me.

Pops slips a quick scowl at DeWayne before taking a sip of his coffee, then gestures past the window, to an apartment with a lone light on and the silhouette of the old lady just barely discernible in the distance.

POPS

Shit. You think it makes sense to
her? Fuck man, eighty-some-odd
years a livin', and fer what:
husband dead; one son shot up in
Iraq, other rotting away insane in
Angola. Sister dead way too early.
Now a grandson dead. Back of his
head oozing out into Washington
Street for all the neighbors to
see. I can only imagine.

Pops slumps just a bit. DeWayne stares intently at him, probing the first sign of emotion as Pops continues speaking, seemingly to himself.

POPS

At some point in your life you come
to realize you're more dead than
alive. Father Time just hasn't
sealed the deal on you, yet.

Pops and DeWayne crane their necks and listen as the sounds of GUNSHOTS erupt in the distance. THREE PEOPLE rush by the window, yelling.

DEWAYNE

They shootin' already.

POPS

Like a broken clock.

DEWAYNE

So your take is that we're just 'sposed to sit around and eat shit all day with big smiles on our faces. That's real fresh.

EMPIRE DINER OWNER (O.C.)

Oh Shit.

DeWayne and Pops crane their necks, looking past the OWNER of the Empire Dine(r), who along with the a couple of locals, are staring at the TV across the room, showing a news report of the local mall engulfed in flames. The owner blurts out a whistle of shock at the carnage on screen.

LOCAL 1

Well, you can count out eating at Jake's Place for the next six months.

EMPIRE DINER OWNER

Maybe that'll bring in more business here?

LOCAL 2

Not the way you cook, Carl.

They chortle macabre laughter as Pops musters a smile which quickly disappears as he looks back at DeWayne.

POPS

Look, I was in Detroit in Sixty-Seven. I'm old enough to remember Harlem. L.A. I'm older than dirt, remember?

DEWAYNE

Yeah, well in case you haven't been keeping up with current events shit's going down every week now. Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Alton Sterling, Eric fuckin' Garner. I mean, choked the fuck out for selling fucking loosies?

He holds up his cigarette between two fingers to accent his point.

POPS

Yes. Tragic. All of them young men. All of them fuckin' tragic.

DEWAYNE

And now...

The young man glances away for a second before locking eyes.

POPS

Reggie.

DEWAYNE

Yes Reggie.

POPS

Look, I know this probably isn't the best time to say it, but--

DEWAYNE

Then don't say it.

POPS

But what if that was your body they were scraping up off that dingy back alley over there? How you'd think I'd feel?

DEWAYNE

No worse than I feel right now.

POPS

Shit, I'd be just like that ol' lady up there. Hunkered up and just waiting to die. Look, the point is that Reggie could have very well brought you down with him, the way he was going.

DEWAYNE

Hold up, pops. Now you talkin' outta both sides of your ass.

POPS

C'mon DeWayne. Open up your eyes. He almost drug you down with him. Nearly stole away your future 'cuz he never had none.

DEWAYNE

You know what Pops, you don't know
shit. Not even the slightest.
Puhlease.

POPS

I know enough.

They stare at each other. We see the disheveled SAXOPHONE
PLAYER seated in a booth in the corner of the room, his
mellow notes filling the lull in the conversation. Finally,
DeWayne dips his cigarette into an ashtray and looks up.

DEWAYNE

Wadn't like that.

POPS

Wadn't like that? What, were you
there?

DeWayne locks his eyes directly at Pops.

DEWAYNE

We went to Kim's together.

POPS

Kim's?

DEWAYNE

What?

POPS

Old Man Kim's?

DeWayne tugs at the strings on his hoodie in discomfort.

POPS

Is this the same DeWayne I'm
talking to?

DEWAYNE

What? Did I stutter?

POPS

So let me wrap my brain around
this. You and Reggie went into Ol'
Kim's place. The same Kim I talked
into hiring you when you came
begging for a job last summer.

DEWAYNE

Temporary job.

POPS
The job where you lasted, what, two weeks--

DEWAYNE
Two-and-a-half.

POPS
Oh, two-and-a-half weeks is it now? That's real temporary.

DEWAYNE
Shit, I wouldn't be caught dead in there.

POPS
Yeah, but Reggie would.

DeWayne scowls.

POPS
I'm sorry. I didn't mean it like that.

DEWAYNE
You never do.

POPS
And I know you think you're going to be the next Tupac, but the only way to get outta here is to work your way out.

DEWAYNE
Yeah, how well did that work out for you?

Pops stops, barely showing the slightest discomfort, then places his coffee cup on the saucer with the utmost of restraint.

POPS
All right. I deserved that.

DEWAYNE
I ain't gonna be wasting my youth stocking shelves and shit.

POPS
How else to you get by while waiting for that big break everyone's always waiting for but never seems to come? So he fired you.

DEWAYNE

That's whack and you know it.

POPS

Was it? Newsflash DeWayne, before you start working you gotta show up. Work don't wait for you.

DEWAYNE

Nope. Wadn't like that.

POPS

And how did I found out?

DEWAYNE

It was just a summer job.

POPS

I walk right into Kim's store and I find out from the Ol' man himself. Helluva way to get my Sunday paper.

DEWAYNE

Hey, I told you--

POPS

Oh, after that you told me, all right. You told anyone that would hear. You talked the entire neighborhood's ears off about you'd never set foot in that place after how Ol' Man Kim did you wrong last summer, and how he's racist and how we need to boycott and--

DEWAYNE

--Yo' I get it and I'm telling you Reggie didn't do nothing wrong.

POPS

So, you two just happened to show up there late at night? Don't tell me, you needed to pick up cigarillos on the way to going to Reggie's grandmother's church for bible study?

DEWAYNE

God's truth we just stopped by. Reggie talked me into it.

POPS

Oh, I bet he did. Just like he did when he almost got you two years for that little pow wow with that little Peruvian Lady.

DeWayne scowls.

POPS

What? Am I wrong? You looked me in the eyes and told me yourself.

DeWayne starts to smirk a little.

POPS

Were you lying?

DEWAYNE

Nah, this wasn't like that, pops.

POPS

What makes you so sure?

DeWayne takes a drag and looks out the window. Flames reflect off his face as we pull back.

DEWAYNE

I just know.

CUT TO:

INT. RUNDOWN APARTMENT STAIRWELL <<COLOR SEQUENCE>>

An apartment door opens up and a LARGE MAN, early twenties and dressed for the rain, walks out bearing a book-sized present, locks the door, and heads down the stairs down to the first floor. A HOMELESS MAN sleeps next to a small fire, kindled with old newspapers and cardboard, under the wall ensconced mailboxes. The homeless man stirs, but neither one acknowledges each other as the young man walks by.

EXT. STREET - DAY <<COLOR SEQUENCE>>

On an overcast, listless day, the man blithely walks past storefronts in various stages of disrepair, his footfalls clacking on the wet pavement. Feral dogs greedily gnaw at scraps left from an overturned garbage can, before bolting at the sight of him. KNOCKING SFX.

INT. APARTMENT <<COLOR SEQUENCE>>

The KNOCKING SFX continues. It's pitch black as we hear the voice of REGGIE, the large man walking the previous scene.

REGGIE (O.C.)
Yo' Tisha. Open up.

The KNOCKING SFX continues.

REGGIE (O.C.)
Oh, C'mon now. Don't pretend you not in there. C'mon girl, I know you a homebody, but you can't watch Walking Dead twenty-four-seven. I know you in there. Please. Wanda says you ain't left for five days now. C'mon. Please.

The door opens from the inside, just wide enough to reveal Reggie's face. From Reggie's position in the hallway we see TISHA, balefully staring at him from the partially-opened door. The doors chain creaks taut as he tries to push his way inside, stopped not so much by the door as by her look.

With a violent thrust she slams the door shut. He stands stunned, listening to the sound of the multiple deadbolts locking. Reggie nervously tugs at a rubberband on his wrist while chewing gum. He looks down at the gift, pauses to think, then knocks on the door once again.

The door abruptly jerks open, bringing the security chain tight once again. Tisha's eyes glare.

TISHA
What?

Reggie soaks in the intensity of her gaze and softens his face into a smile.

REGGIE
Baby, you look--

TISHA
Whatchu want?

REGGIE
Just in the neighborhood, thought I'd let you know how fine you are.

He holds up the gift.

TISHA
You mean like all the text messages
you sendin' me all day and night?

REGGIE
Ah.

TISHA
Seventeen.

Reggie pauses to calculate.

REGGIE
Seventeen?

TISHA
Yeah, and that was for counting
just yesterday.

REGGIE
Ya just had to answer just one. I
just wanted to--

TISHA
To make sure I wasn't goin' back to
Jamaal. Damn, you so jealous.

REGGIE
I wasn't trippin' over Jamaal.

They pause and stare at each other.

REGGIE
You weren't were you?

She slams the door. A PAUSE, then she opens it just enough
to grab the gift, then shuts it again. Reggie takes a deep
breath, thinks for a second, listening.

She opens up the card. It reads 'For us. Forever.'
Nonplussed, she opens up the wrapping. It's a picture of
Reggie and Tisha, posing with big, happy smiles, together.

Reggie knocks again.

REGGIE
Yo' girl. What you think?

Nothing.

REGGIE
C'mon T, this texting is killing
me. I'm on a limited data plan.

She opens the door mid-knock and gives him an incredulous stare. We first notice that Tisha's left eye is slightly bruised and puffy.

REGGIE

I was just making sure you're ok.
(smiling) You know how I worry
about you being a shut in and all.

TISHA

You got your nerve.

Tisha sniffs the air.

TISHA

You been smoking?

REGGIE

Naw I quit.

TISHA

I bet.

REGGIE

I quit drinking, too...

Tisha tilts her head incredulously.

REGGIE

...So much. Look, I admit I was
fucked up.

TISHA

More like stupid.

REGGIE

Okay, stupid it is.

TISHA

Ya' got that right.

She slams the door again. Reggie starts to knock, but she opens the door before he can.

TISHA

You're an asshole.

REGGIE

Fair enough.

She slams the door. This time Reggie makes a half-hearted knock attempt at the door. She opens it.

TISHA

And what was all this talk about
you and me?

REGGIE

That's what I want, too. I
promise. Somebody's gotta watch
late night re-runs of CSI with you,
right?

TISHA

I'm not sure that what you and I
want are the same thing, anymore.

REGGIE

How can you say that?

TISHA

Because we both twenty-two years
old and we haven't seen or done
shit. And if we keep going the way
we going we ain't never gonna
amount to nothin'.

REGGIE

Babe, I took you to Wonder Woman
just last month.

TISHA

I'm serious.

REGGIE

All right. All right. I gotcha.

TISHA

'Cuz I wanna be somewhere besides
this open air tomb we been livin'
in all our lives. Anywhere.

REGGIE

What you talking about, Boo?

Tisha pauses.

TISHA

Spain.

REGGIE

Spain?

TISHA

Yes Spain.

REGGIE
The Spain in, like, Europe, Spain?

TISHA
See, I knew you'd talk me down.

REGGIE
Wow. Wow. Wow. Hold up. Hold up. Gimme a chance.

TISHA
It's just like you to-

REGGIE
Just give me a second. Spain. If I'm not mistaken that's a helluva long way from where we at.

TISHA
Three-thousand-Nine-hundred-and-fifty-one miles.

Reggie leans over to her, looking at her face, trying to soak in the earnestness of her intentions.

REGGIE
How we find jobs in...Spain?

TISHA
What's it matter? We don't got jobs here.

REGGIE
But why be broke all the way over there when we can be flat broke here?

Her face says she's not having any of it.

REGGIE
Okay, say something in Spanish.

TISHA
Say what?

REGGIE
Habla Espanol. Say something in Spanish. For me.

TISHA
Well, what you want me to say?

REGGIE

Hell, I don't know. Pretend,
pretend we over there and lost.
Say, 'Excuse me, could help us find
the train that goes to Madrid?'

TISHA

Uh, permiso. But, but, but...

REGGIE

Let's leave our butts outta it and
go for can how about?

TISHA

Can. Po...Pue...uh.

REGGIE

Train's leaving.

TISHA

Puede to show. To show? Shit.
Donde. Donde...

REGGIE

Esta. Damn girl. I thought Isabel
was Puerto Rican.

TISHA

Yeah, but it all sounds like noise
she talk so fast. And look at you?
You don't speak no Spanish?

REGGIE

Don't worry. Hey, I slept through
Spanish class, too. What makes you
think we can make it over there?

TISHA

Because we can't make it here. You
and me, the both of us, we dyin'
here. Every day. Every year, this
place takes more out of us than we
put in. I'm afraid after a few
more years there won't be nothing
left.

REGGIE

Just front me some time to collect
some funds.

TISHA

I can't take this shit no more.

REGGIE

Bug. Listen. You know that thing I always talkin' 'bout?

TISHA

Yeah, you been boring me with that talk for like, forever. Archaeology and buildings and shit.

Tisha gently brushes away the beginnings of a tear.

REGGIE

That's architecture. Well after what happened I did some thinkin'. No more just talkin' for Reggie no more.

TISHA

You've said this before. We always have the same conversations.

REGGIE

And I went down to that vocational college and took the entrance test.

Tisha gives a wan smile.

TISHA

You did?

REGGIE

Straight up.

TISHA

Well?

REGGIE

Well, I ain't Neil Degrasse Tyson...but I passed.

TISHA

Really?

REGGIE

Shit, they even said they I might qualify for some grants or something. I just need to find a way to come up with five gees.

TISHA

And how you gonna do that?

REGGIE

I got a plan for all that.

Reggie looks at Tisha's distraught face and welling tears.

REGGIE

Ah Boo, you worry too much. You hear me?

TISHA

And you stay away from DeWayne.

REGGIE

Why you always trippin' on DeWayne?

TISHA

He ain't gonna get you help you go nowhere. We on our own.

REGGIE

DeWayne's the only true friend I got. Babe, you know I'd do everything for ya, just not that...right now.

Her face changes to a sour look.

REGGIE

Just give me some more time. We gonna have a better second half, you hear?

Reggie forces a pleading smile and she pauses with the faintest of smiles before starting to shut the door. We are inside the apartment door as it closes to complete darkness. CHAIN UNLATCHING SFX. The door opens to:

EXT. BENNY'S BITES AND BREWS <<COLOR SEQUENCE>>

It's an old, neon sign for 'BENNY'S BITES AND BREWS' lighting up an old brick facade with cracked steps leading down to the entrance.

REGGIE (O.C.)

Yo' man this be crazy. She copped another look again.

INT. BENNY'S BITES AND BREWS <<COLOR SEQUENCE>>

The interior of the place is a quiltwork of revolutionary pop culture artwork and iconic historical figures in whimsical poesy: Che, Fidel, Musa Mansa, Haile Selassie, etc... A poster of Augusto Pinochet with a title '9/11 '73'. Another of Tupac Amaru 'El Peru Te Necesita'.

There's a resounding SMACK as a POOL PLAYER powerfully breaks, billiard balls scattering in all directions, revealing Orwell's 'Big Brother is Watching You' eye as the racking apex on the pool table. Immortal Technique is heard playing.

Reggie and DeWayne are seated at a table, leaning towards each other. Two WOMEN are seated at a booth behind them. One of the women stares purposefully over at them.

DEWAYNE

I'm telling ya', she been like Jedi mind trick eye fucking me since I sat down.

REGGIE

What makes you think she lookin' at you? We both sitting here.

DeWayne laughs like Reggie just told the funniest joke.

DEWAYNE

Yo', no offense but you don't dress like you on pussy patrol.

REGGIE

What? This shit's clean.

DEWAYNE

It's cool. I'm not sayin' that. I'm saying--

REGGIE

You might be sayin' it with a size twelve up your ass.

DEWAYNE

What I'm trying to say is that your style, while refined, isn't particularly geared for acquiring the attention of the feminine persuasion. Take your shirt.

REGGIE

What's wrong with my shirt?

DEWAYNE

By itself nothing...much, but add to it that too big jacket on your already too big ass frame and you look like some sort of hitman nightmare from Grand Theft Auto. Like you were drawn up by Rockstar Games or something.

REGGIE

This is my most comfortable shirt.
I've had this since before Tisha
and I got together.

DEWAYNE

I rest my case.

DeWayne looks over at the woman in the booth, who returns the glance.

DEWAYNE

Shit, she is staring hard, nigga.

Dewayne returns his half-attention back to Reggie.

DEWAYNE

How you and Tisha workin' out,
anyway?

REGGIE

Shit. We've hit our ups and downs.
The good with the bad...and right
now we bad.

DeWyane stares back over at the flirting woman.

DEWAYNE

Puhlease.

INT. BENNY'S BITES AND BREWS - BATHROOM <<COLOR SEQUENCE>>

Tisha and WANDA are both staring at the mirror. Tisha is applying concealer with a makeup brush to her face as Wanda applies some lipstick.

TISHA

How do I look?

WANDA

You look like you gotta a whole
lotta concealer on tonight. How is
you and Reggie?

TISHA

We had it out on Monday. Bad.

Wanda stares at Tisha.

WANDA

You could've said something.

TISHA

I don't wanna talk about it.

WANDA

So, you just shut yourself off in your apartment not seeing nobody and when you do finally you come out you look like you haven't eaten anything in four days.

TISHA

It's a way to lose weight.

WANDA

Like you need it. So, what was it--

TISHA

Don't wanna talk about it.

There's a pause as Tisha nervously applies more makeup around her eye.

TISHA

You never feel like you're missing out?

WANDA

Missing out? Missing out on what?

TISHA

Missing out on...I don't know...

on everything?

WANDA

Is this still about you and Reggie?

TISHA

No. Maybe. It's just everybody else looks like they're moving forward, while we all moving ten steps back.

WANDA

I don't know who you talkin' 'bout ten steps back. Isabel--

TISHA

Oh Isabel.

WANDA

Yeah, Izzie's a trip. Been letting me take her station 'bout every other weekend now.

I figure a year of this and I'll have my own permanent spot. DeMaccio says maybe sooner if I build my clientele.

TISHA

So, that's it? That's where you wanna be?

WANDA

It's enough. Don't you believe all that shit on TV and Facebook. Everyone is makin' themselves into bein' somethin' they not. Hopin' that if they talk shit loud enough long enough someone will believe 'em. Maybe even themselves? Marketing and bullshit. Gotten to the point where you can't even trust what's in front of your eyes, no more. So, Reggie?

TISHA

With Reggie my trump card is he thinks he 's my first. And I'm planning on letting him keep thinkin' that. Besides, I know it drives him cray cray.

WANDA

I bet.

TISHA

So when he's being a bad boy I just make up this Jamaal character. Stops him right in his tracks.

WANDA

Jamaal?

TISHA

My Aunt Nellie's pit bull.

Tisha looks over at Wanda and they both laugh.

TISHA

It's funny 'cuz he thinks he's all that around other women, but I put a stop to that. In a way it's just like training a dog. Just gotta rub his nose in it every once in a while.

WANDA
Sounds like DeWayne.

TISHA
DeWayne? Puhlease. Compared to
DeWayne Reggie's a big Teddy Bear.
I don't know how you do it?

WANDA
What?

TISHA
DeWayne. Once he gets his mind on
something he just won't stop.
Ever. I swear last month all he
could talk about was how he's going
to buy ya'll a Jay Z lifestyle,
complete with his own basketball
team.

WANDA
Yeah. Yeah. And before that he
thought he was going to be the next
LeBron. Silly motherfucker ain't
even five-ten.

TISHA
That's what I mean. Maybe he got
autism or somethin'?

WANDA
It's funny. Sometimes I think he
actually believes half the stupid
shit he say. Sometimes I just let
him talk and smile 'cuz it's the
only time he really happy. Talkin'
'bout a future that'll never be.
Other times I shut him down and
tell him to grow the fuck up. And
you know what he say?

TISHA
Puhlease.

WANDA
Puhlease.

They look at each other and smile.

WANDA
Gimme a break.

INT. BENNY'S BITES AND BREWS <<COLOR SEQUENCE>>

DeWayne stares at the other woman as Reggie downs the remainder of his glass of Budweiser.

DEWAYNE

Puhlease.

SMACK SFX. Wanda smartly raps DeWayne with her purse while she and Tisha sit down at the table. Reggie laughs at the spectacle that is DeWayne and Wanda's relationship.

REGGIE

Damn.

WANDA

What you lookin' at?

DEWAYNE

Hey girl.

WANDA

Don't give me that 'Hey girl'.
Remember who you here with.

The two couples sit down and start reading the menus. The attractive WAITRESS comes over.

WAITRESS

What can I get ya'?

DEWAYNE

Well, I'll have--

WANDA

Watch it.

TISHA

I'll stick with water.

DEWAYNE

Water? Since when do you drink
water?

TISHA

Since when times are changing
faster than you realize. A water
with a lemon, please.

DeWayne and Reggie look at each other. Reggie looks up at the waitress.

REGGIE

Water's cool. Tres Cervezas.

WANDA
 Make that dos cervezas. I wanna
 try something new. Something
 that'll fuck me up but tastes good.

WAITRESS
 We got a Slippery Nipple on special
 tonight, we got--

DEWAYNE
 I'll take one of those.

Wanda smacks him, semi-playfully.

WANDA
 What's that?

WAITRESS
 Two-Thirds Part Cream Liqueur. Two-
 thirds Part Sambuca. Tastes like
 licorice.

DEWAYNE
 A licorice-flavored nipple?

She smacks him again.

WANDA
 Never mind him. He special.
 Licorice?
 (Pausing)
 I'll try it.

WAITRESS
 Excellent. A Slippery Nipple, two
 Buds and a water with lemon. I'll
 be right back.

The waitress leaves. Wanda looks around at the kitschy
 furnishings. On the wall above them is a big picture of an
 African Elephant being killed. Very gauche.

WANDA
 Man, someone painted this place fug
 ugly.

REGGIE
 Yeah, the owner must be either too
 rich to care or completely insane.

DEWAYNE
 Maybe a lot of both?

DeWayne lights up a cigarette with as much dramatic effect as possible while furtively sneaking a glance at the women in the booth.

Reggie looks over at Tisha, who is distant, staring wistfully through a window at people coming and going on the train. He gently nudges her, but she still looks away.

TISHA

The restroom smells like stale piss just like the rest of the city.

DEWAYNE

Girl, how can you say that? Shit, photographers from Europe get paid thousands for the pictures of all this wonderful urban blight. Puhlease.

Tisha barely smiles.

TISHA

Europe.

WANDA

Tisha, you okay, honey?

Tisha looks over at the beaded curtain separating a backroom from the rest of the bar.

TISHA

It's got something painted on it.

REGGIE

What?

TISHA

The beaded curtain. What's it say?

Reggie shrugs.

REGGIE

I don't know.

DeWayne leans forward like he's reading it.

DEWAYNE

It's says 'You got a nice ass'.

DeWayne busts out laughing as Reggie stifles a giggle. Wanda frowns as Tisha seems unaffected.

WANDA

Not funny, Dewayne.

DEWAYNE

What? It was a compliment.

The waitress returns with the drinks and places them on felt coasters with 'Power To The People' fists painted on them that she perfunctorily tosses on the table like an ace blackjack dealer, then stares at DeWayne and nods past the beaded curtain to the room to the outside.

DEWAYNE

Hello there.

WAITRESS

You can't smoke in here. You wanna smoke you smoke outside.

The waitress smiles and successively looks around the table at Reggie, Tisha, and Wanda.

WAITRESS

Everybody else doing okay?

TISHA

Peachy.

REGGIE

We good.

With that the waitress leaves to attend other customers. DeWayne extinguishes the offending cigarillo and looks over at Wanda, who's scowling.

DEWAYNE

Yo' Tish. I was just playin'.

No reaction. Wanda turns to Reggie.

WANDA

How's your grandma?

REGGIE

Better.

DEWAYNE

Must be hell.

TISHA

We don't need no hell around here.
We got each other.

REGGIE

I coulda done more.

WANDA

No need to beat yourself up over it. She needed someone there properly with her twenty-four-seven. People like us can't do that.

REGGIE

She pretty well raised me.

WANDA

You didn't know what she was gonna do. We can't just jump into each other's minds when it suits us.

There's an uncomfortable pause. Tisha takes a sip of her water.

DEWAYNE

When'd you start drinking water's with lime, anyhow?

REGGIE

Everybody chill.

DEWAYNE

Must be a European thing?

Now Tisha's pissed.

TISHA

I don't know? When'd Reggie started puttin' his fuckin' hands on me?

REGGIE

Shit.

WANDA

Anybody want another drink?

TISHA

I'm fine.

Everybody's frozen, undecided. DeWayne nods softly past the room with the beaded curtain.

DEWAYNE

C'mon Wan. I think you need a little somethin' stronger than that licorice tasting shit.

Wanda pauses as Reggie and Tisha stare at her, then she puts on her cap.

WANDA

You good?

TISHA

Fine. Just great.

They get up and leave. Reggie and Tisha look at each other, taking each others measure. Reggie makes a circle around the top of the glass of beer and stares at the table.

REGGIE

You know it ain't nothing, Boo.

She stares blankly outside at the people waiting for the train.

REGGIE

I'll go with you.

TISHA

And then what?

REGGIE

What? Whatcha mean, what? Then we go on.

TISHA

What makes you think we will?

REGGIE

Or we could go someplace. Someplace fine. Wherever you wanna go. How 'bout Toro's? Remember last time we was there?

Reggie smiles at the recollection and moves his hand closer to hers. She pulls back.

TISHA

Then you think we be all right?

REGGIE

True dat. I'll move out as soon as I can. I swear. Shit, I've known lots of people that--

TISHA

So have I.

A beat.

TISHA

And you really want to? No worries?

REGGIE
Nah, no worries. It's simple.

TISHA
I don't care about nothing, no
more.

REGGIE
Whatcha mean?

TISHA
Not even myself.

Reggie pauses, obviously shaken.

REGGIE
I care.

TISHA
Yeah, well I don't. But I'll do it
for you.

REGGIE
Well, if you feel that way then
don't.

She looks again at the train.

TISHA
Shit. We could get outta here and
make something of ourselves.

REGGIE
We can make something of ourselves
here.

TISHA
No we can't. It's all wrong.

REGGIE
Once this is behind us it'll all be
good.

TISHA
No, it ain't. I don't think it'll
ever be good again.

REGGIE
Boo, you got to realize--

The other couple arrives back.

TISHA
I realize, that we can't stop
talking?

DEWAYNE
All right, who here wants to get
their drink on? I'm buying.

DeWayne looks over at the waitress across the room and
gestures to capture her attention. Tisha pauses, then looks
over at Reggie.

TISHA
And you really want to?

DEWAYNE
Sure, I'll get the first round.

REGGIE
I do if you do.

DEWAYNE
That's the spirit.

Wanda elbows him sharply.

DEWAYNE
Oww! What?

Tisha pauses as the other couple stares at the two of them,
not knowing what's going on.

TISHA
Then I'll do it. But I still don't
care about me.

DEWAYNE
We still talkin' about drinks?

REGGIE
Oh come on.

TISHA
Well, I don't.

DEWAYNE
Tisha. Girl. I apologized.

REGGIE
You don't mean that.

TISHA
Would you do something for me, now?

REGGIE
Baby, I'd do anything for you.

TISHA
Would you please, please, please,
please, please, please, please,
just shut the fuck up and act your
age!

DEWAYNE
Is this about me?

She gets up and gathers her things.

TISHA
Oh puhlease.

She looks over at Wanda, then heads out the door.

TISHA
Ignorant motherfuckers.

REGGIE
Fuck.

Wanda looks at DeWayne, then Reggie, then puts on her cap and follows Tisha. Wanda opens up the front door and goes outside.

Through the window Reggie can see Wanda stop Tisha. They exchange words, then Tisha breaks down crying. They hug. Tisha steals a glance past the window at Reggie, then they leave.

DEWAYNE
What...the...fuck?

REGGIE
Nah, she gave me something to think
about.

DEWAYNE
Think about? Let me tell you Reg,
your girl is crazy.

There is a pause as they stare at their half-empty beers. Behind them, we can see the old woman from the first scene, as she slowly makes her way past the window. A police cruiser with sirens on speeds the other way past the window.

DEWAYNE
Wanna play some pool?

REGGIE
Nah, man. My night's shot.

DEWAYNE
I hear that.

Reggie swigs his beer and starts to get up. The waitress plops two full glasses of beer on the table in front of them.

DEWAYNE
Hey, I didn't pay for this?

The waitress coldly points with her chin at Reggie, then leads with her eyes past them.

WAITRESS
Yeah, but she did.

Reggie and DeWayne look over at the two women in the booth. The more flirtacious of them smiles, holds up her beer in a toast, and waves them over.

DEWAYNE
Looks like I still got it.

DeWayne tips his beer bottle towards her in a toast.

WAITRESS
Hang on there, Cool Breeze. She was talkin' up your big friend here.

Reggie stifles a smile as DeWayne slumps noticeably.

DEWAYNE
Ain't my night.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREETS - NIGHT <<COLOR SEQUENCE>>

Lightly sprinkling. More feral dogs running about the street. Reggie and DeWayne, slightly tipsy, amble desultorily along the street.

DEWAYNE
Whoa you Casanova. That didn't take long.

REGGIE
What?

DeWayne assumes a falsetto voice and gesticulates with his hands, badly mimicking a ladies' mannerisms.

DEWAYNE

Oh Reggie, you're so big and strong. And so interesting.

DeWayne swiftly smacks Reggie on the chest.

DEWAYNE

Shit, man. Why didn't you make a play back there?

REGGIE

'Cuz I'm not you.

DEWAYNE

Puhlease. Can't turn down what's being offered. Ain't natural.

Reggie just looks at him, smiling, as they walk.

DEWAYNE

I'm serious. I know it's hard to believe, but you ain't gonna be young, forever. Just wait until you're older and fatter and completely invisible.

REGGIE

Time happens to everybody.

DEWAYNE

'Cept me of course. I'm always gonna be the damn fine-looking specimen you see today.

REGGIE

How long we known each other?

DEWAYNE

Shit, a long time. Remember kindergarten? Me an' you and that other skinny kid with the crazy ass haircut?

An BULKY YOUNGER MAN, with his face partially buried in his coat, briskly bumps into Reggie.

REGGIE

Hey?

Reggie and DeWayne look at the man as he continues walking the other way down the street, then back at each other. They laugh.

DEWAYNE
Rude motherfucker.

REGGIE
Toothy.

DEWAYNE
What?

REGGIE
Toothy. The skinny kid with the Angela Davis haircut.

DEWAYNE
Yeah. Toothy. Remember when we three used to fight those older kids out on the playground to impress the girls?

DeWayne smacks Reggie on the chest again.

DEWAYNE
And Toothy's head got split open after that big first grader in the Captain America shirt pushed him off the jungle gym? Goddamn we was in trouble.

REGGIE
We was in trouble? I remember taking the fall on that one.

DEWAYNE
And I remember we all in the principal's office on that one. You and me and Captain America. Puhlease.

REGGIE
He's dead now.

DEWAYNE
Who? Captain America?

REGGIE
No Toothy. About a year ago.

DeWayne stares at the pavement, thinking.

DEWAYNE
Poor Toothy.

REGGIE
Who knows? Maybe Captain America
is dead, too?

DeWayne feels an uncomfortable pause and pulls out his pack
of cigarettes.

REGGIE
Times is changing. Tisha's really
been pushing for progress between
her and me.

DEWAYNE
Progress?

DeWayne starts humming 'Here Comes the Bride'. Reggie thumps
DeWayne on the chest, playfully, but it's still strong enough
to almost knock DeWayne off balance as he's trying to light
his cigarette.

REGGIE
Shit. I gotta get squared away and
fast. I can't be livin' in my
grandmother's apartment like some
fifth grader.

DEWAYNE
You really serious about vocational
school, college, architecture?

Reggie stops and looks up at an old building with a bunch of
white discoloration on it's brick facade.

REGGIE
As serious as that efflorescence up
there.

DEWAYNE
Efflor--what--sense?

REGGIE
Efflorescence. The white, powdery
shit just below the chimney up
there. It happens when the natural
salts in the material leach out and
crystallize.

DeWayne give Reggie a look of surprise as he continues
struggling with his lighter.

REGGIE

I remember having to scrape a bunch of that shit off back when grandma had the house. That guy shoulda installed a cricket to divert the rainwater.

Reggie takes the lighter from DeWayne, deftly lights DeWayne's cigarette, then commences walking.

DEWAYNE

Cricket eh?

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - EVENING <<COLOR SEQUENCE>>

DeWayne and Reggie walk by a neglected basketball court with big rips in the chainlink fence around it. The only light illuminating the court is from an old halogen lamppost.

DEWAYNE

Holy shit! Get down. You remember this place?

REGGIE

How could I forget? I walk by it every day.

DeWayne eagerly steps through a gaping hole in the fence and looks around.

DEWAYNE

Yeah, well I don't. Remember all the good times we had in here?

Reggie follows.

REGGIE

Oh yeah. And I remember you crying, pissing and moaning everytime you lost, too.

DEWAYNE

Puh, not even.

REGGIE

C'mon, I can't see shit out here.

DEWAYNE

You never could. Ah hah!

DeWayne finds a ratty looking basketball nestled between a plastic bench and a badly dented garbage can. DeWayne whips the ball over to Reggie, who fumbles but catches it.

DEWAYNE
Let's see whatcha got.

REGGIE
Man, what kind of cigarettes you
smokin'? You know I don't play no
more. My knees are shit.

DeWayne crouches to guard Reggie.

DEWAYNE
Unless you scared?

Reggie rolls his eyes and bounces the ball. They both laugh in surprise as the ball smacks the pavement with a hollow THUD because it's half-deflated.

REGGIE
All right. I gotcha.

Reggie drives in hard, makes several fades left and right, before shooting a fade-away with DeWayne's hand in his face. The ball CLANGS off the front of the rim.

DeWayne races for the rebound and heads for the top of the key area.

DEWAYNE
And now it's Jordan time.

DeWayne races around with the ball, contested by Reggie. Finally, DeWayne jumps up like a whirling dervish, contorting himself to get his shot off over the taller man. Reggie swats the ball away, but DeWayne scoots past him and clutches it.

DEWAYNE
No problems. Time to go old
school. World B. Free for the
three.

He fires off a long shot that bounces off the backboard with a resounding thud. The ball crashes into the garbage can. A DOG barks. Shortly afterwards, a window opens from an apartment across the way.

NEIGHBOR (O.C.)
Shut the fuck up!

Reggie and DeWayne giggle like schoolboys. Reggie starts coughing.

REGGIE
We're fuckin' terrible. Let's get
outta here.

DEWAYNE
Nah, it's gotta be the lighting.
Gotta be.

Reggie pulls a nebulizer out of his pocket and takes a big,
long inhalation.

REGGIE
I'm done.

DEWAYNE
Nah. That's just your mortality
bumping into you, dog. Bump back.

DeWayne whips the basketball to Reggie, who drops his
nebulizer to catch it. The nebulizer smashes on the
pavement.

REGGIE
Fuck!

Reggie shoots an airball, picks up the pieces of his
nebulizer, then casually tosses them away while DeWayne jogs
over to his coat on the bench.

REGGIE
What are you doing?

DEWAYNE
Getting us more light.

DeWayne lights up a cigarette and claps his hands for the
ball.

REGGIE
You can't be serious?

DEWAYNE
Serious as a heart attack now pass
me the ball.

Reggie stands up as DeWayne dribbles around with a cigarette
perched in his mouth.

REGGIE
Yo' man I ain't guarding you.

DEWAYNE
Oh c'mon, don't just stand there
with your hands up like Michael
Brown.

REGGIE
You singe me I'll kick your fuckin'
nuts off.

DEWAYNE
Yeah, well you ain't gonna touch no
LeBron James.

Reggie guards DeWayne. DeWayne crossover dribbles and spins around, then changes direction. When he does, Reggie steals the ball from him.

DEWAYNE
Foul!

REGGIE
Foul? Foul my ass. That's a
steal.

DEWAYNE
You slapped my wrist.

Reggie heads back to center court.

REGGIE
Ah, your poor, delicate wrists.

DEWAYNE
Yo' man that's a foul.

REGGIE
Fuck that shit.

Reggie comes barreling in, backing into the smaller man, using his weight to get close enough for a layup. DeWayne strains to push him away.

DEWAYNE
Ahh, you big motherfucker!

As Reggie pushes past him for an uncontested shot, DeWayne desperately jumps right on his back.

REGGIE
Shit. Now's who's foul'in'?

DEWAYNE
Give it up.

They are both straining everything they've got, with DeWayne on Reggie's back, trying to strip away the ball from Reggie's big paws.

DEWAYNE

Shit!

NEIGHBOR (O.C.)

I said shut the hell up! People's sleepin'!

Reggie finally frees himself, throwing DeWayne to the ground. DeWayne looks up helplessly as Reggie sinks an uncontested layup.

Reggie then kicks the ball away and walks towards DeWayne. They are both out of shape and breathing very heavily. DeWayne holds his hand up and Reggie pulls him up.

DEWAYNE

Shee it. Damn you strong.

Reggie puts his hands on his knees, exhausted.

DEWAYNE

Yo', you got me this time.

REGGIE

Like ol' times. Yo' D Montgomery. Got a smoke?

Dewayne pulls out his cigarette pack. It's empty.

DEWAYNE

Yo' man, let's get some smokes.

REGGIE

Sure?

DEWAYNE

Damn sure.

REGGIE

All right.

Composing themselves, they leave the court. Reggie heads in the opposite direction as DeWayne was expecting.

DEWAYNE

Yo' where you goin'?

REGGIE

Kim's.

DEWAYNE
Puhlease. That motherfucker
overcharges.

REGGIE
Yeah, but it's on the way home.
Besides I diggin' on some Gimhap.

DEWAYNE
Reg, you one big, weird
motherfucka.

They walk for a bit before Reggie smiles slightly.

REGGIE
You know she was trippin' on you
when you was gone?

The DeWayne stops.

DEWAYNE
Who?

REGGIE
The friend of that fine young lady
back at the bar.

DEWAYNE
Then why don't we go back?

REGGIE
'Cuz I'm saving you from an ass
kicking from Wanda, that's why.

DEWAYNE
Yeah, she would all right.

DeWayne smiles a bit.

DEWAYNE
But I think I really know why we
ain't going back.

REGGIE
Oh yeah. Well, wise me up,
Einstein.

DEWAYNE
Tisha.

They continue ambling down the street as DeWayne starts
playfully humming 'Here Comes the Bride'.

REGGIE
Motherfucker.

EXT. KIM'S MART - NIGHT <<COLOR SEQUENCE>>

The old, placard-type sign sits perched above the entry reads 'KIM'S MART'.

INT. KIM'S MART <<COLOR SEQUENCE>>

KIM, a wiry man looking fit for a man in his seventies, sits languidly behind the counter watching news in Korean from a small TV situated next to the security camera console. He perks up as the door entry chimes.

Reggie walks in first and Kim smiles and greets him in his sing song voice.

KIM
Hello.

REGGIE
Hey.

DeWayne trails behind, obviously uncomfortable. DeWayne's eyes dart at Kim from behind his hoodie. Kim just stares blankly as they lock eyes for a second.

Reggie goes down the aisles, searching for something he just can't find. DeWayne catches up to him, and hums 'Here Comes the Bride'.

REGGIE
Keep it up.

DeWayne looks down at a lower shelf.

DEWAYNE
Remember when we used to spend all our money on them Toffo bars?

REGGIE
Yeah. Oh hell yeah. Too bad they don't make them no more.

DEWAYNE
You mean like this?

DeWayne picks up a Toffo candy bar from the shelf.

REGGIE
Oh snap! Toffo, where you been all my life? I've missed you. Holy shit.

DEWAYNE
Blast from the past.

REGGIE
Shit, every Saturday we'd eat this shit and watch cartoons all day long?

DEWAYNE
Ren And Stimpy.

REGGIE
Stimpy you idiot!

DEWAYNE
Pinky and the Brain.

REGGIE
Spongebob Squarepants. Shit, remember when we'd come in first thing in the morning and Kim would give us all a free piece of candy?

DEWAYNE
Yeah, try that shit now. Ol' Man Kim's wallet's tighter than a snare drum.

REGGIE
Don't trip my nigga. I got this. We goin' retro tonight. I be back.

DEWAYNE
I be here.

Reggie walks up to the counter, cradling the candy bar reverentially.

REGGIE
Ain't nothing like ol' times.

Still tipsy, Reggie counts the change in his pocket. The Korean owner looks over at DeWayne as DeWayne casually strolls the aisles. Reggie smiles at Kim.

REGGIE
A pack a Swishers and this. You remember me and an' the boys comin' in and you'd let us pick out a piece of candy for free?

Kim smiles in recognition.

REGGIE
Shit man. That was all right.

KIM
Long time.

REGGIE
Oh, hell yeah. No worries back then. Oh shit. You got that uh...Gimdap?

KIM
Kimdap.

REGGIE
Yeah. Gimdap. Where is it?

Kim looks past Reggie at DeWayne, then points over to another aisle.

KIM
Over there.

REGGIE
Huh?

Kim gets out from behind the counter, muttering in Korean. Reggie follows him over to a shelf in the back with Gimdap.

KIM
Here.

REGGIE
Oh, you moved it.

Reggie looks through the various types of Gimdap that Kim has, asking questions. As he does Kim casts glances over at DeWayne, who has loitered over by the front counter. Finally, Reggie finds the flavor he's looking for.

REGGIE
Oh yeah, that's the one. Thanks.

Reggie and Kim head up to the front counter, where DeWayne is waiting. Kim rings up and bags the Gimdap, Swishers and Toffo as Reggie counts his change.

REGGIE
You want anything else?

DeWayne stares sullenly at Kim.

DEWAYNE
Not from here. Besides, ain't my
payday.

Kim hands the bag to Reggie.

REGGIE
Thanks.

Kim nods and Reggie and DeWayne start to head out, with DeWayne leading the way. Kim glances at his cigarette shelf, searches for a second, then frantically chases down Reggie and DeWayne.

KIM
Hey! You stealing!

DEWAYNE
What?

DEWAYNE
Steering? What, you got
Alzheimer's grandpa. I just paid
for this.

KIM
No you. Cigarettes.

DEWAYNE
Me? Fuck you!

KIM
DeWayne.

REGGIE
Look. He said he didn't do it.

KIM
He thief! He steal!

DEWAYNE
Bullshit!

REGGIE
Shit. Everybody just calm down.

DEWAYNE
I ain't doin' shit. Fuck you and
fuck your store ol' man!

DeWayne raises his hand like John Carlos in the Olympics, flips the Korean owner the bird, and walks off.

KIM

Stop!

Kim starts to give chase but Reggie blocks his way.

REGGIE

He didn't do it!

There is a short struggle. Reggie effortlessly pushes the smaller man, knocking him over into an endcap of potato chips and candy, knocking everything over. Kim's cell phone flies out of his pocket and smacks onto the floor. Reggie, shaken and surprised at the turn of events, pauses for a second, then quickly walks out the door.

Looking up, Kim sees DeWayne and Reggie hurriedly walking away, DeWayne still cursing. Trembling, Kim reaches over to his cell phone and starts to dial.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT <<COLOR SEQUENCE>>

It's raining harder now as Dewayne and Reggie walk briskly. Reggie keeps looking behind them, on the alert.

REGGIE

Motherfucker. Cannot believe he had the balls to say we kyping that shit. Motherfucker.

DEWAYNE

Ain't nothing, 'Cuz.

REGGIE

Shit. I just gave him the money.

DEWAYNE

Ah, ain't personal shit. Ol' man Kim's been jacking niggers since before Rodney King was telling us to all get along. Ain't no thang.

REGGIE

Shit, he was talking 'bout you.

DEWAYNE

Yeah, and he can keep talking, too.

DeWayne pulls out the cigarillos.

REGGIE
What the fuck is this?

DEWAYNE
What's it look like?

REGGIE
You dumb motherfucker.

DEWAYNE
That ol' fucker done fucked me
outta my last days pay. It was the
least I could do.

REGGIE
A fuckin' pack of cigarettes? What
if he was packing? We coulda got
shot.

DeWayne looks at Reggie, who's definitely more upset than he expected.

An OLDER MAN passes them going the opposite way. His eyes lock onto Reggie's for a second. Reggie looks behind himself as he walks. The older man stops and stares at both of them, then, conscious of being looked at, continues walking away, into the darkness.

DEWAYNE
Puhlease amigo. Relax. Kim ain't
got no guns on himself. He keep
his shit behind the counter.

REGGIE
What the fuck? I Spent all this
time trying to pull my shit up and
you wanna get shot for a fuckin'
pack of smokes and a grudge.

DEWAYNE
Hey, you're the one who wanted to
go in there, remember?

DeWayne hands Reggie a cigarette.

REGGIE
What am I supposed to do with this?

DEWAYNE
Smoke it, motherfucker.

DeWayne lights one up and takes a big, exaggerated exhale.

DEWAYNE
Shit, that's more than just a
cigarette motherfucker. That's
justice.

Reggie's mood lightens with a smile.

REGGIE
A fuckin' cigarette. You sure are
something.

DEWAYNE
Sly is what I am.

He looks over at his apartment building.

DEWAYNE
Looks like my stop.

They exchange a hug.

REGGIE
Seems like old times.

DeWayne heads up the stairs to his apartment.

DEWAYNE
Right that. Hey Reggie?

Reggie pauses.

DEWAYNE
Take care of yourself out there.
This neighborhood's filled with sly
ass motherfuckers just waiting to
steal your ill-gotten smokes.

Reggie stifles a laugh and keeps walking.

REGGIE
Take care, motherfucker.

Reggie walks off, adjusting his jacket to cover from the
rain. Walking faster, he starts to sing Tupac Shakur's
'Changes'.

REGGIE
It's time to fight back, that's
what Huey said/Two shots in the
dark, now Huey's dead. Shit!

A large DOG scurries out of a dark alley and startles him.

REGGIE
Motherfucker.

Reggie watches the dog run off. He re-composes himself and starts swiftly walking, this time whistling the tune of the song and fidgeting with the rubberband around his wrist, reflexively.

Reggie walks a bit further, then turns the corner around a back alley and stops dead in his tracks.

We see the large, unmistakable silhouette outline of a POLICE CAR looming large on the wall of the building in background, lighted by the streetlights. Reggie freezes, his cigarette dangling precariously from his mouth. It falls to the pavement as he mouths the word 'motherfucker'.

CUT TO:

INT. EMPIRE DINE(R) - NIGHT ##BLACK AND WHITE SEQUENCE##

Pops and DeWayne, still seated at their table, watch the rainstorm outside. The sound of far off gunshots, intermittent yelling, and thunder punctuates their conversation.

POPS
Shit, you got your whole life ahead
a ya'. It's right there. All that
potential right in your face-

Pops snaps his fingers.

POPS
-like a clap of thunder but you
can't see it 'cuz you too busy
circling the drain with the same
ass folk.

DEWAYNE
Oh, the same ass folk it is, now.
Oh, C'mon man, just say what you
mean.

The Older Man starts naming names of people.

POPS
Marcus.

DEWAYNE
Prison.

POPS

LeRoy.

DEWAYNE

Dead.

Pops smiles for a second.

POPS

Sammy.

DeWayne stifles a smirk.

DEWAYNE

Shit, missing in action.

POPS

Fast Freddie.

DEWAYNE

Not too fast. He deader than
Tupac. Just say it!

POPS

Reggie!

DEWAYNE

Oh, now we're at it. Ah yes, it
always comes back to Reggie.
Puhlease, I'm all ears. Let's hear
it.

POPS

Boy his age still living with his
grandma. Shit, back in the sixties
and seventies we were taught to be
independent. Don't wait for nobody
to help you 'cuz it ain't gonna
happen. You help yourself.

DEWAYNE

You're not seeing everything there,
pops. Reggie's a standup guy.
Hell, he even volunteered at the
homeless shelter.

POPS

Homeless shelter? Reggie?

DEWAYNE

Damn straight. And unlike the
government, corporations, even the
church, Reg will be with ya' when
the chips is down.

Believe me I noticed all the times you paid your taxes and filled their donation plate and they sure as hell didn't help you when you hit your rough road.

Pops frowns. DeWayne hit a nerve.

POPS

Hey, MLK and the churches were the first ones on the front line. In fact, in addition to reparations he also stressed that change was a two way street.

DEWAYNE

What? You mean back in the bronze age?

POPS

Not long ago. The more years I put on the more recent it is.

DeWayne starts laughing overindulgently while taking a drag from his smoke.

POPS

What?

DEWAYNE

Oh, now that makes some sense.

POPS

What's so damn funny?

DEWAYNE

You. You missed your calling. You coulda made your fortune Vlogging all over the internet with your new age home spun wisdom shit. Puhlease.

POPS

It makes sense to me. You cannot expect change to happen by just making demands on others without having expectations and standards for yourself.

DEWAYNE

And what, exactly you mean by that?

POPS

Fuck DeWayne, grow up and get a job.

DEWAYNE

Like the one you had? Old man, in some circles wage slavery is a small step from indentured servitude.

POPS

So you're just looking for handouts?

DEWAYNE

I don't know, but sure as hell not jobs like yours. Bust your ass for thirty years 'til your too ol' so they fire you off-

POPS

-I wasn't fired!

DEWAYNE

Let you go. They don't say it's because of age and you're at the top of the wage scale, so they come up with whatever bullshit excuse suits them so they can ship your job overseas so some young CEO's stock goes up one point and he can get the yacht that's ten foot longer than his friends at the country clubs' financial dick measuring contest.

POPS

I was a damn hard worker.

DEWAYNE

For a company who's sole purpose is to bomb whomever our leader's fine foreign lobbyists pay them to. Never mind the cost of the yacht could feed a small city of poor people for a year.

Pops looks away, not quite knowing what to say.

POPS

I can't believe who I'm talking to. Prepare to wait in unemployment lines. Prepare to be broke. Prepare to be depressed.

DEWAYNE

There's no depression in poor people anymore, Pops. You have to have hope in the first place for that.

POPS

Then how in the hell are you going to get money if you don't work?

DEWAYNE

Wealth is not the fruit of labor but the result of organized, protected robbery.

POPS

Frantz Fanon. Where'd ya' learn all that?

DEWAYNE

You. I learned it from you, dad. Ya' know, it might amaze you that I did listen to you growin' up. Malcolm. MLK. Frantz Fanon. That is, when you were there.

POPS

I always provided you clothes, fed you, not a house but a place to live best I could. I never abandoned my kids like every other piss poor excuse for a father. I was always there.

DEWAYNE

You're right. You never abandoned me like all the rest. You chose the more socially acceptable, middle-class way of abandonment: working two jobs, showing up late drunk, parking yourself like a zombie in front of the tv watching 'Sanford and Sons' re-runs. Hell, I'm surprised you didn't name me Dummy.

POPS

I'd sure as hell never call you a dummy. God, I was naive back then.

DEWAYNE

Doesn't it bother you that no matter how hard you've worked your whole life, this is how the system's paid you back? You see the way the police treat us. You see it every day. Or maybe you just blind to it 'cuz you never go out anymore? Locked in your studio apartment like a prison cell. A cleaner version of hell.

Pops starts to talk, then pauses to re-compose himself.

POPS

Reggie's little fuckup woulda set you back for good. But we got past it. You just gotta find a job, work harder, and maybe ask Clarice to pay your part of the rent to get back into college.

DEWAYNE

Pops. Clarice and I ain't been a thing for almost a year. I ain't got no steady job and I sure as hell ain't lookin' for more college debt, either.

POPS

Then, where the hell you stayin'?

DEWAYNE

Somewhere.

POPS

You can stay with me.

DEWAYNE

No. No offense Pops, but I'm good.

The locals grow silent for a second as everyone checks out two POLICE OFFICERS as they come in and sit down a few booths to the back of them. Their look tired as they slump to their seats. DeWayne, noticeably uncomfortable, pulls at his hoodie.

POPS

We aren't from the ghetto. The ghetto came to us. White flight. Start seeing people on the corners hustling. Pretty soon neighbors don't even talk to each other. Don't even know each others names.

Don't care. What kind of neighborhood is that? Thirty years ago everybody knew everybody's name. Sure, we all had our noses in each others business but we all looked out for each other. You asking me all these questions now you tell me: how do we fix it?

DEWAYNE

Let 'em hear ya'. Let 'em feel your pain.

POPS

When I was younger I woulda been all for that. Then I got middle-aged, fat, bills to pay, stuck at a job I hate. Then even worse, lost the job that I hated. Watched my youth, my dreams ebb away.

DEWAYNE

Then what's wrong with tearing this shit down?

Pops laughs.

POPS

Because it always winds up the same way. When you're young you don't even know, not even an inkling, just how rigged all this shit is for the powers that be. Surveillance, illegal wars, poverty.

DEWAYNE

Racism.

POPS

Racism. Sexism. Classism and every other kind of ism under God's green earth with faux liberty and injustice for all but the richest one percent.

DEWAYNE

Are you arguing or proving my point?

POPS

Why should your generation be the ones to break the chain? How can you?

You're all enslaved to your
precious electronic devices of mass
distraction? Now that I'm...a man
of a-

He looks at DeWayne who perks up with a wry smile.

POPS

-a distinguished vintage...I just
don't Goddamned know anymore. The
older I get the less I look
forward, the more I look back. The
more I doubt.

DEWAYNE

There's protests. That's all we
got.

POPS

Protests? More like genosucide.

DEWAYNE

Huh?

POPS

The self-willed extinction of a
people. It's what happens when
young men decide that to matter,
they must assert themselves
violently.

DEWAYNE

Then you better re-check your
history, pops. It's nothing but
wars and genocide. Hell, look at
our national anthem.

Pops furrows his brow in askance.

POPS

O say can you see, by the dawn's
early light? What so proudly we
hail'd at the twilight's last
gleaming?

DEWAYNE

Not those lines

POPS

Then what?

DEWAYNE

That's the lines that everybody
knows. I'm talking about the lines
that nobody knows. But I do.

Pops and DeWayne look over in surprise as a waterlogged
ceiling tile crashes down. Water streams down the wall next
to them.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - NIGHT <<COLOR SEQUENCE>>

Blood is streaming down the curb.

DEWAYNE (O.C.)

And where is that band who so
vauntingly swore,

We PAN up to show Reggie's lifeless face staring blankly, his
inert body with a bullet hole through his neck.

DEWAYNE (O.C.)

That the havoc of war and the
battle's confusion

The POLICE OFFICER paces in anguish while clutching his gun,
hyperventilating, adrenalized, and freaking out.

DEWAYNE (O.C.)

A home and a Country should leave
us no more?

Finally, he throws the gun down and slumps onto the curb away
from the body.

DEWAYNE (O.C.)

Their blood has wash'd out their
foul footstep's pollution.

Dogs are barking and we hear the commotion of neighbors
opening up their windows, yelling and screaming.

We see one of the windows open up from above. CU on a
neighbor's face. It's the older man that Reggie just passed
before encountering the police car silhouette.

NEIGHBORS (O.C.)

Oh my God. Oh my God. He's dead.
He's dead. He's been shot!

DEWAYNE (O.C.)
 No refuge could save the hireling
 and slave

From the terror of flight or the
 gloom of the grave,

CU of the police officer's anguished face. He seemingly snaps out of his shock, and looks around at the neighbors, then at the blood soaked body.

DEWAYNE (O.C.)
 And the star-spangled banner in
 triumph doth wave

O'er the land of the free and the
 home of the brave.

Tears start streaming down his cheeks as he buries his face into his hands.

CUT TO:

INT. EMPIRE DINE(R) - NIGHT ##BLACK AND WHITE SEQUENCE##

DeWayne and Pops move from the table in corner with the broken ceiling tile and watersoaked wall. The owner gets out a mop bucket and wrangles an oversized garbage can to catch the water. They sit down at another booth, just one removed from the two police officers drinking coffee.

POPS
 You know it would take cops forty years to kill as many black men as black men have killed each other in two-thousand-twelve alone. What does that mean to you?

DEWAYNE
 I think it's a symptom of when you've had your entire culture torn apart.

POPS
 You know if black America were a country, it would have the highest murder rate in the world. And the ones that ain't dead, one-third are in prison by the time they're in their thirties.

DEWAYNE

A nice, for-profit prison system that makes a nice profit over our bodies. Blacks account for thirty-five-percent of drug arrests and fifty-five-percent of drug convictions, despite being just fourteen-percent of the population and drug-users. It's slavery by another name.

POPS

Are you always going to be melodramatic?

DEWAYNE

Sure, in the prison's they don't call it slavery, but what else would you call it when you're working for twenty-three cents an hour? Shit, U.S. Prisons create products that garner five-hundred million in sales a year. Some of the work involves exposure to toxic materials. 'Course they got no rights. No vote.

POPS

One can judge a society by its prisons. Ok Frederick Douglass, how many more generations will have to bleed out in order to matter?

DEWAYNE

If the system treats us all equal, then why do the top ten-percent of families own three-quarters of the wealth. The bottom half of families own a whopping one-percent. The median white family's worth is one-hundred-thirty-four k. The median black family. Eleven. A single black woman. Five dollars.

POPS

Hey, I read too, boy. Just as Thucydides believed that historical consciousness of a people in crisis provided the possibility of more virtuous action, more informed and rational choices, so do I.

Pops raises his coffee cup like he's giving a toast.

POPS
Cedric Robinson.

CUT TO:

INT. KOREAN STORE <<COLOR SEQUENCE>>

Kim leaves his front counter after DeWayne starts speedwalking out the door.

KIM
Stop!

Kim starts to give chase but Reggie blocks his way.

REGGIE
He didn't do it!

There is a short struggle. Reggie pushes the smaller man, he knocks over a stand of potato chips and candy, before falling. His cell phone flies out of his pocket and smacks onto the floor. Reggie, shaken and surprised at the turn of events, pauses for a second, then quickly walks out the door.

Looking up, Kim sees DeWayne and Reggie hurriedly walking away, DeWayne still cursing. We see Kim trembling as he reaches over to his cell phone and starts to dial, his face a mask of pure fear.

KIM'S FLASHBACK ##BLACK AND WHITE SEQUENCE##

A large ROBBER wearing pantyhose over his face, points a GUN at us.

ROBBER
Gimme yo' money. Shut the fuck up!
Get down! Down!

KIM (O.C.)
Ssoji mala! Ssoji mala! Don't
shoot! I have family!

We are pushed down violently. The Robber practically growls.

ROBBER (O.C.)
I don't give a shit! Get down and
shut the fuck up!

Our head has been pushed to the floor and all we hear the sound of hyperventilating and store items being knocked over as the robber rifles through the till.

BABY CRYING SFX.

INT. APARTMENT <<COLOR SEQUENCE>>

A MOTHER, cradling a crying baby, weeps inconsolably. A small DAUGHTER, about eight clings to her mother's side, crying. In the background, a SON, twelve-ish, rubs his eyes while leaning up against the kitchen doorway. A POLICE OFFICER has a notebook and pen out.

MOTHER

Oh Lord. Lord, oh Lord why? Why?
Why you takin' my son.

POLICE OFFICER

I'm sorry.

MOTHER

Oh God.

Tears stream down her cheeks. The police officer rests his arm on the woman's shoulder.

POLICE OFFICER

Miss Carmichael, I know this is a terrible time to answer questions...but do you have any idea who might have done this?

MOTHER

Some coward. A filthy coward slaughtered my son like a dog in front of his family, officer. Just like Malcolm X.

POLICE OFFICER

Did you see anything?

MOTHER

Oh Lord no, officer. Tyrone wouldn't hurt nobody. My boy was a good child.

There's a knock on the front door. The young son and police officer start to head for the door to open it, but stop abruptly when the mother composes herself.

MOTHER

It's open. Come on in.

Two DETECTIVES enter. The police officer walks up to them and leads them to a part of the room away from the grieving family.

DETECTIVE 1
What do you got?

POLICE OFFICER
Small caliber weapon. Six shots.
Two headshots, a chest, and a groin
shot.

Detective 2 winces.

DETECTIVE 2
Ouch.

POLICE OFFICER
Victim was DRT.

DETECTIVE 1
Up close and personal. The family?

POLICE OFFICER
Not much. They heard the shots but
didn't see the shooter.

DETECTIVE 1
We got a neighbor who says he saw
it all from his window.

Detective 2 pulls out a pocket-sized notebook.

DETECTIVE 2
APB's already out. African
American male. Early twenties.
Heavy set. Six-foot-two-plus.
Wearing a heavy jacket. On foot.
Last scene on foot heading North
between Lincoln and Douglas.

DETECTIVE 1
Anything on the deceased?

POLICE OFFICER
Some warrants. Thirty-five-oh-two.
Fifty-two-hundred and a twenty-
three-hundred.

All three men look down as the police officer's radio goes
off.

DISPATCH (O.C.)
We got a description on the
thirteen-oh-one at Kim's Mart on
Rutherford. African American Male.
Mid-to-early twenties.

Approximately two-hundred-fifty
pounds. Blue starters jacket.

The police officer nods over at the family.

DETECTIVE 1
Kim's Mart? That's pretty close to
Lincoln and Douglas.

POLICE OFFICER
You got this?

DETECTIVE 1
What's her name?

POLICE OFFICER
Edith Carmichael.

The police officer starts to walk away.

DETECTIVE 1
Hello Mrs. Carmichael. This is
detective Schmidt and I'm--

Miss Carmichael stares over at the police officer almost out
the door.

MOTHER
Oh God. Oh Lord. Find him! Find
the killer of my son!

INT. STAIRWELL <<COLOR SEQUENCE>>

We can still hear Miss Carmichael screaming as the police
officer heads down the stairs.

POLICE OFFICER
(To dispatch)

Unit thirteen-fifteen. Ten-seventy-six to Lincoln and
Douglas.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT <<COLOR SEQUENCE>>

We follow the police officer as he gets into his police
cruiser.

INT. POLICE CRUISER - NIGHT <<COLOR SEQUENCE>>

The police officer stomps on the gas pedal as the police radio maintains chatter. He turns his lights and sirens on and goes through stop lights and quick turns.

As his eyes dart around to avoid traffic, he looks up at the driver's side sun visor, which has a PHOTO of his daughter on it. He quickly jerks it shut.

He maneuvers his car deftly through a couple more turns.

DISPATCH (O.C.)

Unit thirteen-fifteen, please be advised, we have a visual on the suspect walking southbound from Memphis to Lorraine.

POLICE OFFICER

Roger.

The police officer strains his car into a sharp turn, then jerks to a stop as he stares down a back alley with threadbare lighting. He turns off the sirens and lights.

POLICE OFFICER

What's the ETA on backup?

DISPATCH (O.C.)

Five minutes, thirteen-fifteen.

The police officer puts away the radio and stares at the alley.

POLICE OFFICER

Damn it.

He slowly lurches the police cruiser into the alley, eyes darting around at unseen enemies. He slows around a corner, the rearview mirror barely scraping a dumpster.

He turns another corner into a slightly better lit alleyway and abruptly stops. Reggie's caught, frozen in the full wash of the police cruiser's headlights.

Reggie freezes, his cigarette dangling precariously from his mouth. It falls to the pavement as he mouths the word 'motherfucker'.

EMPIRE DINER OWNER (O.C.)

Motherfucker!

INT. EMPIRE DINE(R)

The two policemen are hurriedly getting out of their booth. Through the window we see two MEN kicking at their patrol car.

EMPIRE DINER OWNER
Oh no! Oh hell no!

The policemen rush outside as the other two men begin fleeing on foot.

EMPIRE DINER OWNER
They breakin' into shit with the cops right there.

POPS
They ain't the brightest of bulbs.

The policemen get in the car, turn on the lights and take off. The Empire Diner owner points at the now empty table and scowls.

EMPIRE DINER OWNER
Hey! You didn't pay!

DeWayne glances around. The Empire Diner owner turns towards the locals.

EMPIRE DINER OWNER
You see that? What's the world coming to when even the cops be rippin' ya' off?

LOCAL
Maybe they got the shits just by lookin' at your menu and decided to make a run for it?

The other local cracks up.

LOCAL 2
Probably those runny, shitty eggs you always pushing.

EMPIRE DINER OWNER
Yeah, well I noticed you two show up here every day.

LOCAL
And you also probably noticed that the only thing we order is beer.

The locals crack up like they heard the funniest joke ever.

Carl and the locals keep jawjacking at each other as DeWayne turns to Pops.

DEWAYNE

So where are we in all this shit?
Have we solved the world's
problems, yet?

POPS

Nah, we have worn out this booth,
though. I'd say if we're going to
solve the world's problems we're
going to need more coffee.

Pops holds up his cup of coffee to get Carl's attention.
Pops stares at DeWayne thoughtfully as DeWayne smokes.

POPS

You could have told me where you
were at with Clarice and college.

DEWAYNE

It...wasn't a lie. Just a little
deflection. That's all. You think
I'm no good. That I'm a liar?

POPS

Nah. Just tortured by the truth
like the rest of us.

Carl comes over and refills Pops' coffee.

EMPIRE DINER OWNER

Nobody respects nothin' or nobody
else's business no more.

POPS

At least your business hasn't
burned to the ground. Yet.

Pops starts to reach into his pocket.

DEWAYNE

Naw. I got it.

DeWayne reaches into his jacket pocket.

POPS

No. No. You got no job.

DEWAYNE

Neither do you. How much is it?

Carl looks at the bill.

EMPIRE DINER OWNER
Eighteen-Sixty-Five.

DEWAYNE
Here.

DeWayne hands Carl a Twenty. Pops looks at DeWayne incredulously.

DEWAYNE
I took a good look at myself in the mirror today.

POPS
What did you see?

DEWAYNE
I'm not old, but Goddamn am I tired. Tired of seeing all the pain that's all around me...and I can feel it but I can't touch it. It just wears on ya'.

Pops tugs at the collar of his jacket and looks outside. The rain slowly dissipates.

POPS
Does it seem cold to you?

DEWAYNE
A little cold. It's the suffering. It's all I think about.

POPS
It's your age. I used to, too. Now I never do...like some defensive habit...that keeps me from feeling...from being a better person.

Pops slowly gets himself up and heads over towards the wood stove. On the countertop next to the stove Carl is drawing on a large piece of cardboard with a black felt pen.

POPS
Now, what the hell are you doing?

Carl puts some tape on the sign that reads 'BLACK OWNED'.

CARL
Tryin' to keep these assholes from torchin' the only thing that I got.

Carl heads towards the front door with the sign as Pops grabs a piece of wood, and leans over the stove. The flames burst with sparks as Pops throws the piece of wood in.

INT. BENNY'S BITES AND BREWS <<COLOR SEQUENCE>>

The beaded curtains make a staccato snapping sound as they are parted by a MALE HAND. We see the MALE HAND reach out to an outstretched FEMALE HAND and clasp as we walk through a back room where various LOCALS, mostly in their twenties, are playing cards, drinking beer, and socializing. A few of them turn their heads disinterestedly at us as we walk through the room, but most are solely focused on the card game.

The MALE HAND opens a door to outside patio area.

EXT. BENNY'S BITES AND BREWS PATIO - NIGHT <<COLOR SEQUENCE>>

We follow the CLASPING HANDS outside and we turn around to see DeWayne and Wanda smiling at each other.

DEWAYNE

I got something for you.

WANDA

I bet you do.

They embrace and kiss. DeWayne smiles devilishly and produces a joint from his pocket. Wanda returns the smile and leads him further out from the patio, away from the door.

They are startled to see the sight of Reggie's grandma, the old woman from the first scene, alone at a table, having a drink of wine in the shadow of an old tree. A lone candle on the table outlines her figure.

DEWAYNE

I didn't know a corpse could drink?

WANDA

Shhh. She gonna hear you.

DEWAYNE

Nah, she deaf.

The old woman looks up and DeWayne smiles at her, waves and mouths 'Hello'. She gracefully waves back.

WANDA

I wonder how she tried to do it?

DEWAYNE

Slit her wrists. Reg just happened to come home early. Found her in the bathtub.

WANDA

That's horrible.

DEWAYNE

Yeah. At least the floor was clean.

As they walk past the old woman, DeWayne speaks with exaggerated slowness.

DEWAYNE

Nice night out tonight, isn't it?

The old woman just silently nods as Reggie and Wanda walk past her for more privacy, then light up the joint and pass it between each other. Wanda takes a puff.

WANDA

About time.

Past the chainlink fence, they notice another amorous couple walking by.

WANDA

Tyrone better get himself off the street. He got warrants.

DEWAYNE

Or get himself shot. He in the wrong neighborhood. But what does it matter if he gets what he's after?

WANDA

I wonder what it feels like to be like that?

DEWAYNE

Horny like Tyrone? Puhlease, all that takes is having a dick.

Wanda takes the joint.

WANDA

I meant Reggie's grandmother.

DEWAYNE

Shit. He says she never sleeps. Just sits up in her room looking down at the neighborhood from that window like some sort of fucking ghoul.

WANDA

Gettin' old is just...nasty.

DEWAYNE

You gonna get old too. We all do.

WANDA

Naw, I'm gonna die at an age all right and proper.

She takes another drag and tilts her head.

WANDA

What exactly happened between you and Reggie?

DEWAYNE

Dayum girl. That's old news.

WANDA

C'mon. I've known Reggie too long. Hell, I got him that job at the shelter 'cuz he knew Tisha volunteered there. Gettin' pinched for slinging weed and happy dust just ain't him.

DeWayne grabs the joint, takes a hit, and stares directly into Wanda's eyes.

DEWAYNE

The truth?

WANDA

No. Lie to me.

DEWAYNE

Back in the glory of my couch surfing days my oh so trustworthy friend from back in the day, we'll call him Craig, helped me out. I could stay for a month, free of rent.

WANDA

All right.

DEWAYNE

Short story long it turns out my trustworthy Craig ain't so trustworthy because if he was, he woulda told me he set up a little smack selling operation in his back bedroom.

WANDA

That's some important information.

DEWAYNE

Yeah, what are friends for, right? I found this all out when the five-o decided to play knock knock games on our front door with some shock lock rounds from a breaching shotgun. Knock. Knock.

WANDA

Who there?

DEWAYNE

Poh. Poh. Reggie and I just happened to be over there when shit went down. Wrong place. Wrong time.

Wanda cocks her head in disbelief.

WANDA

Really?

DEWAYNE

Honest. And since my roomie and me got priors, the honorable Reginald Washington took the hit for us.

WANDA

Sounds like a helluva friend.

DEWAYNE

Yeah, Reg is the only friend who's like family.

WANDA

And would you take the fall for him, someday?

DeWayne thinks for a second as she stares into his eyes.

DEWAYNE

Ah, suck my dick.

WANDA
How much money you got?

DEWAYNE
Shit, I'm busted. But when I hit
it big I'm gonna pay off all my
friends. Big time. And my lady of
course.

WANDA
Well, you've got confidence.

DEWAYNE
I'm all confidence.

WANDA
Nah, you got youth. That's about
it. And that gets used up real
quick around here.

DEWAYNE
And what do you got?

WANDA
Everything but work.

They smile at each other. She starts giggling.

WAITRESS (O.C.)
Ya'll good out here?

The waitress startles them. Dewayne reflexively drops the
joint and squelches it like a cigarette butt.

WANDA
Nah, we good.

Reggie and Wanda head inside. The waitress picks up the
joint and holds it disdainfully.

WAITRESS
Pigs.

The waitress walks over and dumps the joint in a coffee can
full of cigarette butts at the edge of the patio. She
straightens up the chairs around an outside table before
seeing the old woman. The waitress walks over, gently taps
her on her thin shoulder, and leans down toward her.

WAITRESS
Sorry, I'd almost forgotten about
you. Are you okay?

The waitress sets the tray on the table and clears it off.

DEWAYNE (O.C.)
Is this about me?

TISHA (O.C.)
Oh puhlease.

The BARTENDER looks at the waitress as he pulls sterile dishes out of a small dishwasher.

BARTENDER
What a night.

WAITRESS
Tell me about it.

TISHA (O.C.)
Ignorant motherfuckers.

We turn around and see an angry Tisha stomp out.

REGGIE
Fuck.

Wanda looks at DeWayne, then Reggie, then puts on her cap and follows Tisha. The waitress looks back at the bartender, who's nonplussed.

BARTENDER
Have fun.

WAITRESS
Always.

WOMAN (O.C.)
Waitress. Hey Waitress. Connie.

The waitress looks over. It's the floozy who was flirting with Reggie and DeWayne from afar. The waitress goes to their table.

WOMAN
Would you buy those two gentlemen over there two beers and tell the big one what a fine specimen he is?

The woman hands the waitress a ten.

WAITRESS
I'll be back with the change.

WOMAN
Keep it.

The waitress heads towards the Bartender, who is using what small time he has between orders to towel off the bar.

WAITRESS
Two Budweisers.

He quickly pulls them out and gives them to her. She hands him the money.

WAITRESS
For our sorrows.

The siren from a police cruiser is heard speeding past the bar. She heads toward Reggie and DeWayne's table.

DEWAYNE
I hear that.

Reggie swigs his beer and starts to get up. The waitress plops two full glasses of beer on the table in front of them.

DEWAYNE
Hey, I didn't pay for this?

The waitress coldly points with her chin at Reggie, then leads with her eyes past them.

WAITRESS
Yeah, but she did.

Reggie and DeWayne look over at the two women in the booth. The more flirtacious of them smiles, holds up her beer in a toast, and waves them over.

DEWAYNE
Looks like I still got it.

DeWayne tips his beer bottle towards her in a toast.

WAITRESS
Hang on there, Cool Breeze. She was talkin' up your big friend here.

Reggie stifles a smile as DeWayne slumps noticeably.

DEWAYNE
Ain't my night.

The waitress leaves. DeWayne looks over at Reggie.

DEWAYNE
Well? Go over there, man.

REGGIE
Naw, not tonight.

DEWAYNE
What's your problem?

REGGIE
Shit, I ain't got time.

DEWAYNE
Puhlease. Why you trippin' on
time? You worry too much. Shit,
you and me, we're gonna live
forever.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT <<COLOR SEQUENCE>>

Reggie is lit up by the police car headlights as he stares in complete disbelief, cigarette falling from his lips. He silently mouths the word 'motherfucker'.

POLICE OFFICER
Freeze! Put your hands up!

Reggie pauses, then turns and runs.

POLICE OFFICER
Shit!

The police officer calls dispatch.

POLICE OFFICER
Unit thirteen-fifteen on foot
pursuit heading south between
Lorraine and Memphis.

The police officer leaves his car, pulls out his gun and gives chase.

The chase takes them through gates and around sharp corners. Reggie looks around and tries locked doors. Looking down, he sees an open cellar window.

The police officer jumps over the gate and heads around the corner. He, too, tries the locked doors, leading with his gun hand. He looks down and see the open cellar door ajar.

INT. CELLAR - <<COLOR SEQUENCE>>

The police officer cautiously moves about in the darkened room, lit only by the light from the cellar door window. Muffled music is heard from upstairs.

POLICE OFFICER

Ow!

The police officer bangs his knee against a piece of furniture as he tries to clear the room, then heads up the stairs.

He listens as the stairs creak under the strain of his footfalls. We hear his heartbeat and breathing as he touches the door handle. A PAUSE, then he rips open the door. Loud MUSIC blares as he points his gun and looks around the hallway with closed doors.

He tries one. Locked. He tries another with the sound of muffled music behind it. It's unlocked. He opens it. It's a couple having sex on a disheveled bed.

POLICE OFFICER

Freeze!

With the music blaring, it takes a second before the GUY notices as his GIRLFRIEND rides him. The guy stops and puts his hands up as she looks towards the police officer in surprise.

The police officer leaves the bedroom and tries another door. It's an empty, filthy bathroom. He heads out to the grimy living room area.

It's dark, with a completely stoned GUY watching a stupid TV show. The police officer senses a blur of motion behind him as Reggie flees. The police officer turns around and heads towards a narrow hallway to a back room.

Turning the corner he steps over a completely wasted GUY lying on the floor with a syringe in his arm. We hear the sound of a door opening.

The police officer gives chase.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT <<COLOR SEQUENCE>>

The police officer watches Reggie run into the darkness.

POLICE OFFICER

Thirteen-fifteen requesting backup.
ETA 'til backup!

DISPATCH (O.C.)
Less than five minutes.

POLICE OFFICER
Shit.

The police officer cautiously walks down the alleyway with his gun drawn, scanning from side-to-side with his eyes. Doors and windows on the right. Doors and windows and an old, decrepit bicycle leaning against a building below a window on the left. As he keeps walking, we slowly pull back through the slats in the window.

INT. ROOM - <<COLOR SEQUENCE>>

Reggie is hyperventilating, looking out the window as he whispers to Tisha on his cell phone.

TISHA (O.C.)
Why'd you run? You dumbshit, you didn't do nothing wrong?

REGGIE
I don't know. I don't know. I don't know. I fucking panicked, alright. Maybe it was the parole?

TISHA (O.C.)
Godammit! You always paying the price for DeWayne's shit. Lookout for yourself.

REGGIE
I know. I know. This is insane. It was a fuckin' pack of smokes.

TISHA (O.C.)
Well, then you go out there an give up.

REGGIE
Mom, I'd...

TISHA (O.C.)
Mom?

REGGIE
Babe, I'd ain't goin' out there unless you like me gettin' shot. Shit, after I ran they'll get me on general principal.

TISHA (O.C.)
Reginald Eugene Washington, you
suck up that ego that's bigger than
your brain and tell that cop you
didn't do nothin'.

REGGIE
This is crazy. This is crazy.

Reggie is nervously tugging on the rubber band.

TISHA (O.C.)
And check that temper of yours and
keep your hands outta your pockets.

REGGIE
I will.

Reggie looks out and can't locate the police officer.

REGGIE
Maybe he gone?

TISHA (O.C.)
You and me, we're gonna get outta
here together, right?

REGGIE
Babe, you know it.

TISHA (O.C.)
Then say it.

REGGIE
Babe, we gettin' outta here
together.

The police officer keeps searching around back into Reggie's
field of vision.

REGGIE
Oh shit. I can't believe this guy
ain't givin' up.

TISHA (O.C.)
Reggie, there's been a shooting!

REGGIE
Well, what the fuck that got to do
with me?

TISHA (O.C.)
It was a black male, Reggie. It's
got everything to do with you.

Reggie starts crying.

REGGIE
Oh God. No. No.

TISHA (O.C.)
Just go out there hands up. I don't care if you gotta walk outta there butt naked, let that cop know you ain't no threat. Reggie?

REGGIE
Yeah.

TISHA (O.C.)
Say it.

REGGIE
Why?

TISHA (O.C.)
For me.

REGGIE
I will.

TISHA (O.C.)
And keep yourself in check.

Reggie looks down as the door knob moves. The police officer is trying the door.

TISHA (O.C.)
And you call me after this shit is done. You hear me, call me right after...

Reggie hangs up on her. He steps back from the window, even holding his breath as he tries to be as quiet as possible as he fumbles with his rubberband. Silence.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT <<COLOR SEQUENCE>>

The police officer looks through the window and sees nothing. Satisfied, he backs around and slowly starts to leave.

The police officer stops dead in his tracks as we hear the sound of a cell phone.

INT. ROOM - <<COLOR SEQUENCE>>

Reggie looks down at the cell phone. Tisha is on the ID. He quickly mutes the phone while cursing under his breath. A pause, then the police officer bangs on the door from the side away from the window.

POLICE OFFICER
Come out with your hands up now!
Hands up now!

Reggie, undecided and hyperventilating, tries to figure out how to get out of this mess. He begins to slowly reach for the door to give himself up. The police officer is still yelling and screaming for him to get out and give himself up.

Reggie looks around. He sees a back door. His eyes dart in indecision. Flee or give up? The cell phone vibrates as Tisha calls back again. Her text reads 'You got to come back. You owe me that mirror. Remember?' The front door buckles as the police officer starts kicking it.

The lock gives way and the police officer barrels into the room. He turns and sees the open back door.

EXT. BACK ALLEYWAY - <<COLOR SEQUENCE>>

The police officer bursts outside, then turns right down the alley. We follow through a couple more turns then abruptly come upon Reggie at a dead end, hyperventilating with his hands on his knees.

We are obscured by the darkness and debris in the back alleyway as we hear practically unidentifiable, high-pitched screams.

VOICES (O.C.)
Help!!! Don't resist!! Ahhh!!!

Gunshot SFX. There is a lingering PAUSE.

CUT TO:

INT. OLD APARTMENT - NIGHT <<COLOR SEQUENCE>>

Reggie's grandma, seated in an old chair, smoking and watching TV. In the room behind her Reggie and Tisha are arguing. We hear the sounds of a NEIGHBOR yelling for them to quiet down as he bangs on the wall. A BABY is heard CRYING next door.

REGGIE

Boo, why you gotta be like that?
Why can't we be fine?

Reggie tries to embrace her but she turns away.

TISHA

Save that sweet talk with me? You
outta money?

REGGIE

This shit again? How 'bout we
pretend we still civil with each
other?

TISHA

Then you pay me what you owe me?

REGGIE

I don't understand why you gettin'
off treating me like a stranger.
Like you're putting me in a box in
the corner there.

TISHA

You will one day.

Reggie tries to pull her towards him, but she pushes him away
with surprising force, tilting him off balance. He regains
his balance after smacking against the wall.

The Neighbor bangs on the wall in reply.

NEIGHBOR (O.C.)

How 'bout some quiet?

TISHA

Let go of me! You can't touch me!
You on parole.

Reggie clenches his fist, but then relaxes.

REGGIE

Let's not go there!

Reggie awkwardly steps backward as Tisha suddenly flips a
switch and heads right towards him.

TISHA

Oh hell yeah we're going there!

She jabs her finger into his chest like a dagger.

How 'bout I do whatever the fuck I
please 'cuz you can't do shit! How
bout that?

She slaps him harshly, but Reggie's more stung by the intent.

REGGIE
What the fuck?

TISHA
How you like me now?

REGGIE
What's with you?

She slaps him again.

TISHA
Where you been lately?

REGGIE
Stop.

She starts slapping and pushing him wildly.

TISHA
Where you fuckin' been? Where you
spendin' yo' time? Fuckin' answer
me!

REGGIE
Nowhere.

TISHA
That ain't no fuckin' answer!

We pull back to Reggie's grandma obliviously watching TV. We
hearing furniture crashing and the sound of broken glass and
physical struggle. The neighbor is still knocking on the
door and the baby is still crying.

We pull into the TV <<COLOR SEQUENCE>>

A TV REPORTER is standing in front an angry crowd yelling at
and opposed by RIOT POLICE in the background.

TV REPORTER
Tensions are high as a large crowd
of protesters have gathered where
Jesse Washington, a twenty-three-
year-old African American, was shot
dead, bringing to life memories
from this cities grim past.

The TV report cuts to archived footage of the aftermath of the 1967 riots in front of the Algiers Motel. It is a compendium of interviews with African Americans, telling their different viewpoints of the riots.

A REPORTER interviews a HEAVYSET WOMAN seated on the couch in her living room.

OLDER, HEAVYSET WOMAN

The expressway divided the community. There was a day when you could walk across the street and talk to your neighbor. It's no long there. You gotta go across a brige. And if you go across the bridge you ain't gonna find that same neighbor because that space, that street is gone. All those houses in that neighborhood is gone.

A REPORTER interviews a YOUNGER MAN on the streets with a CROWD of people walking by, someone of whom stop to listen, intently.

YOUNGER MAN

This is not right and something gotta stop. I'd be willing to put my time, my effort, my life, to put an end to this because something's gotta give. And if nobody in the city can do it, the people in the city should put an effort to stop this because there's no more than right for the people that put this together to stop it.

Another REPORTER interviews an African American SOLDIER, dressed in full gear to help quell the riots.

SOLDIER

Tonight, it has been raining. Yes, it has been quiet.

REPORTER

You think the rain will have some effect on the temper of the riot?

SOLDIER

It has so far for tonight. I don't know whether it will continue or not.

REPORTER

Sergeant, you just recently returned from Vietnam. Could you tell how it feels to have to come from one zone of combat in a foreign land to one in your land?

SOLDIER

It's not a good feeling. Not one I'm proud of, but it's a job. It's a duty. It have to be done.

A REPORTER interviews another YOUNGER MAN and WOMAN on the streets.

YOUNGER MAN #2

That's why the people all rioting all uptown, ya' hear. All these police, every time you see one of them, they gonna stop a brother, they ain't ever gonna stop a whitey. That's why we gonna riot and we gonna keep on riot, until they stop all this!

REPORTER

Are you angry at anybody for all this?

YOUNG WOMAN

No. I'm preaching and I just pray for everybody for things that they do wrong.

An interview with HERB BOYD, instructor at Wayne State University.

HERB BOYD

The feeling in the streets at that time: kind of a sense of euphoria, a sense of freedom and rebellion. Everybody felt, like, unified. That, you know, the revolution was right around the corner. Because, you know, we had been talking about those things in the community, anyway. So everybody felt that this was the catalyst. This was the charge. This was the igniter.

We are at a news conference, where an African American Preacher is delivering a speech.

preacher
 We, all of us today, are witnessing
 and we are sharing one of the most
 eloquent expressions of the human
 spirit. In spite of the tragedy
 and in spite of the ashes which we
 also share in common. And that is,
 that in the midst of disaster the
 most powerful unifying forces of
 human life surge forth. And they
 express themselves in such a way
 that the barriers and the
 traditional restrictions of class
 and a race and color are
 obliterated.

We start fading from color to black and white.

The last interview is with a young, Gary "Pops" Montgomery.

INTERVIEWER

Excuse me, young man. What's your
 name?

POPS

Gary Montgomery.

INTERVIEWER

And what do you think all this
 means?

POPS

Means?

INTERVIEWER

Yes.

POPS

Uh, well, by my reading and
 recollecting I think it means, that
 we, all of us, depends on each
 other. That if we stagnate it's on
 us, all of us and that if we go
 forward it is due to all us, too.
 There ain't no superman to take
 responsibility for everything, but
 the work of millions of hands and
 them hands is the people. All of
 us.

Sounds of a WOMAN CRYING are heard.

We pull back from the TV ##BLACK AND WHITE SEQUENCE##

Reggie's grandma sits in her chair, tugging at Reggie's rubberband that's covering up the scar on her wrist. Tisha is seated on the bed in the other room, crying and cradling the PICTURE of Reggie and Tisha in happier days, smiling.

The TV switches back to the live coverage of the crowd gathering. Reggie's grandma slowly gets up from her chair, and with deliberate effort, heads towards the window. She is joined by Tisha as she opens it. They look outside.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT ##BLACK AND WHITE SEQUENCE##

Complete silence except for the sound of the wind as all of the CROWD stands completely still as if in a trance, looking up at the window. We PAN around in a prolonged, uncanny silence around the crowd, illumined by bonfires lit in metal drums with sparks flying all around as everyone stares up at the two women looking down on them from the window.

CUT TO:

INT. PUBLIC RESTROOM ##BLACK AND WHITE SEQUENCE##

DeWayne is alone in the restroom, pondering himself in the mirror with his hands draped over the sink. His left hand holds a bag with a hard liquor bottle in it. A faint, inchoate MURMUR is emanating from outside the room.

DeWayne closes his eyes. The MURMUR grows until we can recognize it as the incoherent, low rumble of voices screaming. DeWayne stares at himself, then closes his eyes again and takes a big swig off the bottle until he stops to catch his breath and wipe the tears from his eyes. He pulls away from the mirror.

The RUMBLE of voices crescendos as we look at the mirror. The thrown bottle violently smashes it into shards.

DeWayne frantically walks around, working himself into a drunken frenzy. He punches the paper towel dispenser and even cocks his fist like he's going to hit the wall before backing off and circling around.

DeWayne rips open the bathroom door, slamming it hard against the wall. The voluble mass of screaming voices increases in intensity.

He's in a narrow hallway with a doubledoor at the end. With purpose he starts walking towards it. Finally, he breaks into a trot as he nears the doubledoor, the screams becoming yet more coherent, more powerful, more shrill. With surprising dexterity he kicks open the door.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT ##BLACK AND WHITE SEQUENCE##

We're in the middle of a full-blown riot. The throng of voices and frenzied bodies moving in accelerating arcs of violence is deafening. DeWayne rushes around, awestruck by the force of the carnage swirling around him.

Buildings are on fire. People are throwing bricks through windows and scurrying about with looted merchandise from stores.

A floodlight from a helicopter sweeps the area, temporarily blinding DeWayne as he tries to make his way around.

Fights are breaking out. People jump on an abandoned police car and pose for selfies. Finally, a young man jumps on the hood and smashes a brick through the windshield. The crowd chants as a group of guys tips over the squad car. DeWayne pulls out his cell phone and takes selfies as well.

A poor, unfortunate soul is pulled from his car and kicked to the ground as a group of people, frenzied in their bloodlust, watch and cheer as a criminal smashes his face in with a brick.

Sirens blare and firefighters jump out of their firetruck and unfurl their hoses to combat a fire that threatens to engulf an apartment building. The crowd yells epithets as well as 'Let it burn!'.

As the firefighters are occupied putting out the blaze, a teenager takes a switchblade and punctures a hole through one of the firehoses. The crowd throws bottles at the firefighters as they scramble onto the truck, turn on the sirens and part the crowd to safety.

DeWayne passes by a bullet riddled car with a shot out window. A young dead man, sits in the bloodstained front seat.

As DeWayne gets swept away in the sea of people, a rioter snatches his cell phone from his hand and takes off running, deftly dodging through the haze. DeWayne starts to give chase but is blocked by the crush of bodies.

DeWayne's yelling is drowned out by the crowd as he elbows trying to get past people. A crazed rioter get in his face, yells 'It's beautiful!' and suckerpunches DeWayne right on the chin.

DeWayne slumps to the ground, rubs his jaw and tries to cover up from the mass of people, pushing, shoving, kicking, elbowing and punching to try to extricate themselves from the bedlam.

DeWayne shuts his eyes, realizing in horror that he's going to be trampled to death and there's nothing in his power that he can do about it. Suddenly, the crowd's screaming dissipates, as they scatter haphazardly.

We hear the staccato sound of boots striking pavement. DeWayne musters the strength to look up and sees a phalanx of police officers, dressed in full riot gear and shields, marching in formation towards him.

Looking around, he realizes that the rioters are behind him, leaving him as the lone person in the middle. The crowd is yelling, taunting and hurling debris at the police as they inexorably march closer.

A muffled gunshot sound is heard and a tear gas canister is shot into the crowd. As the helicopter floodlight washes over the crowd, rioters scramble out of the way, leaving people coughing, crying, expectorating phlegm and mucus as they cover their burning eyes. Some people are doubled-over, retching.

A brazen teenager with a bandana over his face rushes up to the canister and grabs, it, flinging it back at the police.

The canister is deflected by the police shield, then kicked aside by another officer as they march.

The police stop in formation, beating their batons against their shields. Police dogs, jerking their handler's leashes taut, wildly snarl and wag their tails.

There is a voice over a bull horn.

POLICE (O.C.)
Disperse Immediately.

As Dewayne hears the warning he suddenly realizes he's moving. Looking down, his feet are dragging on the pavement below him. A MAN has his arms around DeWayne, struggling to carry him out of the middle of the street.

MAN
Move! Move! Move your fuckin'
legs!

DEWAYNE
Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

They make it to a side street. The exhausted man gently places Dewayne on some steps and gathers his breath.

MAN
Are you hurt?

DEWAYNE

Thanks, man.

MAN

Never mind that shit. Are you all right?

DeWayne nods his head. The man gives a thumbs up, then looks around.

MAN

Just stay here, man. You're gonna be all right.

DEWAYNE

Yo' man, thank you.

The man bolts off back onto the main street. DeWayne watches as the crowd charges the police phalanx.

More tear gas explodes amidst the tumult of fighting. Police are being kicked at and punched as well as dodging thrown rocks and bricks.

People are knocked to the ground with huge gashes of blood creasing their screaming faces. Police dogs bite and arms and legs. Police smash people's limbs with the powerful swings with their batons as buildings burn behind them.

Dewayne weakly pushes himself up and shakes off the cobwebs. Fleeing the maelstrom on the main road, a group of rioters race towards him. They push him along the side street.

RIOTER

C'mon.

They turn the corner to another, less congested street. Mostly recovered, DeWayne catches up to one of the lead rioters.

DEWAYNE

Where we going?

RIOTER

You'll see.

In the background, a man in a yard climbs over a fence and runs the opposite way. Seconds later, the houses bursts into flames. Gunshots and explosions are heard from other streets, as well as the whir of the helicopter over head. A Woman cradling a baby runs out of the house that's ablaze.

DeWayne breaks stride for a second.

RIOTER

Don't stop.

They all turn another corner. DeWayne freezes in his tracks when he sees where they are headed. Down the street is Kim's Mart.

EXT. KIM'S MART ##BLACK AND WHITE SEQUENCE##

The gang descends on Kim's Mart, quickly rushing in before Kim can do anything. They quickly start beating Kim and ransacking the store. DeWayne freezes outside in the parking lot, watching as Kim's store is destroyed and Kim gets punched in the face as he tries to stop the looting.

DeWayne steps forward for a second, making a reaching gesture with his left hand, as if to help out Kim.

With everything he can muster, Kim hobbles out of the store and into the parking lot. He briefly looks back, the rioters are more interested in the looting than they are of hurting him more. Glasses shatters everywhere as the register is flung through the window.

Kim backs away to the curb, sits down, pulls off his shirt to wipe the blood off his face, and watches his store get ransacked.

DeWayne sees him, then looks at the store being gutted, then back at Kim, who is silently crying. DeWayne pauses for a second, then looks around. He sees a rock on the ground, grabs it, then starts walking over to Kim.

Another rioter lights up a molotov cocktail and heads back into the store.

RIOTER

Everyone get they shit and get the fuck out! Get the fuck out!

Everyone leaves carrying stolen goods as the rioter hurtles the molotov cocktail. In seconds, Kim's Mart is engulfed in flames.

Kim sits there stunned, with his white shirt full of blood. People are screaming and running all around. DeWayne cradles his rock as he heads towards Kim.

Kim looks up and sees him. They lock eyes through all the pushing, shoving, running and swirling violence all around them. Kim buries his face into his hands and starts to cry.

Dewayne pauses, watching Kim break down as he watches his life's business go up in flames. DeWayne stops in front of Kim who looks up at him. DeWayne drops the rock, then walks past him.

He pulls his hood over his head and starts to cry. The yelling and police sirens slowly dissipate as he walks away, slowly leaving the pandemonium of the masses of human tumult.

We follow DeWayne as he turns the corner onto a residential street, sparsely populated and relatively calm. He walks, head down, with the exhailes of his breath seen in the cold.

Finally, Dewayne is all alone. A lone light pole lights the scene as we slowly follow him, head down, slowly walking alone down the street and finally into the darkness.

FADE TO BLACK.

FIN.