

A BLOOD STAIN THAT WILL NEVER BE ERASED

Written by

Doctor Shrimp Puerto Rico

Historical - housekeeper - colored chalk - airplane

"win at all costs"

(c) 2020

FADE IN.

EXT. STREET CORNER (MEMPHIS, TN) - DAY

The intersection of Mulberry Street and East Butler Avenue. A one-story red-brick building with scorched yellow grass and a concrete retaining wall serves as a backdrop.

At the corner, a table with pamphlets. A tent which covers a mattress and some belongings stuffed in bags. And an umbrella to shield oneself from the harsh Memphis sun. Hung from the table is a sign that says "Boycott the Civil Rights Museum."

SUPER: MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE, 1991

Sat on a folding chair next to the tent is JACQUELINE SMITH (41), a thin, resolute Black woman in dark sunglasses.

Across Mulberry Street, rising to meet the cloudless sky, is the original "Lorraine Motel" sign. Behind it, the National Civil Rights Museum. From Jacqueline's corner, the wreath on the door of Room 306 is just barely visible.

Jacqueline stirs in her seat. She moves forward at the sound of a revving car engine... which grows steadier, and louder.

Jacqueline bolts from her chair and scrambles up the wall onto the grass. Seconds later, a pickup truck jumps the curb and careens into her tent, sending her belongings flying.

TRUCK DRIVER (O.S.)
Bye bye, Jackie!

Jacqueline collects herself. She stands, proudly. She makes her way off the wall and onto the sidewalk.

Jacqueline eyes the carnage, emotionless. She begins to collect her possessions from the middle of the street.

From under the deflated tent she retrieves a pack of chalk. She selects a small piece of red, and on the concrete wall she scrawls - BOYCOTT... THE... CIVIL... RIGHTS... MUSEUM.

INT. AIRPLANE COCKPIT - COACH SECTION - DAY

BURL and EDIE (50's) husband and wife, sit side-by-side. Edie, on the aisle, cranes her neck to observe behind her.

She pokes Burl in the ribs. He seems annoyed.

EDIE
Burl, I'm telling you, I heard it!

BURL

For the last time, Edie, why would President Carter fly coach?

PRESIDENT CARTER (O.S.)

Well, why on Earth not?

The couple look to their left. Former President James Earl Carter (67), stands beside them.

Edie is overcome. She begins to fan herself. Burl, happy to be proven wrong, extends his hand.

BURL

Well, I'll be. Mister President, it sure is an honor. My name's Burl, and this is my wife, Edie.

President Carter meets Burl's hand with his.

PRESIDENT CARTER

The honor is mine. Burl. How y'all folks doing today?

EDIE

Mister President, it's such a thrill to meet you! What brings you to Memphis today, if I may ask?

PRESIDENT CARTER

Well, my daughter Amy attends the Memphis College of Art, and I thought it was high time for a visit. She also told me about a very special lady that I should meet while I'm in town.

BURL

Forgive me if this is too bold, Mister President, but I thought you all flew on private planes? Or at least in first class?

President Carter emits the ever-so-slightest chuckle.

PRESIDENT CARTER

Well, truth be told, I've always considered myself a simple man. Doesn't matter if you're President or on the city council, we're all servants of the people. When our time to serve is done, I believe we should return to our former lives.

EXT. STREET CORNER (MEMPHIS, TN) - DAY

The intermittent FLASH of a police siren is evident from the sidewalk, where Jacqueline animatedly relates details to a UNIFORMED POLICE OFFICER.

TWO burly SECRET SERVICE AGENTS stride into view. President Carter emerges from between them. He extends his hand.

PRESIDENT CARTER

Ms. Smith, I'm Jimmy Carter. It's a pleasure to make your acquaintance.

Jacqueline hesitantly extends her hand.

PRESIDENT CARTER (CONT'D)

I heard what happened. I am so sorry. I hope you're okay.

JACQUELINE

Thank you. Yes sir, I'm okay. I have my enemies here. But they don't bother me. Just ignorant.

PRESIDENT CARTER

Did they tell you I was coming?
That I refused to enter the museum?

JACQUELINE

Yes, I was informed of your visit.
And I thank you for your purpose.

PRESIDENT CARTER

Tell me what I can do for you.

The two take their seats in two folding chairs.

JACQUELINE

Well, see, it's like this. I was dragged out of this hotel kicking and screaming in nineteen-eighty-eight. I worked as a housekeeper. Since nineteen-seventy-three. I got room and board for it. And after Doctor King... well, the rich folk, the celebrities. They stopped coming. But this place was still vital. Fifteen years. Fifteen years I served the community. People who needed a place to stay. Poor people. It was home. And that home was taken away. My home was taken.

President Carter pats Jacqueline's hand.

JACQUELINE (CONT'D)

Look around you, sir. You think the locals can afford to live here any more? They're charging admission. To see where Doctor King died. They're selling his death. You know what you white folks call it?. They call it proudly. Gentrification. Sink a neighborhood as low as it can go, and then completely renovate everything and sell it to the upwardly mobile. Instead of fixing it for those who live here.

President Carter bows his head, then looks at Jacqueline.

JACQUELINE (CONT'D)

Why are you really here, sir?

President Carter smiles.

PRESIDENT CARTER

My dear, I just had this conversation on the plane. When I went back to Plains, my farm was a million dollars in debt. I had to sell it. And my home is not worth much more than the dwellings you'd see around here. Now, I don't disagree with anything you've said. But don't you think there should be a civil rights museum? Shouldn't we honor all that Doctor King was, and all he's given to the world?

Jacqueline leans forward, and becomes animated.

JACQUELINE

Oh, yes sir, I agree with that one hundred percent! I just think it shouldn't be here. I mean, this man died here. He bled here. You know, they cleaned up his blood? Took the concrete straight away. That blood should never be erased from history. This place could be a homeless shelter. Low income housing. A soup kitchen. Something that would make Doctor King proud.

INT. AIRPLANE COCKPIT - COACH SECTION - DAY

President Carter stares out the window, reflective.

PRESIDENT CARTER (V.O.)
You're three years into your mission. What makes you think anyone will listen?

JACQUELINE (V.O.)
Well, Mister President... that's a very good question. I'm homeless. They took my home. They took a lot of peoples' homes. And I'm going to fight for this. Each day, every day. I'm not going to let them win. Doctor King would agree with me. He'd want this site to be used for the community. I'm sure of it.

The secret service agent next to the President leans in.

SECRET SERVICE AGENT # 1
Are you okay, Mister President?

A pensive President Carter collects himself, and turns.

PRESIDENT CARTER
Yes, thank you. I was just thinking that I might have encountered the bravest woman I've ever met.

SUPER: Former President Jimmy Carter accepted a humanitarian award in 1993 at the American Civil Rights Museum. He once again took the opportunity to visit Jacqueline Smith.

Since he had broken his promise and entered the museum, Ms. Smith refused to shake his hand. With regret, he once again expressed his admiration for her cause.

Jacqueline Smith continues her vigil to this day.

EXT. STREET CORNER (MEMPHIS, TN) - DAY

Written on the concrete wall, in blue chalk, are the words -
THANK YOU, JACQUELINE... JIMMY.

FADE OUT.