



Bronzeville

Written By:
Seith Mann

Based on the Podcast by Josh Olson

1st Network Revision
11/6/2020

Universal Content Productions
10 Universal City Plaza
Bldg. 1440, 34th Floor
Universal City, CA 91608

COPYRIGHT © 2020 UNIVERSAL CONTENT PRODUCTIONS LLC.
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. NOT TO BE DUPLICATED WITHOUT PERMISSION.
This material is the property of Universal Content Productions LLC and is intended solely for use by its personnel. The sale, copying, reproduction or exploitation of this material in any form is prohibited. Distribution or disclosure of this material to unauthorized persons is also prohibited.

TITLE: Osceola, Arkansas
Fall 1932

*

EXT. OLD CLAPBOARD CHURCH - NIGHT

A full moon reflects off the Mississippi River. In a clearing not far from its banks sits an old, WOODEN CHURCH.

Checking over his shoulder, a BLACK MAN approaches ON FOOT. He knocks on the door. The sound of voices behind the door immediately stop. Nervous - he waits until the door opens a crack.

MAN AT DOOR (O.C.)
Was you followed?

The Black Man shakes his head. The MAN AT DOOR sticks his head out briefly, surveys the surrounding area. Satisfied, he lets the Black Man inside.

INT. OLD CLAPBOARD CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

The Black Man enters the cramped, sweaty one room edifice to a meeting already in progress.

He finds a seat in the PEWS that are half-filled with Black men. Their haggard, thread bare clothes tell us they are not men of means. The calloused hands, dirt permanently stuck under their nails and worn, sun-hardened faces say they're field hands. Sitting together among them are ARTHUR GRACE, (40s) heavy-set, strong, earnest and JIMMY TILLMAN (30s) hungry and charismatic with a fire in his eye.

At the front of the room, AL MORELAND, (white, late 20s) passionate, idealistic, remains silent until the door is shut again. On a TABLE beside him are several staple-bound LITTLE BLUE BOOKS. Some in the audience thumb through copies.

MORELAND
You should all have the right to
take your harvest directly to
market. And shop for the best deal
on your equipment...

MAN 1
Last I checked, suh, they don't
give no rights at all to Black
folk. No deals neither.

MORELAND

That's why I'm here, sir. We making
strides for the working man in
Alabama. And we'd like to...

Another MAN, LINKWOOD, cuts him off.

LINKWOOD

No disrespect, Mr. Moreland. This
ain't Alabama. Words Elaine,
Arkansas mean anything to you?

Murmurs of agreement from the audience. Arthur speaks up.

ARTHUR

We all know what you think,
Linkwood. Let the man say his
piece.

More mutters of agreement and discord throughout the room.

MORELAND

Listen. I know what happened in
Elaine. I'm working toward a world
where we can make sure nothin' like
that ever happens again.

LINKWOOD

Now he just talkin' crazy.

Linkwood leaves. As do a few others. As the door closes...

MORELAND

I understand your apprehension. But
I promise you, if we can stand
together, there is nothing we...

As Moreland continues, Jimmy whispers to Arthur.

JIMMY

They right you know.

ARTHUR

They yella.

JIMMY

That don't mean they ain't right.

ARTHUR

You too, Jimmy? Damn.

JIMMY

I ain't yella. I just don't see the
point of begging for crumbs from
Mr. Charlie when we can...

ARTHUR

Here we go again.

JIMMY

Get real jobs in...

They say it at the same time. But with very different levels
of enthusiasm.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Chicago!

ARTHUR

Chicago.

*

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

You act like they ain't got crackas
up there.

JIMMY

I'm sure they do. But the way I
hear it them crackas ain't keeping
Negros from voting. From workin' no
jobs.

ARTHUR

You read The Defender too much. It
cain't be all they say it is.

JIMMY

Gots to better than here. Ain't you
tired of living like a dog, man?

ARTHUR

That's why I'm at this meeting,
Jimmy. Man should be able to make
his way wherever he call home. You
just want to go Chicago cuz yo' ass
don't like to work.

JIMMY

These hands wasn't made to pick
cotton.

ARTHUR

What was they made for, nigga?

*

JIMMY

I 'on't know. I'm aimin' to find
out.

*

*

*

They share a laugh.

*

MAN 1
You hear that?

The room falls silent as everyone strains to listen. There is the unmistakeable sound of CAR ENGINES idling. And then...

CRAAAAAASSSSHHHHH!!!!

A ROCK WRAPPED IN A FLAMING RAG crashes through a BACK WINDOW.

MORELAND
WAIT! Don't PANIC!

Another FLAMING ROCK SMASHES through the OTHER BACK WINDOW.

Pandemonium erupts as EVERYONE SCATTERS. People knock each other over running for the front door. Pews tumble. The table with the Little Blue Books is kicked over.

Arthur starts for the front door, but Jimmy pulls him toward the back.

JIMMY
This way.

Jimmy rears up and KICKS the BACK DOOR open

EXT. OLD CLAPBOARD CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

...the door flies out SMASHING a white UNION BUSTER in the face. BLOOD GUSHES from his nose. He drops his SHOTGUN.

Jimmy dashes past the Union Buster who is cupping his ruined face in his hands. He sprints for the tree line with Arthur.

JIMMY
C'mon, Arthur!!!

UNION BUSTER
GET THEM NIGGAS!

Several other WHITE UNION BUSTERS emerge from the side of the church and run after Arthur and Jimmy.

As they disappear into the tree line, MORE UNION BUSTERS beat the fleeing sharecroppers BLOODY with BATS and STICKS around the front of the church where most of the Union Busters were waiting to attack.

EXT. WOODS - MOMENTS LATER

Arther and Jimmy tear through the woods. Jimmy is a little ahead of Arthur. Even running through dense foliage lit only by moonlight, there is a precision with which he moves.

Arthur not so much. The big man's FOOT catches on an UPTURNED ROOT. He goes down HARD. Jimmy turns back for him.

JIMMY

Get up, man. Let's go.

Arthur grimaces as he clutches his ankle.

ARTHUR

I cain't. Done twisted it.

JIMMY

Fuck.

Jimmy starts helping him to his feet.

ARTHUR

Go'on, Jimmy. You cain't tote my big ass.

JIMMY

We'll make for the river. Current carry us downstream faster than we can run.

ARTHUR

You know I cain't swim.

JIMMY

You gon' learn.

He gets him to his feet. Turns to continue, but a WHITE MAN wielding a CROW BAR, blocks their path.

WHITE MAN

Only thing you niggas gon' learn is to stop causing trouble.

JIMMY

We don't want no trouble. Just let us by. We'ont want no parts a no union no how.

WHITE MAN

Don't look that way to me.

SAP MAN (O.C.)

Me neither, Ned.

Arthur and Jimmy turn. Another white man, SAP MAN, has approached from behind. He wields a BUCHEIMER BLACKJACK SAP.

A look passes between Jimmy and Arthur. Jimmy undrapes Arthur's arm from his shoulders and leaves him to stand on his own. He raises his hands plaintively.

JIMMY

Look. We can work this...

Whatever Jimmy's got to say bears no interest to White Man. He SWINGS his Crow Bar HARD. Jimmy barely dodges the blow.

Arthur musters all his strength and leaps toward Sap Man who swings the sap and connects. But Arthur is able to absorb the blow with his heavy shoulders. Sap Man is surprised by his strength. They struggle over the sap.

Jimmy dodges another blow. White Man swings wildly again. This time Jimmy lets the bar come dangerously close and then steps past the arc of the White Man's follow through. He surprises White Man with a quick JAB to the face. And another set of rapid fire blows. The man drops his weapon as Jimmy continues to back him up.

The sap goes flying. Arthur and Sap Man fall to the ground. Arthur maneuvers to get on top of him where his weight will give him the advantage. But Sap Man has another idea. He reaches for the SMITH & WESSON MODEL 10 REVOLVER tucked in his waist band. Arthur's eyes go WIDE. He grabs for the gun.

Jimmy PUNCHES White Man with ALL HIS MIGHT. He FALLS to the ground unconscious. Just as Jimmy turns to help Arthur...

BANG!!! BANG!!!

Sap Man pushes a BLOODIED, GUT SHOT Arthur off of him and FIRES at Jimmy. TREE BARK explodes just behind Jimmy's head as he DIVES out of the way.

Sap Man scrambles to his feet FIRING ANOTHER SHOT at Jimmy who scurries out of sight - grabbing the crow bar as he goes.

EXT. WOODS/A FEW FEET AWAY - CONTINUOUS

Jimmy takes refuge behind a BIG TREE. He braces himself; ready to swing. Eyes whipping everywhere. Straining to hear.

MOMENTS LATER

A BOOT hesitates over a TWIG. Then sets down silently just to it's side.

Sap Man approaches as stealthily as he can. Gun cocked and ready. Up ahead - at the base of the Big Tree, he sees just the TIP of JIMMY'S SHOE.

He approaches in silence and then whips around the trunk BLASTING into...air.

He looks down at two EMPTY SHOES. And looks up just in time to see the CROW BAR as it careens toward his...

THWOCCCK - the unmistakable sound of metal fracturing skull.

Jimmy, SOCKS ONLY adorning his feet, stands over the fallen man. He swings the bar twice more to be sure. Then drops the blood stained instrument. Picks up the gun. And his shoes.

EXT. WOODS - MOMENTS LATER

Arthur is BLEEDING OUT in the spot where Sap Man left him. Jimmy crouches next to him. Rocks him awake. He stirs. Weak.

JIMMY

C'mon, Arthur. You gots to get up now.

ARTHUR

You was right, Jimmy.

JIMMY

Fuck you talkin' bout? Get up.

ARTHUR

You've seen this before. You know.

JIMMY

I seen people survive worse.

ARTHUR

Good. Then let's git to Chicago. Right now.

JIMMY

Alright. C'mon.

Jimmy tries pulling him up again. But he just slumps in his arms. Dead with his eyes open.

Jimmy realizes. Takes his moment. Closes his friend's eyes.

MOMENTS LATER

Jimmy's SOCK CLAD FOOT kicks White Man until he stirs.

He opens his eyes. He sees Jimmy standing over him holding Sap Man's gun at his side.

White Man looks around and sees the slumped corpse of Sap Man. He starts scooting backward on his hind parts.

WHITE MAN

Now, now, look. Let's not do
nothin' hasty. We can work this
out.

JIMMY

Yes we can. You know my face?

WHITE MAN

No, suh. No, suh. Never seen ya.

JIMMY

Yes you have. So you might as well
know my name...

Jimmy raises the gun. Points it right at the man's head.

WHITE MAN

No, suh! PLEASE!!!

JIMMY

When they ask who sent ya, tell 'em
it was Jimmy Tillman.

WHITE MAN

NOOOOOOO.....

He SQUEEZES the TRIGGER.

CUT TO:

EXT. COPELAND'S - NIGHT

TITLE: Chicago, Illinois

We're on a BUSTLING AVENUE we will come to know as THE
STROLL. The sidewalk is teeming with storefronts of
BOUTIQUES, SHOPS and RESTAURANTS. Cars are crushed together.
Folks dresses in their SUNDAY BEST are out on the town.

*
*
*
*

A large MARQUIS fixated above the roof of a fancy restaurant
bears the name "Copeland's." We drift past the sign into...

INT. BACK ALLEY / CHICAGO - NIGHT

*

...an alley. Narrow. Dark. Empty except for BILLY (mid 20s), bluster masking fear, who stands with TWO BURLY DUDES. He tries and fails to light a CIGARETTE.

BILLY

I don't see what the big deal is.
I'm saving them...

He cuts himself short as a BACK DOOR opens.

LIGHT spills into the alley as TWO SILHOUETTED FIGURES emerge. The first, EVERETT COPELAND (mid 30s), an impeccably and conservatively dressed businessman who prides himself on being reasoned, pragmatic, smarter than the next guy, steps uncomfortably close to the scared young man.

EVERETT

This Billy?

BURLY DUDE

Unfortunately for him.

EVERETT

You know who I am?

BILLY

Yes, suh.

EVERETT

You know who he is.

Billy looks over Everett's shoulder at JESSE (30), Everett's younger brother. He's good looking, but his nose has clearly been BROKEN a number of times. His suit fits, but not just so like his brother. He stares at Billy - a promise of violence.

Billy swallows his words. Nods instead.

EVERETT (CONT'D)

We understand you fixed some
numbers.

Billy mumbles something unintelligible. Jesse starts
UNBUTTONING his jacket.

*
*

EVERETT (CONT'D)

I'd start talkin' if I was you.

*

BILLY

I was trying to save you...save you
some money, suh.

*
*
*

EVERETT

You damage our rep, you cost us
money. You understand that?

BILLY

Yes, suh.

Everett slides a WAD OF CASH out of his pocket and into
Billy's shirt pocket.

EVERETT

Go make it right. The number hits.
You pay. Got it?

*

BILLY

Yes, suh.

EVERETT

Now.

Billy takes off full speed down the alley.

Everett and Jesse head back inside...

INT. COPELAND'S - CONTINUOUS

...the elegant, high-end restaurant that bares their name.
Everett speaks to the MAITRE'D who holds the door open.

EVERETT

No more interruptions, please.

MAITRE'D

So sorry, Mr. Copeland.

As they move away from him, toward a private dining room...

*

JESSE

You shoulda let me handle that.

*

*

EVERETT

He's got no broken bones, little
brother. And he won't do it again.

*

*

*

JESSE

Yeah, but somebody else might.

*

*

INT. COPELAND'S / PRIVATE DINING ROOM - NIGHT

A small intimate dinner in a room designed for royalty.
EZEKIEL "ZEKE" COPELAND (28), playboy, hedonist, the youngest
and most irresponsible of the Copeland Brothers, launches a
CHAMPAGNE CORK across the room.

ZEKE

To my baby sister!

ELOISE

That's enough, Ezekiel.

The family matriarch, "LADY" ELOISE COPELAND (late 50s), a
wise, traditional woman who is always in-charge, secretly or
not, gently reprimands her son. Next to her, the baby, LISA
"LILI" COPELAND (25) intelligent eyes, earnest and at the
moment quiet.

ZEKE

But you haven't even had any.
C'mon, Ma. It's for her big day.

ELOISE

No thank you.

ZEKE

Pop ain't here.

ELOISE

Boy.

He puts down the glass he poured and sits chastened.

ELOISE (CONT'D)

Instead of trying to turn this
little dinner into a party all a
sudden, you need to explain to me
why y'all throwing a big event
tomorrow and the guest of honor is
not my LiLi.

LISA

Ma. This is plenty. I don't need...

ELOISE

(to Lisa)

Hush. You're too modest.

(to Zeke)

She should have the celebration
you're planning tomorrow.

ZEKE

You don't understand, Ma. That's different. If Joe wins this fight - he's on his way.

ELOISE

To what? A lifetime of getting beat about the head by other men standing around in their underwear?

ZEKE

It's not like that.

ELOISE

It's not?

An ATTENDANT opens the door as Everett and Jesse enter.

*

ZEKE

(to Everett and Jesse)

She wants us to cancel the party.

*

*

ELOISE

No. I want you to do something for your family instead of some boxer you barely know.

ZEKE

It is for the family.

ELOISE

How?

EVERETT

We stand to make a lot of money.

JESSE

And it's good for the race.

*

ELOISE

You all do plenty for the race already. Half the Negroes that got jobs in this city work for you.

JESSE

People need a champ, Ma. Gives 'em hope.

EVERETT

Why don't we do both? Celebrate Joe's victory. And Lisa's 1st day at work. Could be like a debutante's ball...

ELOISE
I like that.

LISA
I'm nobody's debutante.

*
*

EVERETT

We'd still get to promote our contender. Lisa gets to meet some of the more eligible prospects in town. Hell, maybe Joe takes a shine to her.

LISA
I'm not interested in no damn
boxer.

ELOISE
Watch your mouth, young lady.

JESSE
Lisa - do you want a party?

LISA
No. I keep trying to say that.

JESSE
Ma. She don't want it. Don't make
her.

ELOISE
Then cancel it.

Toldja.

ZEKE

Ma!

JESSE

*
*

EVERETT

We've already invited half the town. Hazel and Esther are at the club setting things up right now.

JESSE
Please, Ma.

*
*

LISA
Let 'em have their party.

*
*

Eloise sits unmoved. Zeke throws back some champagne.

A sudden, quiet KNOCK on the door breaks the tension.

What!?

JESSE

The Maitre'D enters tentatively. He is dragging a PHONE with a LONG CHORD with him.

MAITRE'D

I'm sorry, Mr. Copeland. It's Mr.
Roxborough. He insisted.

Everett takes the phone.

EVERETT

(into phone)

What now?

INT. ROXY'S GYM / RING - MORNING

WHAAAAAM!!!!

SWEAT DROPLETS leap off a MAN'S FACE as a LEATHER BOXING MITT
SMASHES into it. The Man stumbles backwards.

He manages to get his MITTS up in a defensive position as his
opponent, JOE LOUIS BARROW (18), skinny but ripped, maybe
angry, stalks toward him and unleashes a fusillade of
punishing blows. The two are in a ring in the middle of a
modest, well-kept boxing gym.

FOUR OBSERVERS, obscured by shadow, watch from the upstairs
office window.

INT. ROXY'S GYM / OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

*

The office is dark, smoky. Thick tension sits on the room.

Everett and Jesse talk with fellow Policy Kings, LUCKY SMITH
(45) and JOHN "ROXY" ROXBOROUGH (40), Joe's manager.

JESSE

What's the big deal? Didn't this
bastard already agree to the fight.

ROXY

He did. But now he's getting cold
feet. Says if his man loses to a
colored, it could ruin him.

JESSE

Fuck 'em both. Shouldn't be no
fighter if he's scary.

EVERETT

But he's not scary is he?

ROXY

I don't think so. Started talkin'
'white boy.' Said the terms don't
reflect his client's exposure.

LUCKY

How much we talkin'?

EVERETT

Didn't say a number did he?

ROXY

Nope.

EVERETT

Of course. Let us figure out how
much the fight is worth to us.

JESSE

Wait a second. We already agreed to
give him the gate and half the
purse. Even if we win. You not
actually thinking about paying this
cocksucker more are you?

EVERETT

I'm not thinking of doing shit.

JESSE

You just gon' let the fight go?

EVERETT

Jesse....

JESSE

What!?

EVERETT

Get a hold of yourself, little
brother.

JESSE

Tired of these fuckin' crackas.

EVERETT

You finished?

Beat.

EVERETT (CONT'D)

We'll be there. They can show up if
they want. Or they can forfeit.

Jesse's not finished. He storms out of the office. Slamming the door behind him. Everett watches after him a beat.

EVERETT (CONT'D)

Sorry, Roxy.

ROXY

He's right. Forfeiture ain't a K.O.

EVERETT

It's a bluff.

ROXY

I dunno. Might want to set a precedent. Sides - he don't need the fight. We do.

LUCKY

No we don't. We make our bread off the numbers. This just gravy.

*
*
*

ROXY

This is legal.

*
*

EVERETT

Can't we fight somebody else?

ROXY

Not tonight. Dewey Sanders has to be his next fight. Joe beat him, we on our way.

LUCKY

Where? And how much more money it gon' take to get there?

*
*

ROXY

When he gets his weight up, I believe we might be looking at the next Jack Johnson.

LUCKY

They ain't never gonna be no 'nother Jack Johnson.

ROXY

But what if there is? Can you imagine what it would mean?

LUCKY

I know. That's why we done what we did already. But I can't see it. Here, there.

(MORE)

LUCKY (CONT'D)

Somewhere along the way - they gon'
make sure the nigga don't win.

EVERETT

(to Roxy)

Tell him the terms is the terms.
We'll see him tonight. Or we won't.

*

Roxy exits.

LUCKY

Jesse's in a state. You shoulda
brought Zeke along to calm his ass
down.

EVERETT

He's supposed to be here.

LUCKY

So where is he?

On Everett, asking the same question.

OMITTED

OMITTED

INT. ZEKE'S CRASH PAD / LIVING ROOM - DAY

*

An UPSCALE BACHELOR'S PAD. There are framed photos everywhere
of Zeke with his arm draped around or lifting glasses with
luminaries of the day like ROBERT ABBOTT, LOUIS ARMSTRONG,
WALTER BARNES, JELLY ROLL MORTON, WILLIAM EDOUARD SCOTT, an
assortment of BEAUTIFUL WOMEN including a not yet famous
KATHERINE DUNHAM and POLICY KINGS like POLICY SAM, MUSHMOUTH
JOHNSON and THE JONES BROTHERS. The COUCH is the finest
leather. The TABLE, BAR - SOLID MACASSAR EBONY. All the
LIQUOR - TOP SHELF. The latest and most expensive PHONOGRAPH
PLAYER AND RADIO and several ROLLEIFLEX CAMERAS adding a
distinct panache to the place.

*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*

A man and WOMAN'S CLOTHES are DISCARDED haphazardly across
the floor from the front door to the couch. The Woman (20s)
voluptuous, uninhibited, is bent over said couch screaming in
delight as Zeke fucks her from behind.

*
*

WOMAN (O.S.)

Oh Zeke! Right there, baby! Right
there! OH GOD, OH GOD...

It sounds like they're close to finishing. Unfortunately...

CRAAAAASH - the DOOR JAM splinters as A LARGE MAN KICKS in the FRONT DOOR.

WOMAN (CONT'D)
(terrified)
Oh GOD!

The Woman attempts to cover herself with her arms as Zeke spins and instinctively tries to pull his PANTS up from around his ankles.

LARGE MAN
Not so fast.

He levels a REMINGTON .45 CALIBER M1911 at Zeke who slowly stands back up - hands raised in the air - careful to place his body between the Woman and the gun.

FRANK "BETTER OFFER" BARNES, (40s) a stylish gentleman with a * cold heart, steps into the apartment.

BETTER OFFER
Let him grab his pants. This one don't pack.

LARGE MAN
You sure, boss?

BETTER OFFER
You wanna look at his dick all day?

Large Man lowers the weapon.

ZEKE
My friend?

BETTER OFFER
(feigning surprise)
Oh. This isn't the Mrs?

The Woman cuts Zeke a look. He shrugs.

BETTER OFFER (CONT'D)
She can go.

ZEKE
We'll try this again real soon, baby.

The Woman quickly slides past Zeke, covering her nakedness as best she can as she grabs a few of her garments off the floor and scurries out the door. Better Offer tips his hat and closes the door behind her while Zeke buttons his pants.

BETTER OFFER

Fine woman.

ZEKE

I thought so too. There a reason
you ain't let us finish?

BETTER OFFER

I want my money.

ZEKE

And you think kickin' in a
Copeland's door is a good way to
get it? You won't live to spend a
dollar.

*
*
*
*

Large Man COCKS BACK THE HAMMER.

BETTER OFFER

It's okay. He gots to puff up is
all. Everett and Jesse ain't never
gonna hear tell of this. Not from
Zeke anyway. Shit - better chance
of him introducin' old girl to his
Old Lady. Ain't that right?

ZEKE

It's hard to say.

BETTER OFFER

I can say. You'd rather your wife
know you're a cooze hound than your
brothers know you are such a
fucking degenerate that even after
they forbade you gamble ever again,
you're still laying jacks with me.

ZEKE

Now, Frank, that ain't no way to
talk to a friend. Let me pour you a
drink. Take a load off.

BETTER OFFER

I don't want no gotdamn drink. I
want my fucking money.

ZEKE

Clearly. You came all the way from
St. Louis just to collect from me?

BETTER OFFER

I came for the fight. Word is the Chicago Kings putting some serious paper behind this kid outta Detroit.

ZEKE

Well come see him up close at The Royale after. If he is who they say he is, I'll have your money. We can have that drink then.

Better Offer just shakes his head.

BETTER OFFER

You better. Or I will take it up with your brothers.

He leaves. On Zeke, looking stressed for the first time.

EXT. WASHINGTON PARK NEIGHBORHOOD / COPELAND MANSION - DAY

A crisp, autumn day. *

Nestled on the historic, well-manicured 5900 block of South Park Avenue, the Copeland Mansion sits kitty corner to the former home of Chicago's 1st Black banker, Jesse Binga. *

Eloise calls to the WHITE DRIVER waxing the CADILLAC.

ELOISE

Make sure it sparkles. I want everything perfect for my baby's first day.

WHITE DRIVER

Yes, Ma'am.

She heads into...

INT. COPELAND MANSION / FOYER - CONTINUOUS *

...the massive foyer and heads up the stairwell. Her hand holds a beautiful HAND-CARVED BANNISTER as she ascends.

Art by prominent and yet-known Negro artists of the day hangs on the walls. Among them are pieces by HENRY OSSAWA TANNER, ARCHIBALD MOTLEY, WILLIAM H. JOHNSON and early works by CHARLES WHITE. In the center of them all is an OIL PORTRAIT of a YOUNGER ELOISE with her late husband, ROYAL COPELAND, a handsome, if not stern, officious looking man.

They are surrounded by Everett, Jesse, Zeke and Lisa when they were much younger. In the painting, Lisa looks to be about 8 years old.

*
*
*

INT. COPELAND MANSION / UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Eloise pushes down the long hallway adorned with more Black art. She passes "Girl in a Green Dress" by William H. Johnson before she opens a door without knocking and enters...

INT. COPELAND MANSION / LISA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

...interrupting Lisa who is trying to mask her nerves in chiffon. She stands in front of an elegant FULL LENGTH MIRROR staring at the FLORAL PRINT DRESS she's wearing. It is modest and professional. Just slightly more daring than the GREEN DRESS she's holding up to consider.

*

LISA

Mom...

ELOISE

You ain't got nothin' I ain't seen
and nothin' I ain't make.

LISA

You never fail to remind me.

ELOISE

Look at my little LiLi Swan.
College graduate. First day working
at *Chicago United Savings and Loan*.

LISA

It's not a big deal, Mom.

ELOISE

It is to me. And it would be to
your father if he was still here.
Thank God you didn't drop out of
school like Everett. Or get kicked
out like Jesse.

LISA

They're men. They have the luxury
of...

ELOISE

They're Negro men. They don't have
any luxuries.

LISA

You know what I'm saying.

ELOISE

I do. That's why I want you to make a good impression. Be courteous, polite. Don't talk unless he asks you something directly. And when you do - soften your voice. You want to speak loud enough for Mr. Randolph to hear you without straining. But that's it.

LISA

Be seen and not heard.

ELOISE

Exactly.

LISA

That is not why I took this job, Mom. And that's not why Mr. Randolph hired me.

ELOISE

Mr. Randolph hired you because he was your father's oldest friend. And if you've got half the sense I think you have, you'll look at this job as an opportunity to listen and to earn his trust.

LISA

And when do I talk?

ELOISE

No time soon if you want to learn anything.

She starts out the room, but pauses at the door.

ELOISE (CONT'D)

The flowers look good on you.

On Lisa, annoyed at every bit of her mother's counsel.

INT. COPELAND MANSION / KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Like the rest of the house, the kitchen is extremely well appointed. The most MODERN FIXTURES embedded in the classic architecture.

*
*
*

Jesse is in the kitchen stuffing BILLS into a DISLODGED WOOD PANEL along the base of the cabinet. He looks grim.

Eloise walks in and surprises him.

ELOISE

Boy, I told you I'm not gonna use any of that money.

JESSE

It's here if you need it.

ELOISE

Your father took care of me. You don't have to.

JESSE

Nonetheless.

He replaces the wood and stands up.

ELOISE

What's wrong?

JESSE

Nothin', Ma. Gotta run.

He bolts the kitchen. Eloise picks up the PHONE and dials.

ELOISE

Morning. Everett and Jesse are at it again.

*
*

INT. TRAIN / BOX CAR - DAY

Cargo packed in stacks of WOODEN CRATES jostle rhythmically in the dark, crowded box car. Jimmy Tillman sits amongst them. He looks as if he has not slept. He wears the same clothes from the ruined meeting several nights before. He's face is streaked with TEARS.

He wipes his face. Approaches the sliver of DAYLIGHT slipping through the CRACK in the BOX CAR DOORS. Cautiously, he peers through the opening.

JIMMY

(sotto)

Damn. Arthur.

EXT. ILLINOIS CENTRAL TRAIN STATION - CONTINUOUS

*

This is not Arkansas.

The station itself is HUGE. An ENORMOUS MASS OF PEOPLE crowd around the tracks awaiting the oncoming TRAIN. More, it seems than the entire population of Arkansas. There are COLORED, WHITE, ASIAN and HISPANIC PEOPLE - each group circled in an enclave of its own.

Many await loved ones. Or have tickets and baggage of their own and plan to board the train for its next destination. Then there are the PEDDLERS, VALETS, CABBIES, PORTERS, POLICY WRITERS and OTHER HUSTLERS who have all descended on this crush of humanity in hopes of making their daily bread.

PAPER BOYS loudly hawk their respective NEWSPAPERS: the Chicago Tribune, Chicago American, Chicago Daily Times. The group of BLACK PAPER BOYS that sell THE CHICAGO DEFENDER, no doubt aware that their paper is in the middle of a very intentional campaign to draw Southern Blacks to Chicago, are among the loudest of them all.

BLACK PAPER BOY
Get The Defender! Your Guide to the
Promised Land!

BLACK PAPER BOY 2
Defender! Get your Defender!

There's also the BULLS, a group of white men wielding BILLY CLUBS who have a particular interest in the cargo cars of the train. One of which has scrawled on its side: "Farewell - We're Good and Gone. Bound for the Promised Land."

The train BELCHES SMOKE as it grinds to a halt and announces itself with a LOUD WHISTLE.

The Bulls start moving toward the various cargo cars.

INT. TRAIN / BOX CAR - CONTINUOUS

Jimmy spies the Bulls fanning out. A couple approach his car.

JIMMY
Shit.

He retreats back into the shadows.

INT/EXT. TRAIN / BOX CAR - MOMENTS LATER

The Bulls throw the doors to Jimmy's car open. Even fully illuminated by daylight, Jimmy is nowhere in sight.

BULL 1
I'll check it.

BULL 1 jumps inside and starts walking through the stacks, looking around, indiscriminately tapping the crates with his BILLY CLUB to see if they sound odd.

He is approaching a PARTICULAR CRATE towards the far end of the car when he hears...

RANDOM BULL (O.S.)
Hey! You! Git back here!

Bull 1 immediately turns and jumps off the car.

He and Bull 2 join the others in running after a STOWAWAY.

INT. TRAIN / BOX CAR - CONTINUOUS

The LID pops off of that particular crate. From inside, Jimmy quickly lowers the lid to the floor and climbs out.

EXT. TRAIN / BOX CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Jimmy sticks his head out the box car door. He sees the crowd dispersing as the Stowaway tries to run away. But the Bulls catch him and proceed to BEAT HIM MERCILESSLY.

While almost everyone's distracted, Jimmy slips off the train and quickly approaches the crowd. One man, CASPER(30), a dandy sporting a GOLD POCKET WATCH and a matching GOLD TOOTH, clocks him while he talks to a female POLICY CUSTOMER. *

POLICY CUSTOMER
...I ain't no Copeland. Just have
to be a day number today. *

CASPER
(with a wink)
And hopefully a gig tomorrow.
Before you know it, you'll be
havin' 'em over for dinner.

She laughs as she digs for change.

For Jimmy, it's easy to get lost in a crowd this size. He notices TICKETED BLACK PASSENGERS disembarking the train in droves. There are joyous and tearful reunions all over the platform.

Jimmy tucks his head and continues moving briskly toward the exit hoping to go unnoticed. He walks by CASPER who is finishing the exchange of a POLICY SLIP for a NICKEL with the female customer. Casper excuses himself and follows after Jimmy. *

CASPER (CONT'D)
Man with your luck don't need to
rush.

Jimmy ignores him. Casper falls in step.

CASPER (CONT'D)
You must look like your Mama.

JIMMY
What? The fuck you just say?

CASPER
Don't mean no offense, Country.
Just observing that you was born
for luck.

JIMMY
How you figure?

CASPER
How you not? You saw what happened
to your fellow striver.

JIMMY
I don't know what you talkin' bout.

CASPER
I ain't the law, man. Just tryna
put a little money in your pocket?

JIMMY
You gonna put money in my pocket?

CASPER
After you put some in mine. A
nickel gets you five dollars.
Five'll get you plenty. Just tell
me your 3 favorite numbers and we
be on our way.

JIMMY
I ain't the gambling type.

CASPER
You sure? The squares usually buy
tickets when they ride the train.

JIMMY
Get away from me, man. I don't know
you.

CASPER

I reckon you don't know nobody. But everybody needs a friend in Chicago.

JIMMY

Do I look like I got money?

CASPER

You look like you got a good head on your shoulders. Good enough to bet on yourself. And good enough to bet on the right candidate when the time comes.

JIMMY

Now you want me to vote? I just got here.

CASPER

We'll get you set up. Just make sure you remember who your friends are when it's election time.

JIMMY

You can help me find a place? Cheap?

CASPER

Cheap is my specialty. I know the perfect spot. Come with me.

Jimmy hesitates. Casper offers his megawatt smile. The glint from the sun bouncing off his gold tooth is almost blinding.

JIMMY

(sotto)

Fuck it.

They start walking.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Name's not Country. It's Jimmy.

CASPER

Please to meet you, Jimmy. Casper.

JIMMY

They really let Negroes vote up here?

*

CASPER

Let us? Shiiit. These crackas need us.

EXT. CHICAGO UNITED SAVINGS & LOAN - DAY

A beehive of patrons swarms in and out of Bronzeville's own DEPARTMENT STORE. Across State Street, nestled on the corner in the shadow of the Bates Building sits Chicago United. A large HAND PAINTED SIGN on the open brick wall of the adjacent building says "INVEST IN YOUR OWN AT CHICAGO UNITED SAVINGS & LOAN."

*
*
*
*
*

INT. CHICAGO UNITED SAVINGS & LOAN - DAY

*

Sunlight streams through LARGE, ARCHED WINDOWS bathing the bank's mid-day rush in warm light. Every teller, manager and customer is Colored.

*
*

Towards the back of the main floor, Lisa, now wearing the GREEN DRESS, sits at a desk strategically positioned in front of a CLOSED OFFICE DOOR with the words "MANAGER" stenciled across the frosted glass. She is talking to an older customer, MR. FERGUSON (60s) feeble and distraught. He leans unsteadily on a CANE.

LISA

Mr. Randolph will see you as soon as he can, sir. If you'll just take a seat...

MR. FERGUSON

Please, Miss. Our little house is alls we got. I told my fool wife not to pay no never-mind to no damn dream book, but she run off and done it anyhow. Now we ain't got the mortgage again. I's just hoping Mr. Randolph could find it in his heart to give us a little relief.

Lisa stands and starts steering him over to the waiting area.

LISA

I'm so sorry to hear that, Mr. Ferguson. I'm sure Mr. Randolph will do everything he can to help you. Now if you don't mind taking a seat right over here, I will make certain that you are his very next customer.

MR. FERGUSON

You sho' is sweet, Miss. Thank...
(suddenly excited)
Oh shit.

Lisa turns. Sees what he sees. Her older brother, Everett, striding into the bank as if he owns it. Some customers point him out; others tip their hats. A few pretend not to see him, but what's clear is that everybody notices as he passes.

MR. FERGUSON (CONT'D)

Pardon me, Miss. Not every day you
see one of the Copeland Brothers.
The head brother at that.

*
*

LISA

Excuse me please.

Moving as quickly and casually as she can, Lisa returns to her post and sits just before Everett arrives.

EVERETT

How's the first day on the big job?

LISA

What do you want, Everett?

EVERETT

I need to talk to your boss.

LISA

You'll have to come back. He's in a meeting right now.

EVERETT

Tell him it's me.

LISA

It doesn't matter. They're customers waiting. One in particular who lost his mortgage payment playing policy.

EVERETT

And you think that's my fault.

LISA

Our fortune is built on the backs
of the less fortunate.

*

EVERETT

You sound like Dad.

*

LISA

Daddy was right.

*

EVERETT

I don't have time, Lili. He called me.

LISA
Have a seat. I'll let Mr. Randolph
know you're here.

EVERETT
Lisa...

LISA
You're gonna wait. Like everybody
else for a change.

EVERETT
And you will lose your little job
if I do.

LISA
Are you going to be the one that
tells Mom you got me fired on my
first day?

EVERETT
Jesus Christ. Here.

Everett abruptly counts out SEVERAL BILLS onto her desk.

LISA
What's this for?

EVERETT
The old man. Now tell Mr. Randolph
I'm here.

Lisa smiles wryly as she stands. Raps quietly on the door.

RANDOLPH (O.S.)
Come in, Lisa.

Just before she cracks the door, Everett offers...

EVERETT
How sweet. You look just like the
girl in Mom's favorite painting.

On Lisa, wry smile erased. Now more annoyed than ever.

LISA
Sorry to disturb you, Mr.
Randolph...

INT. CHICAGO UNITED SAVINGS & LOAN / OFFICE - LATER

*

The office is decorated with more taste and capital than one
would expect in a bank manager's office.

Everett and CURTIS "EYEBALL" RANDOLPH (50s), regal, a gangster turned statesman dressed in an exquisite IMPORTED ITALIAN SUIT, talk in hushed tones. It's clear, he's more than just a bank manager.

*
*
*
*

RANDOLPH
You been having trouble with any of your wheels?

EVERETT
Some idiot who tried to change the numbers after the pull. I straightened him out.

*

RANDOLPH
No raids?

Everett raps the desk.

EVERETT
None yet. But not sure how long our protection lasts with the new administration in place.

*
*

RANDOLPH
I know. I'm working on it.

EVERETT
That's why you called me down here? You wanna talk about Cermak again?

RANDOLPH
Actually - I heard you and Jesse are having problems.

EVERETT
Who told you? Roxy? Lucky?

*

RANDOLPH
Doesn't matter. What's going on?

EVERETT
Sanders' manager wants more money for the fight. Jesse wants to handle it.

RANDOLPH
Well you don't want that.

EVERETT
Exactly.

RANDOLPH
So, he's mad you're paying him.

EVERETT
I'm not paying him.

RANDOLPH
Why not?

EVERETT
Cuz fuck these crackas.

RANDOLPH
Now you sound like Jesse.

EVERETT
He's not all wrong. Hell I agree
with him - a Colored Heavyweight
Champ will do wonders for the race.
And our balance sheets.

RANDOLPH
So then pay. The more legitimate
businesses we have the better. Plus-
you don't want your brother
upsetting the balance of things. We
got enough trouble with Cermak in
office as it is.

EVERETT
Fine. About Cermak...?

Randolph moves to the wall. Flips back a painting, "The Good
Shepherd" by Tanner. Behind it, a HIDDEN SAFE. He starts
removing CASH.

*
*

RANDOLPH
Yes.

EVERETT
All due respect - I just don't see
it.

*

RANDOLPH
Why not?

EVERETT
Did the Democrats free the slaves?

RANDOLPH
No. And neither did Big Bill
Thompson.

EVERETT
He did a lot more for us than that
Czech bastard ever will.

RANDOLPH

That Czech bastard won. He's the Mayor now.

EVERETT

So we're just supposed to fall in line. Throw out 65 years of party loyalty because we lost one election.

RANDOLPH

We're not loyal to a party. We're loyal to our interests.

EVERETT

And Anton Cermak is serving our interest? Raiding wheels and arresting every other writer we know.

RANDOLPH

He wants us to fall in line. He knows the Republican machine is gonna pull out all the stops to take City Hall back. He won't win again without us.

EVERETT

Not gonna get our vote with the shit he's doing now.

RANDOLPH

It's the only way he knows to deal with Negroes.

EVERETT

So we should teach him a lesson and vote his ass outta office. Before he destroys the policy business.

RANDOLPH

Three long years till we elect a new mayor. But if we get on his side now, we can control him.

EVERETT

How we gon' do that?

Randolph hands him a FEW BRICKS OF CASH.

RANDOLPH

I'm gonna talk to him.

*

*
*
*

*
*
*

*
*
*

*
*
*

EVERETT

Let me know how that goes. In the mean time, I'll go pay the man.

RANDOLPH

Make sure you call Jesse first.

EVERETT

(getting up to leave)
I'll take care of it.

RANDOLPH

Everett.

He stops.

RANDOLPH (CONT'D)

You guys are better together than you are apart.

On Everett, knowing that it's true.

*

EXT. LESTER DANIEL'S OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

The Northside. Most of the commuters are Caucasian.

LESTER DANIELS (30s) aka THE MANAGER leaves the office building and approaches an awaiting PACKARD on the curve. A NEGRO DRIVER holds the door open and closes it behind him.

I/E. PACKARD - LATER

Lester Daniels reads the CHICAGO TRIBUNE as the car cruises along. He notices that the car passes his turn.

*

LESTER

You missed your turn. You're supposed to turn right on 79th.

*

The Negro Driver does not respond or look up. It is odd.

NEGRO DRIVER

You got another appointment, you'll be wanting to keep, Mr. Daniels.

*

As he speaks, he raises a REVOLVER so Lester can see it. Then lays it on the seat next to him.

On Lester, silent now. And afraid.

EXT. SOUTHSIDE POLICY BANK - DAY

Jimmy and Casper walk through a rough part of the Southside. The block is lined with STORE FRONTS and TENEMENT BUILDINGS in varying stages of disrepair. A RADIO broadcasts Jack L. Cooper's "The All Negro Hour" from an OPEN WINDOW. *

It is all breathtaking to Jimmy - who has not seen a section of a city of this magnitude filled with nothing but Negroes. There are some BUMS here and there, but also many Negroes driving cars and trucks, hustling their wares from the corners. One such brother, a NUMBERS RUNNER, is in the middle of a furtive transaction with an OLD WOMAN. She is handing him some MONEY when a BEAT COP rounds the corner.

OLD WOMAN

I ain't know'd whether to play my
Myron's name or Little Darryl. But
since Myron ain't got the rent I...

The Numbers Runner drops her CHANGE on the ground and takes off - running away from the Beat Cop who gives chase.

JIMMY

Y'all got colored cops too?

CASPER

Not much better than the white ones
you ask me. Folks just tryin' to
make their way through the panic
and these toms wanna make it
harder.

JIMMY

Jobs all dried up?

CASPER

Lotta folks outta work since the
crash. But there's still more
Negroes working here than anywhere
on Earth. *

JIMMY

That's not true. *

CASPER

Sure it is. Cuz there's more
Negroes on the south side of
Chicago than there is in Africa. *

Jimmy laughs. *

CASPER (CONT'D)

Everybody read the same paper brung
you here, Jimmy. More people. More
jobs. More opportunity. Let's cut
through this alley.

*
*
*
*

They turn off the main drag into an alley.

JIMMY

You know anybody hiring?

CASPER

Depends on the kinda work you
looking for. What you used to do
back in...where you say you came
from again?

JIMMY

I didn't.

CASPER

(chuckling)

That's alright, Jimmy. Er'body get
off that train runnin' from one
thing or another. You good with...

TWO ROUGH MEN brandishing KNIVES step from the SHADOWS.

ROUGH MAN

Alright, Fancy Man. I'll take the
cash. And your gold watch. You too.
Empty your pockets.

CASPER

You're making a mistake.

ROUGH MAN

Shut the fuck up. Hand it over!

Jimmy's hands move toward his waist. Rough Man 2 charges.

Jimmy starts to pull the Smith & Wesson, but Casper grabs his
hand - stopping him - before he can pull it all the way out.

JIMMY

What the hell you doin'?

CASPER

No need for that.

Rough Man now has his KNIFE at Jimmy's throat.

*

JIMMY

You set me up?

CASPER

Not in the slightest. These boys
gonna apologize and we gon' be on
our way.

ROUGH MAN 2

Why the fuck would we do that?

CASPER

Cuz we work for the Copeland
Brothers.

He flashes his gilded smile.

ROUGH MAN 2

Oh shit. Chauncey?

ROUGH MAN 1

What you saying my name for, man?
(to Casper)
We sorry. Here. We 'on't want no
trouble.

He rifles his pockets. Drops a couple of CRUMPLED BILLS.

ROUGH MAN 1 (CONT'D)

Give him your money, fool.

ROUGH MAN 2

(backing away)
I ain't got no money.

ROUGH MAN 1

Just come on.
(to Casper)
We sorry. Tell the Misters - we
sorry.

*

The two men run off.

JIMMY

The Misters? What the hell? Who are
the Copeland Brothers?

*

*

Jimmy starts picking up the money off the ground.

CASPER

Told you it's good to have friends
in Chicago.

JIMMY

I ain't never heard tell of no
friends like that.

CASPER

(walking ahead)

Welcome to Bronzeville. Home of the Copeland Brothers. Far as I know - the owners and operators of more policy wheels than anybody in Chicago.

JIMMY

What's a wheel?

EXT. COPELAND'S HABERDASHERY - DAY

*

Copeland's Haberdashery sits in the middle of a bustling block known as Whiskey Row years ago when it was the center of the city's Red Light District. Now it is a brisk commercial district filled with Black-owned businesses.

*

*

CASPER (V.O.)

The wheel's a bank. Not no Savings and Loan. It's where they pull the numbers and people find out whether they hit or not. And get their cash. \$20 for a dime gig. \$200 for jacks if you got the balls.

One PATRON races toward the storefront.

INT. COPELAND'S HABERDASHERY - DAY

A surprisingly large group of CUSTOMERS are gathered in the front room of this tailor's shop in the middle of the afternoon. That is because despite the presence of SEWING MACHINES, MANNEQUINS and WORK COUNTERS that are the tell-tale signs of a tailoring business, most are not gathered to get their trousers hemmed.

*

JIMMY (V.O.)

They can front all that?

CASPER (V.O.)

Course they can. Folk say they rake in millions off those nickel and dime bets. Plus they own more shops, stores, restaurants than you could shake a stick out. Some are full legit.

A RADIO in the shop is also carrying WSBC's broadcast of "The All Negro Hour," but no one's really listening.

All eyes are focused on the back corner of the room where the POLICY BANKER, a formidable, stern looking man packing a BARELY CONCEALED GUN, stands watching over the crowd. He calls to a LOOKOUT hanging by the front door.

POLICY BANKER

The law out there?

The Lookout, also STRAPPED, briefly steps outside and looks over the block. He steps back in and gives the ALL CLEAR SIGN to the Policy Banker. He positions himself so he BLOCKS the door.

Which he LOCKS.

The radio is TURNED OFF.

A DRAPE is removed from the back counter revealing a small WOODEN BARREL (aka the "WHEEL".)

A BLIND-FOLDED POLICY WRITER begins spinning the Wheel which has almost 80 small NUMBERED RUBBER CAPSULES inside. He is flanked by the Policy Banker who stands ready to take the capsules from the Writer as he pulls them out. Ponds is also there, positioned near the door to the back office. Like the Policy Banker, he is ARMED.

The room is LOUD and ELECTRIC. The Policy Writer stops the spin and begins to draw the first number. The hopeful Customers, most of whom clutch POLICY SLIPS, alternately call out the numbers they are hoping for, close their eyes in prayer or make other petitions to Higher Powers for a financial blessing.

*
*

CASPER (V.O.)

Loan money to people to start they
own businesses too. They the
backbone of this community. So
don't nobody wanna fuck wit' em.
Plus they'll kill you if you do.

Everything goes silent when the Policy Banker looks over to the back office door as Everett Copeland steps out. Everett calls to the Banker...

EVERETT

Carry on.

...and the organized noise continues. He speaks to Ponds.

EVERETT (CONT'D)

No sign of this manager?

PONDS

Not yet.

INT. COPELAND'S HABERDASHERY / EVERETT'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Everett closes the door. Crosses to his desk and picks up the phone. His leg jack hammers the floor as he dials.

EVERETT

Jesse there?

ELOISE (O.S.)

Ain't seen him. Everything okay?

EVERETT

Everything's fine.

ELOISE (O.S.)

Good. I want y'all to come by for dinner before your little fight.

EVERETT

Yes, Ma'am.

On Everett, wondering if there's going to be a fight.

OMITTED

INT. ABANDONED TENEMENT - DAY

This building is beyond fucked. Pools of stagnant water. Holes in walls. Boarded windows. Rats. Unfinished floors. Not a place anyone wants to hang out. No one that is, except Jesse Copeland. He sits on a couple of STACKED APPLE CRATES - a picture of serenity.

*

A door opens and Negro Driver and another HEAVY muscle Lester Daniels through it. He protests as they force walk him to the middle of the floor to stand in front of Jesse.

JESSE

Let him go.

They do so roughly.

LESTER

Who the fuck are you supposed to be?

JESSE

I work with Roxy.

LESTER

Well - you tell his black ass the fight is off. I don't care if you niggas change your mind about the money.

JESSE

I thought you might say that. And normally - I'm the type of Negro that would take exception to such language. I tend to just react to things without thinking. That's what my brother tells me...

LESTER

I don't give a fuck you black sonuvabitch. Let me go or...

Heavy grabs Lester's face in his MASSIVE HAND. He squeezes Lester's cheeks together so his lips purse and he can't talk. *

JESSE

I already told you I don't like that kind of language. 'Sides - we're just talking here. Being reasonable. Right? That's how we solve problems. And I've put a lot of thought to this.

Jesse starts unbuttoning his shirt as he speaks.

JESSE (CONT'D)

See - I think you got cold feet cuz you don't think a Negro and a white man can have a fair fight. But that's not true. See - I'm a Negro. You're white. And we can have a fair fight. Matter of fact, we gon' have one - right now.

He drops his shirt revealing a WHITE TANK TEE, BUILT FRAME. Lester mumbles something unintelligible.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Sure it is. This ain't just about tonight.

(to his cronies)

Gentlemen.

Heavy and Negro Driver step back as Jesse stalks forward. He moves like he spent some time in the ring himself. Lester turns to run, but Heavy and Negro Driver catch him and push him back towards Jesse....

LESTER

Wait...

...who throws his FIRST PUNCH. It snaps Lester's head back and staggers him backwards. Heavy and Negro Driver help him keep his balance.

Jesse unleashes a vicious combination on Lester. Blood erupts from his face. He drops to a knee. Jesse stands over him menacing - no longer masking his rage.

JESSE

Fight me, you cocksucker!

Lester raises his hand signaling mercy or something, but Heavy and Negro Driver just stand him to his feet.

There is a look of a evil joy in Jesse's eyes. His lips curl into a smile as he approaches for another assault.

BOSKO (O.S.)

The city's colored are out of control as it is.

INT. CITY HALL / MAYOR'S OFFICE - DAY

*

The 44th Mayor of Chicago, ANTON J. CERMAK (59), a Czech political brawler with no formal education, sits with his Chief of Staff, FEDIR "FREDDY" BOSKO (50s), salty, of Polish and Ukrainian descent, sipping tea and talking.

BOSKO

Giving a private audience to this so called Negro business-man will only embolden the native element.

CERMAK

Three of the five wards that went for Thompson are on the Southside. Damn near 40,000 votes.

BOSKO

And we still won.

CERMAK

Cuz Bill Thompson is a corrupt sonuvabitch. In three years, the Northside will have forgotten how terrible the Republican administration was. We're gonna need the Southside coons if we want to hold this office.

*
*
*
*
*

BOSKO
If you say so.

CERMAK
I do. So show the fucker in so we
can get this over with.

The Chief of Staff rises and opens the door to the outer office where Curtis Randolph sits in the waiting area across from the Mayor's SECRETARY. He's been there for a while.

SECRETRAY
You can head in now, Mr. Randolph.

RANDOLPH
Thank you, Ma'am.

Curtis crosses into the office.

BOSKO
Sorry to keep you waiting, *Curtis*.

There is a slight tinge in the way Bosko says his name.

RANDOLPH
No problem, *Freddy*. Happy to
finally have a chance to sit down
with our Mayor and offer my
congratulations in person.

The men shake.

CERMAK
Well it is my pleasure. So good to
finally meet you. I hear wonderful
things about the work you're doing
in the community.

RANDOLPH
Actually, sir - we met briefly when
you spoke at Wendell Phillips.

CERMAK
Ah. That was a great event. I do
recall. You seemed to be one of the
few civic leaders on the Southside
who seemed to think I had a
snowball's chance of victory.

RANDOLPH
I recognize that the entire city
does not have the same political
disposition we do.

CERMAK

Do I take that to mean you are also machine loyalist?

RANDOLPH

Oh contraire. I say "we" in acknowledgement of my particular constituency. I don't cast my ballot out of rote. I want to forge alliances with those who have the best interest of my community at heart.

CERMAK

And I have the best interest of all Chicagoans in mind at all times. So it is good that we speak.

RANDOLPH

There is a particular issue that has confronted the Southside. I wonder if you can help.

CERMAK

How can I be of service?

RANDOLPH

It seems, since your election, there has been an inordinate and, I dare say, unnecessary amount of pressure on certain business interests.

CERMAK

If you're referring to my administration's efforts to root out crime and corruption wherever we find it, I will remind you that I campaigned on a promise to do just that.

RANDOLPH

To be clear - sporting houses are not my concern. And I applaud any attempts to curtail the violence associated with the Outfit. I speak specifically to certain non-violent efforts of colored entrepreneurs who have taken the onus of making capital investments in our district.

Cermak looks puzzled.

BOSKO
He's talking about policy.

CERMAK
I know. I'm just....surprised.
(to Randolph)
Curtis, you are one of the first
and only Negros to successfully
open and run a bank for coloreds in
the entire State. Maybe the
country. Why's a man of your
relative stature here pandering for
hooligans who prey upon the most
vulnerable of your people?

RANDOLPH
Respectfully, the men you call
hooligans are the only reason there
is any hope in our community. A
community, I'll remind you, that
has been historically neglected and
marginalized in every possible way.

CERMAK
Are you that desperate for
deposits?

RANDOLPH
I beg your pardon.

CERMAK
Let's cut to the quick, shall we?
You want the police to lay off the
policy bankers so they can funnel
money into your "legitimate" bank.
And in exchange, you'll deliver the
Black Belt in the next election.

RANDOLPH
My interests are not self
motivated.

CERMAK
Well, mine are. You see my
interests are the city's interests.

RANDOLPH
And mine are in supporting the
candidate that supports us.

CERMAK
So we have an understanding?

RANDOLPH

I understand there's three years
until you run again.

On Cermak, flummoxed by a Negro that sees himself as equal.

INT. ABANDONED TENEMENT - DAY

Lester Daniel's face is SWOLLEN and BLOODY. Heavy and Negro Driver hold the barely conscious man up as Jesse continues to beat him. Jesse doesn't notice the CUTS that have opened on his hands.

JESSE

Say it! Say it, you miserable fuck!

Alternately striking him and taunting him to speak.

JESSE (CONT'D)

We gon' have a fair fight. Say it!

NEGRO DRIVER

Jesse, man, you gon' kill him.

JESSE

Not if he smartens up.

Lester says something. But he's so weak, no one can hear it.

JESSE (CONT'D)

What's that?

Jesse leans in close so he can hear the man's whispers.

Lester SPITS BLOOD in Jesse's face.

Jesse loses his shit. Beating the man so wildly, Heavy and Negro Driver are forced to let go of him. They exchange looks as the men crash to the floor and Jesse continues to pummel the poor man.

They grab Jesse and pull him off Lester.

HEAVY

Stop, Jesse! He not gonna give.

They pull their boss a few feet away and try to calm him down as he struggles against them.

NEGRO DRIVER

Jesse, please!

JESSE

Alright, alright, alright!

He relents. They let go. All three shake it off for a beat. Jesse finally seeming to get control of himself.

Then - quicker than either of them can react, Jesse snatches the GUN from Negro Driver's waist and strides back over to Lester. He pulls him up by the HAIR and slams the barrel of the gun to his temple.

JESSE (CONT'D)

You got two seconds, mothafucka!
One!

HEAVY

Jesse, DON'T!

JESSE

Two!

He SQUEEZES...

EVERETT (O.C)

Go ahead.

Jesse looks up. Letting go of the trigger before it discharges. He sees Everett standing in the doorway. His Driver behind him holding a LEATHER SATCHEL.

EVERETT (CONT'D)

Do it. Blow him away. Then what?

JESSE

Then this cracka is dead. And all these white cocksuckas know not to fuck wit us.

EVERETT

Cuz that's what's gonna happen right? No. Let me tell you how this plays out. He's dead. The fight gets cancelled for sure. A bunch of flatfoots investigate the murder of a white man. On the Southside. In this building. We all get pinched. You get the hotsquat. Mama's heart breaks. Again. Every policy bank in Bronzeville is shut down. No more dough for the legit businesses - so they dry up too. If they don't just burn 'em down for good measure. Everything we working toward goes down the drain. And for what?

*
*

Jesse says nothing.

EVERETT (CONT'D)
Cuz you a goddamn hothead. Cuz you
refuse to think. Go head if it's
worth it to you. Let him have it.

Jesse considers his brother. The white man whose barely open eyes still regard him with contempt.

Jesse wrestles with his bloodlust.

And drops the gun.

EVERETT (CONT'D)
(to Negro Driver)
Take him to the house.
(to Jesse)
Ma wants us to come for dinner.
(to Heavy)
Grab the roscoe. Help him sit up.

Heavy does as told. While Negro Driver walks a chastened Jesse out past his brother. The two glare at each other.

Once Jesse is gone, Everett goes and crouches by Lester.

EVERETT (CONT'D)
Find me some ice.

*

Heavy leaves. He pulls his SILK POCKET SQUARE out his jacket and goes to wipe Lester's face.

The man FLINCHES. Turns away.

EVERETT (CONT'D)
I'm not gonna hurt you. Is it okay?

Lester nods. Everett gently begins to wipe the blood away.

EVERETT (CONT'D)
I'm sorry about my brother. He's...

*

LESTER
...a fool.

*

*

WHAAAAAM - Everett SMACKS the words right out of his mouth -
HARD. His eyes narrow to a slit.

*

*

EVERETT
My brother is my brother. You see
the bag?

*

*

*

Lester nods.

*

EVERETT (CONT'D)

2 G's. For your trouble. So the
fight goes on. You okay with that?

Lester doesn't respond. He leans into the man. Whispers
something only he and the man can hear. *

Lester's face whites. Everett speaks audibly again. Still
quiet. Very calmly.

EVERETT (CONT'D)

The fight goes on. You had a bad
car accident. We ever hear
otherwise, all bets are off. Okay?

Lester Daniels nods, more afraid than he's ever been.

INT. COPELAND MANSION / DINING ROOM - EVENING *

A THICK SALVE is applied with care to the CUTS on Jesse's
hands.

JESSE

It's nothing, Ma. Worked the heavy
bag too hard.

Eloise sits next to him at the dining room table tending to
his hand while the ELEGANT FEAST that awaits them gets cold.

Still pissed, but trying to hide it, Jesse is careful not to
look at Everett who sits across the table also working hard
not to look at him. Instead, Everett eyes the CLOCK on the
wall. Under the table, his leg shakes like it was in the
office. His wife, ESTHER (26), fastidious about rules and
quiet to a fault, places a calming HAND on his THIGH to get
him to stop. She reiterates the point with her eyes. *

Also at the table - Lisa, still dressed from work.

ELOISE

I think you all done got too
excited about this fight. You
oughta know better.

JESSE

It's fine, Ma.

ELOISE

No it is not fine. Where's Ezekiel?

A BUTLER brings over a few BANDAGES and places them on the
table next to Eloise. He disappears back into the kitchen as
Eloise continues to work on Jesse's damaged hand.

EVERETT

He's probably at the club. Making sure everything is perfect for tonight.

ELOISE

I told him to be here. I figured since I'm lettin' you all throw your little party...

JESSE

He'll be here.

ELOISE

He's late.

LISA

He's always late, Mom.

ELOISE

Don't sass me, girl. How was your first day?

LISA

With the exception of a couple asinine customers, it was...unremarkable.

JESSE

Need me to talk to somebody?

LISA

Nothing I can't handle.

ELOISE

How was Mr. Randolph?

LISA

He was fine. I mostly answered the phone. Nothing too exciting.

JESSE

We can find something for ya.

LISA

Oh no. I see too much of you guys as it is. No. I'll pay my dues at Chicago United. Learn the business so one day I can work at a bank that's not so complicated.

JESSE

What's complicated about holding people's money?

EVERETT

She thinks giving people something
to hope for is exploitative.

LISA

Policy is not hope.

EVERETT

That's where you're wrong, little
sister.

*
*

ELOISE

Enough. The important thing right
now is that this family is together
to celebrate my LiLi getting her
business degree and using it. I am
so proud of you.

*

(a little emotional)

God...I wish your father was here.

She casts a look toward the EMPTY CHAIR at the head of the
table. Jesse places a tender hand on his mother's back.

ELOISE (CONT'D)

I'm okay, baby.

ZEKE (O.S.)

Where's the next president of
Chicago United Savings and Loan!?

Zeke saunters in holding a BOUQUET. He wraps Lisa in a hug.

ZEKE (CONT'D)

I heard deposits was up 100 large
today!

LISA

(laughing)

You a fool, boy.

ELOISE

Ezekiel Marcellus Copeland. You
supposed to be here 30 minutes ago.

He breaks the hug with Lisa. Heads over to his mother,
cheshire stitched to his face. He presents her the bouquet
with a flourish. Jesse rolls his eyes.

ZEKE

It takes time to hand pick roses.

LISA

Nothing for the bank's next
president?

He playfully shushes her, roses still extended to Eloise.

JESSE
He's conning you, Ma.

She takes them, charmed - despite herself.

ELOISE
I know. But they'll look lovely on
the table. Where's Hazel?

JESSE
Left her to finish at the club.
She'll be this way before long.

ELOISE
Again? We'll wait.

| | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| EVERETT | JESSE |
| We need to be gettin' to the | Ma. We got a lot riding on |
| arena before... | this fight... |

ELOISE
Hush. I insist.

LISA
Please, Ma. Not on account of me.

ELOISE
What I say?

Silence from all. She stands and heads to the kitchen.

ELOISE (CONT'D)
Everett, come help me find a vase
for these flowers.

ESTHER
I'll help you, Ms. Eloise.

EVERETT
I got it, babe.

As Everett follows his Mom through the door into...

INT. COPELAND MANSION / KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

....modern and very well appointed kitchen. She instructs the
Butler who is waiting there.

ELOISE

Renfro, be a dear and run the capon
back in the oven for me. Dinner'll
be a little while.

BUTLER

Yessum.

He heads into the dining room as Eloise starts opening
cabinets from the BUTLER'S PANTRY looking for the right vase.

EVERETT

Do we really have to wait for
Hazel? I don't want to be late.

ELOISE

Neither does Jesse. Looks like
that's the only thing y'all can
agree on.

EVERETT

We didn't say...

ELOISE

You think I can't see, boy? Heavy
bag. I don't believe that
foolishness for one minute. You
need to work out whatever's going
on between the two of you.

EVERETT

That's not fair, Ma. Why's it on
me?

ELOISE

Because you don't think with your
heart. And I'm not gonna be around
to play peacemaker forever.

She places the flowers in a vase and splays them out for
Everett to admire.

ELOISE (CONT'D)

See. Beautiful.

On Everett, as Eloise returns to the dining room.

INT. RAINBO FRONTON - NIGHT

WHAAAAAM!!!!

BEADS OF SWEAT leap off a Joe Louis's FACE as a LEATHER
BOXING MITT SMASHES into it.

The man wearing the mitt, DEWEY SANDERS, (26) white, muscular, several pounds heavier and more experienced than Joe stalks forward.

Several BANNERS touting CHICAGO GOLDEN GLOVES are strung up around the space. They're in Fred Mann's Rainbo Fronten. The giant SMOKE FILLED ROOM is electric. Negroes and whites alike cheer the sweet science. *
*

SPECTATOR

Kill the black bastard!

SPECTATOR 2

Who told this monkey he could
fight!?

The two warriors battle.

Everett, Jesse and Zeke, now dressed the dashing peacock, squeeze through the crowd and find their seats awaiting them in the front next to Lucky and Roxy.

LUCKY

That's right, Joe!

ROXY

Finish him!

(to Everett)

Nice of you guys to show up.

EVERETT

How we doing?

OMITTED

OMITTED

OMITTED

INT. THE ROYALE - LATER

POP! A CHAMPAGNE CORK FLIES.

Followed by raucous CHEERS from the Southside's BEST DRESSED and MOST GLAMOROUS, practically all of whom seem to have gathered at The Royale, the Copeland Brothers' legendary night club in the heart of The Stroll. It is larger and more tastefully expensive than anyone could imagine for a club owned by Negroes in 1932. *
*
*

The Brothers are there, as well as Curtis Randolph, Roxy, Lucky Smith, a number of OTHER POLICY KINGS, their WIVES and * MISTRESSES as well as OTHER LADIES, HUSTLERS, GAMBLERS, ENTREPRENEURS, CRIMINALS, and SQUARES too. As long as they look good and have some dollars to spend - they are among.

A band, WALTER BARNES AND HIS CREOLIANS, plays on stage.

Zeke Copeland takes the floor, OVERFLOWING CHAMPAGNE BOTTLE in hand. Several WAITERS top off those who are in need.

ZEKE

If you don't know him now, you gon' know him soon. And so will the whole world. Lift your glasses for the next champ - MR. JOE LOUIS!!!

Everybody cheers. Roxy nudges Joe who attempts to speak. But the crowd is too loud. Zeke notices and simmers the crowd.

ZEKE (CONT'D)

C'mon, yall. Joe got somethin' to say.

JOE

(stammering slightly)

I just want to thank Roxy for bringing me out here to compete in the Golden Gloves. And the Copeland Brothers for hosting this celebration. Believing in me.

LUCKY

A lot of us believe in you, Joe.

JOE

My thanks to you too, suh. And all the Kings!

Those gathered around the bar erupt in spontaneous cheers.

NEAR THE FRONT DOORS

Jimmy, dressed better than before, but clearly working with a limited budget, walks in with Casper. His eyes saucer at the sight of the place; Negroes looking fabulous and dressed to the 9's.

JIMMY

I done died and gone to Negro Heaven.

CASPER

(laughing)

Heaven's later. When we find you a lady. C'mon, let's get you a drink.

JIMMY

They own this too...?

*
*

The two blend into the mass of people, just missing Better Offer as he heads over to Zeke who stands with MRS. HAZEL COPELAND (30.) She is stunning, a star in her own right, named for her eyes. Better Offer, shadowed as always by his Large Man, introduces himself.

BETTER OFFER

Zeke, you told me your wife was stunning, but I don't think you do her justice.

HAZEL

You flatter me, Mister...?

She extends her hand which he takes and kisses.

BETTER OFFER

Barnes. But you can call me Better Offer.

ZEKE

Hazel, baby - Frank and I got to see a man about a horse. Why don't you go bless Walter and the boys.

HAZEL

Sure thing. Nice to meet you, Mr. Offer.

They watch her head over to the band stand.

ZEKE

Real classy.

They heads toward the back of the club, not noticing Everett clocking the whole interaction from across the room. He's talking to Jesse and Randolph. Jesse's got a few in him.

RANDOLPH

You guys alright?

EVERETT

We're good.

JESSE

Yes, sir.

*

Alright. Good. I told Anna I wouldn't stay long, but I wanted to congratulate you both. Relax. Have a good time. You're on your way.

We not goin' anywhere without you.

Well. I appreciate that. But Eyeball's retired. You guys have a good night. I'm gonna check on Lucky.

He excuses himself. Goes over to talk to Lucky.

*
*
*

*
*

*
*
*

*
*
*

*
*
*

*
*

*
*

*
*

- * *
- * *
- * *
- * *
- * *

JESSE

Maybe I oughta start my own wheel.
Shit I was runnin' numbers before
you anyway.

EVERETT

Is that what you really want?

JESSE

What difference it make to you?

EVERETT

Look, man. I know I can be stubborn
sometimes. That's the way we was
both raised. But never for a second
- have I thought I could do any of
this without you. Remember - it was
me that asked you for help. And
look at what we done together so
far. Five years ago, nobody coulda
imagined a club this big on The
Stroll. A legit bank. Property.
That's why cats like Better Offer
and Denver Ferguson are always
comin' to town. To see what we got
goin' in Chicago. They wanna be us.
Not Everett. Not Jesse. Us.

JESSE

Don't forget Bro-Bro.

*

EVERETT

Course not. Zeke built this club.

Jesse looks out at the sea of Brown. Laughing, drinking,
celebrating, free. In their own club. Hazel has now joined
the band on stage. She joins them in a vocal rendition of
"Birmingham Bertha."

JESSE

He sure knows how to throw a party.

EVERETT

We all play our part. And this just
the beginning. If we stick
together.

He raises his glass. A beat. Jesse clinks. Spies Zeke
emerging from a back corridor with Better Offer.

*

EVERETT (CONT'D)

We tight?

JESSE

Yeah.

(nods toward Better Offer)
I need to tell that mothafucka to
leave our little brother alone?

*
*
*
*

EVERETT

Not tonight. Let me talk to Zeke.

*

JESSE

Good idea.

*
*

He steps off to go talk to Zeke just as Casper arrives with
Jimmy Tillman in tow.

CASPER

Boss? Got somebody I want you to
meet. This Jimmy. Got some talents
I think you'll appreciate.

JESSE

That right? Where you from?

JIMMY

Here and there, sir. Just got off
the train today. Lookin' for a
fresh start...

ACROSS THE ROOM

Everett glad hands his way through the club and catches up
with Zeke who has already parted ways with Better Offer. He
throws an arm around his little brother's shoulders - walking
with him in a tight embrace.

Zeke plays cool, but is visibly unnerved.

EVERETT

Great party, little brother.

ZEKE

Great fight, Ev.

EVERETT

I see you beating your gums with
Better Offer.

ZEKE

Just catching up is all.

EVERETT

Hope so. You know St. Louis no
different than Chicago as far as we
concerned.

ZEKE

I know. Don't worry.

EVERETT

Good. I'd hate to get Jesse all riled up again.

ZEKE

Believe me - nobody wants that.

JESSE (O.C.)

Fuck ya'll talkin' about.

Zeke smiles- silently pleading with his eyes to Everett as Jesse throws his arms around both his brothers.

EVERETT

Just how amazing Hazel is.

JESSE

I think we can all agree about that.

The brothers watch the performance - sincerely mesmerized.

FRONT DOORS

Fashionably late and ravishing in a RED DRESS, Lisa saunters into the club. The MAITRE'D practically curtsies when he greets her.

MAITRE'D

Good evening, Ms. Copeland.

LISA

Evening, Freddy.

She doesn't get far before Better Offer is on her.

BETTER OFFER

As I live and breathe. Lisa Copeland - out the house and all grown up.

LISA

Mr. Barnes.

BETTER OFFER

Oh, please, Lisa. No need to be so formal...

AT THE BAR

Casper SLAMS A SHOT on the stick and motions for another while Jimmy is still holding his, watching him.

JIMMY
You alright?

CASPER
I'm fine. I gets a bit ancy
whenever I talk to the boss.

JIMMY
I appreciate the introduction.

CASPER
Don't mention it. Jesse handles the
business end of the business - if
you know what I'm sayin'. It ain't
lost on me how quick you was to
step to my defense today.

*
*
*

JIMMY
Everybody needs a friend in
Chicago.

Casper laughs as he eyes the room.

CASPER
Speaking of Negro Heaven...

JIMMY
I'm all for it. These last few days
been...

CASPER
Woo-wee!

Further down the bar, Casper sees a WOMAN IN A SHORT DRESS revealing beautiful, statuesque legs.

CASPER (CONT'D)
Now that's about my speed. She got
legs just like I like 'em.

JIMMY
How's that?

CASPER
Feet on the bottom. Pussy on top.

JIMMY
You crazy, man.

Jimmy shakes his head as he scans for his own target. His eyes land on Lisa Copeland. Still hemmed up by Better Offer.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

I think I found my salvation.

CASPER

Best keep lookin', Jimmy. Talkin'
to that one there'll get you to
heaven fo' real.

JIMMY

The old man don't seem to know
that.

CASPER

Ain't nobody stuttin' him. Better
Offer a 2nd rate King from a 2nd
rate town. The Copelands'll
straighten him out if he steps
outta line.

*
*
*

JIMMY

That's...?

CASPER

Baby sister.

JIMMY

All the more reason to help her
out.

*

CASPER

Fool, I introduced you.

JIMMY

Don't worry. I'm not screwing up my
chance a' workin' for the Copeland
Brothers for nothin.

*
*
*

Jimmy peels off with his drink. Casper, nervous, slams
another one and signals for two more.

*

Jimmy crosses to Lisa and Better Offer.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Pardon me, Old Timer.

(to Lisa)

Here's your drink, baby. Just like
you like it.

BETTER OFFER

You know this guy?

JIMMY

Of course, she do.

LISA
Actually I don't. I've never had
the occasion to go to Mississippi.

JIMMY
Arkansas.

LISA
I figured you were from somewhere
where they ain't got no home
training.

JIMMY
Pardon me, ma'am. Just looked like
you needed some help.

LISA
Not from the likes of you.

BETTER OFFER
You want me to take this clown
outside, Lisa?

LISA
I don't need help from you either,
Mr. Barnes. If you all need to
prove your manhood to each other,
be my guest. Good evening.

She walks away. Jimmy watches after her - somehow more
intrigued. Better Offer steps into his field of view.

BETTER OFFER
You best mind your eyeballs.

JIMMY
You best get the fuck up out my
face.

Across the room, Ponds rushes over to Everett looking
harried.

PONDS
Just got word. Police done raided
the Indianapolis, Carolina and
Memphis wheels.

EVERETT
What!?

But before he can process that, he turns toward the rising
commotion coming from Jimmy and Better Offer.

EVERETT (CONT'D)

What the fuck is going on?

The Brothers look and see the men step to each other. Casper hurries over. Large Man reaches into his waist band. Jesse starts to move toward the fracas when suddenly...

*
*
*

BOOM!!!

The FRONT DOORS of the club are kicked in. Dozens of UNIFORMED COPS pour through the doors brandishing their SERVICE WEAPONS.

The music stops. EVERYBODY looks toward the commotion - including The Brothers. And Randolph from the bar.

Jimmy and Better Offer separate. Large Man quickly untucks his hand. BUTTONS his JACKET.

COPS

Everybody FREEZE where you are!
DON'T FUCKING MOVE!

The Cops disperse through the crowd, roughly searching for someone or something.

Into the center of the officers walks OFFICER SYLVESTER "TWO GUN PETE" WASHINGTON (27), a heavy, mean and imposing man whose reputation as beyond brutal is already well on its way to legend.

2 GUN PETE

Alright, everybody! Wagon's here!

*

At the sight of him, several hustlers among the crowd begin to voluntarily lay their WEAPONS on the nearest bars and tables. Everybody puts down their DRINKS.

EVERETT

(to Jesse)

Lay it down.

JESSE

What the fuck is he doing here?

EVERETT

I don't know. Just lay it down.

Jesse pulls his BROWNING HI-POWER slowly. Opens The action. Puts it on the ground.

Jimmy whispers to Casper who has saddled up next to him.

JIMMY

Who the hell is that?

CASPER

2 Gun Pete. Don't make no sudden moves. Prefers shooting niggas to arresting 'em. Less paperwork.

On 2 Gun Pete.

2 GUN PETE

Since y'all being so cooperative. We just taking three of you tonight. Everett Copeland, Jesse Copeland and Zeke. You all under arrest.

An audible gasp spreads through the crowd. This is not business as usual.

Three UNIFORMS put the Copeland Brothers in HANDCUFFS and walk them through the crowd toward the front doors of the club. Another retrieves Jesse's pistol from the floor. They stop by 2 Gun Pete.

EVERETT

I thought we had an understanding.

2 GUN PETE

New mayor, new rules.

Randolph approaches.

RANDOLPH

What's the meaning of this? They haven't done anything.

2 GUN PETE

Anton Cermak says otherwise. Take it up with him.

RANDOLPH

I will. What's the charge?

2 GUN PETE

Besides being Black and ugly - attempted murder. Name Lester Daniels mean anything to you?

Randolph is surprised. He looks to Everett and Jesse who exchange looks.

2 GUN PETE (CONT'D)
(to Uniforms)
Let's go.
(to the room)
You have a good evening now!

Randolph watches pissed as 2 Gun Pete parades the Copeland Brothers out the door of their own club...

EXT. THE ROYALE - CONTINUOUS

...and into an awaiting PADDY WAGON for all of State Street to see.

This particular block near the corner of 37th & State is the heart of the Black Belt. But the heart stops beating for the moment, as EVERYBODY on the street watches their Southside Royalty herded like common criminals.

I/E. THE ROYALE - CONTINUOUS

The party is over. Everyone stunned, disbelieving. Most of all, Randolph.

Better Offer slides up behind Lisa who is still processing the whole thing.

BETTER OFFER
You sure you don't need my help?

LISA
Excuse me?

Randolph steps over. Places a gentle hand on Lisa's shoulder. *

RANDOLPH
Frank. *

BETTER OFFER
Eyeball. *

RANDOLPH
He's retired. *

BETTER OFFER
You sure about that? I mean -
somebody's gotta run Chicago. *

RANDOLPH
(to Lisa)
Let's get you home. *

LISA

Are they gonna be okay...?

Randolph shepherds Lisa quickly out the back of the club.
Better Offer watches them go, none too pleased with the
changing landscape.

EXT. THE ROYALE / DOORWAY - CONTINUOUS

Jimmy and Casper who are among many patrons that step onto
the street and watch the Paddy Wagon holding Chicago's
biggest Policy Kings pull away.

JIMMY

Now what?

CASPER

Fuck if I know.

CUT TO:

BLACK.