

THE BLACK HONKY

by

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FADE IN

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

A black boy, ANTWON (14), merrily skips along the sidewalk bouncing a basketball.

Across the street, SERGEANT DOMINIC (40s), a white cop with a no-nonsense bulldog face, stands at an outdoor donut shoppe high-table with SIX ROOKIE WHITE COPS chugging donuts and coffee, their eyes keenly tracking the boy.

Antwon stops, practices basketball maneuvers, dribbles onward.

Dominic gives a come-on nod to the others. They march across the street towards the boy, their eyes hard on their prey.

Antwon looks back. His eyes widen.

SGT. DOMINIC
Hey! Wher'dya get that there
basketball, boaz?

Antwon panics, throws the basketball towards them, runs off.

The cops draw their guns, give chase.

SGT. DOMINIC (CONT'D)
Stop! I'll shoot your monkey ass!

EXT. ALLEYWAY - DAY

Antwon runs up to a tall chain-linked fence. He looks back, breathless with terror, turns, scrambles up the fence.

The cops run up to the entrance. Dominic raises his arm, halts them, takes aim at the boy: BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!

Antwon falls to the ground, dead.

Dominic lifts his eyes to the apartment windows above him.

INT. APARTMENT OVERLOOKING ALLEY - SAME

An hispanic woman, MARIA CORTEZ (50s), quickly backs away from the edge of the curtain, clamps her hand over her mouth in horror; then, gradually, carefully, peeks out again.

EXT. ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

Dominic pitches a REVOLVER towards the boy's body.

SGT. DOMINIC
He's got a gun! Fire!

The cops fire. B-B-BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!... Dominic rips out his empty bullet clip, rams in another, resumes firing. The rookies follow suit: B-B-BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!...

CLOSE ON TRIGGER of the tossed gun--pointed towards the cops--as a bullet strikes it. BLAM!

A cop topples over dead, a bloody hole in his forehead.

The cops stare down at the dead cop, stunned. They look up, glare towards Antwon's body o.s., reload, fire with a vengeance: B-B-BLAM! BLAM! B-B-BLAM!...

INT. APARTMENT OVERLOOKING ALLEY - SAME

Maria backs away from the curtain; gasps in horror.

EXT. DISTRICT COURTHOUSE - DAY

District Attorney CYRUS HAROLD SANDWICH (late 30s), walks briskly down the sidewalk slinging a briefcase.

He gives wide berth to TWO BLACK MEN strolling past him, glances back at them. They look back with puzzled faces.

Cyrus crashes into a two-wheeled cart, trips. An OLD BLACK BAG-LADY, standing beside it, grabs him by the arm.

CYRUS
What the...?

BAG LADY
You okay?

He shrugs her hand off.

CYRUS
You shouldn't be stopped in the middle of the sidewalk like that.

BAG LADY
I'm sorry...Say, could you spare some pocket change? I'm very hungry.

CYRUS
It's against the law to panhandle in the city. Now move on. Shoo! I'm the D.A. here and I don't want to see you here again. Understand?

He carries on.

BAG LADY
I ain't panhandlin', I'm inquiren'.
(to herself)
Cheap honky bastard.

Cyrus climbs the courthouse steps. Assistant D.A. DWAYNE NETTLEBUTT (40s), a short neo-Nazi sporting high-heeled boots and a three-inch pompadour, clomps down the steps to meet him with an air of natural arrogance.

DWAYNE

The cops bagged another one while you were away.

CYRUS

Christ. What happened this time?

DWAYNE

A nigger kid murdered one of our brightest young cops with a shot to the head. We had no choice but to kill or be killed. Open and shut.

CYRUS

Stop saying "nigger". You're suppose to be a public figure...How old?

DWAYNE

Fourteen.

CYRUS

Jesus. Soon they'll be in diapers... Now I've got to spin a variation of the same old story to the press again, and I'm running out of variations. Any witnesses?

DWAYNE

Just the cops that shot 'im.

CYRUS

Write it up. I'll review it.

Cyrus continues up the steps. Dwayne smirks, follows.

INT. CY'S OFFICE - DAY

Cyrus sits at his desk frowning at a sheet of paper he's reading. Dwayne is slumped in a chair before him noisily sucking and picking at his teeth with a toothpick.

CYRUS

Stop sucking. You sound like a mouse jerking off.

Dwayne snarls as he slides the toothpick into his pocket.

CYRUS (CONT'D)

The NAACP is calling it, and I quote: "...a blatant murder with outrageous and unconscionable overkill..."

DWAYNE

What can I say? Colored people got no respect for the law. I mean...come on. They assassinated your daddy, for chrissakes.

CYRUS

I don't need reminding. The cops need to lighten up on the artillery.

(flicks the paper)

The report here says nearly three hundred rounds were fired into that boy. That's what got their attention, Dwayne--the bullet count.

(beat)

Three hundred fucking rounds to bring down a fourteen-year-old, hundred-pound boy, not to mention the cost of bullets these days. That's what? Three bullets per pound. For fucksakes, Dwayne, there was nothing left of the boy to identify him with but his D.N.A.--and that's another cost. Two, three, four bullets at the most ought to have done the job. Jeez.

DWAYNE

Sergeant Dominic made the call. On the positive side, it gave his rookies some practical field experience under hostile conditions--conditions you just don't get at a firing range.

CYRUS

There's a world of difference between a paper target and a body, Dwayne. The only thing they have in common is they both evaporate when hit with three hundred fucking bullets. Get Dominic in here.

Dwayne hesitates, is clearly resistant.

DWAYNE

O-kay.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

JAMAICA WILLIAMS (35}, an attractive black woman, sits stoically in black attire, her eyes red from grief. She's a survivor, toughened by the harsh realities of black life in a white world, and has a very low tolerance for injustice.

Next to her sits SOCRATES (60s), a down-to-earth ex-con, loyal, and Jamaica's father-in-law. Sports a white goatee.

On a pedestal before them sits an etched bronze urn.

The PREACHER slaps his hand on the podium.

PREACHER

...And then the D.A. has the audacity not to indict them with murder! Where's the justice?

CONGREGATION
Amen...Murder...Justice....

PREACHER
Folks, you've heard me often say that if a white man could somehow walk in a colored man's shoes for a day, he would understand our fear and frustration, and things would change pretty damn quick around here.

CONGREGATION
Amen, brother...Damn quick...
Shoes....

PREACHER
But, we must not let little Antwon's murder cause us to overreact and seek revenge. That's what they want. Another reason to kill us. We must be patient. God has a plan. In the meantime, the only way to make lasting change is to vote the ass out of office.

CONGREGATION
Amen, brother...Asshole...Out....

PREACHER
Until then, let's pray for little Antwon's soul. Almighty God....

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

Church bell tolls sadly. Jamaica receives condolences from the parishioners as the church empties.

Maria Cortez taps Jamaica's shoulder. Jamaica turns to her.

MARIA
Hello, Jamaica. My name's Maria Cortez....

INT. DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE - DAY

Cyrus at his desk. Sergeant Dominic stands before him. Dwayne slumps in the chair fidgeting with a bothersome nose hair.

Cyrus' SECRETARY walks in, hands him a sheet of paper, then leaves. He examines it as Dominic blubbers on:

SGT. DOMINIC
...It's a civil war out there. My men put their lives in jeopardy the moment they step out the door and go into enemy territory. But you wouldn't know that part, Sir--with your desk job and all.

CYRUS

Watch it, Sergeant. It's easy to pull a trigger. The hard part is using your fucking head. I'm the one who has to clean up your messes when you fuck up. You think I don't think of you when I get threatening phone calls late at night?

SGT. DOMINIC

Ah...Yes, Sir...No, Sir...What?

CYRUS

All I want from you is the truth. Could the killing have been avoided?

SGT. DOMINIC

When somebody throws a ball at you, then shoots and kills a brother cop, you gotta do what you're trained to do--empty your gun into 'im.

(jabbing the air

with his finger)

Bam-bam-bam-bam-bam-bam!

Cyrus gives him a look, then glances back at the paper.

CYRUS

I looked back at your reports here. I see all your shootings have been against the coloreds. Not one white. This looks really bad to outsiders, Sergeant. Surely, there's some token white crime out there.

DWAYNE

The problem is the white folk ain't the problem. It's the coloreds and the homosexuals that's the problem. Always been that way; always will be.

Cyrus scratches his head in frustration. A commotion O.S.

JAMAICA (O.S.)

I want to see the D.A.! Where is he? Get out of my way!

SECRETARY (O.S.)

You can't just barge in like that.

Jamaica charges through the door, the secretary at her heels, followed by Maria.

JAMAICA

(to Cyrus)

You Cyrus Sandwich?

Dominic unbuttons his gun holster.

Cyrus stares wide-eyed at Jamaica.

CYRUS
I'm Cyrus Sandwich.

JAMAICA
Your cops murdered my baby and you let them go free. I can't seem to reconcile that in my brain. I want to know why in Jesus' name you did that? And you better have a good explanation or I'll haunt you 'til justice is done.

CYRUS
(taken aback)
Sounds like a veiled threat.

JAMAICA
It is a veiled threat. I will get justice for my boy's murder, whether you help me or not.

DWAYNE
(to Cyrus)
You gonna let her talk to you like that?

CYRUS
(to Jamaica)
What's your boy's name?

JAMAICA
Antwon Harold Williams.

CYRUS
(glances at Dominic)
Coincidentally, we were just reviewing that case. I'm sorry for your loss, Miss Williams. Tragic. Very tragic. Have a seat. Can I get you something?

JAMAICA
Deliver me the heads of those homicidal cops on a tray.

Cyrus leans forward.

CYRUS
Miss Williams.
(indicates a paper)
The report here says your boy shot and killed a cop while resisting arrest. There were five witnesses that swore to it.

JAMAICA
Resisting arrest? For what?

CYRUS

(reads)

Ah..."Suspicion of theft."

JAMAICA

Since when did suspicion become a
excuse to kill somebody? My baby
never stole a damn thing in his life
except for my attention and milk
from my two ample breasts.

Cyrus tries not to, but glances at them.

JAMAICA (CONT'D)

How 'bout I suspect you of colluding
with my baby's killers? Should I
hire assassins to blast your white
ass to cottage cheese?

CYRUS

Miss Williams. I understand you are
upset, but...

JAMAICA

Upset? Killing my child over a
basketball that I bought him for his
fourteenth birthday. That upsets me.
My child's life for a basketball?
Might as well have bought him a tank
top that says, "I'm black, shoot
me!"

CYRUS

Well, there's was more...

JAMAICA

And who are the witnesses? The
murdering cops? They lie. And you
lie, too. Because you believe them
and speak their words.

Feeling the heat, Cyrus adjusts his collar.

CYRUS

Look, ah...Miss Williams. I go by
the evidence presented me. The
police are sworn to uphold the law
and tell the truth. I have no reason
to doubt five cop witnesses.

(indicates)

Sergeant Dominic here is one.

Jamaica turns to Dominic, glares at him.

MARIA

(to Jamaica)

That's him. He's the one that shot
first and tossed a gun at Antwon.

Jamaica gets in Dominic's face.

JAMAICA
You murder my blessed baby?

He sneers down at her. She fires a sharp knee into his crotch. He folds.

SERGEANT DOMINIC
Ooh! You nigger bitch.

JAMAICA
The truth will out.

He fumbles for his gun. She kicks it out of his hand and grabs him by the ear like a schoolboy, forcing him to his knees, SCREAMING. Cyrus comes around from behind his desk.

JAMAICA (CONT'D)
(to Dominic)
You know my boy wanted to be a
veterinarian? You robbed the world
of a promising...

Dwayne grabs her from behind, drops her to the floor.

JAMAICA (CONT'D)
Let go of me...

Dominic crawls over, wrestles handcuffs on her, punches her. Cyrus stares aghast.

JAMAICA (CONT'D)
Ooh! Hit a woman when she's down, do
you? Aren't you a brave officer.
Take the cuffs off if you want a
real fight.

SGT. DOMINIC
(snarls in her ear)
I oughta shoot your black ass like I
did your boy.

JAMAICA
(to Cyrus)
You hear that? He confessed to
killing my baby and threatened to
kill me. What more proof do you
need? You're going to be held to
blame for protecting them. You'll
see.

CYRUS
That's enough, Sergeant.
(to Jamaica)
I'm sorry, Miss Williams, but I have
no choice now but to arrest you for
assault and battery.
(to Dominic)
Take her away...and no beating on
her. Understood?

Dwayne jerks her upright. Dominic nods grudgingly.

MARIA
(to Cyrus; points at
Dominic)
That cop's a murderer. I saw him
stage the killing with my own eyes.

Cyrus looks to Dominic, then back to Maria; doubt registers on his face for a fleeting moment. Dwayne grabs Maria, slaps handcuffs on her.

DWAYNE
And you're under arrest for aiding
and abetting an assault.

MARIA
I didn't touch nobody...Asshole!

Dwayne shoves her towards Dominic.

DWAYNE
Take 'em away.

Dominic pushes them out the door.

JAMAICA
(voice trailing)
What kind of prosecutor are you who
protects baby killers? The world's
going to hear about Cyrus Sandwich
and his hit squads. Just wait.
You'll see.

Dwayne turns a smug face to Cyrus.

DWAYNE
See what I mean?

INT. CITY JAIL - DAY

Jamaica and Maria behind bars, looking bummed. The JAILER approaches with Socrates. Slides open the gate.

JAILOR
You've been bonded out. You're free
to go.

Jamaica and Maria brighten; leave with Socrates.

INT. SOCRATES' HOME - DAY

Socrates and Maria at the kitchen island. Maria knits. Socrates sucks on a joint. Jamaica hovers over the toaster.

JAMAICA
...Nothing will get changed if I'm
locked up behind bars. My baby won't
get his justice.

(MORE)

JAMAICA (CONT'D)

(beat)

They're forcing my hand. I have no choice but to do something righteously drastic.

SOCRATES

You think of something, girl...

(joint-snorts)

I'm with you. I don't care what the preacher says. I want revenge for my grandson's murder.

MARIA

Remember what the preacher said? They need to walk in a colored man's shoes for a while before they can understand and make changes...But how do you make them put on your shoes, metaphorically speaking?

SMOKEY BURNT TOAST POPS UP from the toaster. Jamaica stares at it disappointedly.

JAMAICA

I gotta get me a new toaster.

She regards the black toast in her hand; suddenly brightens.

JAMAICA (CONT'D)

Thank you, Jesus. I just found a way.

EXT. DANCE CLUB - NIGHT

Dwayne trolls through the crowd, drink in hand. He wears gaudy Western attire, his pompadour rolled high like risen bread. He sets down his drink, approaches a gaudily dressed BRAWNY WOMAN. They dance.

INT. CYRUS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

A TOILET FLUSHES. Cyrus exits the bathroom in his pyjamas. He picks up his CAT, kisses it, strokes it. The cat PURRS.

CYRUS

(kitty talk)

I love you, too, Huckleberry. Wanna hear about my first day back?... Well, this crazy black cat charged into my office hissing and spit...

A pistol barrel touches the back of his head. Cyrus freezes. The cat leaps away.

SOCRATES

Don't move or I'll blow your brains true your nostrils.

CYRUS
Whoa! Hey! Don't shoot! I'll give
you what you want.

Jamaica and Maria come around. Jamaica pushes Cyrus.

JAMAICA
Sit!

Cyrus plops onto the bed, staring up, surprised.

CYRUS
You! How did you...?

JAMAICA
So I'm a kitty cat, am I?

Jamaica notices a body under the covers--rips them off.

A BLACK INFLATABLE SEX DOLL. Cyrus blushes, mortified.

JAMAICA (CONT'D)
Lonely are we?

CYRUS
I--I...

She throws the blanket back over it.

JAMAICA
Don't explain. I get it. Now, stand
up and put your hands behind your
back. You're coming with us.

Cyrus stands. Socrates handcuffs him.

CYRUS
What about my cat?

Jamaica picks up the cat, strokes it.

JAMAICA
Didn't think a person like you would
appreciate the well-being of
animals, the way you treat colored
folk and all. I'm slightly impressed
by that.

They lead him away.

EXT. CYRUS' GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

Jamaica shoves Cyrus into the back seat of Cyrus' car, gets
in next to him. Maria--carrying a pet carrier--gets in the
front, next to Socrates, who's driving.

INT. CYRUS' CAR - NIGHT

Cyrus wears a blindfold. Jamaica next to him.

CYRUS

Whatever you're doing, you'll never get away with it, you know.

(pause; no answer)

Let me go and I'll take the life sentence off for kidnapping.

(pause; no answer)

Alright. You wanna arbitrate? No kidnapping charge. I'll just charge you with...

JAMAICA

Shut up. You're in my jurisdiction now and I'll do the charging. I'm charging you with dereliction of judicial duty, and there's no arbitration in my court.

EXT. CYRUS' HOUSE - NIGHT

Three masked figures tread silently onto the front porch, check the door. To their surprise, it's unlocked. They enter.

INT. CYRUS' BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

A moonlit room. Three dark figures stand in the doorway, point silencer guns at the figure under covers. PHOOT! PHOOT! PHOOT! P-P-PHOOT!... The figure sinks. They leave.

EXT. CYRUS' FRONT PORCH - CONTINUOUS

A dark figure stops, punches a number on his cellphone.

SERGEANT DOMINIC'S VOICE

(to cell phone)

It's been taken care of...

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - NIGHT

Jamaica, Socrates, Maria hustle Cyrus to a side door, go in.

INT. CHEMISTRY ROOM - NIGHT

Cyrus, handcuffed to a chair. Jamaica removes his blindfold.

CYRUS

(looking around)

A chemistry lab? What's going on?

JAMAICA

You'll see. Hold still.

Jamaica picks up a large beaker of clear liquid, pours it over his head. Cyrus dodges, coughs, sputters.

CYRUS

Hey! That smells like ether.

Jamaica pulls out a lighter, brings it to his face, gets ready to flick it.

CYRUS (CONT'D)
Wait! Wait! Are you crazy? Stop!
Tell me what you want? Let's talk,
for chrissake! Pleez!

Jamaica hesitates, withdraws the lighter.

JAMAICA
Alright. Let's talk.

CYRUS
W-Whadaya want from me?

JAMAICA
You're going to indict those racist,
mother-fucking cops who killed my
baby with first degree murder.

CYRUS
First degree murder? I...

JAMAICA
And, I want them convicted.

Cyrus swallows with difficulty.

CYRUS
I can indict them in the first
degree. Okay? But it's up to the
grand jury.

JAMAICA
Then you better do your job and
convince them.

CYRUS
I-I think you should know, from
prosecutors' experiences throughout
the country, that no matter how good
the evidence, it's impossible to
convict a cop for first degree
murder. You are better off charging
second degree for the grand jury to
buy it and maybe get a conviction.
Even then, it's iffy.

She raises the lighter, flicks it. A FLAME pops up.

CYRUS (CONT'D)
Okay, okay! I'll do it.

She lowers the lighter. Turns to Socrates and Maria.

JAMAICA
Whadaya think?

SOCRATES

Mmm. I picked up a note of fear and questionable hints of sincerity.

MARIA

We can hold his cat hostage.

CYRUS

Leave my cat out of it. I'll swear to my sincerity on the Bible if you want--whatever will convince you. I promise, I'll prosecute them as you wish. Just leave Huckleberry out of it. Okay? Take me home and we'll pretend this part didn't happen. We'll start fresh tomorrow. Okay?

A pause. He stares nervously at their skeptical looks.

JAMAICA

(to Socrates)

Alright, uncuff him.

CYRUS

Ple...ah...Really?

Socrates uncuffs him. Cyrus sighs with relief. Jamaica hands Cyrus some folded clothes and a towel.

JAMAICA

Here. Get cleaned up. Put these on.

(indicates)

There's a shower in the corner.

Cyrus takes them, goes to the shower. He quickly undresses and jumps in. The sound of SPLASHING WATER.

SOCRATES

Sure it will work?

JAMAICA

It'll photo-fix when he gets in the sunlight. The whiter they are, the darker they get. After that, it's between him and his people.

LATER

Cyrus, dressed in a janitor's one-piece green coveralls, sits on a chair fitting into his slippers.

CYRUS

I'm glad you came to your senses. I promise you that I will personally investigate your boy's death and if I find incrim....

Jamaica slaps a small folded towel over his face from behind and holds on. Cyrus struggles, then goes limp in her hands.

JAMAICA

If?

Socrates buzzes Cyrus' hair off with clippers.

Maria giggles as she pours glue into the gums of false "BILLIE BOB" TEETH that she's holding in her hand.

INT. CYRUS' OFFICE - DAY

Dwayne looks in a hand mirror, buzzes his nostrils with a battery-operated nose-hair remover. Dominic waits.

DWAYNE

The coroner should be there by now.
You absolutely sure he's dead?

SGT. DOMINIC

(snorts)

I didn't check his pulse, if that's what you mean? Nobody survives twenty four hollow points to the head and torso. Nobody. In fact, the blood drained right out of him. Drained him flat. Never seen anything like it.

DWAYNE

Okay, then. Let's do it.

They head out.

EXT. COURTHOUSE STEPS - DAY

Dwayne stands before a gaggle of reporters.

DWAYNE

We have it on good authority that District Attorney Cyrus Sandwich was assassinated last night. We are awaiting the coroner's report for more details.

REPORTER #1

Where did it happen?

DWAYNE

At his home, in bed. That's all we know at this time. As acting D.A., I, Dwayne Nettlebutt, advise everybody to remain calm. I got it covered. We will find the perpetrators.

REPORTER #2

Any idea who did it?

DWAYNE

We suspect this was a black revenge killing. The D.A. was getting death threats.

REPORTER #2

Does this have anything to do with the case the NAACP is suing you over?

DWAYNE

We will keep you informed of further developments. That's all for now.

Dwayne turns away, heads back up the steps.

EXT. DOWNTOWN SIDEWALK - DAY

Quaint shop-lined street. The sun beats down on Cyrus, snoozing in the entryway of one of them. NEWSPAPERS cover his body to his shoulders.

His shaven head, now the COLOR OF DRY BURNT TOAST, is cocked awkwardly on the stoop, resting on a pair of slippers.

TWO STROLLING COPS stop beside him. Cop #1 kicks him.

COP #1

Wake up, boah!

Cyrus' eyes pop open, dart around confused. Another kick.

CYRUS

Hey! What the hell.

He sits up. The newspapers fall away, revealing Cyrus' still-white hands and feet. He squints up at the cop.

COP #1

Get up. Let's see some ID.

Cyrus rises up, looks around bewildered.

CYRUS

Where am I?

COP #1

Your drunken ass is blocking a store entryway like a big pile of dog shit --that's where you're at.

CYRUS

Hey! You can't talk to me that way. I'm the D.A. and I'm not drunk. I don't know how I got here.

COP #1
(guffaws)
You're a D.A. like I'm a rock star.
Come on. Let's see some ID.

Cyrus reaches into his pocket, realizes he's wearing coveralls. He makes a puzzled face as he rummages through the pockets. He gapes at the cop, baffled.

CYRUS
I've been robbed.

The cop notices his white hands turning gray, then looks up at his black face and rotten teeth.

COP #1
What on earth are you? Some kinda
two-toned carnival freak?

CYRUS
What?

The cop moves closer.

COP #1
I have minus-zero tolerance for
white wannabes. They're lower than
niggers, in general. You got to the
count of ten to skedaddle from here
before I blow your ass away. One...

CYRUS
Wait! What's going on?

COP #1
I'm giving you a head start. You
better take it. Fair warning. Two...

CYRUS
You're joking?

COP #1
No. Three. Boa, better move your ass
or I'll put lead in your head right
here.

CYRUS
(horrified)
Jesus, I think you mean it.

COP #2
He does. Four...

Cyrus sprints away on his bare feet.

EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET - DAY

Cyrus runs to a corner, gets behind it, his panicky black face pouring sweat. He glances back at the two cops nonchalantly jogging towards him.

He takes off across the busy street, dodges HONKING, SCREECHING cars, angry faces.

He tumbles to the sidewalk SCREAMING. Grabs his foot.

He pulls a nail out, tosses it, stumbles up; resumes his run, blindly crashes into a WHITE WOMAN pushing a baby stroller.

She SCREAMS as the stroller takes off on its own. The baby in the stroller SCREAMS.

CYRUS
Sorry. I didn't...

WHITE WOMAN #1
My baby! Help! Somebody help me! I'm
being attacked!

Cyrus WATCHES in horror as the stroller veers into the street.

He limps after it, grabs the baby out of the stroller, kicks the stroller into the street towards the cops.

He limps back, hands off the baby to the woman.

CYRUS
Here. Sorry, ma'am. Gotta run.

She pepper-sprays him. Gets him in the left eye.

CYRUS (CONT'D)
Aaaagh! Shit! Sonovabitch!

He wipes his eye furiously as he hurriedly limps away.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - DAY

Cyrus hobbles into it. A fence. He stops, looks around in panic. Sees a wedge-shadowed doorway recess. Limps over to it. Tries the door. It's locked. He looks around, desperate.

The two cops appear at the alley entrance. They draw their guns, enter. One stares towards the recessed doorway for a second, then carries on. They walk up to the fence, look up.

COP #1
He musta been scared shitless to
jump over that.

COP #2
Whadaya expect? They're natural
jumpers. Gotta tip my hat to that.

They holster their guns and leave.

Like a chameleon, Cyrus' black head emerges from the wedged black shadow in the doorway. He looks around. Steps out.

EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET - DAY

Cyrus limps by a row of shops; his feet and hands now black. Shoppers stare at him, give him wide berth.

He stops, gawks at his hands, then turns to a shop window, SEES his black reflection there. He moves closer, as if in a trance, staring in horror. He partially unzips his coveralls revealing white skin. Quickly zips back up.

A white SHOPKEEPER steps out with a broom, swipes it at him.

SHOPKEEPER

Get away from here. Move along.

Cyrus backs off; hobbles away dazed and confused.

INT. PUBLIC RESTROOM - DAY

Starkly lit, filthy. Cyrus furiously scrubs his face with a paper towel. Looks into mirror: Left eye, swollen, leaking.

CYRUS

(frustrated)

Why the fuck won't this shit come off?

He grins broadly, revealing rotten teeth.

CYRUS (CONT'D)

No! What have they done to me?

He stares at himself in disbelief. A TOILET FLUSHES o.s.

MOSES (O.S.)

(chuckling)

It's gonna take mo' than scrubbin' to erase that sin off yo' face, brotha.

Cyrus freezes, gapes into the mirror at the reflection of MOSES (70s), a black hobo, as he steps out of a stall pulling his rope suspenders onto his flannel shoulders, his patched pants hiked high.

CYRUS

Wha...?

MOSES

I say, as sons of Cain we are cursed to blackness--so some folk believes.

CYRUS

Who are you?

MOSES

My name is Moses. Folks call me
Mosey.

Cyrus turns around to face him.

CYRUS

You part of this?

MOSES

We're all a part of it.

CYRUS

What?

MOSES

The Flaw.

CYRUS

The Flaw?

MOSES

The flaw of self-consciousness--the
original sin against God and nature.
Where in creation do you find
another species that hates each
other so much, like we do? As a
Muslim you is hated by the
Christian. As an immigrant you is
hated by the native. As a black man
you is hated by the white man. You
got no choice who you is, but you is
hated by somebody, whether you knows
it or not.

CYRUS

I prefer being a white man right
now.

MOSES

(chuckles)

Keep dreamin', son. You the most
burnt nigga I ever seen.

CYRUS

Look...

He unzips his coveralls. He gazes down, then gasps as his
white naked body starts turning grey in the bulb light.

CYRUS (CONT'D)

I'm a white man. What's happening to
me?

His skin turns darker. He quickly zips up his coveralls.

MOSES

Praise the Lord. He's strikin'
whitey with the Sin. Now he'll see.
Hallelujah. 'Bout time.

Cyrus turns back to the mirror, stares at himself, SEES a helpless, pathetic black man.

CYRUS
That black bitch might just as well
have put a bullet in my head.

Cyrus drops his head against the mirror in despair. Moses walks forward, pats Cyrus' on the shoulder.

MOSES
There, there. You'll get used to it.
We all do. Come over here and sit.

He leads Cyrus to a toilet seat and sits him down. Cyrus slumps in a depressed daze.

Moses goes to the sink and wets some paper towels. He comes back to Cyrus, wipes the soap off his face.

MOSES (CONT'D)
Look like you got stung in the eye
pretty good. Gotta watch out fo' dem
WASPS. What happened to yo' foot?

CYRUS
Stepped on a nail.

MOSES
Let me look at it.

He scoots back, examines Cyrus' foot.

MOSES (CONT'D)
Don't look infected. Needs some
cleanin', though.

He scrubs Cyrus' foot with the paper towels, then reaches into his satchel, pulls out a tube of antiseptic lotion, dabs it on the wound. Cyrus stares amazed.

CYRUS
Rob a drugstore, did you?

MOSES
(chuckles)
Just stuff I finds in the dumpsters.
Never knows when it will come in
handy. I fixes lots of folks. Cuts,
scrapes, bullet holes, knife wounds.
They cain't afford them expensive
doctors.

He pulls out an Ace bandage, wraps it around the foot.

MOSES (CONT'D)
There. That oughta do it.

Cyrus is speechless for a moment.

CYRUS

I don't know what to say...Thank
you...I'm sorry, but I don't have
any money to tip you with.

Moses looks up, a little ruffled, disappointed.

MOSES

I ain't no shoeshine boy. "Thanks"
is good enough.
(shakes his head)
You a white man inside, fo' sure.

CYRUS

So you believe me then?

MOSES

Make better sense than miracles,
right now.

CYRUS

Now I've got to convince others.

MOSES

By others, you means white folks.

CYRUS

Well...yeah.

MOSES

(laughs)
You one ugly nigga. You'll never
convince a white man you is
otherwise.

Cyrus ponders this as Moses takes off his own shoes.

CYRUS

What are you doing?

MOSES

You don't want to infect that wound.

Cyrus watches in amazement as Moses puts them onto his feet.

CYRUS

I promise I'll send you a brand new
pair when I get my identity back.

MOSES

Don't bother. I likes my shoes
broken in. With all the brothers
gettin' killed 'round here, they's
plenty of shoes to go 'round--a few
times.

CYRUS

I won't forget this.

(beat)

What town are we in, anyway?

MOSES

Brookdale.

CYRUS

Brookdale! That's fifty miles from home.

(a sudden thought)

Wait a minute. I know the A.D.A. here. He'll vouch for me.

MOSES

You a felon, then?

CYRUS

No. I'm the District Attorney of this District. Cyrus Sandwich.

He stands, offers his hand to Moses. Moses shakes it loosely with a surprised look on his face.

MOSES

You? The D.A.?

(pauses; considers)

You Cyrus Sanwitch, huh?...You know what? I think you is tellin' the truth.

CYRUS

You've heard of me...You do?

MOSES

What fool in his right mind would confess to bein' Cyrus Sanwitch if he wasn't Cyrus Sanwitch. You the most despised man in the black community.

CYRUS

I-I'm shocked to hear that.

(speechless; then:)

Look. I'm just an instrument of the law. Anybody breaks it, I have no choice but to prosecute them.

MOSES

You mean white man's law. Now, you is gonna feel the white man's hate.
(chuckles)

So, Jamaica did this to you, did she?

CYRUS

Y-you know her?

MOSES

I hear'd rumors she magically turned somebody black. And here you is.

CYRUS

You saying she put a spell on me?

MOSES

Black women have powers they don't even know they have, and when they gets mad enough, look out, brother. Better holt on to yo' nuts.

Moses gathers up his satchel.

MOSES (CONT'D)

Well. I better mosey on.

CYRUS

What? You leaving?

MOSES

Gots to assess the dumpsters over behind the new Walmart. Good luck.

As he leaves:

CYRUS

Wait! Wait! Where's the courthouse from here?

INT. A.D.A.'S OFFICE - DAY

Cyrus approaches the desk of the SECRETARY, who eyes his every move. She slides her hand into her purse next to her.

CYRUS

Hey...Easy. Don't be alarmed by the way I look. I'm really a white man. Name's Cyrus Sandwich. I'm the District Attorney. It's urgent that I see A.D.A. Raven.

The secretary pulls out a can of mace, aims it at Cyrus.

SECRETARY

Come any closer and I'll mace you.

CYRUS

Look, Miss, you don't understand.

SECRETARY

Oh, I understand all right. Last week, one of your kind came in claiming to be Obama. He wasn't, and you're no D.A.

CYRUS

I'm not one of those kind.

(approaching)

Listen. I must see Claud Raven. It's a matter of life and death. Tell him Cyrus Sandwich is...

The secretary jumps up, squirts him in the face.

CYRUS (CONT'D)
 Aaaagh! God damn it! Why did you do
 that? Aaaagh! Jeez!

He keels over in a coughing fit, rubbing his eyes.

CYRUS (CONT'D)
 Sonovabitch! Aaaagh!...

Raven's office door swings open. CLAUD RAVEN (50s) storms
 out, followed by HORACE STUBBLES (60s), a local klansman.

CLAUD
 What's going on out here?

SECRETARY
 That schizo accosted me.

CLAUD
 You attack my secretary, nigger?

He punches Cyrus in the ribs.

CYRUS
 (coughing; hacking)
 Claud. For chrissakes. It's me.
 Cyrus. Your boss. I've been
 kidnapped and turned black. You've
 got to help me.

CLAUD
 Cyrus? I don't know any nigger by
 the name of Cyrus. And you certainly
 ain't my boss.
 (to Horace)
 You know any niggers named Cyrus?

HORACE
 Don't recall none.

Cyrus notices Horace for the first time.

CYRUS
 Horace! I got your boy off on a
 serial rape charge last year. And
 before that, I got you off a drunk-
 driving vehicular homicide rap. Now
 do you believe me?

HORACE
 Where did you get that fake
 information, nigger? Huh?

CYRUS
 What? Horace. Open your eyes. It's
 me! Cyrus!

HORACE
 Whoever you are, you know stuff you
 shouldn't know.

CYRUS
Look deeper than the color of my
skin, for fucksake.

Claud and Horace share a chuckle.

CLAUD
Well, Cyrus Sandwich. In case you
haven't heard, you're dead.

CYRUS
Dead? What?

CLAUD
You were assassinated last night.
Remember?

CYRUS
Assassinated?

CLAUD
The real Cyrus told me he was
getting threatening phone calls.
You've been stalking him, haven't
you? How else would you know
privileged details about him...and
me?

(to Horace)
Funny how unscrupulous people
dishonor a dead man's name, even
though he was a snowflake prick.

CYRUS
Prick? Fuck you, Claud.

CLAUD
(to the secretary)
Call the cops. We found Cyrus'
murderer.

Claud grabs for him. Cyrus throws a wild, blind punch into
Claud's jaw. Connects. Claud falls back, out cold, taking
Horace down with him.

Cyrus staggers out the door.

EXT. CITY HALL - CONTINUOUS

Cyrus trips out the front door, tumbles onto the sidewalk.
PEDESTRIANS step around him in disgust as he slowly gets up.

He wipes his sleeve across his swollen eyes, squints into the
distance, then lurches off, parting a stream of wary WHITES.

EXT. CITY SIDEWALK - DAY

Cyrus splashes water into his face at a public fountain.

CYRUS

Gaawd! Oh, my, my...mmmm...

Water splashes on a WHITE MAN passing by.

WHITE MAN

Hey! Idiot! That's not for bathing!

He grabs Cyrus, spins him around.

WHITE MAN (CONT'D)

Jesus Fucking Christ!

CYRUS

Help me.

The white man backs off in horror, scurries away. Cyrus resumes his splashing. Takes a long drink.

A WHITE MOTHER drags a FUSSY LITTLE GIRL along.

GIRL

Mommy, I'm thirsty. I wanna drink of water. Now!

The woman glares at Cyrus.

MOMMY

Not here, honey. It's filthy.

GIRL

But I like to drink here. It's my favorite fountain. Waaa...!

MOMMY

No, I said. You're not to drink from that fountain ever again. Understand?

She hurries onward, pulling the SCREAMING girl with her.

EXT. BUS STOP BENCH - DAY

Cyrus hesitates, then scoots in next to an OLD WHITE WOMAN clutching a sack with a loaf of sliced bread sticking out.

CYRUS

Um...Excuse me, Ma'am. I really hate to ask you this, but...

The woman turns to him, bends away in horror.

OLD WHITE WOMAN

Aaach! Get away from me!

CYRUS

Please, Ma'am, could you spare a slice of bread? I could faint from hunger. Please?

OLD WHITE WOMAN
(screams)
Help! Police!

Cyrus leaps up.

CYRUS
No-no-no, Ma'am. Please! Don't
scream. I'm not who you think I am.
(looks around,
alarmed)
Okay, okay, I'm going. I'm gone.

He hurriedly hobbles away.

EXT. CITY SIDEWALK - CONTINUOUS

Cyrus glances back at the woman on the bench, crashes into
the old black bag lady standing by her cart slicing an apple.

CYRUS
I'm so sorry, ma'am.

BAG LADY
No harm done. You okay?

Cyrus studies her.

CYRUS
Didn't I see you in Englewood?

BAG LADY
Maybe. Got chased out by the D.A.

Cyrus is momentarily taken aback by the accusation, then his
eyes fall on the apple she's carving.

BAG LADY (CONT'D)
You look hungry. Want my apple?

CYRUS
No...I-I couldn't.

BAG LADY
(offers it)
Here.

CYRUS
Really? Are you sure?

BAG LADY
There's always them that's more in
need than me. I'll get by.

Cyrus grabs it, attacks it.

BAG LADY (CONT'D)
My. You are hungry. Sorry I can't
give you more.

CYRUS
 (mouth full)
 This helps. Thank you so, so much.

BAG LADY
 You take care now. Good luck.

She wheels away. Cyrus chomps viciously on the apple.

INT. DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE - DAY

Dwayne leans back in Cyrus' chair and plonks his boots onto the desk. He gaily punches numbers on his cellphone.

DWAYNE
 (into his cellphone)
 Hey. I feel like celebrating. Wanna do the train thing again?...Yeah, I loved the toilet sex, too...Very orgasmic...Sure, I'll dress up real nice for you. Same place, same time?...See you then. Tootle-doo.

Dwayne closes his eyes, rubs his phone into his crotch.

The coroner saunters in. Stops. Watches Dwayne rubbing himself. Dwayne sees him, instantly pockets his cellphone.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)
 (breathy)
 Mosquito bite. Itches like crazy.
 (beat)
 Knock before you enter, okay? Well?
 Everything good?

CORONER
 He wasn't there.

DWAYNE
 What do you mean he wasn't there?

CORONER
 No corpse. No blood. All we found was a black sex doll with twenty-four bullet holes in it.

DWAYNE
 A sex doll! Twenty-four...You sure?

CORONER
 Of course I'm sure. It's the most bizarre thing I've ever seen in my career as a coroner.

DWAYNE
 (to himself)
 Idiots.
 (thinks; to coroner)
 Okay.

(MORE)

DWAYNE (CONT'D)
Keep a lid on this for a while, will
you, until we gather more facts?

 CORONER
Understood.

 DWAYNE
Good. Okay. You can leave now.

He leaves. Dwayne makes a call.

 DWAYNE (CONT'D)
Hey, shit for brains....

EXT. ALLEY - BAR BACKDOOR - DAY

A very DRUNK WHITE MAN stumbles out the backdoor waving a
sack of french fries.

Cyrus' head rises from inside a dumpster, watches as the
drunk stops, picks out a fry, eats it, suddenly looks
stunned, then vomits. He drops the fries, staggers away.

Cyrus scrambles from the dumpster, falls on the sack of
fries, rams a fistful of fries down his gullet.

A starving MUTT enters, laps up the vomit, then turns its
pleading eyes to Cyrus.

Cyrus tosses some fries at him. The dog wolfs them down.

 CYRUS
You look more hungry than me. Here.

He tosses more. A drunken WHITE FIVESOME (30s) push each
other out the backdoor. RAFF (30) stops them with a gesture.

 RAFF
Well, looky here? A coupla shit-
eatin' dawgs.

He kicks the dog. It YELPS, slinks away.

Cyrus scrambles up.

 CYRUS
Hey! That's no way to treat a dog.

 RAFF
What did you say, dawg?

 CYRUS
I said, That's no way to...
 (realizes he's
 black)
treat...a dog.

 RAFF
Whadaya gonna to do about it, dawg.

He pushes on Cyrus. Cyrus throws up his hands.

CYRUS
Hands off...I-I got fleas.

RAFE
You got fleas? You know what I hate
more than dawgs with fleas?...Huh?

CYRUS
Let me guess. Niggers with fleas?

Rafe barks out a laugh, wags his head with exaggeration.

RAFE
Damn, you're a smart nigger.

CYRUS
What if I told you I am really white
and I'm the D.A.?

RAFE
(snorts; laughs)
If you say so. I suppose you're
gonna tell me that bitch mutt was an
elephant?

His buddies snigger.

RAFE (CONT'D)
You're one ugly nigger, you know
that?

CYRUS
I know. That's what my peeps tell
me. Well...I should move on now and
get out of your sight. Maybe you can
tell me where I can find the bus
station?

RAFE
Sure. Come with us. We'll show you.

CYRUS
If you'll just point me in the right
direction, I'll walk there an...and
enjoy the sights.

RAFE
Ain't nothin' to see. We'll give you
a lift. How's that? Come on.

Two drunks move stealthily beside Cyrus. Cyrus backs away.

CYRUS
No. I Don't. Think. So. Thanks
anyway.

He turns and runs. The drunks grab him by the arms.

RAFE

You better come with us. You might
get lost.

CYRUS

(struggling)

Let go of me. What are you doing?

Rafe punches him in the gut. Cyrus folds, pukes his fries.
They haul him off. The dog enters, gobbles up the puke.

INT. CAR TRUNK - DAY

Cyrus beats on the trunk lid latch with a tire iron.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - SAME - ON CONVERTIBLE

Rafe drives. The drunks whoop it up, guzzling beer, tossing
empties onto the road. METALLIC SOUNDS from the trunk O.S.
Rafe SEES a TIRE in the road, aims for it.

RAFE

Grab your balls! Hold onto your
beers!

The car hits the tire, jumps, lifting the drunks, plopping
them down, hands on their balls, beers held high.

INT. CAR TRUNK - SAME

RAFE (O.S.)

Yee-haa!

Cyrus bounces and tumbles. The trunk lid pops open. Cyrus
sees his chance, dives out, hits the dirt rolling.

INT. CONVERTIBLE - CONTINUOUS

Rafe glances through the side mirror, SEES Cyrus tumbling on
the road, brakes to a stop.

RAFE

Did I hit a nigger? Better go back
and put him out of his misery.

He changes gears, looks back over his shoulder.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

Cyrus groans in pain as he raises himself to his knees, SEES
the car speeding backwards towards him. He rolls away. The
convertible ROARS by in a cloud of dust. Slides to a stop.

CYRUS

Fuck!

He gets to his feet, stumbles into the woods.

The drunks tumble out of the convertible. Rafe reaches into the glovebox, removes a handgun. They head into the woods.

EXT. WOODLAND CREEK - DAY

Cyrus runs up to a tree, panting. Takes a quick look back, steps into the creek, sloshes down it.

EXT. CREEK BANK - DAY

TWO HUCK FINN TYPES (10 and 8), are fishing. The ten-year-old baits a hook.

The 8-year-old stares off upstream towards the sound of WATER SLOSHING coming from around the brush-hidden bend. Suddenly, Cyrus emerges, pushing water ahead of him.

BOYS

Aaaaaaaaaaagh!

Cyrus waves his hands frantically for them to be quiet. The boys run off SCREAMING in horror.

EXT. WOODS - SAME

The white drunks stop, turn to the boys' SCREAMS.

RAFE

This way.

The two boys suddenly break from the bushes, charge towards them in a panic, pointing back from whence they came.

TEN-YEAR-OLD BOY

Th-There's a b-black monster in the crick!

EIGHT-YEAR-OLD BOY

It tried to eat us!

Rafe and the drunks take off.

EXT. CREEK - DAY

Cyrus sloshes out of the creek, runs blindly into the woods straight into the belly of Rafe. The drunks wrestle him down.

RAFE

We weren't done with you, dawg.

CYRUS

Listen to me. I'm not black, like you think. I'm white, just like you. Give me a chance to prove it.

RAFE

(to drunk #2)

Do I have my shades on?

DRUNK #2
I don't see none.

RAFE
(to Cyrus)
I see black. You're a nigger.

They haul him up, drag him away.

EXT. CONVERTIBLE - DAY

Cyrus is roped parallel to the front bumper, eyes bulging in terror as the road whizzes by below him.

CYRUS' POV: A girder bridge coming up fast, suddenly he's headed for the cement abutment. END POV

Cyrus SCREAMS! The car brakes. Slides up to the concrete abutment inches from Cyrus' frozen scream.

Rafe comes around.

RAFE
Having fun yet?

CYRUS
You...you motherfucker.

EXT. GIRDER BRIDGE - DAY

Cyrus' hands are tied around a 15-foot-long split-fence rail shouldered at each end by two beefy drunks. He's forced to ride it like a bouncing tenderfoot. Drunk #1 whips him with a twig, splashes beer into his face.

DRUNK #1
Yeee-haw! Ride 'im, cowdawgy!

They gallop to the end of the bridge and back, WHOOPING and HOLLERING. Cyrus YELPS with every ball-splitting bounce.

RAFE
Giddy up! Faster!

They trot faster. Cyrus squirms to get off. Rafe whacks him in the leg with a stick.

They set him down in the middle of the bridge. Cyrus GROANS.

RAFE (CONT'D)
Hell of a ride! You're a natural bronc buster, dawg.

CYRUS
What do you want from me?

RAFE
Nothin'. We're done with you.

CYRUS
What do you mean by "Done"?

RAFE
You'd think when they find stinkin'
black bodies floatin' down the
river, you niggers would get the
hint and stay away.

CYRUS
What?

RAFE
Everybody knows niggers can't swim.
Stand up!

Cyrus painfully rises with the rail.

Rafe pulls out his gun. Cyrus reacts in panic, swings the rail, knocks the gun from Rafe's hand, rams the rail end into his face.

Rafe falls back spitting blood and teeth.

RAFE (CONT'D)
You fuck! You're dead, nigger!

The drunks charge at Cyrus. He leaps off the bridge.

EXT. RIVER - DAY

Cyrus and the rail bob up. Cyrus coughs up water as a fast current takes him downstream, towards the wilderness.

BLAM! A bullet-splashes next to his head. He desperately shimmies off the rail. BLAM! A bullet splinters the rail. Cyrus goes under.

UNDERWATER

Cyrus struggles out of his hand bindings. A bullet spears by, trailing bubbles. He swims away.

BACK TO ABOVE WATER/FLOATING TREE

Cyrus' head breaks the water by a floating tree log, gasps for air. He looks towards the bridge.

WHAT CYRUS SEES: The drunks leaving in the convertible.

Cyrus lifts himself onto the floating tree and collapses, exhausted. He closes his eyes.

LATER - SAME DAY

Peaceful NATURE SOUNDS. Cyrus dozes on the floating tree log.

DREAM SEQUENCE

Jamaica's face, intense with hypnotic power. She wiggles her pointing finger at Cyrus.

JAMAICA

I'm going to show you what it's like to be a nigger, honky. Embrace it as the black night must embrace the day. Your acceptance will be your salvation. Your trials will be your reward. Grow in the pain...

DREAM ENDS abruptly as we hear bursts of LAUGHTER o.s.

Cyrus' eyes pop open; he LISTENS to distant LAUGHTER, bewildered. He looks towards it--a clearing on the bend.

Cyrus panics as the tree drifts towards it. He slips into the water behind the tree log.

EXT. RIVER BANK CLEARING - HOBO CAMP - DAY

BLACK HOBOS lounge around a bonfire. Nearby, a dozen crude STICK CROSSES stick out of the ground.

A couple of loafing hobos observe the tree as it floats by.

WHAT THEY SEE: The top of Cyrus' shiny bald head reflecting sunlight behind a broken limb of the floating tree.

Hobo #1 peers sharply at it. Suddenly, he's excited.

HOBO #1

I see turtle soup.

Everybody looks towards the tree log as Hobo #1 splashes into the water towards it.

Cyrus raises his head. Hobo #1 freezes.

HOBO #1 (CONT'D)

Hey, brotha.

EXT. HOBO CAMP - DAY

Cyrus wolfs down a plate of beans. TWON (50s), a black hobo, watches him, FARTS raucously, wafts his hand.

TWON

Watch out fo' them beans. They taco beans. Potent. Wee-yoo!

Cyrus finishes up. Twon hands him a hot cup of coffee.

TWON (CONT'D)

Bet they was extra bad wit' you, black as you is.

CYRUS
They tried to kill me!

TWON
You lucky you found something to
grab onto. Most niggers drifts here
fulla holes. We picks 'em up and
buries them over there.
(points to the
crosses)
They's our brothas.

CYRUS
I-I'm sorry.

TWON
What you sorry for? It's the
honkies. They gets away with murder.
I even hear'd they got's a secret
place where they lynch us and leave
us hanging there forever. And, get
this, the cops is on they side, even
that honky D.A., Cyrus Sanwitch.

The hobos mumble in agreement. Cyrus chokes on his coffee.

TWON (CONT'D)
You alright, brotha?

CYRUS
Yeah...
(coughs)
Went down the wrong pipe.

TWON
You know what I think?

CYRUS
(nervous)
What?

TWON
I think the D.A. don't knows what's
going on. I think they lie to him
and he believes them; otherwise, how
can he be who he is? That's my
theory. I'm prob'ly wrong.

Cyrus clicks down a gulp of coffee.

CYRUS
Good theory. Th-That's got to be it.

TWON
What's yo' name, brotha?

CYRUS
(thinking fast)
Ah...Antwon.

TWON

That's my name, too. How 'bout that.
Only, folks calls me Twon.

They shake hands.

CYRUS

Thanks for the beans. I was
starving.

TWON

No problem. The pot's always on.
Never know when another nigga's
gonna land on shore still floppin'.

Somebody FARTS O.S. Hobo #3 plays with a cell phone.

CYRUS

(to Hobo #3)

Say, does that phone work?

HOBO #3

Don't know how to use it. Found it.

CYRUS

Can I see it?

Hobo #3 hands it to him. Cyrus pokes a button.

ON THE PHONE: "1% Battery Life Remaining"

CYRUS (CONT'D)

Mind if I make a call?

HOBO #3

Go ahead, brotha. It's yours.

Cyrus excuses himself, steps away from the group.

INT. CYRUS' OFFICE - DAY

Dwayne looks at his cellphone, frowns, answers it.

DWAYNE

If you're a goddamn telemarketer,
you can stick...

He promptly sits up. Glances at Dominic surprised.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)

Cyrus? Is that you? Where are you?

He listens, writes down what he's hearing.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)

Don't worry. Hang tight. I'll send
somebody up there to get you. Hello?
Hello? Shit!

He lowers his phone.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)
He's down river from the Old Trestle Bridge east of Brookdale. Make triple damn sure you finish the job this time...Oh, and by the way, he says he's black. Do what you have to. Never mind collateral damage.

EXT. HOBO CAMP - SAME

Cyrus holds the phone out. The screen, BLACK.

EXT. RIVER BANK - DAY

COPS stalking, guns in hand.

EXT. HOBO CAMP - DAY

Moses runs into camp.

MOSES
The cops is comin'! Ya'll better skedaddle, fast.

CYRUS
Mosey!

The hobos quickly gather up their belongings, disappear into the woods. Moses approaches Cyrus.

MOSES
They be lookin' for you.

CYRUS
I know. I called my assistant. Told him where I was, to come and get me. But how do you know?

MOSES
I was shoppin' at a Dunkin' Donut dumpster lookin' for some Old Fashion donuts when I overhear'd the cops talkin' on they phone. They have orders to kill you on sight.
(beat)
And they knows you is black...That's some assistant you got there.

Cyrus is stunned for a moment.

CYRUS
(to himself)
Dwayne, you traitorous little prick.
(to Moses)
How will they know what I look like-- black?

MOSES

They won't. They shoots everybody,
to make sure. Hurry. Follow me.

They take off, disappear into the woods.

The cops enter, guns drawn, look around, frustrated.

EXT. RAILROAD TRACKS - DAY

Moses leads Cyrus out of the woods. They jog down the tracks.

EXT. TRAIN STATION PLATFORM - NIGHT

A passenger train comes to a stop. BLACK CONDUCTORS jump off,
place portable steps in front of the car exits.

Cyrus sits cross-legged against the platform wall. Moses
hands Cyrus a tin can.

CYRUS

I don't know if I can do this.

MOSES

It's easy to be blind wit' your eyes
open. Just stare straight at me.
(indicates)
I'll be by that post.

Moses goes to an adjacent stanchion, squats with his can.

Cyrus stares at Moses. Walking legs stampede by.

A hand reaches down, drops coins into his can. Cyrus starts
to look in the can, stops himself.

CYRUS

Oh!...Ah...Thanks.

Another hand stuffs a bill into the can. Cyrus stares ahead.

CYRUS (CONT'D)

Thank you.

A hand flips a coin at him. It hits Cyrus in the forehead,
then CLANGS into the can. Cyrus continues staring.

CYRUS (CONT'D)

Thank you. Have a nice day.

A WOMAN stops with her BRATTY BOY (10), rummages through her
purse.

The boy waves his hand before Cyrus' eyes. Cyrus' face
strains to hold the stare. The boy swings a fake punch at
Cyrus' nose. Cyrus flinches away.

BRATTY BOY

Mommy! He blinked! He's a fake!

The mother finds her money, deposits it in the tin.

MOTHER
Come along, Tobias. Leave the poor
man alone.

CYRUS
God bless you, ma'am.

She drags the boy away. The boy looks back, frowning. Cyrus grins big, exposing his Billy Bob teeth. The boy's eyes widen. He clings to his mother's skirt.

Suddenly, Moses is by his side.

MOSES
Get up. Security's comin'.

CYRUS
Should I still pretend I'm blind?

MOSES
Keep pretendin'. Give me yo' can.

Moses grabs his can, pours the money into his hand, looks at it, pockets it, tosses the can into a waste bin.

CYRUS
How did I do?

MOSES
You a natural-born beggar.
(beat)
Close your eyes. I'll guide you.

They stroll up the platform, arm in arm. The security guard gives them the stink-eye as they pass him.

They arrive at the front of the train lanes.

MOSES (CONT'D)
Okay. You can stop pretendin'.

Cyrus opens his eyes. He looks up at the train engine marquee. It reads: "Englewood".

CYRUS
I need to get on this train.

MOSES
Come on, then. Follow me.

They walk up to a car and clamber aboard.

INT. SLEEPER CAR - DAY

Moses glances at the door numbers as they pass. He opens the "Employees Only" door, peeks in. They enter.

INT. ATTENDANTS' QUARTERS - LATER

Cyrus and Moses stand before a mirror dressed as servers.

CYRUS
I don't know about this.

MOSES
Just take they orders and deliver
it. Otherwise, stand around and be
the dumb nigga they thinks you is.

Cyrus doesn't look convinced.

INT. LOUNGE CAR - DAY

Cyrus stares down at the "L.A. Times" laying on a table. A large photo of his "white" face is above the fold.

HEADLINE READS: "L.A. D.A. ASSASSINATED"

OLD WHITE TRAVELER VOICE (O.S.)
Waiter?

Cyrus continues to stare at the newspaper.

OLD WHITE TRAVELER VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Waiter!

Cyrus turns to him in a daze.

CYRUS
Huh? You talking to me?

WHITE TRAVELER
Of course I'm talking to you,
nimrod! You deaf, too? Bring us a
couple glasses of Merlot.

CYRUS
Yes, sir. Sorry. Be right back.

Cyrus FARTS. Hurries stiffly away. The white traveler turns to his OLD WIFE whose ears are packed with hearing aids.

WHITE TRAVELER
Disgusting the service these days.

His wife sniffs, face sours, flutters the menu card.

WHITE TRAVELER'S WIFE
What about gays?...Whew!
(eyeing him)
Herbert!

LOUNGE CAR - LATER

Cyrus climbs the steps from the galley. He stares intently at the two overfilled wine glasses he's balancing on a round tray with both hands.

He suddenly goes rigid, falls back against the bulkhead, his face tense, pained. Wine sloshes out of the glasses.

He squeezes out a long, squeaky FART as the joy of relief spreads across his face. He resumes his climb.

A white, slutty, rhinestone COWGIRL and her YOUNG BLACK GIGOLO sit at a table clung together, smooching.

Cyrus moon-walks by, staring at his tray. A FAT PASSENGER squeezes by. Bumps him.

The glasses slide off the tray, crash onto the cowgirl's head, drenching her.

She jumps up, arms a-flurry. Knocks her wig back. It's Dwayne.

DWAYNE
(in his male voice)
You fucking imbecile.

CYRUS
(mortified)
I'm sorry, I...
(stares at Dwayne)
Dwayne? Is that you?

Dwayne quickly resets his wig. The gigolo gets up.

BLACK GIGOLO
(to Dwayne)
Who's he? You got another squeeze?

DWAYNE
(to gigolo; in falsetto)
Of course not. I've never laid eyes on this idiot before in my life.
(pouts)
Just look what he did to me?

CYRUS
Dwayne. It's m....

The gigolo punches Cyrus in the jaw. Cyrus falls back onto a WHITE PASSENGER'S lap. The passenger shoves him off with disgust. Cyrus slips to the floor, lost in a daze.

The MAIN CONDUCTOR arrives.

MAIN CONDUCTOR
What's going on here? Ma'am, are you
alright?

He dabs her face with a dry cloth. Dwayne snatches it from
him, finishes dabbing himself.

DWAYNE
(fake tears;
falsetto)
That nig...That nincompoop spilled
wine all over me. Look what he did
to my new outfit. I want him
arrested, and I want compensation.

A CONDUCTOR arrives, hauls up the dazed Cyrus.

MAIN CONDUCTOR
Take him away and lock him in the
toilet. We'll turn him over to the
police at the next stop.

Cyrus is led away. Dwayne sniggers: He's caught him.

DWAYNE
I want him arrested for assault and
battery. He ruined my sequinned top.

MAIN CONDUCTOR
Yes, Ma'am. And we'll compensate you
for a new outfit. In the meantime,
if there's anything you need, just
let me know. It'll be on us.

DWAYNE
How 'bout a sleeper suite?

EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

The COPS handcuff Cyrus, take him away. We SEE Moses watching
from the lounge car window in the b.g.

INT. COUNTY JAIL CELL - NIGHT

The DEPUTY shoves Cyrus into the cell.

CYRUS
Hey! No need to be rough.

The Deputy slams the barred gate shut.

DEPUTY
What are ya gonna do about it,
nigger? Arrest me?

He cackles with laughter. Cyrus, furious.

CYRUS
Asshole.

DEPUTY
What? Did you say something?

CYRUS
I said, you're a fucking asshole.

The Deputy thrusts his nightstick through the bars into Cyrus' belly. Cyrus folds, gasping for air.

The Deputy opens the gate. Bashes Cyrus' with his baton.

DEPUTY
I am the law here. You will respect me. Understand, boa?

Cyrus, trying to catch a decent breath, nods.

DEPUTY (CONT'D)
That's better. Now you just make yourself comfortable with your homeys here and I'll check in on you later.

He steps out, locks the cell door, and saunters away.

FIVE BLACK INMATES approach Cyrus, hover over him.

Cyrus looks up, face pained, eyes filled with fear.

INMATE #1
You all right, brotha?

Cyrus, realizing he's one of them, nods.

INMATE #2
What's your name, bro?

CYRUS
Antwon.

INMATE #1
Come on, Antwon, let's get you over to your bunk.

They help him to the bunk, sit him down.

INMATE #1 (CONT'D)
You'll learn not to challenge him; that's what he wants you to do so he can beat on you. Wha'cha in for?

Cyrus studies the earnest faces around him.

CYRUS
Spilling wine on a white drag queen...and being black.

The inmates nod and mumble agreement.

INMATE #2

You sho' got that last part right.

INMATE #1

You know what they got me for?
Talking to a white woman. And she my
girlfriend.

INMATE #3

Me and Zoey and James here, we're in
for unlawful congregatin'. They say
we was scorin' dope, but they
planted it. Who the judge gonna
believe? Not us.

INMATE #4

They got me for having too much
money on me. Said it was drug money.
They confiscated it. I'll never see
it again. This shit happens all the
time now. Never used to be this bad.

CYRUS

What happened?

INMATE #4

It all started with that honky D.A.
who just got hisself assassinated.
(scratches his head)
What's his name? Sandy Whitebread,
or something like that.

CHORUS

Cyrus Sanwitch.

Cyrus stares stunned, as if found guilty.

INMATE #1

You know him?

CYRUS

Well, I...I've, ah,...I've had run-
ins with him.

INMATE #2

He was a racist motha-fucka. Good
riddance, I say. Maybe things will
get better now that he's gone.

INMATE #3

He got what he deserved. Shootin's
too good for him. I'da lynched him.

Cyrus is seized with a sick feeling.

INMATE #1

You alright, Antwon?

INT. COUNTY JAIL - MORNING

The Deputy rattles the bars with his stick. The inmates drowsily rise up from their beds.

DEPUTY
Cyrus Sandwich. Get dressed.

Cyrus cringes at his name. Deputy points his stick at him.

DEPUTY (CONT'D)
That's you. Come on. You've been
bailed out.

The inmates glare at Cyrus as he nervously puts on his shoes.

CYRUS
(to inmates)
Same name. I'm the black
version...Middle name's Antwon.

The inmates get it, nod sympathetically.

INT. COUNTY JAIL ANTEROOM - DAY

The Deputy leads Cyrus in. Socrates and the SHERIFF, waiting.

CYRUS
(points at Socrates)
Hey! That's the guy who kidnapped me
and turned me black. I order you to
arrest him, Sheriff.

SHERIFF
You're not the D.A. You're
delusional. I know an imposter when
I see one. You should be grateful.
He just bailed you out. Now, do you
want to go or stay? Up to you.

CYRUS
(frustrated)
Go.

INT. CYRUS' CAR - DAY

Socrates drives. Cyrus slumps in the passenger seat.

CYRUS
What do you want from me?

SOCRATES
We told you--justice.

Cyrus sits quietly for a moment.

CYRUS
Where's your accomplice?

SOCRATES

Jamaica? She's worried about you.
You're comin' to my place for your
own protection.

Cyrus stares at him for a moment, then sits back resigned,
gazes out the window at a black neighborhood.

CYRUS

I've only driven through the black
district once in my life, and that
was when I took the wrong turn off
the roundabout.

Socrates glances at him, shakes his head; humors him:

SOCRATES

Lucky you weren't killed. Were you
scared?

CYRUS

Shitless. The stares I got trying to
get out--pretty nerve wracking.

SOCRATES

Imagine being a black man drivin'
through a honky neighborhood--every
day.

Cyrus ponders this thought.

EXT. BLACK NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY - ON CYRUS' CAR

As it stops at a red stop light.

INT./EXT. CYRUS' CAR

A WHITE CONVERTIBLE full of ROWDY WHITE TEENS pulls alongside
Cyrus' window. Cyrus glances their way.

TEEN DRIVER

What are you looking at?

Cyrus turns away.

DRIVER

Hey, nigger! Wanna blow me?

The teens laugh. Cyrus turns back to him. Glares.

CYRUS

Get lost, you fucking pissant.

DRIVER

(stunned)

What did you say?

(acting tough)

I'm gonna kick your black ass.

Cyrus suddenly grows big and fearsome, snarling like a rabid racoon, exposing his frightful teeth below bloodshot, swollen eyes--an awakened ogre about to unleash a horror on them. He reaches for the outside door handle.

The driver's eyes are saucers.

DRIVER (CONT'D)
Jesus Motherfucking Christ!

He stomps on it, PEELS away.

A crossing VAN clips them.

The convertible spins to a stop in the middle of the intersection facing the way it came and stalls.

The light turns GREEN.

Cyrus and Socrates slowly pass the stunned teens.

CYRUS
(to teens in car)
Wait for the light to change, you
fucking moron or you're going to get
yourself killed. And stay out of our
neighborhood or I'll eat you alive.

He snarls viciously at them. They cringe in horror.

Socrates is highly amused.

SOCRATES
Our neighborhood? You one of us now?

CYRUS
I'm black, aren't I? Here seems to
be my safest option.

EXT. SOCRATES' HOUSE - DAY

Cyrus' car turns up a long driveway into an open attached garage and parks within. The garage door closes.

INT. SOCRATES' LIVING ROOM - DAY

Cyrus sits in a chair staring at Maria knitting on the couch.

MARIA
Do you knit, Mr. D.A.?

CYRUS
The name's Cyrus. And no, I don't
knit.

MARIA
You should give it a try, Cyrus.
It's therapeutic.
(MORE)

MARIA (CONT'D)

You're creating something good and useful with your idle hands, you see.

Jamaica enters with a tray of tea and bite-sized sandwiches; sets it on the coffee table. Cyrus grabs one, inhales it.

JAMAICA

Go ahead. Dive in.

He takes a sip of tea, rams a sandwich into his mouth.

Jamaica sits, studies him.

JAMAICA (CONT'D)

How's the world been treating you, Cyrus?

CYRUS

(mouth full)

Shitty. Real shitty. No thanks to you.

He wolfs down another sandwich, grabs another one.

JAMAICA

Welcome to the white world through a colored man's lens. See a difference?

CYRUS

Is that what this is about? Getting me to see through your eyes?

JAMAICA

You have had the unique opportunity to peek behind the curtain of the racial divide, and live through it.

CYRUS

What opportunity? I was spit on, sneered at, yelled at, maced, shot at, beat on, knocked out, thrown into a trunk, tied to a moving car bumper, rode on a rail, nearly drowned, was mistaken for a turtle, jailed, and chased by cops and white drunks who wanted to kill me; in addition to starving, begging for food, and stepping on a nail in my bare feet...All in a span of two days.

JAMAICA

Sounds like a ho-hum day to me. You're talking the daily life of my brothers and sisters.

He stuffs a sandwich into his mouth.

CYRUS

It was a miserable, terrifying experience. I was treated like radioactive dirt--by my own peeps.

(reflects)

I must admit though: The only people that treated me with any decency was black folk. How ironic is that?

He shakes his head at the paradox, grabs another sandwich.

JAMAICA

It's ironic, if you're a racist. So, you're a changed man, then?

CYRUS

My eyes have been opened. My thinking turned around a hundred and eighty degrees. So, there. You won. You can remove the spell now. Okay?

Jamaica glances at Maria with a perplexed look. Maria winks.

JAMAICA

(to Cyrus)

Spell?

CYRUS

Your scheme worked. You can remove the spell you put on me.

JAMAICA

You don't look to me to be the kind that believes in the occult arts.

CYRUS

I saw my skin turn black before my eyes. And it won't scrub off. So, yeah--in this instance, anyway.

JAMAICA

It's one thing to make promises when you are desperate and hungry. It's another when you're safe and your belly's full. How do I know you won't revert to your old racist ways?

CYRUS

My stomach's nearly full now and I haven't changed back, have I? And I won't. You have my sacred word on it. What more do you want?

JAMAICA

I want an all black jury.

Cyrus thinks about it; takes another sandwich.

CYRUS
That's a tough one.

JAMAICA
Why? All-white juries convict blacks. An all-black jury should be able to do the same for whites.

CYRUS
You got a point there.
Unfortunately, the defence won't agree to an all-black jury here. The best you can hope for is a mixed jury, but still heavy on the white. Our only recourse is a change of venue and get an impartial jury. Otherwise, the defence will think it's biased, which it understandably would be.
(indicates himself)
There would even be bias against me because I'm black. So, please, change me back now so I can fight for you.

Jamaica struggles with a helplessness within her.

JAMAICA
Sorry, but no.

Cyrus sinks back, perplexed.

CYRUS
What more do I have to do to prove myself?

JAMAICA
When you are sincere, the spell will disappear.

Cyrus shakes his head in frustration as he reaches for another sandwich.

EXT. OUTDOOR BASKETBALL COURT - DAY

Cyrus, Jamaica, Socrates stroll past. A nicely-dressed BLACK COUPLE greet Jamaica and Socrates.

BLACK TEENS play basketball, one team wearing T-shirts, the other no shirts--Shirts and Skins. A boy calls out:

SHIRT #1
Hey, Jamaica! Your friend wanna play? We could use an extra player.

Jamaica looks up at Cyrus as if to say, "Well?"

CYRUS

Oh, no,...no, no, no. I can't dribble. I couldn't even make towel boy in grade school.

JAMAICA

The player they're missing is my son.

CYRUS

Oh...I see.
(looks at the boys)
Well, I guess it wouldn't hurt to give it the old grade-school try.

JAMAICA

(shouts to the boys)
He'd be glad to play. His name is D.A.

Cyrus gives her a look. She smiles back.

BASKETBALL COURT - LATER

A game in progress. Cyrus defends uncoordinatedly against a Skin. The Skin bounces the ball through Cyrus' spread legs. Another Skin lays it up and scores.

SHIRT #2

Hey, D.A., close 'em up. They ain't frisking you. Ha-ha!

The boys laugh in fun.

Cyrus concentrates on his awkward dribbling as he brings the ball down court. A Skin snatches it away, scores.

SKIN #1

Don't look at the ball, D.A. Look at my balls.

The boys laugh.

A Skin takes the ball out. Cyrus faces him, gets low, knuckles on the court. The Skin bounces the ball between his legs. Cyrus snatches it. Passes it off. A Shirt scores.

LATER

SCOREBOARD READS: "20/20". Cyrus acts the confident clown as he sashays and bounces the ball head-high to mid-court.

He stops. Palms the ball.

CYRUS

Make way for the only shot I was ever good at.

SKIN #2

Ha-ha! Raht. You haven't made one yet. Let's see whatcha got.

Cyrus slam-bounces the ball onto the court with both hands. It leaps twenty feet into the air, arches towards the rim.

SLO-MO as it hits the rim, bounces, lands on the top edge of the backboard and teeters there.

ON THE SHIRTS: Staring up with tense anticipation.

The ball finally tips off, bounces onto the heel of the rim, wobbles around it, drops through the hoop.

ON THE SKINS: Mouths agape, staring in disbelief.

Shirts rush to Cyrus, hoist him into the air. Cyrus WHOOPS it up with them. The Skins join in.

Cyrus looks off. His face suddenly registers alarm.

WHAT CYRUS SEES: A WHITE VAN jumps the curb, speeds towards the court perimeter fence.

Cyrus pushes the boys away, points at the van.

CYRUS

Runaway van! Run!

The van crashes through the fence, veers toward a boy. Cyrus grabs him up as the van ROARS past.

Socrates and Jamaica dive off the bleachers as the van CRASHES into it and stalls.

A PAUNCHY WHITE MALE SEPARATIST (60s) gets out with a pistol, takes a couple of woozy steps, aims it at a fleeing boy.

BLAM! The white separatist suddenly has a hole in his head and crumples to the ground.

ON SOCRATES as he lowers his gun.

Cyrus and Jamaica approach, stare down at the dead man. Cyrus turns to Socrates.

CYRUS (CONT'D)

You just prevented a massacre, Socrates. I'll see you get a hero's medal for this.

SOCRATES

The only metal I'm going to get is iron bars or lead bullets.

JAMAICA
 (to the kids)
 Alright, boys. Go home to your
 families. Now! And stay there.

The boys scatter.

CYRUS
 (to Socrates)
 You have nothing to worry about. You
 have credible witnesses, including
 me--the D.A.

SOCRATES
 And when they find out I'm a felon
 with a gun? That's an automatic five
 years in the clink, and you can't do
 anything about that. I'm too old for
 that shit. I just got out after
 serving twenty for possession of
 marijuana, and now it's legal.
 They'll find a way to charge me with
 something, or kill me. That's the
 way it is.

Police sirens BLARING in the distance.

SOCRATES (CONT'D)
 So, what would you do? Serve time
 and die, or leave the scene and hope
 to live free another day?

CYRUS
 (hesitates)
 Legally, you're obligated to stay.
 But, to your point, leaving the
 scene's not a bad idea under the
 circumstances...Let's go, we'll
 figure this out later.

They hurry off.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Cyrus, Socrates, Jamaica walk hurriedly down the sidewalk. A
 patrol car squeals to a stop beside them.

TWO COPS jump out. Cop #1 points his gun at them.

PATROL COP #2
 Where's the fire?

Cyrus, Socrates, Jamaica shuffle to a stop.

CYRUS
 What's with the gun?

PATROL COP #2
 Try running and find out, smart ass.
 Up against the wall.

Cyrus turns around to the wall. Cop #1 frisks him.

He frisks Socrates, finds the gun. Sticks it into his belt.

PATROL COP #2 (CONT'D)
You're all under arrest for murder
and accessories to murder. Put your
hands behind your back.

As Cop #1 holsters his pistol, Socrates wheels around,
punches him in the gut. Cop #1 buckles. Socrates rams him
into Cop #2, knocks them both to the ground, takes off
running.

JAMAICA
Socrates! Don't do this!

The cops fire aimlessly at Socrates. BLAM! BLAM! They get up,
run after him as he disappears around a corner.

Cyrus and Jamaica chase after them.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Socrates runs up to the same fence Antwon was killed on
earlier. He turns, looks back.

The cops appear at the entrance, guns pointed.

COP #1
Freeze!

Socrates turns around, raises his arms.

The cops approach, stop fifty feet away.

COP #1 (CONT'D)
(to Cop #2)
This far enough?

COP #2
About two paces closer.

They take two giant steps forward.

Cyrus and Jamaica appear at the alley entrance in the b.g.,
duck behind a dumpster and watch.

Cop #1 flips a coin, slaps it onto the back of his hand.

COP#1
Heads or tails?

COP #2
Heads.

COP #1
(uncovering)
Tails. Damn!
(MORE)

COP #1 (CONT'D)
(to Cop #2)
Okay, let's see a tight pattern.

Cop #2 raises his gun, empties it into Socrates' chest:
BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! Socrates is
slammed backwards against the fence, slumps to the ground in
a splayed sitting position against the fence.

INT. MARIA'S APARTMENT - SAME

Maria, holding Cyrus' cat, gasps in horror at what she SEES
below from behind her curtain.

EXT. ALLEY - SAME

Jamaica SCREAMS. The two cops turn to her. Cyrus grabs her.
They disappear around the corner.

EXT./INT. CITY BUS - DAY

It pulls away from the bus stop as the cops exit alley.

Jamaica pays. They hurry to a rear seat and peer through the
back window at the two cops looking around as if lost.

Jamaica turns away, sobbing. Cyrus puts his arm around her.

JAMAICA
Poor Socrates.

Cyrus stares blankly ahead as sympathetic tears wet his eyes.
Finally, Jamaica sits up, comports herself, wipes her tears
away with the back of her hand. Cyrus removes his arm.

CYRUS
You alright?

JAMAICA
It's all so senseless.

CYRUS
Let me see your phone.

Jamaica hands him her phone. He punches some numbers.

INT. DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE - DAY

Dwayne slumps in his chair looking defeated as Dominic rants.

SGT. DOMINIC
...He could be anybody; they all
look the same. We might as well be
blindfolded at a duck shoot.
(chuckles)
He must be one funny-looking nigger.

DWAYNE
Then look for a funny-looking
nigger.

The office phone rings. Dwayne answers in a brusque tone.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)
What is it?...Says he's who?

Dwayne sits upright. Glances at Dominic.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)
It's him.
(into the phone)
Hold on a sec.

He punches a phone button.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)
Put a trace on this call.
(punches button)
Okay, put him on.
(beat)
Cyrus! Is it really you? Where are you?

CYRUS
(on speaker)
I'm on a bus trying to keep twenty steps ahead of some very bad cops who are trying to kill me. You wouldn't happen to know anything about that, would you?

DWAYNE
Haven't heard a thing.
(winks at Dominic)
Why are they trying to kill you?

CYRUS
You tell me. A friend of mine just got executed by a couple of cops. I saw it happen with my own eyes.

DWAYNE
You saw it? Where?

CYRUS
MLK Park.

DWAYNE
MLK Park? What were you doing there?

CYRUS
Playing basketball.

DWAYNE
Playing basketball? Have you gone completely nigger on us, Cy?

A pause.

CYRUS
I saw you on the train last night...

INTERCUT: CYRUS ON BUS/DWAYNE IN OFFICE

Dwayne punches the phone off speaker mode, gets up, strolls.

CYRUS (CONT'D)
You were dressed as a cheap floozy
smooching with your black gigolo
lover. He punched me. Remember?

DWAYNE
I-I don't know what you're talking
about.

CYRUS
Sure you do, you fucking hypocrite.

DWAYNE
Hypocrite! Hey! We found a black sex
doll in your bed. Black. If
anybody's a hypocrite, it's you.

CYRUS
I don't lead a secret life as a
transvestite trolling for black
gigolos. That's an ethical
violation.

DWAYNE
What do you want?

CYRUS
I want you to reopen the Antwon
Williams shooting case. I want all
the officers involved investigated
by Internal Affairs for possible
collusion to commit murder.

Dwayne paces.

DWAYNE
Murder? Don't be ridiculous. They
went by the book and were cleared of
any wrongdoing, as you yourself
attested to.

CYRUS
Start the investigation.

DWAYNE
Tell me where you are. I'll pick you
up and we'll work on it together.

CYRUS
Just do what I told you. I'll be in
touch.

The line goes dead.

DWAYNE

Fuck.
 (punches a phone
 button)
You get the location?

Cyrus hands Jamaica back her phone. She smiles.

JAMAICA

Thanks for that.

EXT. BUS STOP - EVENING

The bus takes off leaving Cyrus and Jamaica standing at the bus stop. Jamaica reads the bus schedule sign.

JAMAICA

We can catch the red line back.

A black government sedan SCREECHES to a halt by the curb. TWO WHITE THUGS get out pointing guns.

Cyrus and Jamaica freeze. The thugs grab their hands, zip-tie them behind their backs.

CYRUS

Hey! What do you think you're doing?

They shove them into the sedan.

INT. BLACK SEDAN - CONTINUOUS

Cyrus and Jamaica sit across from two thugs staring ahead.

CYRUS

This is a government vehicle. Who
the fuck are you? And what do you
want with us?

The thugs stare at them blankly.

EXT. STREET CORNER - EVENING

A DARK FIGURE waits. The sedan pulls up to curb. The figure opens the front passenger door, gets in.

INT. BLACK SEDAN - CONTINUOUS

The figure looks back over his shoulder. It's Dwayne.

CYRUS

So, it's you. Is this your way of
insisting that I help you on the
Williams case?

DWAYNE

(chuckles)
Funny. How's the ride so far?

CYRUS

Pretty cozy, considering: A government car, body guards, chauffeur. Why the V.I.P. treatment, Dwayne? An unnecessary expense, don't you think?

DWAYNE

Tonight's a special night and you're the guest of honor.

JAMAICA

(alarmed)

He's going to kill us, Cyrus.

CYRUS

You going to kill us, Dwayne?

DWAYNE

Everybody believes the old D.A.-- that's you--is dead. Don't want to disappoint them. They're getting used to me as their D.A.

CYRUS

I always suspected there was something smarmy about you--high-heels, high hair, short penis. Where's your skirt? Afraid to dress up for these bots?

DWANE

Fuck you, Cyrus.

CYRUS

You betrayed me. Is it because you lost the election to me? Here I was, mister nice guy, letting you stay on as my assistant after challenging me --and pretty viciously, I might add. To think I felt sorry for you.

DWAYNE

Let's just say I'm getting what should have been mine. And I had the nigger vote.

CYRUS

Only because you set me up as a racist without a conscience. You had the cops do your bidding to make me look bad in the eyes of the black community. You sullied my name for personal gain.

JAMAICA

(to Dwayne)

You're contemptible.

DWAYNE

(to Jamaica)

Wanna know something? Cyrus here was turned on by you the moment you barged into his then-office and fucked his brain with that nigger talk.

(to Cyrus)

Ain't that right, Cy?

Cyrus glares at him.

CYRUS

If I get the chance, I'm going for your eyes, then your throat.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - CONTINUOUS

The sedan turns off the highway onto it.

EXT. GATE - DUSK

The sedan drives through an open gate in a chain-linked fence. Beyond, ground fog. Trees eerily silhouetted in the sunset.

EXT. GROVE OF TREES - DUSK

The SUV drives up to them and stops.

DEAD BLACK MEN in various stages of decomposition hang by their necks from the tree limbs, like last fruit.

A small GROUP of KKK stands motionless holding fiery torches under a limb with an empty noose hanging from it. Next to it, a hanged skeleton CLACKS in the breeze.

INT. BLACK SEDAN - CONTINUOUS

Cyrus stares in shock out the window at the BLACK MAN hanging dead outside his window. It's hobo Twon.

CYRUS

Twon. You lynched Twon?

He turns to Dwayne, furious.

CYRUS (CONT'D)

You stunted, fuck-faced psychopath.
You killed Twon. Why?

DWAYNE

Lets just say this is where real justice gets done.

CYRUS

It's vigilante murder, nothing less.

DWAYNE

One less nigger, one less crime; or
in your case, obstacle.

EXT. HANGING TREE - NIGHT

Cyrus stands trembling on a turned-over five-gallon bucket, a
noose around his neck.

Jamaica struggles against two thugs holding her by the arms.

The GRAND WIZARD steps forward.

CYRUS

Show your face, you fucking coward.
Let me look at my assassin.

The grand wizard removes his hood. It's Horace.

CYRUS (CONT'D)

Horace? You?

HORACE

Welcome to my private mobile art
gallery, Cy. As you can see, it's a
work in progress. Even at this
stage, it's very meditative,
especially when the breeze blows
through the valley and their bones
start to talk.

CYRUS

You're a sick, twisted fuck.

HORACE

Depends on your perspective. I
happen to think you are a sick fuck,
just like your daddy.

CYRUS

You bastard.

HORACE

The nut doesn't fall far from the
tree. He was a nigger-lover just
like you, only he didn't go so far
as to tattoo himself black. By the
way, those bones hanging next to
you...?

(he rattles them)

That was my first. A fine specimen,
don'cha think? Any guess who it is?

CYRUS

Fuck you.

HORACE

That's yo' daddy.

Cyrus slumps in horror as he stares at it. The noose tightens around his neck, reminding him not to faint.

HORACE (CONT'D)
As you can see, he wasn't cremated like he wished. Now it's time for you to join him. Father and son together. At last. Forever.

CYRUS
(desperate; to Jamaica)
Jamaica. Do something. Cast a spell!

JAMAICA
(blubbering)
God forgive me, I can't, Cyrus.

Horace kicks the bucket away:

CYRUS
Nooooo-auch!

Cyrus swings.

CYRUS' SURREAL POV: Jamaica's contorted face SCREAMING. Horace LAUGHING demonically. Dwayne drawing back to knife Cyrus in the heart. Gunshots: BLAM! BLAM! Horace hosing blood from a hole in his head. Dwayne SCREAMING. BLACKNESS. END POV

EXT. WOODS - SAME

Horace topples over, a hole in his head. Dwayne drops.

DWAYNE
(screaming)
Aaaaah! I'm hit! Help me!

The robed men scatter, disappear into the woods.

BLAM! A thug drops. BLAM! BLAM! Another thug falls.

Dwayne hobbles to the car, gets in. BLAM! BLAM! Windows blow out. BLAM! The thug driver takes a bullet, gets behind the steering wheel. The sedan ROARS away in a cloud of dust.

Socrates runs up to Cyrus. Blasts the rope away. BLAM! Cyrus crumbles to the ground unconscious.

Maria runs in. Cuts Jamaica's hand tie.

JAMAICA
Socrates? Maria. How...?

MARIA
We followed you in Cyrus' car.

Socrates hurriedly works the noose off Cyrus' neck.

Maria scoots over to Cyrus, cuts his hand tie. Jamaica rolls him over, starts pumping on his chest.

JAMAICA
Come on, Cyrus. Breathe!
(looking skyward)
Jesus. Do your thing. Give this poor
misdirected soul his life back.

She now pounds on his chest like she's chopping wood.

JAMAICA (CONT'D)
Don't you die on me! I got. Too
much. Invested in you. Come on!
Breathe!

She puts her ear to his chest. Does mouth-to-mouth.

Cyrus' hand involuntarily comes around to the back of her head, presses her lips to his. Jamaica jerks back in surprise. Cyrus' eyes pop open, bewildered, snatched from the nipple of a divine nourishment.

CYRUS
(hoarse)
W-What happened?

JAMAICA
Thank you, Jesus. You're back.

She sits him up. Cyrus rubs his neck.

JAMAICA (CONT'D)
You just had the ultimate black
experience, Cyrus--you were lynched.

CYRUS
Lynched?

JAMAICA
What's the last thing you remember?

Cyrus thinks, tastes his lips with his tongue.

CYRUS
You kissing me?

JAMAICA
(blushes)
Um, that was C.P.R. Before that?

CYRUS
Well, I remember seeing my daddy's
skeleton hanging by his neck.

He stares up at the hanging skeleton. He shudders.

CYRUS (CONT'D)
Is it really him?

JAMAICA
(indicating Horace)
According to him, and I have no
reason not to believe the sadistic
mother-fucker. You all right?

He suddenly sees Socrates.

CYRUS
Socrates? Didn't I just see you take
a bullet magazine?

Socrates opens his shirt to reveal a flak vest bristling with
eight copper slugs in a tight pattern.

SOCRATES
All in the heart. I'm grateful they
wasn't head shots.

CYRUS
(indicates Horace)
What happened to him?

JAMAICA
Socrates took them all out.

SOCRATES
It was a team effort, but I was
thrilled to do my part.

Cyrus tries to get up. Socrates helps him to his feet. Cyrus
draws him close. They hug.

CYRUS
Thanks,...brother.

SOCRATES
Anytime, brotha.

They release. Cyrus looks down at Horace's body.

CYRUS
I thought Horace was a friend. You
never know about people--what's
going on inside a man's head.

JAMAICA
Speaking as a woman, you can make a
pretty good assumption...Come on.
Let's get away from this hell.

Socrates glares down at the dead Horace.

SOCRATES
I gotta do something first.

MINUTES LATER

Jamaica, Maria, and Socrates, supporting Cyrus, walk away. In the f.g., a hooded Grand Wizard sways from a noose.

INT. SOCRATES' KITCHEN - NIGHT

At the kitchen table: Maria knitting. Socrates toking a joint. Jamaica enters.

JAMAICA
He's sleeping like a baby.

MARIA
Poor man. What he's been through...
The least I can do is remove those
ugly teeth while he's sleeping.

JAMAICA
I think he'd appreciate that. At
least one part of him will be back
to normal.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Dwayne, in bed with his leg in a cast; Dominic; the jailhouse deputy; and the thug, with his arm in a sling, conferencing.

THUG
I saw him. He's an old nigger. White
goatee. Damn good with a gun.

DEPUTY
I know him. He's the one who bailed
that nigger Cyrus out.

DWAYNE
Find out who he is and where he
lives. Put out an A.P.B. on them. I
want them gone for good. Understood?

INT. SOCRATES' BEDROOM - DAY

Cyrus, in bed, opens his eyes, COUGHS, winces. Feels the welt around his neck.

Jamaica, dozing in a chair, jerks awake.

JAMAICA
How are you feeling?

INT. SOCRATES' LIVING ROOM - DAY

Cyrus standing still as Jamaica buttons Cyrus' collar.

JAMAICA
It will hide your rope burn.

Cyrus stops her, unbuttons the collar.

CYRUS

It feels like a noose around my neck.

Jamaica backs away, looks him over. Cyrus is dressed in a shirt, slacks, and loafers.

JAMAICA

They fit you perfectly.

She turns him towards a wall mirror.

JAMAICA (CONT'D)

Have a look.

Cyrus observes himself in the mirror.

CYRUS

Your husband had good taste.

Cyrus grins, pleased.

CYRUS (CONT'D)

My teeth! They're back to normal.

(turns to her)

Haven't I proven my sincerity by now? When are you going to take the rest of the spell off me?

JAMAICA

Have a seat.

Cyrus sits on the couch. Jamaica sits down next to him. She reaches into her purse and pulls out a wallet and a badge. Hands them to Cyrus.

JAMAICA (CONT'D)

Here.

Cyrus takes them, puts them in his pockets.

CYRUS

Bit by bit, you're putting me back together. Is that your plan? What about the grand finale?

JAMAICA

That, you'll have to wait a bit longer, I'm afraid.

CYRUS

What? Why?

JAMAICA

I didn't put a spell on you.

CYRUS

But you told me...

JAMAICA

I never told you any such thing. You told me.

Cyrus pauses; a thought registers--it's true, he did.

CYRUS

Then how did I get this way?

(alarmed)

You tattooed me?

JAMAICA

Ever heard of silver nitrate? It's the chemical solution photographers use to develop pictures. If it gets on the skin, it will turn your skin black when exposed to light. That's what you were drenched in when you took a shower in my chemistry lab. I titrated it into the water line.

CYRUS

Then it's not permanent?

JAMAICA

No. It only lasts a week or so.

Cyrus sinks back relieved, then bursts out LAUGHING.

JAMAICA (CONT'D)

You okay?

CYRUS

Wow. I've been punked. I'll have to give it to you--it worked. You made your point loud and clear.

He gazes at Jamaica affectionately.

CYRUS (CONT'D)

I'm disgusted with the behavior of some of my fellow whites and the lengths they will go to...to make a black man's life miserable and keep him down. I had no idea.

JAMAICA

Feel the remnants of slavery?

CYRUS

I felt the deadly hate.

JAMAICA

I like it when I witness transformation.

Jamaica smiles. Cyrus is taken in.

CYRUS
You have a beautiful smile. You
should use it more often.

JAMAICA
Getting justice is a grim business.

He leans forward, staring at her lips. She leans away.

JAMAICA (CONT'D)
Whoa! I'm not some black sex doll.

Cyrus backs off, chagrined.

CYRUS
Sorry. I didn't mean...

JAMAICA
Don't you have a regular squeeze--a
man in your position?

CYRUS
No. You?

JAMAICA
My husband was killed five years
ago. Been too busy raising my son to
find a good man, too.

Cyrus picks up a picture from the coffee table.

ON PICTURE: A beaming, nine-year-old Antwon sitting on the
lap of his black stepfather. Behind them stands Socrates.

CYRUS
This must be Antwon? Handsome boy.

JAMAICA
He lost that smiley innocence when
his step-father there was killed.
They were very close.

CYRUS
Sorry to hear that. I was raised by
a step-father, too. He was a true
blue father to me. I rarely saw my
real father. My mother divorced him
right before I was born. He was a
well known philanderer. You might
have heard of him. Harry Flunk? He
was a State Senator, until he was
assassi...

Jamaica gasps; grabs at her heart.

CYRUS (CONT'D)
What? What's the matter? You okay?

JAMAICA

Harry Flunk is your father? Oh,
sweet Jesus.

She gets up, moves to the corner of the room, her back to
Cyrus. Cyrus stands up, concerned, confused.

CYRUS

Did you know him?

Jamaica hesitates, then turns around to face Cyrus.

JAMAICA

He was the father of my boy.

Cyrus' jaw drops. He stares at the picture, then at Jamaica.

CYRUS

Antwon...is my...step-brother?

Cyrus collapses back onto the couch staring at the picture,
trying to take it all in.

CYRUS (CONT'D)

H-How did it happen? I mean, how did
you get together?

JAMAICA

I worked for him as an intern one
summer during college before I got
my chemistry teaching degree. I was
young and innocent and he took me
under his wing. He was a very
charismatic man. I learned a lot of
interesting sex positions from him.

Cyrus gulps hard.

JAMAICA (CONT'D)

Then I got pregnant. He created a
secret trust to pay for Antwon's
upbringing and education. After he
was killed, the well ran dry.

(beat)

He was a good man. Gentle. Funny. I
was in love with him. He treated me
and other blacks as equals. Seems
the nut fell far from the tree this
time.

CYRUS

His assassination gave me a very
negative view toward black people. I
never trusted a colored man since--
'til now, of course.

JAMAICA

You think a black man killed your
daddy?

CYRUS

It's in the police report. The black assassin was killed, too.

JAMAICA

That report is a fraud. The cops assassinated him and the black friend he was with that day, then pinned the black friend as the assassin.

CYRUS

That's not what the report said. How would you know differently?

JAMAICA

Because that black friend was my husband. Your father and he had become very close because of that boy.

Cyrus is stunned. He takes her hand. They gaze sadly into each other's eyes for a long moment, urges building.

Socrates storms into the house, catches his breath.

Jamaica and Cyrus jump up.

SOCRATES

The cops are comin' for us.

Jamaica grabs her purse off the coffee table.

CYRUS

How do you know?

SOCRATES

Heard it at the bar on the scanner. There's an All Points Bulletin on us.

EXT. STREET - SOCRATES' HOUSE - SAME

A parade of cop cars creep to a stop. Sergeant Dominic, in the lead car, gets out, signals the others to follow him.

INT./EXT. SOCRATES' HOUSE - DAY

Socrates goes over to a window, peeks through the curtains.

WHAT HE SEES: The yard swarming with cops.

SOCRATES

They mean business this time.

CYRUS

Wait! My D.A. badge. I can order them to stop and desist.

SOCRATES
You're black, brotha. They'll figure
you stole it and shoot you on the
spot. They want us dead.

Socrates pries up a floorboard, reaches in, pulls out a
Glock, hands it to Cyrus.

SOCRATES (CONT'D)
Here. You'll need it.

Cyrus takes it with hesitation.

SGT. DOMINIC
(through a
megaphone)
This is the police. We know you're
in there. Come out with your hands
up or we'll come in shooting.

Cyrus peeks through the curtains. SEES Sergeant Dominic.

CYRUS
It's Dominic, my A.D.A.'s go-to man.

BLAM! The window blows out beside him. He ducks away.
Socrates stands back; aims through it.

JAMAICA
Wait! Don't shoot! All they need is
an excuse to open fire and torch the
place. We can escape in the car,
catch them off guard.

CYRUS
(to Socrates)
Give me the keys.

SOCRATES
Get the car ready. I'll be right
out.

Socrates tosses him the keys. Cyrus and Jamaica run through
the kitchen, out the interior door to the garage.

Socrates picks up a bong, SHATTERS a window ten feet down the
wall. The cops fire at it: BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!...

He stands back from the window he's at, takes aim at the two
cops who "assassinated" him earlier. BLAM!...BLAM! They
collapse dead on the lawn.

All hell breaks loose. B-B-BL-BL-BL-BLAM!...Bullets dotting
the wall with daylight. Pictures, glass, plaster flying.

Socrates dashes through the kitchen, chased by exploding wall
plaster, and dives through the open door into the garage.

EXT. SOCRATES' DRIVEWAY - DAY - ON CYRUS' CAR

as it CRASHES through the garage door, accelerating backwards.

A gauntlet of cops turn and fire at it as it roars past them. BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!...

INT./EXT. CYRUS' CAR - SAME

Cyrus, at the wheel, looking back over his shoulder. Socrates, next to him, fires out his window. BLAM! BLAM!... LEAD SMACKING METAL, SHATTERING WINDOWS.

Socrates' head EXPLODES. His brains splatter against Cyrus.

ON CYRUS' SHOCKED FACE, then he screams a REBEL YELL.

Jamaica, in the back seat, FIRING through her window. BLAM!...

She's hit; slumps sideways, eyes closed.

Cyrus takes one in the shoulder.

He spins the steering wheel with one hand.

ON CAR as it whips expertly onto the street, GRINDS GEARS, ROARS away.

The cops gather, recklessly fire at it: BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!...

EXT. EMERGENCY ROOM - DAY

Cyrus SQUEALS to a stop, gets out, runs inside.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Blood covered, left arm dangling, Cyrus races to the counter.

A DOUGHY WHITE MALE RECEPTIONIST jumps up, his posture defensive, fearful, suspicious.

CYRUS
I've got two shot people in the car!
They need attention immediately!

The receptionist goes to his computer.

RECEPTIONIST
What's your name?

CYRUS
Cyrus Sandwich. Hurry!

RECEPTIONIST
How do you spell "sandwich"?

CYRUS
What? Sandwich. As in ham sandwich.

RECEPTIONIST
Address?

CYRUS
Fuck the address. I've got two
people bleeding to death in my car.

RECEPTIONIST
I have to verify insurance.

Cyrus pulls out his gun, points it at him.

CYRUS
Verify this, you lumpy slab of shit.
If you don't attend to them this
instant, I'll blow your fucking nose
out the back of your fucking scull.

The receptionist snatches up a phone receiver.

RECEPTIONIST
Emergency room! STAT! People shot!

LATER - TRIAGE WARD

A DOCTOR finishes putting Cyrus' bandaged arm in a sling.
TWO DEPUTIES await him.

CYRUS
(to doctor)
Can I see them?

DOCTOR
I'm sorry to have to tell you this.
The man, Socrates, was dead on
arrival. Miss Williams is in
critical care. A bullet just missed
her heart.

Cyrus stands stunned as the deputies cuff his good arm.

DEPUTY #1
Come on. Let's go. You are under
arrest for assault with a deadly
weapon.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The deputies lead Cyrus away. In the b.g., Dwayne, supporting
himself on a crutch, glares at Cyrus, unseen.

INT. COUNTY JAIL - LOCKUP - DAY

The cell door CLANGS behind Cyrus, now in an orange jumpsuit.

DEPUTY

You're becoming a regular. I'm putting you with a white man this time. Maybe you'll learn some respect.

He strolls away, WHISTLING to himself.

A WHITE PUNK lies on the lower bunk with his eyes closed, jiving to his earbuds. Cyrus steps up.

CYRUS

Excuse me. Helloa!

The punk keeps jiving. Cyrus rips off his earbuds.

PUNK

Hey! What the fuck.

CYRUS

I can't climb into the upper bunk with this arm. Would you mind switching bunks with me?

PUNK

I ain't movin' for no stinkin' nigger.

CYRUS

What did you call me?

PUNK

A stinkin' nigger. And I ain't movin'.

CYRUS

Get your punk hatchet-ass up.

The punk jumps up, gets in Cyrus' face.

PUNK

This is my bunk. And I ain't givin' it over to no nigger.

CYRUS

You know what a nigger is?

PUNK

What? You tryin' to fuck with me? A nigger's a nigger--you.

CYRUS

It's a man, a red-blooded man, with black skin.

PUNK

Don't matter. His skin is nigger.

CYRUS
You ever been fucked by a nigger?

PUNK
What? You a fag, too?

CYRUS
You going to give me this bunk?

PUNK
Fuck, no! I ain't gonna give my bunk
to no nigger fag.

Instantly, Cyrus grabs his throat, runs him backwards to the wall. The punk's head slams hard against it with a CRACK!

CYRUS
Then let me change your mind.

He rams a knee into the punk's groin. The punk slumps.

CYRUS (CONT'D)
Not only am I going to sleep in that
bunk, you're going to make it for
me, or I'll hammer your balls into
Nutella. Okay?

He presses his knee lightly into the punk's balls. The punk
nods his head like a woodpecker, his eyes eclipsed with pain.

CYRUS (CONT'D)
Now, get your crap off my bunk and
put the sheets from the top bunk on
it. I'm not lying in your shit
grease. Hurry! I'm tired.

The punk gropes his way to the bunk, strips the bed.

CYRUS (CONT'D)
You're one fucked-up racist punk...
How much education do you have?

PUNK
My daddy educated me. He said public
school teachers are liberal commies.
He saved me.

CYRUS
I'll bet he did. If you ever use the
word "nigger" in that context again,
I'll kill you. Okay?

PUNK
Okay.

INT. COUNTY JAIL - LOCKUP - DAY

The deputy escorts Maria, disguised as an old colored woman
with a knit shawl, to Cyrus' cell.

The deputy rattles his nightstick against the bars.

DEPUTY
Wake up, Cyrus. Yo' mama's here to
see you. You got five minutes.

Cyrus goes up to the bars. The deputy leaves.

CYRUS
Maria! Tell me, is Jamaica...?

MARIA
She's out of critical care. She's
going to be okay.

CYRUS
That's a relief. Tragic about
Socrates. A righteous man. He saved
my life.

MARIA
A terrible loss to the community. It
comes with the territory,
unfortunately. Is there anything I
can get you?

CYRUS
No, but there's something you can do
for me. Just need your cell phone.

INT. COUNTY JAIL - LOCKUP - LATER

Dwayne hobbles on a crutch to Cyrus' cell.

CYRUS (CONT'D)
Here to finish me off?

Dwayne chuckles as he flicks his lighter on and TORCHES an
I.D. card he's holding.

DWAYNE
Symbolically speaking, yeah. You
won't need your D.A. I.D. no more.

He lets it fall to the floor and flame out to ash.

CYRUS
My first priority when I get out is
to see you oscillate under an
electric helmet.

DWAYNE
(guffaws)
You're not going to get that chance.
I've filed additional charges of
murder. No bail. No counsel. No
hope. I'm going to see you stay
dead.

Dwayne gives a slight acknowledging nod to the punk in b.g.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)
Your miseries will be over soon.

CYRUS
What do you mean by that?

DWAYNE
(falsetto)
See you in the morgue, darling.

He hobbles away chuckling maniacally to himself.

Cyrus turns to the punk.

CYRUS
What are you in here for?

PUNK
Ah...Rape.

CYRUS
Did the D.A. cut you a deal?

PUNK
Uh-uh. W-why would he do that?

CYRUS
So he could have me killed.

He grabs the punk by the throat and runs him to the wall.

CYRUS (CONT'D)
Did the D.A. make a deal with you to
kill me? Tell me or I'll jack your
junk to the rafters.

The punk breaks down.

PUNK
He gave me a knife an-and told me to
kill you while you slept and make it
look like you attacked me with it. I
didn't want to do it, but he said I
would never serve time for rape,
ever again.

CYRUS
Where's the knife? Get it.

The punk goes over to his bunk, pulls out a SHEATHED KNIFE
from under his pillow, hands it to Cyrus.

CYRUS (CONT'D)
How many more ignorant mercenary
fucks like you are out there?

PUNK
I don' know. Lots, I guess.

Cyrus glares at him with profound disgust.

EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET - DAY

Dwayne hobbles along on his crutch, CHUCKLING to himself.

Maria approaches from behind, sticks a gun barrel through her shawl into his lower back. Dwayne freezes.

MARIA
Keep moving, you Cracker bitch, or
you'll be bagging your poop the rest
of your days.

INT. COUNTY JAIL - DAY

Cyrus stretches awake, then suddenly sits up gaping at his WHITE hands and arms. He throws the cover off his WHITE legs.

He leaps out of bed, shakes the punk, who is thrashing about in the throes a bad dream.

PUNK
Please, I beg you, don't jack ma
nuts...

CYRUS
Punk. Wake up.

The punk's eyes pop open. Sees Cyrus.

PUNK
Aaaah!

He sidles away to the wall.

CYRUS
Am I a white man, or a black man?

PUNK
Y-You're white. H-How...?

Cyrus goes to the bars, yells out:

CYRUS
Deputy! Get your ass over here!

The deputy mumbles as he storms up with baton in hand.

DEPUTY
You niggers never seem to learn
respect for the law. Well, I'm gonna
teach you a lesson you'll never...
(sees Cyrus)
What? How did you get in there?

CYRUS
Get me the Sheriff.

The deputy turns, hurries away. A minute later, he returns with the Sheriff. Points at Cyrus.

DEPUTY
Look! See?

The Sheriff comes closer. Eyeballs Cyrus.

SHERIFF
Cyrus? You're supposed to be dead.

CYRUS
You should dust off your eyeballs, Sheriff. I told you I was kidnapped and turned black. Now it's gone, as you can see. Get me out of here.

SHERIFF
I don't know, Cyrus. You got me in a pickle here. You, as a black person, are charged with murder. You, as a white person, are suppose to be dead. You're the same person. I have strict instructions concerning the black one, from Nettlebutt. I'll have to call him and get written permission to release you. Formalities, you know.

CYRUS
As you can see, the white me is alive. As far as the black me is concerned, I can prosecute him myself.

SHERIFF
Huh? You can?

CYRUS
I'm the chief prosecutor, aren't I? Call my private secretary, right now. She's the only one I trust to get you what you need. Call her.

The Sheriff takes out his cell phone.

INTERCUT: SHERIFF/MARIA IN CYRUS' CAR

Maria is driving. Her cellphone rings. She glances at the number, answers.

MARIA
D.A.'s office.

SHERIFF
Hello. This is Sheriff Jenkins down at the county jail.
(MORE)

SHERIFF (CONT'D)

You're not going to believe this,
but I have Cyrus Sandwich in my
jail. He's not dead after all.

MARIA

God save us. He's alive!

SHERIFF

I need official release papers from
your office. Is Nettlebutt there?

MARIA

The A.D.A. has gone missing, too.

She glances at her rearview mirror.

THROUGH THE REARVIEW MIRROR: Dwayne is in the back seat,
bound, gagged, blindfolded. Dwayne's gigolo lover from the
train holds a gun under Dwayne's chin.

SHERIFF

What should I do, then?

MARIA

He can sign them himself once you
release him on his own cognisance.
We need him desperately in the
office.

SHERIFF

I just don't want to go against
procedure is all.

MARIA

He's the D.A., right? He makes
procedure.

SHERIFF

I guess you're right there. Okay,
then. Thanks.

He pockets his phone.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)

Okay, Cyrus, you are free to go.

The Sheriff unlocks the cell gate.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)

My deputy will give you a lift home.
Just send me the paperwork ASAP.

EXT. CYRUS' HOUSE - DAY

The Sheriff's car pulls up to the curb.

INT./EXT. SHERIFF'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

The deputy puts it in park.

DEPUTY

There you go, Sir. Sorry I treated
you so bad as a nigger...

Cyrus grabs the back of his head and pounds it to a bloody
pulp against the steering column.

CYRUS

Thanks for the lift.

He gets out, walks away. The car horn BLARING.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Cyrus, in a business suit sans tie, approaches Jamaica's bed
with his hand behind his back. She smiles, happy to see him.

JAMAICA

Well, look at you! Back in your own
skin. Comfortable now?

He presents her with a bouquet of flowers.

CYRUS

For you.

JAMAICA

Oh! They're beautiful! Thank you.
Put them over there with the others.

She indicates. Cyrus turns, walks over to a table loaded with
bouquets of flowers. He arranges the bouquet.

CYRUS

You have lots of friends...Is there
anything I can get you?

He plucks a flower away.

JAMAICA

I'm okay.
(indicates the bed)
Come over here and sit beside me.

Cyrus walks over and sits. He weaves the flower carefully
into her hair. He gets closer as he does so. Their eyes meet.

JAMAICA (CONT'D)

That's sweet.

Cyrus touches her lips with his finger, then substitutes his
lips. A light touch. He backs off. They regard one another,
then kiss with passion.

Maria enters.

MARIA

Oops.

Cyrus and Jamaica quickly release, hearts pounding.

JAMAICA
Ahem. Maria. Come in.

Maria hands Cyrus a sheet of paper.

CYRUS
What's this?

He takes it, scans it.

MARIA
Nettlebutt confessed to leading a
gang of vigilante cops.

CYRUS
How did you get him to do that?

MARIA
Fear.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

A MILITARY HONOR GUARD seven-gun salute: BLAAM! Echos away.

Socrates' casket is suspended over an open grave. His
portrait on a easel.

Cyrus places a ribboned Civilian Hero Award Medallion over
the easel apex, takes a chair near Jamaica and Maria.

A MARINE gives Jamaica a triangular-folded flag, says some
quiet words to her.

The entire black community is present, swaying, moved to
tears, as a BLACK BARITONE PERFORMER sings "Old Man River."

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

The gallery is filled with BLACK SPECTATORS. Sergeant Dominic
and five rogue cops sit at the defence table; Cyrus and
Jamaica at the prosecutor's table. Maria on the stand.

SIX BLACK and FOUR WHITE JURORS listen to the WHITE DEFENCE
ATTORNEY grill Maria. She wears reading glasses, takes notes.

DEFENCE ATTORNEY
...You dare to tell us that Antwon
Williams was not carrying a gun,
when I have five honorable, career
law enforcement officers telling us
otherwise?

He GUFFAWS. Walks back to the defendants' table.

DEFENCE ATTORNEY (CONT'D)
Come on now, Miss Cortez. You were
forty feet away.
(MORE)

DEFENCE ATTORNEY (CONT'D)

Who do you expect us to believe--
you, an old woman with cataracts who
 needs glasses to see, or these clear-
 eyed young law enforcement officers
 who had front row seats?

MARIA

(removes her
 glasses)

First of all, asshole, I don't have
 cataracts...

LAUGHTER from the gallery. A WHITE MALE JUDGE BANGS his
 gavel.

JUDGE

Order in the court! If I hear such
 an outburst again, I will clear the
 gallery.

(turns to Maria)

And you, madam, watch your tongue.
 Keep it civil. Answer the question.

MARIA

Yes, Judge. As I was going to say...
 (to Defence
 Attorney)

I wear reading glasses to read. I
 don't need glasses to see that tiny
 mole on your neck.

The gallery--and some in the jury--SNICKER. The Defence
 Attorney unconsciously fingers the barely noticeable mole on
 his neck. He realizes it, and quickly drops his hand.

MARIA (CONT'D)

(points)

See that spider up in the corner
 yonder?

He turns, looks up at the dusty Corinthian cornice.

DEFENCE ATTORNEY

I don't see anything.

MARIA

(squinting)

Oops. It's not a spider. My mistake.
 It's a gnat.

(turns to the jury)

But I am not mistaken when I tell
 you good folk, as a God-fearing
 Christian who swore on the bible to
 tell the absolute truth in this here
 courtroom, that these eyes saw

(stands; points
 directly at Dominic)

(MORE)

MARIA (CONT'D)

Sergeant Dominic there slide a gun to Antwon's mangled body, and that that gun went off on its own and killed the cop.

The gallery MURMURS. The judge RAPS his gavel.

MARIA (CONT'D)

(speaking louder,
over the gavel)

Then he and the rest of those murderers shot his body to little pieces. There's no way on earth or heaven Antwon could have killed that cop, because Antwon was already dead.

The jury members turn to one another aghast. The judge HAMMERS his gavel.

JUDGE

Order! Order in the court!

Finally, quieting down:

DEFENCE ATTORNEY

Your honor, I move to strike the insinuation that my clients are murderers. Goes to speculation.

JUDGE

The jury will disregard the witness' reference to the defendants as murderers. Miss Cortez. Sit! And stay seated, or I'll hold you in contempt. I'll have no more theatrics in my court. Do you understand?

MARIA

Yes, Judge. I was just stating fact.

DEFENCE ATTORNEY

Ahem. Your honor, I also object to her unobservable illustrations to make her point. How do we know if there really is a spider--or gnat--in that corner when nobody can see it, but her?

JUDGE

(amused)

The jury will disregard Miss Cortez' spider sighting. Let the fact remain that the defence attorney has a tiny mole on his neck.

(to defence
attorney)

You may continue.

DEFENCE ATTORNEY
The defence rests, your honor.

JUDGE
Does the prosecutor wish to
continue?

CYRUS
The prosecution rests, your honor.

JUDGE
In that case, the court will adjourn
until tomorrow at nine for
summations.

He bangs his gavel.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Cyrus, Jamaica, and Maria sit at a table before meals.

JAMAICA
(to Cyrus)
How are we doing?

CYRUS
I think Maria made our case for us.
Great move to point like that.

MARIA
Really?

CYRUS
Really. And you were very convincing
with that spider story. You even had
me believing you saw it.

MARIA
You didn't see it?

CYRUS
You mean you actually saw a gnat?

MARIA
I swore to tell the truth, didn't I?

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

The defence attorney gives his summation to the jury:

DEFENCE ATTORNEY
...We all sin. And young Antwon's
sin was that he used a gun he either
borrowed or stole, and hid it from
his mother--whether she choses to
believe it, or not--to kill a
dedicated law enforcement officer.
That's it. Plain and simple.
(MORE)

DEFENCE ATTORNEY (CONT'D)

Your only choice is to vote for acquittal.

He walks back to his table. The defendants give him high fives. Cyrus gets up, approaches the jury, looks them over.

CYRUS

Antwon hated guns. He lost his father and his stepfather when he was nine, both to an assassin's bullet. Imagine that for a minute. What an awful thing for a child to deal with.

He paces before the jury box.

CYRUS (CONT'D)

Despite that, he was an "A" student--top in his class. He sang in the church choir, made his own money working as a proofreader at the local newspaper, and volunteered at a local animal rescue shelter. He wanted to be a veterinarian.

He stops, scans the jurors' faces.

CYRUS (CONT'D)

I ask you, ladies and gentlemen of the jury, is that the profile of a killer? Much less a cop killer?

Pregnant pause. Sympathetic faces in jury. He resumes pacing.

CYRUS (CONT'D)

But, alas, nobody's perfect. We all sin, as my esteemed colleague rightly avers. But, according to his theory, poor little Antwon had one immutable, genetic flaw: His skin was black. For this reason alone, he was stalked and shot to death...

He swings a pointed finger at the defence table.

CYRUS (CONT'D)

...by that gang of psychopathic thugs sitting at that table, disguised as law officers, who abandoned fair and honest law enforcement for hate, racism, and wanton assassinations. They are traitors to the honorable profession of law enforcement. They are traitors to civil trust and democracy. They are traitors to our country.

He walks up to the jury-box railing.

CYRUS (CONT'D)

Now, we know from the coroner's report and bullet casings from the scene that two hundred-and-ninety six rounds were fired into little Antwon's body.

(ponders;
calculating)

That's two hundred-and-ninety-six nine-millimeter hollow point slugs, whose sole purpose is to tear your insides apart and make your body irreparable. That's two hundred-and-ninety-six reasons to convict. Show these cold-blooded killers you mean business and won't tolerate racism in law enforcement any more. Find them guilty of first degree murder.

He sits. Jamaica wipes the tears from her eyes with a hanky, pats Cyrus on the shoulder.

The judge turns to the jury, some wiping their eyes.

JUDGE

You have heard testimony and summations. It's now your sworn duty to examine the facts, come to a consensus, and bring back a verdict of guilty or not guilty on the count of murder in the first-degree. The jury will now retire for deliberations.

INT. BOARDROOM - DAY

Cyrus and Maria sit across the conference table from the defence attorney and the six defendants.

DEFENCE ATTORNEY

What are you offering?

CYRUS

Twenty five to life.

The defendants huddle around the defence attorney, grumble petulantly. The defence attorney separates, turns to Cyrus.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

Come on, Cy. You can do better than that. It was group insanity, like in war--like My Lai.

CYRUS

Group insanity is still murder, even in war. Nope, it's either that or you can take your chances in court and get the death penalty, which is shorter than twenty-five-to-life--if you want the shortest time.

They huddle again. The defence attorney turns to Cyrus.

DEFENCE ATTORNEY

Ten.

Cyrus leans aside, Jamaica whispers in his ear. He nods.

CYRUS

Tell you what I'll do. You do the twenty-five and I'll give you one week of probation--before your sentence begins.

DEFENCE ATTORNEY

(flummoxed)

I-I don't get it. What's the catch?

CYRUS

The defendants must each agree to take a supervised shower to wash their sins away, then live on their own as transients in a community of my choosing, unsupervised and without ID. After a week of freedom, they will report to their designated prisons on their own and begin serving their sentences. That's the best I can do.

Defendants huddle with defence attorney. After a bit, the defence attorney turns to Cyrus.

DEFENCE ATTORNEY

We'll take it.

CYRUS

And, of course, this applies to the A.D.A., Dwayne Nettlebutt, in absentia, when and if he's found, unless you want to take him through a separate sentencing.

DEFENCE ATTORNEY

No, no, I'm sure he will take it, if he's found.

The cops' demeanors betray their thinking--a chance to disappear like Dwayne did.

EXT. COUNTRY BRIDGE - DAY

Rodeo time. Dwayne, now black, bald, sporting Billy Bob teeth, SCREAMS on a bucking rail.

Rafe, who now has missing teeth and sports a fresh scar across his face, drunkenly waves his gun, fires: BLAM!

RAFE

Yeee-haaa. Ride 'em hard, boys.

DWAYNE

Aaaagh. I'm white, you idiots! I'm white--like you. Aaaagh.

Rafe gets beside him, leans into his face.

RAFE

You're black. You don't see me goin' round sayin' I'm a nigger when I'm really white. You crazy? You ain't white if you ain't pure white.

(to the rail carriers)

Toss 'im.

The carriers lift the rail onto the bridge railing and tip it go over.

DWAYNE

No, No, No! I can't swim! Aaaaagh!

The rail-end flies skyward, bumps a white drunk's gun and...

BLAM! Rafe's right ear disappears.

Dwayne's SCREAM fades. SPLASH! The protesting ceases.

EXT. COURTHOUSE STEPS - DAY

Cyrus, Jamaica, Maria face the press.

CYRUS

Justice has prevailed today. The law was held accountable. In the coming months, I'll be reviewing cases that have been adjudicated, looking for any suspicion of perjury or false testimony by law enforcement and, hopefully, what happened to this boy will never happen again. Thank you.

They walk off, the press clamoring for more.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Cyrus, Jamaica, Maria stroll by a barefoot black man sitting on a bench with the old black bag-lady. It's Moses.

CYRUS

Mosey?

Moses looks up, eyeballs him, chuckles as he stands. They shake hands.

MOSES

Cyrus Sanwitch. You survived your black skin. How 'bout that. How's the foot?

CYRUS
All healed, thanks to you. It's
great to see you alive.
(turns, indicates)
You know Jamaica and Maria?

MOSES
(to Jamaica and
Maria)
We do. Heard all about your black
experiment. Good work.
(turns to bag-lady)
This is my friend, Jasmine.

Cyrus grins as he shakes her hand warmly.

CYRUS
Jasmine. You gave me food when I was
hungry. I'll never forget that. You
taught me a great lesson.

JASMINE
I did? Why would I do that? You a
white man and all.

CYRUS
You did, when I was black. Come with
us, both of you. Join us for lunch.
There's a lot to talk about and I
would like to hear your opinions on
law enforcement.

MOSES
Well, thank you, Mr. Sanwitch. Never
turn down a free meal.

Jasmine gets up, scratches her head trying to remember, grabs
her cart. They start off.

MOSES (CONT'D)
Say, I met another white man in a
black man's skin. Says he's a D.A.,
too. Short little fucker with a big
attitude...

Cyrus glances suspiciously at Maria, who winks back.

CYRUS
(to Moses)
Do tell.

They stroll down the sidewalk. Moses, animated.

FADE OUT