

No Man's Promised Land

by Nate Thompson

Based on True Events

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FADE IN:

EXT. OUTSIDE CITY TRAIN STATION - DAY

SUPER: 1909

Luggage-burdened black travelers exit the station. Enraged white demonstrators, restrained by police, accost them. The THOMAS family emerges from the station, warily navigates the hostile crowd. Mother, EVELYN, looks to father, WALTER SR.

Walter looks back: "Union Station, Chicago, IL" is etched in stone above the entryway. He eyes his crumpled brochure:

Titled "Delta Express: Bound for the Promised Land" with a train pictured at full steam. Stops dot a Northerly route map. Photos of a black work force at a factory and a well-dressed black family in front of a nice home adorn the page.

He looks up. Picket signs read "Crush the Scabs," "Amalgamated Meat Cutters Union," "Death to Strikebreakers." A heated WHITE DEMONSTRATOR breaks through, charges at Walter.

WHITE DEMONSTRATOR

Stay down south, nigger scab!

Police intercept the man, as Walter shelters his family. He gives a reassuring nod to YOUNG WALT(10), who holds his sister's hand, JOYCE(7), and his brother's hand, JOE(5).

EVELYN

What's he mean, scab?

A perplexed Walter betrays his ignorance to his wife.

WALTER SR.

Reckon I'm thought to be one.

Walter shepherds his family onward to curses and jeers.

INT. URBAN FLAT - DUSK

The door opens. Walter and family timidly enter, luggage in hand. Their eyes wander the dank, decrepit abode.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A white man, CHARLES DOOLEY, sits at a table, hand glued to the bottle. His son, YOUNG FRANK DOOLEY(11), sits on the floor, back glued to the wall. A DOCTOR, stethoscope over his suit, emerges from an adjacent room. Frank stares in at an ailing, bed-ridden lady before the doctor closes the door.

DOCTOR

Charles, it's most certainly typhoid.

Charles takes a sloppy swig of liquor.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

There's a drug. It's expensive.
But if she doesn't get it soon...

The doctor looks at Frank. Turns back just as Charles' bottle sails past his face, shatters on the wall. Frank flinches under the shards. Charles seizes the startled doctor.

CHARLES DOOLEY

That's your expert opinion, is it, a
sick person needs fuckin' medicine!?!

He drives the mute doctor into the wall, tightens his grip.

CHARLES DOOLEY (CONT'D)

What would you have me do? Union
boys were wrong! The owners won't
even hear us out! They just haul
themselves up some southern niggers,
pay 'em pennies, not so much as blink.

After a tense moment, Charles eases off. The doctor slips towards the door. Passes Frank. Pats him on the head gently.

DOCTOR

Bye now, Frank.

He scurries out. Charles flips over the table. Smashes a chair. Attacks the wall. Frank cowers, alone in the corner of the room. Chin to his knees. Hands pinned over his ears.

EXT. STREET TO STOCKYARD ENTRANCE - DAY

Walter walks with other black scabs. Stares ahead at a huge stone archway, capped by the iron bust of a fearsome-looking bull. A high, brick wall stretches to both sides, with a copper roof, faded to green. Police hold back a horde of white men, who hurl slurs and threats at the black workers.

The wary workers look frightened. One particularly uneasy man turns back. Walter shoves him forward. Takes his arm.

WALTER SR.

Just as much our right as theirs.
Don't let them take that from you.
It's all you got.

Walter looks boldly back at the hateful faces in the crowd.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Young Walt strolls along, a paper bag in hand. Pudgy YOUNG RUSSELL(9) accompanies him. Spins his wooden yo-yo.

YOUNG RUSSELL

Say, Walt, why don't your daddy buy off the lunch wagon at the yard?

YOUNG WALT

Don't know about no lunch wagon, not back Alabama, that is. Mama always sends me with daddy's lunch.

YOUNG RUSSELL

Oh. Say, where's Alabama then?

YOUNG WALT

Down south. That's why we left.

YOUNG RUSSELL

It's better up here?

Walt shrugs as they walk, Russell's focus back on the yo-yo.

YOUNG WALT

It's the North.

Russell thrills himself by pulling off a basic trick.

EXT. STOCKYARD ENTRANCE - DAY

The belligerent mob constricts around the workers. Police lose control. A flung rock beams the man by Walter. He drops. More rocks fly. Scabs fall, others scramble. The mob attacks in chaotic unison. A rock slams Walter's head.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Walt continues along. Russell yo-yos next to him.

YOUNG RUSSELL

...I believe you about no lunch wagons, 'cause whatever mush y'all eat down there went straight to your head! Ain't no way a bear can kill a lion. A lion would shred him to a stump before that old bear even knew what hit him! Lion's too fast! One bite to the neck...and the claws!?!

YOUNG WALT

Alls I'm saying is I seen what a big bear can do when he's mad. I'll bet that lion don't want no part of it.

YOUNG RUSSELL

I seen what a lion can do! Shit, I been to the circus! Guess y'all ain't got them in Alabama neither.

Russ looks up from his yo-yo. Stops. Traces Walt's gaze to the frenzy up ahead, under the iron bull's watch. Whites swarm the black scabs. Baton-happy reinforcements arrive. Walt sees a man stumble from the mayhem's fringe, heap against a brick wall. His dad. He drops the lunch bag, rushes over.

YOUNG WALT

Daddy!?!

Walt falls upon his father, who's in bad shape. Under flowing blood, Walter's eyes find those of his frightened son.

WALTER SR.

Don't be afraid, son. Don't you be afraid. Stand straight, stand up tall against the fear of others.

Waning quickly, Walter pulls close his son.

WALTER SR. (CONT'D)

Take care of 'em, they're yours now.

Walter leaves his young son, who absorbs the blow without warning, as turmoil wages behind him. Police whistles BLARE, their dogs BARK. Walt's eyes wander up the wall behind his dead father. A large mural is painted on it:

A picturesque fantasy of brilliant skyscrapers behind by Lake Michigan in all its splendor. Automobiles upon grand avenues. Landscaped parks at lake's edge. Pedestrians, bicyclists on promenades. Ornate piers over the shore.

A title reads "The City by the Lake." Underneath it, "Plan of Chicago 1909 by Daniel H. Burnham, Architect of the White City and the World's Columbian Exposition." Walt stares at his father's blood, smeared down the middle of the mural.

INT. APARTMENT BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

A hard rain falls outside the window. Young Frank stands at the foot of his mother's bed. She's on the losing end of a harsh battle for each breath. A priest performs the Anointing of the Sick. A besieged Charles stares ahead, at nothing.

INT. DOOLEY APARTMENT - NIGHT

Charles hangs from a chair. A nearly-empty bottle hangs from his hand. Frank softly approaches. Reaches for the bottle. Charles jerks awake. Snatches Frank by the collar.

CHARLES DOOLEY

What the fuck are you doing?

YOUNG FRANK

Nothing, sir.

CHARLES DOOLEY

That's right, nothing.

Charles throws Frank to the floor. Staggeres from the chair, barely able to keep his feet. Frank slowly inches away.

CHARLES DOOLEY (CONT'D)

That's all you ever do, nothing!
You just let them niggers come on in
here and kill her. Let them take
the medicine right out her mouth.

Beyond drunk, Charles' half-opened eyes are not on Frank.

CHARLES DOOLEY (CONT'D)

And what did you do to stop it?
Nothing! Not a goddamn thing. You
just lay there and let them trample
you, trample you into the dirt.

Charles eyes have found a mirror across the room.

YOUNG FRANK

I'm sorry, da.

Charles snaps around as if newly reminded of his son. He sneers. Staggeres closer and closer towards a petrified Frank.

CHARLES DOOLEY

You shut up! You ain't got the sand
to beat 'em back. You ain't strong
enough to stop 'em. You weren't man
enough to save her, you coward.

A wave of inebriation hits Charles. He veers off. Teeters into the dark bedroom. Frank looks slightly relieved. Then Charles rushes back out, armed with a thick leather belt. Frank shrieks as his father marches at him. The heavy buckle dangles from his raised hand, as he swings it down on Frank.

INT. MOSTLY-EMPTY CHURCH - DAY

Walt sits in a front pew with Evelyn, Joyce and Joe, a handful of people scattered behind them. A casket is on the altar. Closed. Walt stares at it, deaf to the words the REVEREND mutely motions out from behind the pulpit.

INT. UNITED STATES CAPITOL - DAY

SUPER: 1917

President WOODROW WILSON addresses Congress in joint session.

WOODROW WILSON

"I have called the Congress into extraordinary session because there are serious, very serious, choices of policy to be made..."

EXT. EAST ST. LOUIS, ILLINOIS - DAY

Black workers line up outside "East St. Louis Metal Works." A car passes. Stops. A white PASSENGER exits. Hurries back to the wary workers. Draws a pistol with a shaky hand.

PASSENGER

If y'all are gonna take our jobs,
y'all are gonna take our bullets!

He opens fire on the workers. Those who aren't hit scatter. The shooter flees back to the idling car. It speeds off.

INTERCUT - U.S. CAPITOL/EAST ST. LOUIS, IL

WOODROW WILSON

"...the wanton, wholesale destruction of the lives of non-combatants; men, women, and children, engaged in pursuits which have always, even in the darkest periods of modern history, been deemed innocent and legitimate."

The other occupants exclaim approval for the shooter as the car drives along. Not to be outdone, one aims a rifle at a church, shoots out the windows as children approach with hymnal books. Another leans out, fires at a grocery store filled with black shoppers. Goods explode under bullets.

WOODROW WILSON (CONT'D)

"Our motive will not be revenge or the victorious assertion of the physical might of the nation, but only the vindication of right, of human right..."

The car stops at an intersection for the shooters to reload. Suddenly, armed, angry black men rush upon it from either side. A struggle ensues. They pull out the culprits.

WOODROW WILSON (CONT'D)

"...we will not choose the path of submission and suffer the most sacred rights of our nation and our people be ignored or violated."

Police hold snarling canines inches from three of the black men who accosted the car-load of criminals. A much larger white posse beats them. Cops fire on the others who flee.

WOODROW WILSON (CONT'D)

"...it will be insisted that the same standards of conduct and of responsibility for wrong done shall be observed among nations and their governments that are observed among the individual citizens of civilized states."

Flames lick up a billboard that reads "East St. Louis, Illinois - The Finer Side of the River." Buildings burn around it. White looters destroy shops in a black neighborhood.

Behind them, a poorly-regimented contingent of national guardsmen turn the corner. The black citizens who run to them for help are instead held up at gun point, hit with rifles, or even shot. At the few pockets of skirmishes between whites and blacks, the guardsmen set upon the blacks.

On the periphery, three disheveled guardsmen drag a desperate black woman off the street, into an alley, out of sight.

WOODROW WILSON (CONT'D)

"It is a fearful thing to lead this great, peaceful people into war...but the right is more precious than peace, and we shall fight for the things, which we have always carried nearest our hearts, for democracy, for the right of those who submit to authority to have a voice in their own governments..."

Whites beat a black man, as two goons march him to an opening in the spectators. A noose hangs from a tree. A man fits it around the panicked victim's neck. Even as it's pulled taught, the crowd still beats him. Tears pour down his face.

Police, national guard watch from the outskirts. Belligerents throw debris beneath the man's flailing feet, ignite it.

INT. UNITED STATES CAPITOL - DAY

WOODROW WILSON

"...the day has come when America is privileged to spend her blood and her might for the principles that gave her birth and happiness and the peace, which she has treasured. God helping her, she can do no other.

Every Congressman stands, applauds vehemently.

INT. SHABBY APARTMENT - DAY

Three black CARD PLAYERS sit at a table. One, HORACE, rocks steadily. His contorted hands clutch cards he pins to his chest with chicken wing arms, eyes transfixed on the ceiling.

CARD PLAYER#1
Come on, Horace. You in or what?

HORACE
Just considering, just considering.

CARD PLAYER #2 grimaces. The front door bursts off its hinges. In storms a well-grown, intimidating WALT.

HORACE (CONT'D)
Oh, shit! Shit!

Horace scrambles to his feet. Retreats from Walt's approach.

WALT
Got that right, Half-Wit Horace.
Where the fuck have you been?

HORACE
We-we-well, se-see I-I-I was--

Horace's back hits the wall. Walt punches him in the gut.

WALT
Just hiding out, hoping I forgot?

Walt straightens up a doubled-over Horace. Smacks his face.

WALT (CONT'D)
Was that your half-wit plan?

Walt slaps him again. Horace whimpers.

CARD PLAYER#2
Easy, Walt, you know he ain't fit.

WALT
You keep quiet.

Walt's glare brings immediate compliance. Faces Horace again.

WALT (CONT'D)
He's fit enough, all right. Fit
enough to borrow off Leroy. Fit
enough for y'all to take him at cards.
Fit enough to skip out on the tab,
so I gotta take my time to find him.
Ain't that right, Horace?

Walt slams Horace's head into the wall. Then again.

HORACE

Okay then! In the coffee tin.

Horace jabs at the kitchenette. Walt shoves him. Walks over. Grabs a coffee tin. Dumps out a few bills.

WALT

What's this now? You ain't get a loan for a fuckin' lolly, did you?

Horace weighs ebbing options with each step of Walt's advance.

HORACE

In the ice box!

Walt rummages through it. Finds an envelope, cash inside.

WALT

Still short. Let me go grab my sledge hammer, see if we can find the rest.

HORACE

Alright. Alright. Shit.

Horace nods at a framed picture on the wall. The card players eye each other over his many intricate stashes. Walt grabs the frame off the wall. Pulls cash from an envelope pasted to the back. Drops it. It shatters. Marches back to Horace.

HORACE (CONT'D)

And what's mine on the table. Come on, that covers interest and all.

Walt swipes the cash off the table. Pinches Horace's chin.

WALT

Best hope so, 'cause I'll tie you up and burn this place down around you, whether you fit for fuck all or not.

Walt gives Horace's head a resolute shove. Spits. Exits.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Joe and Russell stare at a poster pasted to a brick wall:

A large, hulking man in a gray military uniform. Drawn distortedly primal, brutish, with dark complexion under a pickelhaube helmet. He clutches a white woman, a fraction of his size. A realistic-looking white soldier has his rifle raised. Caption: "Save Europe from the German Huns. Join up for the Great War. Keep your women safe, Democracy safer."

JOE

Say, Russell, them Germans colored?

Russell slaps Joe on the back of the head.

RUSSELL

No, dummy, white as crackers here.

Joe shoves Russell, who secures his worn, brown flat cap.

JOE

Then how come they look colored and
drawn the same awful way Negroes are
in them stupid white folks' cartoons?
Some artists, drawin' cartoon Krauts
same way they draw cartoon Negroes.

Walt approaches. Slaps Joe's head. Joe rubs it, attempts
no retribution. Down the street, a uniformed, black RECRUITER
pastes up another poster. Carries a bag with more rolled-
up. Small, rigid, quite the poindexter. He notices the
boys. Primps his uniform. Eagerly heads towards them.

RUSSELL

Walt, what do you make of this poster?

Walt lights a cigarette. Glances at the poster. Rips it
down the middle. Joe laughs. Russell looks hurt.

RECRUITER (O.S.)

Now, wait just a minute! That's
property of the United States Army!

Walt turns. Watches the incensed dweeb stomp towards him.

RECRUITER (CONT'D)

You'll have to answer to--

Walt slams the recruiter against the wall by his throat.

WALT

Answer to who? It's on my wall, on
my street. I say that makes it
property of mine.

Walt squeezes harder. The man's toes barely touch the ground.

WALT (CONT'D)

Come to think of it, now here you
are too. So are you my property
then, you squeaky poltroon?

Engaged, Joe blurts out a hyena cackle. Russell's unamused.

RUSSELL

Come on, let a fella do his job.

Walt finally releases the man. Departs, the others in tow. After some much-needed breaths, the recruiter gathers himself.

RECRUITER

Go on then, you lousy bully! Who needs you? Last thing we'd want is a scoundrel like you tarnishing a unit of genuine, upstanding men!

He hops back with a soft yelp at Walt's feigned return. Instead, Walt leads the boys towards a crowd in a square.

EXT. OPEN SQUARE, BLACK BELT - DAY

MAYOR THOMPSON(50s) tops a riser, flanked by black delegates and aldermen. Among them, DR. WILLIAMS, dressed for the part with a practiced pose and DR. HALL, a gruff-looking old goat in a sharp suit, cane in hand, a monocle over his eye.

The only female, elderly MISS IDA, anchors the group with a stoic stare and stalwart stance. The seasoned mayor addresses the entirely black crowd, which occupies the square.

MAYOR THOMPSON

Does your vote not count the same?
Is not Chicago as much your city? I
say it certainly is, what say you?

The mayor notices Walt, who cuts a purposed path through the pliant crowd. The mayor points at him.

MAYOR THOMPSON (CONT'D)

You there, young man, how about you?

Walt stops, penned by the crowds' eyes. Faces the mayor.

MAYOR THOMPSON (CONT'D)

A strapping lad primed with potential.
What do you aspire to? Here it is,
your audience with the mayor, son.
Share with me your dreams, so we
might come closer to realizing them
together in this city we share.

Walt stares down the Mayor, who fishes further.

MAYOR THOMPSON (CONT'D)

Well, what is it your father does,
in order to raise up such a strong
young man? Perhaps you'll follow in
his footsteps? Ply the family trade?

Walt bores a glare into the mayor. Spits. The crowd gasps. The mayor falters. An irate Dr. Hall makes a move from the platform. Miss Ida's steady hand stays him. She watches Walt carry on, unhindered, daring anyone to make it otherwise.

The mayor motions at his heedful aide, MR. MACON(30s), who passes him a handout from a stack. The mayor holds up in an attempt to draw back the crowd's attention.

MAYOR THOMPSON (CONT'D)

I beseech you, ladies and gentlemen, follow me to the polls come November, to finish what I've begun, to foster a city free of vice and violence, a city of justice and equality for all, regardless of race or creed!

The crowd's captivation resumes. Thompson waves the leaflet.

MAYOR THOMPSON (CONT'D)

A Chicago of splendor, which beckons all men to traverse its shores, bask in its beauty. Our boy Burnham may have passed, but his vision remains. I will renew that vision. Together, we shall bring forth its fulfillment. Make me your Mayor once again, and I shall make Chicago your city, as it is the city of every broad-shouldered denizen who labors for its greatness!

The crowd erupts in hearty applause. The mayor smugly waves himself off, potential crisis averted. He blows a sigh as Mr. Macon meets him, equipped with the stack of handouts.

MAYOR THOMPSON (CONT'D)

Well, Mr. Macon, the Irish vote got me into office. Let's hope it's the colored vote that keeps me there.

MR. MACON

Indeed, Mayor Thompson.

MAYOR THOMPSON

And if the Commercial Club backs even part of this plan, I'll have enough padded bids from contractors to fund five more campaigns.

The mayor's face leaps into a smile, as they descend the platform, into the crowd. He shakes the first hand he sees before Mr. Macon abruptly ushers him on to more constituents.

EXT. BUSTLING STREET, BLACK BELT - AFTERNOON

Walt, Russell, and Joe walk along. Men unload barrels from horse-drawn carts. Shop owners CALL OUT discount specials. Russell smokes a cigarette. Passes it to Walt. Dodges Joe's attempt to grab it. Walt takes a couple drags. Passes it back to Russell, just out of reach of Joe's swiping hand.

Walt never alters his path, as people consciously make way. He stops near a window front, heavy curtains drawn inside. "Big Lionel's Billiards and Boarding" marks the entrance, where two ladies stand in short hemlines, high stockings, corsets, bright boas. They smoke cigarettes on quellazaires.

LEROY(20s), a man of steely disposition, exits the building. An older man in a pin-striped suit, feather-brimmed homburg hat follows. They speak. Shake hands. The man returns indoors. Leroy spots Walt. Crosses the street to him.

LEROY

What do you say, bruiser?

Leroy playfully raises his fists as if to spar with Walt.

LEROY (CONT'D)

How many suckers' teeth you rearrange this week?

Leroy unveils an uneven checkerboard smile of gold and white teeth. Walt hands Leroy a wad of cash. Leroy pulls off a few bills, gives them back to Walt. Observes Walt's company.

LEROY (CONT'D)

Hey there, Rolly-Polly. Still eating well, I see. And look at little Joe. Getting almost as big as your brother. You as tough as him though?

JOE

Bet your ass I am!

Joe cops as hard a look as a scrawny 13-year-old can. Walt nods farewell, guides Joe in involuntary departure by the nape of his neck. Russell follows. Leroy counts the cash.

LEROY

Hold up there, Walt. I got a job for you, the real deal. Tonight.

Walt bites, as a baiting Leroy looks up from the cash.

LEROY (CONT'D)

I'm talking serious dough.

Russell's focus on Walt competes with Leroy's enticing grin.

LEROY (CONT'D)

Bring little man along too, show him
what his big brother's all about.

Joe pounds his fist into his palm. Walt tightens his grip.

WALT

I'll think on it.

The three continue on their way. Leroy yells after them.

LEROY

I'm trying to cut you in on something
big, here, Walt! Don't be a sap!

Cocksure Leroy resumes his count in the open, unguarded.

EXT. QUIET STREET CORNER - DUSK

Walt, Russell and Joe slow to a stop.

WALT

Alright, Russ. See you around.

Joe smacks Russell in the stomach.

JOE

See you around, tubby!

He just evades Russell's swat. Dashes after Walt.

RUSSELL

Hey, Walt!

Walt turns back.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

You ain't really fixing to pull no
job with Leroy are you? Collecting
off some deadbeats is one thing, but
you know he ain't one to mess with.

WALT

Yeah, Russ? Well, neither am I. So
stop getting that lily liver of yours
up in knots over my business.

Walt leaves a compliant Russell alone on the corner.

INT. KITCHEN, SMALL APARTMENT - NIGHT

Walt, Joe and Joyce sit down to a meager meal with Evelyn.

JOYCE

...but Albert says all these bawdy, ignorant Southern Negroes coming up will make a bad name for us reasonable, established Negroes.

EVELYN

You tell Albert to go on and zip it. That boy's slower than a bread wagon on biscuit wheels. Only thing he's established in is flapping his gums.

Joe snickers with a mouthful of food.

EVELYN (CONT'D)

Close your mouth.

Joe does so right away.

EVELYN (CONT'D)

Someone ought remind him where his daddy came from. He ain't any better than a soul getting off those trains.

Walt shifts food around his plate with his fork.

EVELYN (CONT'D)

If folks want to come here for a better life, who's Albert Fletcher to cast the first stone? Other daddies want better for their children, same as Albert's did for him, your father did for y'all.

Walt drops his fork on the plate. Stands to Evelyn's glare.

EVELYN (CONT'D)

Where do you think you're off to?

WALT

Found some work at the stables, turning down horses for the night.

EVELYN

First the train tracks, now it's the stables? You're sure in high demand.

Walt passes his skeptical mother. Puts down the day's cash.

EVELYN (CONT'D)

How dare you disgrace my table.

WALT

It's just money, Mama. We need--

EVELYN

Don't piss on my leg and tell me
it's raining, boy!

Joyce and Joe perk up at their mother's crude outburst.

EVELYN (CONT'D)

I see what it is. I ain't as foolish
as you think. Folks talk, you know.

WALT

So let 'em talk. They sure seem to
shut up real quick when I come around.

EVELYN

Oh, you just one bad tough, huh?
You think you got it all figured
out, boy. If you daddy was here--

WALT

Well, he ain't! He ain't here.

EVELYN

No, he ain't. Maybe for the best,
'cause you'd shame him right to death
for sure, you no-good miscreant.

Walt paces off. Evelyn points to a bible standing on a shelf.

EVELYN (CONT'D)

Sinners, they open a hole and dig it
deep, but fall into the pit they've
dug. Their mischief comes back upon
themselves. Their violence falls on
their own head!

Walt slams the door behind him. Joyce and Joe eye the table.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Walt peers out at a street, dimly lit under oil-burning lamps.
Empty but for a Clydesdale-drawn cart loaded with barrels
and two men near it, one, a cop. Walt pulls back into the
alley, where Leroy bickers quietly with a few other hoodlums.

YOUNG HOODLUM

...but you ain't say nothing about
no coppers, Leroy.

LEROY

It's a Mick gambling house. Whose
kickback clams you figure we robbin'?

YOUNG HOODLUM

Well, I don't like it.

LEROY

Well, I don't give a shit. Scram!
The rest of y'all ready to get busy?

The uneasy hoods shift around, eyes down. Just before Leroy can rip into his crew, Walt pushes through them, steps up.

WALT

Just a fat man in a funny hat with a
pin on his chest. Don't worry me.

Walt flashes hard. Leroy's scowl climbs into grin, followed by a proud nod. He winks at one of his nearby cronies as Walt rolls up his sleeves. Bids Walt closer for orders.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

OFFICER CALLAHAN(40s) and VERNON(20s) stand at the horse and cart, near a stairwell that descends to a basement doorway. The door opens. Light floods the stairwell. The SOUND OF VOICES spills into the calm night air. The door shuts.

A man climbs the steps. Lights a cigarette. The match explosion illuminates his scar-tarnished face. Frank Dooley. He exhales. Approaches Vernon and Officer Callahan.

OFFICER CALLAHAN

Franky boy, the man of the hour.

Frank tosses a stuffed envelope to an unprepared Callahan.

FRANK DOOLEY

You know, you cops pocket more off
them tables and whores than just
about anyone in this city, yet they
call me the crook. Go figure.

Officer Callahan smiles. Shakes the envelope.

OFFICER CALLAHAN

Well, Mr. O'Leary operates one fine
establishment. Be a shame if
something like enforcement of the
law got in the way of his business.

FRANK DOOLEY

Callahan, you couldn't enforce the
dress code at a secondary school
social, you jolly fuckin' leech.

Vernon laughs as Callahan jauntily accepts the ribbing.

FRANK DOOLEY (CONT'D)

Just the same, gets me thinking I
picked the wrong career. I spend
all day and night muscling for Mr.
O'Leary's dough, only so you and
your pals can stroll by and take it.

Frank takes a drag. Exhales.

FRANK DOOLEY (CONT'D)

And the world goes round. No wonder
my old man saw himself out of it.

Frank eyes the thick leather belt on his waist. He adjusts
the buckle, seems to drift off momentarily. Spits.

FRANK DOOLEY (CONT'D)

Say, what about your pals, anyway?
They usually got their grubby mitts
jammed in my face right next to yours.

Walt lurches from the alley. Staggeres towards the men.

OFFICER CALLAHAN

Well, have a look at this sloppy
sot. One thing about the Negroes,
they sure can't hold their liquor.

Callahan laughs. Frank glares, as Walt wobbles ahead.

FRANK DOOLEY

Get rid of him, Vernon, before I do.

Frank pulls out a knife. Vernon advances on Walt. Back at
the alley, Leroy creeps out with a baseball bat. Spots two
more cops turn onto the street behind Walt, one with a pistol
holstered on his hip. Leroy stops, recedes into the darkness.

On the street, Vernon slows in front of Walt. A large, dark
port wine stain stretches from the side of his mouth, down
his chin and jaw, onto his neck. An ugly, glaring splotch.

VERNON

You lost, boy?

Walt snaps from his feigned stupor. Floors Vernon with a
fist to the jaw. Looks towards the alley, no one. Stunned,
he turns to flee, right into the arms of the other cops,
JONES and SMITH. Jones gives him a Billy Club to the gut.

OFFICER SMITH

What do we have here?

OFFICER JONES

One dumb fucking Negro.

Down the street, Callahan laughs profusely. Whacks Frank.

OFFICER CALLAHAN

He sure got the jump on your man, a regular old Jack Johnson, this one.

Callahan balls up his fists. Turns towards the cops.

OFFICER CALLAHAN (CONT'D)

Bring him here! Let's see if he can take 'em good as he dishes 'em out.

Callahan draws his baton. NOISE, light spew from the gambling den once more. Three men ascend the steps. A hairy, barrel-chested GEORGE STAUBER(20s) leads another goon towards Frank and Callahan. Slight DANIEL DOOLEY(19) trails them timidly.

GEORGE

Hey, Frank, your pip squeak cousin's chatting up all the Johns over drinks, flashing more pussy than the girls and ain't charging for either.

FRANK DOOLEY

Zip it, George, don't spoil the fun.

George and the other goon watch the cops drag over Walt. Eagerly settle in for the show. Daniel witnesses as well.

DANIEL DOOLEY

All right then, George, no need to fret. I'll go call in those tabs.

Daniel concernedly eyes an unidentifiable Walt, whose head is pinned to his chest by the cops as they force him along. Entirely ignored, Daniel fades back. Retreats down the steps.

Vernon finally finds his feet. Charges at Walt, yanks him from the police escort. Walt ducks a wild haymaker. Woozy Vernon stumbles. Seizing the opportunity, Walt drops Jones with an elbow to the temple. Tackles Smith as he draws his gun. A shot fires, hits Frank square in his left hand.

The horse rears up, bolts forward. Frank and Callahan leap from its path. Unconscious, on the ground, Jones does not. The horse tramples him. He's crushed under heavy cart wheels.

Walt hops up. Frank's eyes move from the hole in his hand to Walt's face, lit by a lamp. Rage takes him. He forgets his wound. Charges. Walt flees, Frank, Vernon, George and the other in pursuit. The cops examine Jones' mangled corpse.

Walt blazes a retreat through a maze of alleys, some no wider than his shoulders. Jumps fences, dodges debris. He's tailed doggedly. He bounds across a wide street, into a dark alley.

He scales a high gate. Cuts himself on barbed-wire atop it. Tumbles over. Lands hard, awkwardly on his ankle. Hobbles a few steps, slumps behind trash. Pulls a knife. Waits.

Frank stops at the gated alley, his panting men behind him. A concussed Vernon pukes. Frank stares down at his hand. Groans. Looks around. A few people occupy stoops. Curious spectators loom in lit apartment windows. Everyone is black.

GEORGE

What's the move, Franky?

Frank looks back at the alley.

FRANK DOOLEY

No sense chasing a rat down the sewer.
He can't hide in them alleys forever.

Frank steps forward. Cups his good hand around his mouth.

FRANK DOOLEY (CONT'D)

You hear that, you son of a bitch?

Frank's words find winded and injured Walt in hiding.

FRANK DOOLEY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I'll be looking for you to crawl out
of the dark, you fuckin' cockroach!
I will find you! You and everyone
you know will answer for this!

Frank stands in the street, wounded hand outstretched. He turns. Young men vacate their porches. Approach.

FRANK DOOLEY (CONT'D)

You hear me, you fuckin' roaches?
You're all gonna get stomped out!

One of Frank's more aware cronies grabs him to lead him away. Officer Callahan bursts onto the scene, terribly out of breath. The approaching bystanders halt their advance.

OFFICER CALLAHAN

Where is he? I'll cave in his skull.

Club ready, Callahan searches in vain. Frank nods ahead.

FRANK DOOLEY

Back in the bowels of this shithole.

OFFICER CALLAHAN

What are we standing here for!?!

Tucked in the alley, a panicked Walt listens intently.

OFFICER CALLAHAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Jones is dead! Head crushed like a
 damn melon. We got us a cop killer!
 He just signed his own death warrant,
 and I mean to oblige his black ass!

At this, Walt desperately starts to crawl away.

OFFICER CALLAHAN (CONT'D)
 Here goes, boy! Let's see if your
 mama recognizes you at the morgue!

Frank blocks Callahan's one-man crusade on the street.

FRANK DOOLEY
 As much as I'd pay to see you try to
 scale that gate, look where we are.

OFFICER CALLAHAN
 To hell with that, I'm the law!

Pulls at the badge on his jacket.

OFFICER CALLAHAN (CONT'D)
 With this shield, I go anywhere in
 this city I damn well please. I'll--

FRANK DOOLEY
 You'll what? Explain beating a man
 dead in the Black Belt, witnesses
 and all, 'cause he tangled with you
 and Jones and your shields outside a
 whorehouse gambling den at midnight
 while you're both fuckin' off duty?

Callahan examines his surroundings. More bystanders gather.

FRANK DOOLEY (CONT'D)
 With our nigger-loving mayor looking
 for reelection, that's the kind of
 heat you and Mr. O'Leary don't need.
 Dump Jones' body. Divvy up his share.
 Make like you ain't seen him in days.

OFFICER CALLAHAN
 So what, just forget about that one?

Callahan nods at the alley. Frank grabs him by the jacket.
 Shoves his bloody hand up to Callahan's face, who recoils.

FRANK DOOLEY
 What the fuck do you think?

Frank tears off a shirt sleeve at the shoulder threads.

FRANK DOOLEY (CONT'D)

Grab a few coppers you trust. Tell
'em Mr. O'Leary pays well to snuff
out those who disrupt his business.

He wraps the sleeve tightly around his wounded hand.

FRANK DOOLEY (CONT'D)

Then we'll tear this place apart.
Before long, that boy will be about
as lively as Lake Michigan in January.

Frank ties off the sleeve with his good hand and his teeth.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Walt slinks from the alley. Empty, quiet. He limps along. Glances about, paranoid. Hears police WHISTLES. Men's SHOUTS mix with dogs' SNARLS. He sees nothing, but hobbles faster. The NOISE closes in on him. He stumbles in pain at the edge of a square, where a podium is on risers. Opens his eyes.

His palm is on one of the mayor's leftover handouts: a print identical to the mural on the wall where his father died. Walt stares in renewed horror at the image of "The City By the Lake," bloody from his cut hand. The BARKING, SHOUTING and WHISTLES intensify. The NOISE envelopes him. He flees.

He turns a corner. Slams into a brick wall, exhausted. Notices something hanging. Steps back to see the remnants of the recruitment poster he ripped that day. Reaches out. Pulls up the torn piece to make the poster whole again.

He stares at the soldier, then down to the bottom. It reads "Whites:" with a series of locations and "Coloreds:," one location listed. He staggers off, looking over his shoulder.

EXT. TRENCH, WWI BATTLE - DAY

Walt staggers through smoky haze, looks over his shoulder. Falls. Writhes in pain, dressed in olive army fatigue. Mortar shells explode. Bullets shred the mud. Walt rubs his clasped eyes. Bloody tears pour down his face. He starts to convulse. He vomits. Shakes. Hyper-ventilates.

A man in a gas mask dives atop Walt. The mechanical SOUND of his filtered breathing enhances his alien-like appearance. Walt tries to fend him off, but he pins Walt with his knees. Grabs a tin spray bottle from his belt. Forces open Walt's bloody eyes, squirts pressurized water into them.

WALT (V.O.)

I know I had an awful fit as a little
boy, when that skunk got me right in
the eyes from not a foot away...

The man pulls a cloth from a pouch labeled with a red cross. Soaks the cloth with water. Puts it over Walt's mouth. Places Walt's hand on it. His own hands are white.

WALT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

...but that's like a puff of perfume
after a face-full of chlorine gas.

The man waves for help. The French flag is sewn on his arm.

EXT. TRENCH - NIGHT

Walt writes by oil lamp light, on paper atop a combat helmet.

WALT (V.O.)

Fact is, most things I think back on
don't seem all they used to after
being over here...

EXT. BLACK BELT, CHICAGO - DAY

Police scour ruthlessly. Smash windows, kick in doors, toss possessions into the street. They pull people from their flats. Line up the young men against a wall. Beat any who protest or resist. A wary Evelyn watches from her window.

Officer Callahan walks the line. Paints each man with a hostile stare. Roughs them up to get a look at their faces. He reaches the end of the line. Turns. Frank casually leans on a wall. Cigarette in hand. Shakes his head at Callahan.

INT. SHELTER IN TRENCH - DAY

A brawny, black soldier lies shirtless on a table, his thigh impaled by a long, jagged piece of shrapnel. Two soldiers hold him down, another, a twisted rag between his teeth. A black medic slowly pulls the shard from his leg. Amid muffled screams, his every muscle flexes. Walt watches in the corner.

WALT (V.O.)

I ain't so tough as I once thought I
was, or as some folks would say...

EXT. TRENCH - DAY

The man from the operating table emerges from the shelter, his leg bandaged. He winks at Walt as he limps by him.

EXT. NO MAN'S LAND, BLACK REGIMENT CHARGE - DAY

Walt dives into a bomb crater. A fellow soldier follows. Shots pelt the dirt. A brother in arms is down in the open. The soldier moves for a rescue. Walt grabs him. He eyes Walt. Pulls away. Scrambles out from cover. Bullets fly.

WALT (V.O.)
 Ain't so brave as I thought either.
 I didn't know what the word meant...

One hits the rescuer's shoulder, another, his hip. He reaches the man down. Hoists him onto his good shoulder. Struggles to his feet. A bullet rips into his gut. He sinks to his knees. Drops the injured man. A shot pieces his lung. His eyes find Walt's again before the battlefield claims him.

EXT. TRENCH, BLACK REGIMENT CAMP - NIGHT

Soldiers sleep. LT. SPEARS(30s) reflects moonlight with a shaving mirror onto a photo: his wife and young son. Walt patrols past in march, rifle shouldered. Spots the longing in Spears' teary gaze. Slows. Watches Spears kiss the photo.

WALT (V.O.)
 I don't know as much about the way
 things are as I thought I did.

Spears notices. Hardens his face, pockets his photo. Overtly eyes his watch, glares back at Walt, who resumes the patrol.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

Walt and PVT. SILKY(20) step among corpses. Callously rip the dog tags from comrades. Walt overturns a face-down body.

WALT (V.O.)
 Suppose I didn't give things much
 thought at all in the first place.

He freezes at the sight of the recruiter he choked back in Chicago. Silky swoops in to snatch the tags. Walt stops him. Gently maneuvers off the chain, removes the tags intact.

EXT. MILITARY BASE CAMP - DAY

Walt sits on a small stool. Writes a letter.

WALT (V.O.)
 But for one thing, seems white folks
 the world over ain't all the same,
 at least so far as I been treated.

Walt observes, as Silky teaches a French soldier harmonica. Silky cringes at the horrid NOISE the pupil spews. Another Frenchman's claps miss the rhythm in awkward, untimely spasms.

WALT (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 These Frenchmen are real different.

Walt laughs as the music lesson continues.

EXT. DECIMATED TOWN - MORNING

Walt patrols with his platoon. Passes a French lady wailing in the street amidst rubble. In front of her, a boy tugs at his dead father's shirt. Fixated, Walt falls out of line.

WALT (V.O.)

I'm not the only one with claim life
ain't been easy. Life ain't easy...

Lt. Spears confronts Walt. Gives him a stern shove back into formation. Signals the platoon to carry on its route.

EXT. MESS HALL IN TENT - DAY

Walt sits among other black soldiers. Laughs at the antics of two who entertain the table. Identical twins. They joke around. Play off each other, almost like an act.

EXT. FOREST - AFTERNOON

Walt silently stares at the dead body of one of the twins.

WALT (V.O.)

...and it sure ain't short on causes
for anger. I suppose hardship's
everywhere but heaven. And if that's
all you hold onto, that's all you'll
ever find yourself with.

The other twin leans over his brother's bullet-riddled corpse. He beats the frozen earth. Tears stream down his face.

EXT. TRENCH - NIGHT

Walt sleeps in a hole dug into the wall. Under moonlight, dark figures sneak into the trench. A shotgun BLAST jerks Walt awake. Rifle in hand, he tumbles onto the duckboard slats of the trench floor. Jabs the bayonet affixed his rifle into a German raider, whose own bayonet just misses.

WALT (V.O.)

You were right, Mama. I would've
shamed daddy. I was nothing but a
frightened boy, out for everyone, so
scared they were out for me...

GUNFIRE, SHOUTS, WHISTLES. Walt downs another attacker with his bayonet but can't dislodge it. He rolls from a German's line of fire. Grabs an edged entrenching shovel. Swings it at the shooter. Just about decapitates him. Germans pour into the trench. The black soldiers rally to the onslaught.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Evelyn reads a handwritten letter under a kerosene lamp.

WALT (V.O.)

I'm sorry for what I put you through.
I'm sorry for everything. I had to
leave. But if I make it back, to
you, Joyce and Joe, I'll be different,
the man daddy taught me to be...

She folds the letter. Places it on a stack of similar ones.

EXT. FARMLAND - DAY

Weary black migrants trudge atop train tracks, belongings in bags and bundles. Some pull handcarts. They part to either side of the tracks. Reveal a train in the distance behind them. The STEAM WHISTLE sounds as it bares down. Black soldiers occupy its last rail car, which is open. No seats.

INT. TRAIN CAR - DAY

Walt sits against the open door frame. Watches the migrants, who now travel alongside the tracks. Soldiers smoke, chat. Isolated, Lt. Spears carves a piece of wood. On the underside of his left forearm is a tattoo. A distinct regiment badge:

A heraldic shield with a stripe running diagonally across, and a lightning bolt to either side. "370th" is written over the shield. "Power to Strike," on a banner below it.

PVT. SILKY

...right over to Miss Rosetta Walker's
for some sweet lovin' them French
broads just can't quite muster up.

The others echo enthusiasm. Lt. Spears audibly does not.

PVT. SILKY (CONT'D)

I'm hot to trot, Lt. Spears. And
she's the girl of my dreams. Classy
lady, big eyes, hair marcelled up,
nice and pretty. Wears a string of
pearls her mama gave her. Wait 'til
she see old Silky in uniform.

Silky basks in his declaration, to Spears' skepticism.

PVT. SILKY (CONT'D)

You ain't been thinkin' on your old
lady? What you got planned for her?

LT. SPEARS

None of your business, boy. And you keep trying to make it so, I'll pull rank and plan something for you.

Spears pats an exposed rifle butt in a rolled-up bundle.

PVT. SILKY

You can take the man out the war, but not the war out the man. You gonna sew that thing to your hip?

LT. SPEARS

Under the bed will do. Hoping it's finished its job, but you tell me.

Spears awaits a retort that doesn't come. Resumes whittling.

LT. SPEARS (CONT'D)

Besides, you go calling on Ms. Walker with those intentions, only loving you'll get will be from an oak door.

This brings Silky to his feet. He approaches Spears.

PVT. SILKY

No so fast, I'm a decorated veteran of the Great War, a genuine doughboy of the Fighting 8th. Can't no one deny that, colored or white. I'll welcome the job, the respect, and all the fine pussy it brings me.

Tugs his Croix de Guerre in Spears' face to split reactions.

LT. SPEARS

You'll welcome a clean pair of drawers, seeing as you shit all over yours whenever a bullet left a gun.

This time all unite in hearty laughter. Silky scowls.

LT. SPEARS (CONT'D)

That's a French medal you're tugging at. Uncle Sam would sooner pin a target on your back than an honor on your chest. You're home now, son. Folks see one thing, one thing only.

Spears tugs on Silky's cheek. Silky bats away his hand.

PVT. SILKY

So why'd a college-schooled man like you jump into the trenches then?

LT. SPEARS

If this is our country, this is our war. We make no ordinary sacrifice, but we make it gladly and willingly with our eyes lifted to the hills. We urge this despite our deep sympathy with the reasonable and deep-seated feeling of revolt among Negroes at the present insult and discrimination to which they are subject, even when they do their patriotic duty.

PVT. SILKY

What the fuck did you just say?

Lt. Spears blows on his woodwork, turns it over. It starts to take the shape of the Eiffel Tower. He whittles further.

LT. SPEARS

You don't do what you do in the hope folks will respect you for it. You do what you do because it needs to be done, because you believe it's right. And I didn't say it. Mr. W.E.B. DuBois did. Heard of him?

He looks doubtfully at silent Silky. Continues whittling.

LT. SPEARS (CONT'D)

Many a man gets to clamoring about the respect he's owed. The way I see it, he should spend less time clamoring, more time carrying on about his business, make himself up into something. Give folks no choice.

PVT. SILKY

Way I see it, a man don't need a statue in his honor to keep shit from being kicked on him. Don't matter who gave me this medal. It matters that I got it. This side of the ocean or the other, can't no one take that from me. If Uncle Sam gonna put me in the cross-hairs, so be it. But he best remember, I spent the last two years dodging everything the whole of the German Army could throw at me, taking on Hun one after the other, sending him to his maker as quickly as they could send him over the top, with a fire in my gut, a song on my lips and a Yankee Doodle tap to my toe, punching that clock on the job for Old Glory.

The train occupants give a resolute military GRUNT in unison.

PVT. SILKY (CONT'D)

I'm a soldier, a warrior. If you gonna put a target on me, very well best make it on my back then, 'cause if I see you aiming, I'm damn sure aiming back and I shoot to kill.

LT. SPEARS

Then you damn sure ain't long for this world, Silky.

PVT. SILKY

We'll see, Lieutenant. We'll see.

Worked up, Silky roams. Spots a fully disengaged Walt.

PVT. SILKY (CONT'D)

And here go your pride and joy, the crazy ass one who got himself an extra medal or two, sitting by silent like always. You ain't got nothing to say on the matter, Walt? What is it you're always thinking on anyway?

WALT

I'm thinking one bullet, one inch this way or the other, none of us might be on this train. It ain't about what you did. It's about what you're gonna do. I'm gonna go home and see to the family I left behind. How that sits with any other folks, respect and all, don't much matter.

Spears winks at an irked Silky, who opts to retire. Walt stares back at the endless trail of migrants. Spots a boy, EUGENE WILLIAMS(9), bundle in one arm, his little sister's hand in the other. Eugene stops. Stares back at Walt.

Walt shakes off glimpses of himself as a boy, holding his siblings' hands, which flash with Eugene as he fades away.

INT. UNION STATION, CHICAGO - DAY

Walt and Lt. Spears stand on the platform. Walt gives Spears a rigid military salute, to which the Lt. responds in kind.

LT. SPEARS

You take care of yourself, Walt.

Walt nods. They shake hands. Spears stops Walt's departure.

LT. SPEARS (CONT'D)

You're a good soldier and you've got the makings of a good man. But old ways have a habit of finding folks. Many a good man can attest to that.

Walt nods. Spears finally releases his hand. Walt leaves.

EXT. BUSY STREET OUTSIDE STATION - DAY

Cars jerk along, bulb horns SQUAWKING. Men in straw boaters, women in dresses peddle bicycles. Horses pull carts. Walt passes people lined up at a building, many with their luggage.

The building reads "Employment Services." Window posts read "Strong Lads Wanted. Negroes Need Not Apply" and "Colored House Maids Wanted. Experience with Southern Gentile a Must."

Apart from the line, a few grungy veterans in uniform resort to panhandling, some maimed with gruesome injuries. Walt proceeds past a young newspaper boy on the corner.

NEWSPAPER BOY

Hot off the press! Mayor Thompson urges cool heads as race violence heats up! Get it here! Only here!

Russell, in his signature flat cap, leaps in front of Walt.

RUSSELL

Russell K. Davis, sir, reporting!

A startled Walt pulls Russ out of his salute, into a headlock.

WALT

You got me all jumpy, you clown!

A cheery Walt tosses his pudgy pal, who secures his cap.

RUSSELL

The big, bad soldier returns. No worse for the wear either. Shoot, the way your letters read, I figured if you did make it back, be with a few more holes or a few less limbs.

WALT

Just luck, I suppose. Wasn't no walk in the park though. Couldn't lie around getting fat like you.

Walt smacks him in the gut. They stroll the crowded street.

RUSSELL
Ain't no lying around here! Got me
a good job, going on a while now.

WALT
Oh, yeah? Working man, huh?

RUSSELL
That's right. Over at the stockyards.

They walk a bit in silence, Russ on alert for a reaction.

WALT
How's that then?

RUSSELL
Don't earn much, but it--

An oncoming black pedestrian knocks into Walt, gives a dismissive glance. Walt stares after him. Calmly carries on. Russell, already a few preparatory paces away, stares at the man too, then ahead at Walt. Puzzled, he catches up.

WALT
Suppose they got any work for me?

RUSSELL
Shit, at the slaughterhouse?

WALT
Yeah, so what's the matter with that?

RUSSELL
Nothing, just don't seem like the
Walt I know, that's all.

Russell, his fishing futile, keeps pace with Walt.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)
I'll sure see what I can do though.

After a few more silent steps, Russell grabs Walt's shoulder.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)
It's just good to have you back.

Russell cops an overly-intense demeanor.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)
Soldier!

The two friends laugh.

INT. MCSHEA'S ALE HOUSE - DAY

Frank sits with Vernon at the bar, a bottle between them. Alone but for a comatose drunk heaped in the corner. Frank pours a shot with a hand marred by a poorly-healed scar.

Baseball relics hang on the wall as attempted decor: pennants, team photos, dusty mitts, a bat. The centerpiece is a sign: "Welcome to Canaryville," painted above a green shamrock, the American Flag painted inside that, atop which is a canary.

The door opens. Sunlight invades the windowless room. Daniel Dooley enters, in uniform. Frank creaks around, squints. The door latches. Normalcy resumes. Frank vacates his seat.

FRANK DOOLEY

Well, I'll be God-damned!

Frank approaches a chipper Daniel, grabs him in rough embrace.

FRANK DOOLEY (CONT'D)

Shit, Danny boy! Looks like Uncle Sam went and made a man outta you!

Frank swiftly maneuvers Daniel into a solid full nelson.

FRANK DOOLEY (CONT'D)

Well, did he? Huh? And what was it your mother said when you signed up?

DANIEL DOOLEY

She called me a fool. Said only thieves and vagrants joined the army.

Frank blurts out a laugh. Gives Daniel a rough noogie.

FRANK DOOLEY

Well, was she right, Danny boy? Huh, was she? You a fool?

Frank hurls Daniel towards the bar. Daniel adjusts his uniform back to top form. Timidly extends his hand to Vernon.

DANIEL DOOLEY

Whaddaya say, Vernon?

Devoted to his drink, Vernon grunts. Tosses out his hand.

VERNON

Kill many Krauts, did ya?

DANIEL DOOLEY

Oh, I suppose so.

Uncomfortable silence.

DANIEL DOOLEY (CONT'D)
Well, how's life on the home front?

FRANK DOOLEY
Just that, life.

Frank retakes his seat. Gulps his drink.

FRANK DOOLEY (CONT'D)
O'Leary's got shut down. Coppers'
pockets too deep, patrons too scarce.

VERNON
Run out by the niggers.

FRANK DOOLEY
They've taken over the whole goddamn
neighborhood, still our great mayor
invites more, ballots at the ready.

Vernon spits on the floor.

FRANK DOOLEY (CONT'D)
Ain't enough to drive us from our
homes, now they want our jobs too.
But the war's over, factories are
shutting down, mills closing up.

VERNON
And they keep on coming.

The brooding men stare off. Daniel hovers amid the hostility.

DANIEL DOOLEY
Tell me it ain't so. Two regular
old working stiffs then? Never
thought I'd see the day, Franky.

Daniel laughs congenially. Slaps a preoccupied Frank's back.

FRANK DOOLEY
They'll understand soon enough, they
ain't welcome, they ain't allowed.

Frank eyes his scar. More silence. Daniel scans for uplift.

DANIEL DOOLEY
So then, all the Canaryville Bunch
is clobbering now are homers on the
diamond, huh? How's the team looking,
boys? We gonna whoop the other clubs?
The old swing's a little rusty, but--

Frank slams a glass. Jolt's Daniel from his swing motion.

FRANK DOOLEY

Drink up, Danny boy. Been too long.

Frank fills the glass. Daniel accepts the notification.

EXT. NARROW STREET - DUSK

Walt strolls under cluttered clotheslines spanning the street. A train rumbles over elevated tracks behind him. The rickety buildings tremble in its wake. Walt turns into a doorway.

INT. THOMAS APARTMENT - DUSK

Evelyn knits in a rocking chair. Joyce stirs stew on the stove, in a maid's outfit. The door opens. Joyce sees Walt.

JOYCE

Walt! I can't believe it!

Joyce rushes the uniformed soldier, slams him with a hug.

JOYCE (CONT'D)

Mama said it'd be soon, but--Mama,
your son's home! Oh, we missed you!

WALT

Joyce, you sure look lovely.

Evelyn stands, returns Walt's stare from across the room.

EVELYN

The good Lord has delivered you.
Come on here and give me a hug.

Walt approaches. Finds relief in a long-overdue embrace.

WALT

Say, where's Joe?

Walt eases back from Evelyn. Joyce stares to the floor.

EVELYN

Suppose your guess is good as mine.

WALT

How's that? He still lives here,
don't he? Does he have a job?

Evelyn slumps back down in her chair. Takes up her knitting.

EVELYN

He brings money back all right. And
if you call stumbling in drunk all
hours of the night living here, then
I guess you'd say he does that too.

JOYCE

Joe runs with Leroy now, Walt. He has ever since you left.

Injured by the news, Walt turns to Evelyn.

EVELYN

You really so surprised, son?

His concern unallayed, Walt settles into his homecoming.

INT. ROW HOUSE FOYER - EVENING

MILES(6) plays with a toy plane on the floor. The door opens to Lt. Spears. He gazes at Miles, who observes the soldier. CHARLOTTE enters. The sight of her husband stuns her. She grabs him. They intertwine. Looks leave nothing to be said.

CHARLOTTE

Miles, come see your father.

Miles obeys. Spears takes a knee. Squares up the shy boy.

LT. SPEARS

Growing up nice and strong, I see.
Been behaving? Minding your mother?

MILES

Yes, sir.

LT. SPEARS

Making good marks in school?

MILES

Yes, sir.

The military man can't stifle his affection. He hugs Miles.

LT. SPEARS

I brought you something.

He pulls out the impressively-finished Eiffel Tower figurine.

MILES

What is it?

LT. SPEARS

It's called *Le Tour Eiffel*, a magnificent tower the French built. It stands for democracy, for the whole world to see, what your daddy was over there fighting to save.

Miles fiddles with it, ambles off. Spears turns to Charlotte. They kiss, Miles' newly-enhanced game underway behind them.

INT. THOMAS APARTMENT - NIGHT

Walt smokes a pipe alone, a tattoo identical to Lt. Spears' on the underside of his forearm. The door flies open. In crashes older, stronger Joe. Spots Walt with impaired gusto.

JOE
Holy shit, Walt! It is you!

He stumbles, falls into Walt's arms, who embraces him coldly.

WALT
Hello, Joe.

JOE
You look swell. Didn't let them
Krauts scar up that pretty face.

He squeezes Walt's face. Walt slaps his hand away. Shoves him. Joe flops into the chair. Stares at Walt, confused.

WALT
Yeah, and you look drunk! What the
hell's gotten into you, stumbling in
at this hour, all liquored up?

JOE
Well, ain't that just like my big
brother? Not back a minute after
two years and already scolding me.

WALT
Listen, Joe---

Joe leaps up from the chair.

JOE
No, you listen, Walt! Things are
different now. I ain't a boy for
you to order around how you see fit.

WALT
Joe, what are you doing messing with
Leroy? What are you trying to pull?

Joe pulls out a fistful of cash. Throws it on the table.

JOE
Same as you always were. You left!
Ran away clear across the ocean,
with me to fend for Mama and Joyce
on my own. Guess you did what you
had to do, huh, brother? So did I.

Inches from Walt, Joe shoulders past after a tense showdown.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Congregation in their Sunday best. The choir SINGS. Walt sits silently next to Evelyn and Joyce, who sing along. The song ends. The reverend steps behind the pulpit.

REVEREND

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want! But in my weakness, I do want, Lord! I need, I yearn to know what it is you ask of me. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto to my path, but which is the path that awaits me, Lord?

CUT TO:

EXT. CHARMING RESIDENTIAL STREET, WHITE NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

A gaunt man, HYRUM(30s), pedals a bicycle in a pastel suit, with sunken eyes and drawn cheeks unbecoming of the crisp boater hat above them. A parcel sits in a handlebar basket.

REVEREND (V.O.)

I see the slaughter of the innocent in the shadows around me, the torment of the meek in the darkness that encroaches. Yet, as I look to the heavens, I'm reminded to look within myself, to the truth etched in me by your hand, which so many ignore but for fear, distort but for anger.

Hyrum dismounts at an elegant home with an address of 176.

REVEREND (V.O.)

You light my path, but I will forward my foot. May I do so to the rhythm of your truth as it beats in my heart.

He takes the package from the basket, verifies the recipient: "Mr. Norman P. Whitaker, Editor in Chief: Freeman's Defender Weekly. 176 Sutton Drive, Chicago, Ill." In place of a return address, is a crude sketch of a yellow canary.

REVEREND (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Lord, as your children, we pray you make us an instrument of your peace.

CUT TO:

INT. CHURCH - DAY

The reverend's face is creased with conviction.

REVEREND

But was not David a soldier of your will when he laid down the monster Goliath with the stone? Was not Joshua a weapon of your wrath, Lord, when he marched your people into Canaan and shook the walls of Jericho?

CUT TO:

EXT. PORCH - DAY

A young black girl opens the door at 176. Stares suspiciously at Hyrum. He removes his hat. Bares a maze of crooked, brown teeth. She warily accepts his parcel. Hyrum winks.

REVEREND (V.O.)

Breathe courage into our lungs, Lord. Brace our backs with faith. Steady our hands, strengthen our souls, so we too may realize your will in this city, to which the Devil lays claim.

EXT. STREET - DAY

As Hyrum peddles away, a massive explosion rocks the house. Pedestrians dive for cover. Flames, smoke engulf the home. Hyrum continues peddling, satisfaction across his face.

EXT. OUTSIDE CHURCH - SUNNY DAY

The Thomases exit. Evelyn's swept into conversation. Joyce finds a girlfriend. They clutch arms, scurry off in whispers, snickers. Men arrange picnic tables on the grassy lot next to the church. Women place heaping pots of food atop them.

Walt stands alone, watching. Some young ladies notice. They toss around giggles at the awkward soldier, between coy smiles, fluttering eyes. Walt smiles. One young lady has him particularly rapt. She waves. He nods hello.

Evelyn approaches Walt from behind with the Reverend, who drops a heavy hand on Walt's shoulder. Walt flinches. Hurls the reverend over him by the arm in a tactical take-down.

The reverend lands hard on his back. The young ladies gasp. Raise hands to their mouths in surprise, others to conceal laughter. The rest of the witnessing congregation is taken aback. Shocked, himself, Walt rushes to help the reverend.

EVELYN

Walt, what in heaven's name!?! The Reverend came to welcome you back.

Walt stands up the Reverend. Dusts the dirt off his suit. Looks around. An appalled woman pulls her child behind her. An elderly lady gives a stern wag of her head at Walt.

WALT

Sorry about that, Reverend.

REVEREND

That's all right, son. Seems you still have a little adjusting to do.

They shake hands. The reverend turns, grimaces as he grabs his back. Shuffles away. Walt faces a mortified Evelyn.

EXT. STREET - EARLY MORNING

A man unloads a batch of newspapers on the street. Headline:

"Prominent Colored Newspaper Editor, Family Incinerated in House Bombing. Third Such Attack in as Many Months."

Walt and Russell step over the newspapers as they walk.

RUSSELL

Mr. Dugan ain't too bad a boss, far as old Honkies go. Yard's okay if you get over the smell. Wait 'til the heat comes, them carcasses out.

Russell grimaces. Walt ignores him for his cigarette.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

The stench ain't half as bad as the company. White boys don't take too kindly to us working alongside them.

WALT

Don't suppose they would. Wasn't any different in the army, so Uncle Sam loaned us out to the French.

RUSSELL

Well, you find a French stockyard around here, give a holler. Otherwise, just gotta make do.

Russell spits on the ground as the men walk.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Some of them boys mob up pretty good. Call themselves athletic clubs or some such since the mayor got tough. Only sport these Micks seem to play though is getting drunk and taking a baseball bat to a Negro's head.

Russell looks over at a totally disengaged walt.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Alls I'm saying is Mr. Dugan don't tolerate trouble, and them crackers like to give us a whole hell of a lot of it. If there's any fighting--

WALT

Russell, about a year back, it was a cool, crisp morning. Sun was creeping up, fitting to make for a fine day. Trenches had dried out some. Germans' Spring Offensive was stalling, looked as we might turn 'em back for good. I was sipping coffee with a pal of mine, quiet fellow from Joliet, name of Herbert Armstrong. We'd just done a perimeter sweep. Herbert had to use the latrine. He was squatting there, taking a shit. A sniper bullet blew half his skull clean off.

Walt takes a drag of his cigarette as they walk.

WALT (CONT'D)

Guess we ain't do too good a job. Herbert, he didn't die right away. I watched him choke down his last few breaths, that look in his eyes you don't see in men 'til they realize what's happening sure is happening, and ain't a goddamn thing can be done about it. This is it.

Walt falls quiet, as he appears to drift back to the past.

WALT (CONT'D)

Being as we'd gotten close, it fell to me to write his people, speak on his courage in battle, honor in death, how he went out with a fight. But I couldn't shake it, him lying there, drawers down around his ankles, squirming in his own shit and brains, swinging at the air, trying to grab hold of something. That look in his eyes. Didn't go out with fight enough to pull up his own pants. It took me a spell to get that letter out.

Walt glances at Russell, who silently absorbs the tale.

WALT (CONT'D)

Just another day in the trenches.
It was a fight for every breath you
pulled in over there, so as a fella
couldn't even take a shit on a spring
morning in peace. A fight's the
last fucking thing I'm looking for.

RUSSELL

What are you looking for, Walt?

They turn a corner. The iron bull glares at them from the
stockyard archway. Walt stares back as they advance, then
over at the familiar mural, almost fully-faded on the brick.

INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE - DAY

A huge cavern of platforms and pits, pierced by light from a
partially-enclosed roof. Blood of all shades and textures
pools about, mixed with fragments of flesh and bone.

MR. DUGAN(60s) walks with a limp. Walt follows. A stout,
watchful man, JULIAN, trails them, a club tucked in his belt.
They're surrounded by a chaotic circus of men and livestock.
Walt strains to hear Dugan over the gruesome melody of men's
SHOUTS, animals' BLEATS, and saws GRINDING through bone.

MR. DUGAN

Figure you did harder work overseas
than cutting up swine and cattle.

Dugan looks to Walt, who nods in quick confirmation.

MR. DUGAN (CONT'D)

Good. But listen up, son. The first
sign of any trouble, you're out on
your ass. I hire men to kill the
livestock, not each other. We clear?
Because if not, there's plenty another
man who'd die to get this here job.

Walt gives a slower, loaded nod. Walks quietly for a moment.

WALT

Yes, sir, Mr. Dugan.

They pass pigs penned on a ramp leading to a platform. Atop
the platform, Frank yanks out a pig as it SQUEALS. Forces
its head in a vice, his face and clothes bloody. He wears a
dark rubber apron and boots that slosh in puddles of blood.

Across the platform, a similar-looking Vernon plunges a meat
hook into a dead pig. Drags it a ways. Loops a thick knot
tied to its hind legs over a hook hanging from a conveyor
chain. Slowly, it lifts the dead animal, carries it away.

Blood drips from its gashed throat. Vernon spots Dugan and Walt pass below the platform, their backs to him.

VERNON

That old fuckin' fool, Dugan.

Frank secures his pig in the vice. Wipes sweat and blood across his brow. Approaches Vernon who nods towards the backs of Dugan and an unrecognizable Walt as they walk away.

VERNON (CONT'D)

He ain't hired a white man in months.

FRANK DOOLEY

That's how it goes with these lackeys,
no sense or spine to join the Union,
content to break their backs for a
cent, scrounge for scraps, praise
'boss man' when he throws them any.

Frank's anger surfaces as he stares at his scarred hand.

FRANK DOOLEY (CONT'D)

So real men who refuse to do the
same don't get a seat at the table.

He marches at the pig, which desperately tries to free itself. Snatches a big, blood-caked knife. Plunges it into the pig's throat. Runs it from ear to ear. The pig SQUEALS. Its hooves slip frantically in its own blood. After an agonizing moment, it falls limp in the vice. Frank gazes at his kill.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE WALT'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Walt watches the night sky. WHISTLING from an alley disrupts him: the tune of "Marine's Hymn." He sees nothing but the glow of a lit cigarette. Slowly, Leroy emerges, cigarette in hand. Stops his whistling. His face twists into a smile.

LEROY

Hello there, soldier. Been awhile.

Leroy saunters towards Walt. Circles him, amused.

LEROY (CONT'D)

Made it back in one piece, I see.
Shit, talk about jumping out of the
frying pan and into the fire.

Leroy laughs. Walt refuses to acknowledge him.

LEROY (CONT'D)

And so hoodlum Walt returns soldier
Walt. Boy, the prospect of that
just gets me all worked up inside.

He feigns excitement. Smiles at a silent Walt.

LEROY (CONT'D)

Never much for words, huh? How come you ain't been by to see me? Figured you'd want back on the payroll.

WALT

I want nothing to do with you, Leroy. Neither does Joe for that matter.

LEROY

Come now, Walt. Ain't no way to greet an old pal. What's wrong? You still sore over that night? That's behind us, a job gone bad.

WALT

It ain't behind me.

Walt slowly draws closer to Leroy, who gives no ground.

WALT (CONT'D)

I saw things in that war, did things. Things you couldn't conjure up in your worst nightmares. But it taught me some, firstly being not to waste no more time on the likes of you.

LEROY

Oh, you think you different now, I see. A changed man, is that it?

The two are nose to nose. Walt balls his hands into fists.

WALT

Perhaps. But not entirely, if you'd care to find out for yourself.

After a tense moment, Leroy cracks a smile. Eases off.

LEROY

All in due time, bruiser. Take care.

He winks, takes a cigarette drag. Slowly backs away and resumes his tune. Walt watches him fade into the alley.

EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET - DAY

Black performers, in blackface, entertain a white crowd. A canvas reads "Dandy Dan the Uptown Man and His Troupe of Old-Timey Georgia Minstrels." Some play instruments. The star does a vaudeville miming act in gaudy getup, cane, top hat.

A suit-clad Lt. Spears exits a nearby building. Crumples papers, tosses them. Loosens his tie in a huff. Walks down the street, unknowingly into the act. The star capitalizes. He slides after Spears, twirls his cane, mockingly trails him in a haughty, slapstick impression. The crowd loves it.

Spears notices. The minstrel plays comically-innocent. Spears carries on. The mimicry resumes. Spears stops, turns back. The minstrel tips his hat with the cane. Spears snags the cane, yanks him in close, stares him down. In character, the man tries to slip away. Spears seizes him by the collar.

The crowd buzzes. The performer's practiced grin fades as he cracks under Spears' glare. He can't pull away. The music stops. The crowd BOOS, CURSES Spears, who doesn't break his gaze until a billy club passes between the two men. Spears' eyes follow it out to a stern Officer Callahan.

OFFICER CALLAHAN

Now, sonny, why would you go and
ruin these fine folks' entertainment?
Let the lad go, or you and I will
find another way to entertain them.

Callahan taps Spears' chest with his club. Spears releases the performer, who retreats. Spears eyes Callahan. Departs to the crowd's JEERS and pelted debris. The music resumes. The minstrel snaps back in character to the crowd's delight.

INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE - DAY

Walt and Russell wash blood off tools in a sink. Walt spies a black worker, STICKY FINGERS, slip shadily about. He feigns a task here and there, only to swipe a tool, slide it in his jacket. Walt sneers. The stealthy thief passes two white MEAT MEN, who saw at big hunks of animal on the killing floor.

STICKY FINGERS

Say, boss, got a T-Bone for me?

They ignore him, as he strategically positions himself.

STICKY FINGERS (CONT'D)

Y'all make it look easy. I know who
to find if my old lady acts up again.

One hand slaps the table, the other pilfers a bone saw.

MEAT MAN #1

Get lost.

STICKY FINGERS

Sure thing, boss. Just making nice.

He gives a purposeful spin, hand still in his jacket.

MEAT MAN #2

Hold on a minute.

The man snags Sticky Fingers by the collar. Yanks him back. Pulls his arm from his jacket, which still holds the saw.

MEAT MAN #2 (CONT'D)

You stealing my fuckin' tools!?!?

STICKY FINGERS

No! Just seeing they clean for you.

MEAT MAN #2

The hell you are.

Sticky Fingers' nerves show. Meat Man #1 rips the saw back.

MEAT MAN #1

Got you some smooth talk and some sticky fingers. Let's see if they stick to your hand just as good.

They grapple with Sticky Fingers, as he tries to flee. One pins his arm to the table, pries out his fingers. The other glances around for witnesses, readies the saw. Overlooks Walt, who wipes the cleaver he washes on his shirt.

STICKY FINGERS

Please, I meant nothing by it! I'm desperate! They ain't paying shit!

MEAT MAN #2

Then lucky for you, boy, the Union still takes men missing fingers.

The man moves the saw into position. Sticky Fingers agonizes.

WALT

That ain't the way to go about it.

The meat men turn. See Walt, the sharp cleaver he holds. One grabs a knife of his own. They ready themselves for a showdown, Sticky Fingers still restrained against the table.

WALT (CONT'D)

Not for fingers, that is. Arm bones, a leg, sure, but the fingers are too fragile for a saw. They'll get all mangled, move on ya, twist up. He'll wriggle and reel, hoot and holler, cause one hell of a scene. A mess.

The confused meat men eye each other.

WALT (CONT'D)

And y'all don't wanna be on the hook
for this? Only teach a lesson, right?

Walt moves at the guarded men. Offers them the cleaver.

WALT (CONT'D)

Here you go. Quick, clean. Easy to
make like he did it himself, chopping
around, not looking. Clumsy bastard.

Walt shakes his head in pity. Scared Sticky Fingers squirms.

WALT (CONT'D)

Well, which one of you is it gonna
be now? Best be quick about it,
before he draws any more attention.

He moves the cleaver handle between them. Stumped, they eye
each other. Sticky Fingers screams. Workers start to gather.

WALT (CONT'D)

Come on now. My lips were sealed,
but not too sure about these others.

The meat men notice the spectators. Walt stomps his foot.

WALT (CONT'D)

Come on! Whatch'a waiting for!?!

The meat men flinch. Walt jams out the knife.

WALT (CONT'D)

What's the matter!?! Y'all gonna
let him steal off you Scott free?

STICKY FINGERS

Shut your crazy ass up! Help me!

WALT

He's nothing but a thief. Do it!

Walt pierces the meat men with his glare. Dugan gimps up.

MR. DUGAN

What in the hell is going on here!?!

The flustered meat men quickly releases Sticky Fingers.

WALT

Nothing, sir. Swapping notes, sharing
tools. Ain't that right, fellas?

MR. DUGAN

What's this swapping shit? Y'all
got your own tools when you came on!
Those the only damn ones you get!

Julian bursts through the crowd. Takes his place near Dugan.

WALT

Yes, sir. Problem is they keep
disappearing on us. Seems like some
right into this one's pocket here.

Walt nods to Sticky Fingers, who panics. Dugan motions at Julian. Julian grabs Sticky Fingers, stands him upright. Pats him down. Rips open his jacket to a large pocket specially sewn in. Julian tears it. Metal tools spill onto the ground. Julian snags the worker, who falls to his knees.

STICKY FINGERS

Mr. Dugan, I'm sorry! My kids! The
pay ain't enough to put food on the
table. I ain't a thief, I just--
they're hungry, they're sick! Have
mercy! I had to, as a father, as a
man. Please, can't you respect that?

Dugan dismisses the pleas, zero concern. Walt steps close.

WALT

Many a man get to clamoring about
the respect he's owed.

STICKY FINGERS

Fuck you, snitch ass mother-fucker!

Dugan hobbles up to Julian, who kicks Sticky Fingers quiet.

MR. DUGAN

Try doing what I hire you for and
drag this filth out of here.

His stare scolds Julian. He faces Walt, beckons he follow. Julian grills Walt heavily. Drags Sticky Fingers away. Russell, too, pastes Walt with a look, unsure disapproval.

STICKY FINGERS

You son of a bitch! I pray when you
need help, it's nowhere to be found!
I hope your family suffers on account
of you, Judas! May you be left broken
and alone among the corpses, with
nary a soul to share in your plight!

He holds out his finger at Walt, as Julian hauls him off.

INT. FOREMAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Mr. Dugan admires the dark abyss of travail over which he holds command. Walt waits quietly behind him.

MR. DUGAN

Had my eye on you these few weeks,
son. Fancy a guess as to why?

Dugan faces Walt, who displays his ignorance.

MR. DUGAN (CONT'D)

You're a soldier. Been to war.
Like myself. Indian Wars. The Sioux,
in the Black Hills. Theirs was a
lost cause. But that don't lend a
tomahawk to doing any less damage
when it collides with a knee cap.

Dugan smiles. Slaps the thigh of his bad leg.

MR. DUGAN (CONT'D)

Two types of men return from war.
Shoulders hunched, head down or chest
out and chin up. You're the latter,
son. Perhaps by no conscious effort
of your own but nevertheless. You're
also colored. I don't hire you boys
out of kindness. I bring you on
'cause you're useful. My partners
and I are looking to open a stockyard
a ways west of Milwaukee, small Polack
town, simple folk, good workers.
Group of Negroes up there too. I'm
told they get on just fine together.

Dugan gazes back out on the floor.

MR. DUGAN (CONT'D)

These Goddamn Unions are bleeding us
dry. Men more worried about keeping
their fingernails clean than getting
the job done. Think they belong to
something, stand for something. Try
standing back to back with a man
while blood-thirsty Sioux braves
gallop around you in a cloud of dust.
Try standing shoulder to shoulder
with a brother in arms, as thousands
of fiery-eyed German Hun charge.

He looks to Walt for concurrence. Walt nods slightly.

MR. DUGAN (CONT'D)

I'll make you an offer, son. You keep them fingernails dirty and that nose clean a while longer, I move you and your family North. Put you in a suitable home, on the company's dime. Then you come work for me, with all the other Negroes up there in tow. You keep them productive, honest, and, most important, Union-free, I keep your salary comfortable.

Dugan pulls out a card. Hands it to Walt.

MR. DUGAN (CONT'D)

Meanwhile, watch out for these. Those union snakes will tell you just about anything for your John Hancock and initiation dues.

Walt stares at the card. It reads "Amalgamated Meat Cutters Union," with lines for writing information.

MR. DUGAN (CONT'D)

Here's your chance to vacate the heinous underbelly of this fine city, to live well, to be a leader. It won't come again. What say you?

Walt looks up from the card to Dugan.

EXT. SHABBY ROW HOUSE - MORNING

SUPER: *Sunday, July 27th, 1919.*

The door opens. Out pops young Eugene Williams. He leaps onto the street. EUGENE'S MOTHER chases him out the door.

EUGENE'S MOTHER

You be careful, Eugene! You stay out of the white neighborhoods!

Eugene nods as he eagerly skips away.

EUGENE'S MOTHER (CONT'D)

And for God's sake, boy, go make some friends, instead of just staring at them boats on the lake all day!

Eugene disappears. His dismayed mother looks around.

EUGENE'S MOTHER (CONT'D)

Not two months we've been up here and folks already startin' to talk.

EXT. ABANDONED STREET - MORNING

Eugene makes sure he's alone. Reaches under a stoop. Reveals a sailboat. A foot long, made from a ragged assortment of items, but with a canvas sail and sturdy mast, fixed to a floatable hull. He gallops off. Turns the corner, right into four black teens, neighborhood BULLIES. His face drops.

LEAD BULLY

Well, if it ain't Gene the Queen?

They laugh. Surround him. One has a bat, the others, mitts.

LEAD BULLY (CONT'D)

What you got there?

The bully reaches for the sailboat. Eugene pulls it away.

EUGENE

Just my sailboat, that's all.

LEAD BULLY

What is it with you and them boats?

EUGENE

One day I'll have my own. Sail it anywhere I please.

The lead bully bursts into laughter, parroted by the others.

LEAD BULLY

If that's the one you planning on using, you ain't gonna get too far.

Laughter continues. Eugene looks hurt.

LEAD BULLY (CONT'D)

You know what I heard? I heard a big storm's brewing on the water.

He rips the boat from Eugene. Pretends it's in waves. Roughly flips it around as Eugene tries to retrieve it.

EUGENE

Come on now, you're gonna break it!

The others grab Eugene. One hands the lead bully the bat.

LEAD BULLY

Uh-oh, a wave. Sure is a big one.

EUGENE

Give it here!

The teen lobs up the boat, smashes it with a swing. Laughter.

LEAD BULLY

Looks like your boat sunk!

The raucous bullies depart in satisfied amusement. Eugene stares, heart-broken at the remnants of his masterpiece.

EXT. SIDE STREET - DAY

Frank and Vernon loll with some men. An especially sloppy George Stauber boozes from a bottle. Rolls dice for money with others. Callahan walks his beat onto the scene.

OFFICER CALLAHAN

What do you say, lads? Hot enough?

Frank grimaces, ignores Callahan. George curses loudly after a roll. Throws cash down on the street. Kicks over a crate.

OFFICER CALLAHAN (CONT'D)

What's a matter, Georgey?

Callahan nods at George's half-empty bottle.

OFFICER CALLAHAN (CONT'D)

You know just 'cause you're seeing double, don't mean you rolled it.

Callahan laughs. The sweaty, unkempt George sneers.

OFFICER CALLAHAN (CONT'D)

What am I to do? Drinking, gambling in public, and on a Sunday at that.

Callahan makes a chiding sound. George advances on him.

GEORGE

You forgot assaulting an officer.

Callahan grips his Billy club.

OFFICER CALLAHAN

Easy there, fella. All in fun. You'd call off your dog if you knew what was good for you, Franky!

FRANK DOOLEY

Sadly that knowledge always seemed to escape me, Callahan. And what am I to do? I'm just a lowly wage-earner now. You and your fat, greedy pals saw to that. I hold no sway here.

Some of the men fall in line behind George.

OFFICER CALLAHAN

Come, fellas, that wasn't my doing.
We go way back. I knew half your
fathers. Keep to your giggle juice,
Georgey, I was just having a laugh.

George stops inches from a near-trembling Callahan. He bucks at Callahan, who almost stumbles backwards. George laughs.

GEORGE

Likewise.

George leads a few men away. Callahan and Frank trade looks.

EXT. OUTSIDE BAKERY, BLACK BELT - DAY

A grocery bag in each arm, Russell shakes around some coins to get a count. He looks at the bakery window, back at the change in his hand. A moment of pained deliberation. He resumes walking. After a few steps, he abruptly turns back.

INT. BAKERY, BLACK BELT - DAY

A line of visibly-vexed customers leads to Russell. Bent to the glass, he peruses his options to the old baker's chagrin.

EXT. OUTSIDE BAKERY, BLACK BELT - DAY

Russell exits. Juggling the grocery bags, he goes at the small pastry box. Manages to pull out a huge éclair. Strains to get it to his mouth around the bags. It's inches away.

WALT (O.S.)

Russell!

Russell jumps. Drops everything. An amused Walt grabs Russell, who gazes at the splattered remains of his éclair.

RUSSELL

Goddamn it, Walt!

WALT

Hey, I'm doing you a favor, son.
You know you're mama told you to
stay out of Mr. Shaw's bakery.

RUSSELL

Hell, I'm a grown-ass man! I'll do
what I please, thank you very much.

Walt, still chuckling, picks up the groceries for Russell.

WALT

You'll keep on growing if you're up
in here every day. Bring your grown
ass to the lake. It's hot as hell.
I'll even carry your bags home first.

Walt puts a hand on Russell's shoulder. Russell pulls away.

RUSSELL

Now, just a Goddamn minute!

Russell glares at Walt, who's mirth fades at this intensity.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Some of this, here, is salvageable.

Russell rescues pieces of his éclair. Walt conceals laughter. They finally head down the street, pass store fronts. One has Eugene plastered to it, fixed on an artisanal miniature sailboat on display for "\$10.00." Other toy boats, none so brilliant, occupy the painted backdrop of Lake Michigan.

Walt stops when he sees forlorn Eugene turn away. His eyes shift from Eugene to the display. He blinks away images of his father's blood, smeared across the similar-looking mural, as they flash with the display. He watches Eugene depart.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

You said home, not one damn block!

Walt snaps back to a peeved Russell ahead of him. He catches up, as Russell savors the éclair's taste from his fingers. His sated expression stiffens at Walt's troubled look.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

What? Tastes all the same.

Walt shakes that off as the reason. Russell motions him onward. He looks back towards a since-gone Eugene. Follows.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

A glum Eugene scuffs along. Hears VOICES up ahead. He peers around a wall at a gang of young men, cast about the dead end of a cross alley. They laugh, drink. Joe is among them. Eugene is drawn to a pile of cash near a haul of stolen goods.

He creeps ahead. Random trash and debris act as cover. One hood has all the others' attention with an animated story.

Eugene crawls near the cash, grabs a hand full of bills. Turns to slip away. Finds himself staring directly at Leroy. With one arm, Leroy snatches Eugene off the ground. Holds him in the air by his collar. Eugene drops the cash.

LEROY
You stealing from me?

The hoods notice, hop up. Leroy stares at a nervous Eugene.

 LEROY (CONT'D)
You know what I do to people who
steal from me?

Leroy flips a switchblade from his back pocket. He runs the dull side of the blade slowly down Eugene's face.

 LEROY (CONT'D)
I steal something from them, something
they don't never get back.

Leroy glowers. After a moment, Eugene drops his head.

 EUGENE
Fine, go on and do your worst then.

This strikes Leroy. He seems taken aback, momentarily.

 LEROY
What are you stealing for anyway?

Eugene stares at the ground over which his feet hang.

 EUGENE
To buy myself a new sailboat. Some
boys went and smashed the one I made.

 LEROY
Sailboat, huh? Made it, you say.
These boys, they friends of yours?

 EUGENE
I don't have any friends.

 LEROY
That a fact?

Eugene nods. Leroy leans close to Eugene's ear to whisper.

 LEROY (CONT'D)
Neither do I.

Leroy winks at Eugene, drops him to his feet. Eyes his crew.

 LEROY (CONT'D)
Five minutes I leave, y'all gettin'
robbed blind by an eight year old.

 EUGENE
Nine.

Leroy looks back at Eugene.

LEROY
How much this boat cost?

EUGENE
Ten dollars.

Surprised, Leroy beckons at Joe. Joe counts out some bills. Hands the cash to Leroy, who hands it to a shocked Eugene.

LEROY
So go get your boat then. But don't
wander down no more alleys, you hear?

Eugene nods. Stares at the cash. Looks up at Leroy, who dismisses him with a head nod. Eugene dashes away. Leroy looks sternly at the silent hoods, equipped with stupid faces.

EXT. LAKE MICHIGAN BEACH - AFTERNOON

Eugene bounds triumphantly onto the sand with his new sailboat. Weaves between black beach-goers. Charges up to the water. Drops in the boat. Waits. After a few seconds, wind catches the sail. Eugene lets out string from the spool. Sprints gleefully along the shore, in pace with the boat.

Pure delight, as the boat swiftly cuts the water, at the very end of its long string tether. It sails past a buoy. The string tangles on the anchor chain, a ways out. Eugene's moment of elation crumbles under this weighty predicament. Now alone, far down the beach, he eyes the stranded vessel.

EXT. LAKE MICHIGAN BEACH - AFTERNOON

Eugene drags a wooden plank to the water. Shakes his nerves. Heads in after his boat. The steadiness of his steps shrinks with each inch the water climbs his chest. It hits his chin. He clutches the plank. Leaps. Flails wildly. The plank keeps his head above water. He kicks towards his boat.

A ways off, a drunk George Stauber loiters with other goons on the end of a rock jetty that juts into the lake. Some cool their feet in the water. They pass a bottle of liquor. George spots Eugene's struggle in the not-so-far distance.

GEORGE
What's that little shit up to?

They watch Eugene thrash about. Behind them, on the opposite side of the jetty from Eugene, white bathers occupy the beach.

GOON ON PIER
Settin' a Negro distance swim record.

All but George laugh, as Eugene splashes closer to his boat.

GEORGE

Not on our beach he ain't. He's
crossing to this side of the buoy.

GOON ON PIER

You gonna jump in, tell him to scam?
You can't swim any better yourself.

The men laugh again. George opts to swig liquor instead. He totters up, bends over. Grabs a small rock. Heaves it.

Eugene is almost to his boat when a rock plunges into the water nearby. Startled, he looks up as another zips towards him. It hits his arm. He yelps. Nearly loses the plank.

Back on the breakwater, the goons join in with George. They laugh and curse. Rocks drill the water around Eugene. He struggles to stay afloat. Panic sets in. He gasps for air. Then a rock strikes him in the head. He slips underwater.

Black bathers witness the ghastly assault from their side of the beach. Some swim out to attempt a rescue. A fit swimmer nears the spot of the attack. Eugene's body surfaces. Blood spills from a head wound. The man grabs him. Dodges the barrage of projectiles that continue to rain from the jetty.

The swimmer rushes Eugene's limp body onto the beach. Places him down. Attempts lifesaving. But Eugene is dead. Shocked, outraged onlookers encircle him. More rush to the scene.

A shirtless Leroy struts lakeside, thumbs hooked under suspenders. Joe and ten hoodlums are in tow. Leroy notices the commotion. Makes towards it. He pulls apart distraught bystanders. The sight of Eugene's battered body on the sand slams him off guard. A chink in his armor after all.

LEROY

What is this? What happened here!?!

Leroy snags the closest witness: the bully who broke Eugene's original boat. He's with the other teens. They seem stunned.

LEAD BULLY

He just wanted to sail his boat.

He points. Leroy finds the small sailboat caught on the buoy, then the men on the jetty. He pushes through the crowd. Marches at the jetty, flanked by his gang in staunch silence.

The sloshed killers continue drinking and horseplay, unaware, remorseless. One spots Leroy leading his crew down the beach. His smile fades. He nudges George. Motions at the approach.

GEORGE

Get Frank. Tell him it's goin' down.

The man flees. George takes a violent swig. Wipes his mouth. Brings the bellicose bunch over the jetty, towards the beach. They hop from the rocks to the sand. On the nearby street, Officer Callahan appears to have witnessed it all. He shakes his head in disapproval. George smiles back at him.

Black bystanders SCREAM and PLEAD with Callahan for action. He ignores them entirely. Slinks off. The growing crowd YELLS after him, but they soon simmer as they spot Leroy and his men approach the suspects near the water's edge.

As Leroy closes, a casual George pretends to offer him a drink. Instead, swings the bottle at his head. Leroy ducks the oafish swipe. Seamlessly draws his switchblade. Locks it in place just as he plunges it right into George's liver.

The blow rocks George into painful sobriety. Leroy tries to jam the blade in farther, but it's already up to its small hilt. His face against George's, he methodically twists the knife. Runs it deep across George's torso. Pulls it out. Guides George to the sand with his eyes, to die in pain.

George's cronies are shocked to inaction by the lightning-fast, uncontested kill. Bystanders observe in silence. Then, the beach erupts. White toughs pounce on Leroy, whose men come to his defense. Some whites, equipped with bottles, stones, use them as weapons. Some of Leroy's men pull knives.

The melee swirls across the beach, into the shallows. A black hood forces a white tough's head underwater, before he's attacked. One black man picks up a nearby rock. Smashes out a white man's teeth. Joe exchanges punches with a foe. After a few seconds, the fighting dies down. Eugene's murderers lie on the sand unconscious, ailing, or worse.

Suddenly, in the distance, a swarm of white men cascade around the corner, steam towards the beach. At least twenty. Armed with clubs, bricks, chains. Frank leads, lead pipe in hand.

Leroy and his men fan out across the sand, side by side. Bystanders gather behind them, armed with makeshift weapons, bolstered by the unwavering force that is Leroy.

LEROY

Stand firm, boys. Let these coward
mother-fuckers come get what old
Leroy's been waiting to give 'em
since the day he came into this world.

He spits without averting his gaze. Joe looks scared but stands fast. The onslaught commences, an even bloodier, more chaotic brawl. The beach becomes a battleground.

A tough, scrappy fighter, Leroy dodges strikes, inflicts damage. Powerful, fierce, Frank fends off attackers. Puts down foes with the pipe. People flock to the scene from all directions. Join their respective sides in the fracas.

EXT. STREET - AFTERNOON

Russell trudges behind Walt, still seemingly ticked off.

RUSSELL

Where you been anyhow? I ain't seen you since that whole mess on Friday.

Russell looks even more irked by Walt's broad smile.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

What the hell gives, Walt? You're giddy as a goddamn school girl.

WALT

I got something cooking. Something real good. Clean and legitimate.

RUSSELL

What kind of something?

WALT

The kind to change things for me and mine. You too. I'll need you, brother. Just waiting on final word. Then it's time to do things right.

RUSSELL

Like the kind of right you pulled on that poor fella at the yard?

WALT

I saved that poor fella his fingers. He's a disgrace, a weakling who went the easy way out. He don't bode well for us. You can't cast your lot with the least of 'em, Russ.

Russell acts as if he's waving at Walt from a distance.

WALT (CONT'D)

What the hell are you doing?

RUSSELL

Wondering if you can still see me from up on that high horse of yours.

Walt confirms he can, with an icy glare at Russell's unwelcome words. They turn a corner. Against the blue backdrop of immense Lake Michigan, the bloody melee wages. Walt stares.

FLASHBACK: EXT. WWI BATTLEFIELD - DAY

Soldiers battle in No Man's Land. Constant GUNFIRE, jarring EXPLOSIONS mash with primal SHOUTS, unnatural SHRIEKS...

Machine gun bullets rip holes through men, knocking them off their feet, dismembering them arbitrarily. Soldiers thrust bayonets and knives into one another's writhing flesh...

Men hang like tortured marionettes in barbed-wire, faces pleading for rescue under torrents of blood...

BACK TO SCENE

RUSSELL

Shit, what do you make of that?

WALT

Come on. Let's get out of here.

As he turns, Walt sees a teen under attack by two men: Joe. Walt bolts down the street. A confused Russell trails him.

Walt charges into the fray. Downs one of Joe's attackers with a colossal punch. The other swings at Walt. Walt blocks with his left. Stuns the man with a shot to the jaw. Grabs him with both hands. Gives a fierce head-butt to the nose.

Blood pours from the man's face. Walt head-butts him repeatedly. Finally, drops him to the ground. Looks at Joe, Joe back at Walt. Walt sucks wind, his victim's blood on his forehead. Russell watches too from the outskirts.

A white man savages a black man with a pipe. It grabs Walt's eye. After a final blow, the man turns towards Walt. Frank. Squared off, they freeze. Walt slowly backs away. Frank eagerly advances. A combatant lunges at him. They grapple.

Still in shocked retreat, Walt backs onto the sand. Blindly catches his foot on a big body. He topples backwards. The union card from Dugan slips from his breast pocket. He rolls over in the sand to Eugene's corpse inches from his face.

SIREN BELLS ring out. Police wagons drive onto the scene. Officers disembark. Batons find limbs and heads, mostly black. Russell takes note from the periphery. Searches out the overcome Walt in the chaos. Pulls him to his feet.

Frank bests his opponent. Sets his sights back on Walt, as Russell rouses him. They flee with Joe, as Frank comes upon where Walt fell. He spots the folded union card in the sand. Steps over Eugene's body as if it weren't there. Grabs the union card. Opens it. GUNFIRE breaks him from his gaze.

The mob scatters from a cop, pistol raised. More officers follow suit, as gunfire shifts towards black citizens. People flee. Some are shot. Leroy helps up a fallen companion. Joins the retreat. Bodies litter the blood-soaked beach.

INT. THOMAS APARTMENT - DUSK

Joyce stares out the open window. Sings a pleasant song, as Evelyn combs her hair for her. The door flies open. Walt shoves Joe into the apartment. Joe's face is cut, swollen.

WALT

You trying to get yourself killed!?!

JOE

I coulda' handled it, Walt.

WALT

Bullshit! You're damn lucky I came along when I did! That's the problem, Joe. You're just a boy. Everything's a game to you. Don't you know you--

JOE

Fuck that! I'm a man, Walt!

WALT

Then start acting like one!

JOE

They murdered that child! Same as they been murdering innocent folks all summer! If we don't do nothing for ourselves, no one else will!

WALT

Oh, so you the new sheriff in town, Joe? You gonna set out with Leroy and fix the world for the Negro? Is that it? Hell, he don't give a shit about anyone but himself anyhow!

JOE

At least he did something about it! At least I stood up and fought like a man. The way you been walking around here, like some old lady, shaking your finger at this, snubbing your nose at that. I'm the only Goddamn man left in this family.

Walt hurls Joe into the wall. Nose to nose, the full force of Walt's strength is apparent, as is Joe's weakness and fear in light of his dominant older brother.

WALT

You think you're a man because you swell your chest and stroll with a gangster? You think fighting makes you a man or killing fixes anything?

Walt slams Joe. Joyce and Evelyn watch in silence.

WALT (CONT'D)

It don't get you nowhere but closer to being killed yourself. I learned that the hard way, boy. I'm trying to spare you the same.

EVELYN

I'd say he's had enough of a beating for one day, son. Wouldn't you?

Walt loosens his grip. Joe disappears down the hallway.

INT. CROWDED MEETING ROOM, BLACK BELT - NIGHT

Working-class commoners bustle behind long tables, arranged in a square, at which those elevated by dress and demeanor sit. A chairman BANGS a gavel in failing attempt at control.

DR. HALL

Respond? I'll tell you! We march across State Street and lay ten whites to rest for every Negro they've taken.

The fiery old man pops his monocle back on his eye. Sits as the clamor grows, GAVEL of no use. Dr. Williams stands now.

DR. WILLIAMS

To what end, Dr. Hall? The idea is to prevent further carnage, not invite more. We must issue an alert to the colored community to remain off the streets, out of white neighborhoods, while we petition the mayor--

DR. HALL

You would have us cower in holes like vermin! We elected our very mayor to improve conditions for the Negro. Fine job he's done!

DR. WILLIAMS

We live in a democracy, as free men, governed by reason. If we were to charge out, torches blazing with every person killed, this country would've been burned to the ground ten times over, nevermind Chicago!

Miss Ida stands from her seat. A hush falls over the room.

MISS IDA

Show me this democracy, Dr. Williams. For I look around and I do not see it. I read the words upon which it was built and professes to uphold, liberty, life, and I am left longing.

DR. WILLIAMS

Miss Ida, your lectures and articles make quite clear the type of vigilante democracy to which you subscribe.

MISS IDA

I subscribe to the truth! Democracy is of the people. We are the people. With each day, this truth becomes more difficult to be hidden and denied by those whom it frightens so. The status of the Negro is changing, our attitude must change with it. Mr. Washington touted patience, compromise from his perch at Tuskegee, but would he comfort that boy's mother with such words tonight? Mr. Garvey urges us to pick up, sail off on a ship flying the Black Star. So will you, Dr. Williams, who began your practice with such pride? Who's grandchildren call these streets their home? Whose father cast off the shackles and now rests in the same soil upon which he bled to make that all so?

The room hangs on her every word. Dr. Williams has no retort.

MISS IDA (CONT'D)

I will do neither. Make no mistake, a lynching need not require a noose or a tree. This is a battle, a battle for our democracy, Dr. Williams. The fight for it abroad required soldiers, armies. Our fight for it here requires citizens, men and women, who refuse to allow what is rightfully theirs to be continually torn from them, as was that child's life today.

Miss Ida quietly takes her seat. A murmur ensues.

INT. MCSHEA'S ALE HOUSE - NIGHT

Frank is alone. One cut, swollen hand steadies him, the other grips a bottle. He belts out an old Irish folk song.

FRANK DOOLEY

*Come all ye warriors and renowned
nobles, who once commanded brave war-
like bands. Throw down your plumes
and golden trophies, take up your
arms with trembling hands!*

He swipes glasses off the bar. They shatter on the floor.

FRANK DOOLEY (CONT'D)

*For Father Murphy of County Wexford,
lately roused from his sleepy dream,
to cut down cruel Saxon persecution,
and wash it away in a crimson stream!*

Daniel appears in the doorway, as if awoken from bed.

FRANK DOOLEY (CONT'D)

Danny boy, come to join me in a drink?

Daniel approaches a wobbly Frank.

DANIEL DOOLEY

Not tonight, Frank. Lou told me you
were tearing up the joint and wouldn't
leave. Had that look made him think
it wasn't wise to try and make you.
I figured I'd give it a shot.

Frank spurns the affability. Daniel eyes his battered hands.

DANIEL DOOLEY (CONT'D)

I heard about what happened today.

FRANK DOOLEY

You heard, did you? You heard! And
where the fuck were you? The whole
Canaryville Bunch was there, but not
you, not my flesh and blood. Leave
it to the soldier to make himself
scarce when the battle breaks out.

DANIEL DOOLEY

I was at the park, where the
Canaryville Bunch was supposed to
be, suiting up to play.

FRANK DOOLEY

That's right, off with other folks,
same as since you been back, folks
not like your cousin. Folks content
to sit around, wisecrack, jaw all
day while their city gets overrun,
their homes taken in the night, their
families cast into the street.

DANIEL DOOLEY

Listen, Frank, I've just been--

Frank closes abruptly on Daniel, whose eyes hit the floor.

FRANK DOOLEY

You just been what? You think
prancing around in some hole, shooting
at Krauts makes you better than me?

Frank prods Daniel, who backs nervously from his advance.

FRANK DOOLEY (CONT'D)

You think strapping on a uniform,
waving the red, white, and blue is
gonna hide that yellow in you?

Daniel's backside meets the wall.

FRANK DOOLEY (CONT'D)

Just what it is you're getting at?

DANIEL DOOLEY

Nothing, I--

FRANK DOOLEY

That's right, nothing. That's all
you ever do, nothing! You just let
them niggers come right on in here
and kill her!

Daniel waffles between fear and confusion.

DANIEL DOOLEY

Frank--

FRANK DOOLEY

You just lay there and let them
trample you, trample you into the
dirt! You ain't got the sand to
beat 'em back. You ain't strong
enough to stop 'em. You weren't man
enough to save her, you coward.

Frank's teary eyes are inches from Daniel's but have taken
him elsewhere. Daniel eases his hand onto Frank's shoulder.

DANIEL DOOLEY

Franky, let's go on home.

Frank slams his hand into Daniel's throat. Strangles his
breath away. Daniel lingers helplessly at the mercy of his
rabid cousin. Finally, Frank withdraws. Wipes his eyes.
Daniel chokes for air, fumbles quickly towards the exit.

FRANK DOOLEY

Seems you've forgot where that is.

With a parting glance, Daniel leaves Frank to his solitude.

FRANK DOOLEY (CONT'D)

Another drink, Lou! Let's liven up
this Goddamn mortuary!

Frank trips back towards the bar. Misses a stool entirely. Crashes to the floor. Scoots against the bar. Sobs. Wipes his face. Suddenly smacks it, pounds his chest, smacks his face again and again. Pulls out the union card that fell off Walt. Unfolds it, stares at it. Crushes it in his hand.

INT. SPEARS' TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT

A KNOCK at the door. Spears enters the dark foyer. Ignites a lamp. KNOCKING. He rips open the door to Walt.

LT. SPEARS

For Christ's sake, Walt!

WALT

I'm sorry, sir. I know it's late.

Spears scans the house. Empty, quiet. Beckons in Walt.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Walt and Spears sit in the lamp light. Drink hot tea.

WALT

Take it you heard what happened.

Spears nods slowly. Reaches for his tea cup.

WALT (CONT'D)

Word is there's still fighting going
on over along State Street. Suppose
that don't surprise me. Sure got
serious at the lake. Like nothing
I'd seen outside of war. Not since
I was a boy, that is.

Lt. Spears looks up from his tea. His eyes interrogate Walt.

WALT (CONT'D)

I came upon it. Found my brother in
the thick of it, alongside that hood,
Leroy, I used to run with. Saw some
others I'd come across before. Just
when I thought that was all behind
me too. Just when I saw a way ahead.

LT. SPEARS

Seeing the way doesn't get you there.
You have to walk it. Don't let the
past keep you from your future, son.

WALT

My brother ain't my past.

LT. SPEARS

He's dragging you back into it.

WALT

It ain't just that. I tried
straightening Joe out, but I got to
thinking, on what they did to that
boy. Thinking maybe Joe wasn't so
wrong. Maybe I'd have laid into 'em
too, instead of running, hiding,
pretending shit didn't happen like
I've been doing my whole life.

LT. SPEARS

That's a dangerous road to start
down, Walt, one that will end you up
in a place you don't want to be.

WALT

It ain't about me. It's about wrong,
and needing to do something over it.

LT. SPEARS

What needs to be done is you getting
on with your life, not entangling it
in the lightning storm of others'.

WALT

But you're the same man who fought
for what you believed in, who
commanded others to fight against
the wrong in this world, 'cause it
needed to be done, like you said.

Spears slams his fist on the sofa. Spills some tea.

LT. SPEARS

I was soldier! At war! Charged
with the defense of justice, the
triumph of democracy! The very
goddamn thing these wastrel brethren
of ours threaten to uproot. Bunch
of no-good dawdlers, hopping a train
to the Promised Land, thinking they
can plop their asses down on some
street corner and get showered with
privileges on account of existing!

Walt seems surprised by the outburst.

WALT

That ain't what I'm talking about,
sir. Haven't you looked around,
ain't you concerned about--

LT. SPEARS

This is all that concerns me!

He points to the floor of his home, then towards the bedrooms.

LT. SPEARS (CONT'D)

Those asleep there, not those running
the street, brawling, killing one
another. My job's to protect them,
provide for them, a sentiment you
shared not too long ago, as I recall.

WALT

But that's it? That's where it ends?

LT. SPEARS

That's where it has to, son, you and
yours. You can't change the world.

Walt spots the Eiffel Tower figurine, toy plane on the floor.

WALT

Well, what if it were your boy?

LT. SPEARS

It ain't.

Spears' reaction snuffs Walt's inquiry. Walt nods. Rises.

WALT

So, you left one trench to hop into
another? You know well as I, when
that whistle blows, don't matter how
deep that trench, how high the walls,
they're coming and they won't stop.

Walt glares at Spears.

WALT (CONT'D)

Yeah, you remember them boys, them
poor boys huddled up against them
walls, eyes closed, heads in their
knees, thinking they're safe in that
little hole they dug for themselves.
Might as well buried their heads in
the sand, the good it did them.

Spears stands up.

LT. SPEARS

That's the difference between us.
Ain't no one coming for me, son.
I've never done anything to make the
world chase after me.

Spears stares down Walt, who absorbs the insult. Turns
towards the door. Stops. Looks back at Spears.

WALT

See, I been thinking on your sentiment
too, about how a fella gotta make
something of himself to get respected.
So what then, Lieutenant? What more
did that boy have to do? Huh? What
more did he have to prove for them
men not to murder him like they did?

LT. SPEARS

I won't trouble to hazard a guess.

Walt turns from a feisty Spears. Grabs the door handle.

LT. SPEARS (CONT'D)

It's just rain, Walt! It's rained
before. It'll keep raining again.
You can stand out there with the
fools, hollering up at the sky,
cursing the clouds, demanding it
stop, all the while getting soaked
to the gills. Or you can get yourself
an umbrella and carry quietly on
your way, warm and dry. Pray others
got the sense to get one themselves.

Walt exits to Spears' glare pasted upon his back.

EXT. TRAIN STATION PLATFORM - MORNING

Mayor Thompson disembarks in a denim shirt, stiff cowboy
boots, and a wide-brimmed ten gallon hat. A porter follows
with suitcases. Police and officials occupy the platform,
Mr. Macon among them. The mayor glides past. They follow.

MR. MACON

Welcome back, sir.

MAYOR THOMPSON

You see? But for the tight-fisted
city council, we'd have kiddies on
carousels by the lake, instead of
drunk rabble on rock-strewn jetties.
Where do we stand, Mr. Macon?

MR. MACON

Sir, a colored boy was drowned--

MAYOR THOMPSON

Goddamn it, Macon, of course I'm well aware! Where do we stand?

Macon stammers. Police CHIEF HUBBARD steps up.

MAYOR THOMPSON (CONT'D)

Yes, Chief Hubbard, let's have it.

CHIEF HUBBARD

Sir, I'm no alarmist. Whites have killed Negroes before. But I don't believe this to just fade away.

MAYOR THOMPSON

So bring me the scum responsible. I'll throw the book at them. Parade your officers around for show of force. I'll parade in the colored delegates for show of concern. We'll smooth the whole thing over with an execution in time for Christmas.

The mayor, followed by the others, descends steps to the street. A driver opens the back door of a large car.

CHIEF HUBBARD

Those scum were killed right there on the beach, most that is, followed by pitched battles into the night. The city's divided against itself, a powder keg packed to the brim. The fuse is lit. If drastic action isn't taken, I fear we're looking at a full-scale riot that will make East St. Louis appear a children's spat.

The mayor grabs the frame of the open door. Faces Hubbard.

MAYOR THOMPSON

That was no children's spat, Chief! Chicago is no East St. Louis. I will keep the peace as I always have. As will you and your men. What would you have me do, call up the Militia?

CHIEF HUBBARD

Yes, sir, I would. This is far from over. I fear it's just the start.

The Mayor fixes his ornery eyes on Chief Hubbard.

MAYOR THOMPSON

Macon!

MR. MACON

Yes, sir?

MAYOR THOMPSON

Was order restored to the streets?

MR. MACON

Well, yes, sir.

MAYOR THOMPSON

Have there been any reports of renewed violence this morning?

MR. MACON

No, sir.

MAYOR THOMPSON

Every police reserve called up?

MR. MACON

Yes, sir.

MAYOR THOMPSON

Then so shall things remain!

The mayor enters the car. Macon gets in on the other side.

MAYOR THOMPSON (CONT'D)

Have you forgotten so soon, Chief, it was the militia's very presence that fueled the disaster in East St. Louis? I will not soak the Black Belt with thousands of restless young white men from all over the state, armed with rancor and rifles. Drive!

The mayor slams the door closed. The car speeds off.

EXT. STOCKYARD ENTRANCE - MORNING

Workers form a line to enter, police on the periphery. Julian checks workers' names off a list. Frank is next in line.

JULIAN

Name.

FRANK DOOLEY

Dooley, Frank. And company.

Julian looks up. Frank holds a few bills against his chest. Leans in. Whispers something. Julian glances at the cops, distracted in chatter, then back at Frank. Takes the money.

Frank looks over at two clandestine men, who hover by the stockyard wall. Nods. They glance about, dart over. Quickly enter in front of Frank. Vernon steps up to Julian. Winks.

INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE CHANGING ROOM - MORNING

Walt ties his boot. Russell tosses his cap into a cubby.

RUSSELL

Reckon any more to come of yesterday?

Walt ignores him entirely. Continues dressing.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

I hear tell of whites mobbing up.
Getting ready to set out for us.

Miffed by the deliberate disengagement, Russ changes tactics.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

What's boss man got you on today?

WALT

Cleaning the scalders.

Russell blurts out a laugh.

RUSSELL

Thought you were his golden boy.

WALT

Work that's gotta be done, ain't it?

Russell half nods. Pulls on his smock. Passes by Walt.

RUSSELL

Don't forget to shut it off first.

Russell laughs again. Exits.

INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE FLOOR - MORNING

Walt enters onto the floor. In wait, Frank spots him, bitter confirmation. He signals the two men he let into the yard. They abandon their fake labor posts. Trail after Walt.

INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE, SECLUDED AREA - MORNING

Walt weaves around a few large machines. The two men follow. ASSASSIN #1 draws a knife from his pocket. ASSASSIN #2, an ox of a man, grabs a meat masher mallet off a table he passes.

Walt nears a massive iron tub, seething with boiling water. Drops to hands and knees. Peers under. Flames heat it. His eyes follow the gas line to a nozzle on the other side.

He pulls his head up, just in time to spot the meat masher coming at it. He rolls out of the way. The mallet pounds the ground. Assassin #2 swings it again. Again, Walt dodges. Knocks the attacker off his feet with a swift leg sweep.

Still on his back, Walt deflects Assassin #1's knife thrust. It scrapes off the ground. Walt slams the man's head into the iron scalders. The THUD of the impact is followed by the SIZZLE of burning flesh as Walt presses his head. He screams.

Walt scrambles to his feet. Ducks the toothed mallet Assassin #2 swings. Punches him in the nuts. Yanks away the mallet.

Assassin #1, face seared, chops at Walt with the knife. Walt avoids the blade. It sticks into a wooden table behind him. Walt pins the man's arm to the table. Smashes his hand twice with the meat tenderizer. He screams again.

Walt turns. Swings the mallet at Assassin #2, who blocks his arm. Punches Walt in the gut, then the chin. Walt drops the mallet. The burly man hoists him off his feet. Hurls him. Walt smacks the ground hard, in front of the scalders.

Assassin #2 grabs the mallet. Charges. Walt finds his feet. Dips his shoulder, thrusts upwards. Flips Assassin #2 into the churning scalders behind him. The man spews an ungodly shriek. The scalders crash from their supports. Hot water gushes everywhere. The severed gas line whips about, aflame.

Walt frantically faces Assassin #1. Mangled hand limp beside him, face badly-burned, he plucks the knife from the table. Flees as workers rush the scene. One dives at the gas nozzle. Cuts it off. A dazed Walt looks around as men gather. He finds Russell's shocked stare. Then Frank's foiled scowl.

EXT. BEHIND SLAUGHTERHOUSE - DAY

A door is kicked open. Julian tosses out Walt. Walt smacks the ground with a jarring thud, a few feet below the raised entry where Mr. Dugan stands next to Julian in the doorway.

WALT

Mr. Dugan, you gotta believe me!
They were trying to kill me!

MR. DUGAN

Save it, son! A man is dead, my
equipment destroyed. This whole
goddamned place could'a burned down!

WALT

But I was just protecting myself!

MR. DUGAN

So am I! You're lucky I'm reporting this as a workplace accident! Call it exchange for your service to this country. You had your chance at a new life, son. Be glad I'm giving you the chance to keep this one.

WALT

Mr. Dugan! Them men don't even work here. I know it! Check the roster!

Dugan goes inside. Walt stands. Julian hops onto the street.

WALT (CONT'D)

Check it! Every man's--

Julian socks Walt in the stomach, knees him in the ribs.

JULIAN

I so much as smell you around here again, I'll finish what they couldn't. And move on to that fat lap dog always hot on your heels, for good measure.

Julian hits Walt again, knocks him to the street. Leaves.

INT. MAYOR'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Mayor Thompson hurriedly tightens his ascot tie in a mirror, while Miss Ida stands staunchly by in the office.

MAYOR THOMPSON

Miss Ida, this is neither the time nor the place. I've met with your aldermen. I've upped police presence in the colored neighborhoods. This talk of the state militia is simply out of the question. I'm a mayor who watches over his citizens with complete control, the Negro included. If the militia enters, I lose that control. I can no longer watch over you. Now, I'm well aware of your acute and seasoned perspective on these matters, but, all due respect, in this instance, it's quite askew. Atrocities happen. Their occurrence does not always signal the imminent doom, which you, among others, are so eager to cry. You'll notice--

MISS IDA

You stupid, sad fool.

The mayor rears back from his primping, aghast.

MISS IDA (CONT'D)

Quite an awful lot of talk about watching for a blind man. One who patronizes, coddles, smiles and nods, while his actions never fail to fall short of his words. I'm not here to plead with you, Mr. Mayor. I'm here to warn you. We are not helpless. We are not weak. Despite what you think, we are not fools. Sit by and watch then. We will do no such thing.

Mr. Macon intrudes upon the harsh exchange of glares.

MR. MACON

Sir, quite the crowd has gathered.

Macon motions to escort out Ida. She zips away without him.

EXT. MAIN STREET - AFTERNOON

Walt treads along. Pats his sore ribs. Down the street, a large crowd, mostly black, impatiently crams in front of City Hall's wide steps, atop which is a podium. Just as many cops form a barrier around them. Walt sees, approaches.

Miss Ida exits City Hall. Descends the steps. Transects the police line. Cuts through the crowd. People reach out for counsel, CALL for her. She brushes by them. Their focus shifts, as the mayor emerges to outcry. He takes the podium.

MAYOR THOMPSON

Despite your concerns and misgivings,
let me assure you, you are safe!

His hands fly up to placate the collective cry of objection.

MAYOR THOMPSON (CONT'D)

Please, please. I know you've read the papers. You've heard the stories creeping up from all corners of our nation, about the lynchings, the riots, the mayhem of this year's so-called "Red Summer," as if the whole country is bathing in blood. Well, that's not the truth. And this is not those places. This is Chicago. I am your mayor. You need not worry as long as that remains the case. But if I cater to these panicked whispers of the national guard and martial law, it shall not be. I'll not be able to guarantee your safety.

Mixed reactions echo from the crowd, as the mayor again calls for quiet. Walt attentively edges in from the back.

MAYOR THOMPSON (CONT'D)

You see, despite the sunny, dry day, we've had a downpour, one of violence, hooliganism, criminality! The result is a flood. As we all know, floods are not pleasant. Among other things, a flood brings the snakes. It drives them from hiding in the holes and tall grass. They move with the water. They plague the farmer in his field.

Walt listens closely, as Thompson seems to win over the crowd.

MAYOR THOMPSON (CONT'D)

So what does the farmer do? He and his hands comb the field, find the snakes, beat them with sticks, shove them in bags and dispose of them. He does not set the field ablaze to rid himself of the snakes, only to burn down his crops too, along with everything else that makes its home in the field. My police are out there, with their sticks, after these snakes, but it takes time. Do not ask me to set fire to this field of ours by calling in the militia.

Still in the dense crowd, Miss Ida comes upon Walt. Stops. Eyes him. He notices her. The mayor's oration fades quiet.

MISS IDA

I've seen you before. Years ago, a similar setting. You were given an audience with the mayor, of which you quite clearly indicated wanting no part. I hope it hasn't taken you this long to change your mind. I dare say, you won't get one now.

A wary Walt hesitates for a moment, stares at Ida.

WALT

Wasn't him I was looking to speak to. Just any police, I suppose. Went by two different stations, empty. Found my way over here. I suppose this is where they all must be.

He nods towards City Hall, where the mayor drones on.

MISS IDA

I suppose so. But isn't the object of one's search always found somewhere other than where it must be?

Walt seems a little lost, shifts about.

MISS IDA (CONT'D)

Looking for police, then? I imagine you're not alone. May I ask why?

An uncomfortable Walt searches for his response.

WALT

I need to make a report, or however something like that works.

MISS IDA

A report concerning what?

WALT

These men, they tried killing me. They been trying to, it seems. Likely will again. One, in particular, that is. I never...I don't know how to go about...well, I'm just trying to do the right thing, I suppose.

MISS IDA

Yes, I suppose you are. Another object of many searches. You keep on trying then, son, but if I were you, I'd cede concern for whatever might have happened to whatever might happen. I have the unfortunate feeling you'll find more material for that report you seek to lodge.

Walt looks around the scene, seems to process her warning.

WALT

Well, I ain't part of that, of this whole mess, not no more that is. I mean, I ain't one of them snakes or whatever the mayor was going on about.

MISS IDA

Yes, he paints a colorful analogy, yet he does so in too broad of strokes. You see, not all snakes are alike. The constrictor, he sneaks silently upon his unwitting prey and strikes from mere inches.

(MORE)

MISS IDA (CONT'D)

He squeezes, tighter and tighter, so the prey cannot move, cannot breath, cannot do a thing but let itself but crushed. Then there's the rattler, named instead for how he defends, how he survives. If something comes too close, he shakes that rattle, as he does not wish a fight. It's not in his desire, nor to his advantage. But he'll not let himself be trampled. He'll not be consumed by this trespasser. His rattle is only as effective as the fangs and venom behind it, coiled, ready to strike, with the power to strike.

She glances down at the tattoo on Walt's exposed forearm.

MISS IDA (CONT'D)

So the constrictor is free to slither about, choking away life without so much as a peep to disrupt the farmer. Yet a rattler shakes from his hole, simply so the farmer knows not to step on him, and the farmer's whole world comes screeching to a halt, paralyzed with fear. So, he calls his hands. They grab their sticks. And which snake is it they set upon?

Her coarse face softens to a smile.

MISS IDA (CONT'D)

Go find the police, son. I hope it works. I'll pray for your safety.

She snatches Walt's tattooed forearm. Pulls him close.

MISS IDA (CONT'D)

Though my advice would be not to so quickly consider yourself above the snakes. Like it or not, we all scrape through this life on our bellies at one time or another. Rather consider which type you are and never forget, as you make your way in this field.

Ida releases Walt. Throws him a parting look, then walks away down the street. Walt rubs his arm. Stares after her. He focuses back on the mayor, who's address cues up again.

MAYOR THOMPSON

...I have the utmost respect for your voices, but I ask you respect the sensitivity of the situation and the sanctity of the office by not adding to the noise. I will do my job. Quietly carry on with yours.

Walt and Mayor Thompson lock eyes, before the mayor retreats abruptly to city hall, to the crowd's dissatisfied murmur.

EXT. BUSY DOWNTOWN STREET - EVENING

Police huddle on corners. Commuters cut through hot summer air, thick with tension. The uneasy faces, quickened steps of some clash with vigilant hovering, eager eyes of others.

A black COMMUTER hops on a packed streetcar. It lurches forward. He hangs slightly off the open trolley, hand on a pole, back to a few white women. It jolts to a stop. He bumps one woman. Her affronted squawking makes a scene.

Loitering white youths notice the histrionics. March over. The commuter spots their advance as the trolley resumes. He pushes to the interior, amid other passengers' discontent.

The streetcar halts once more, blocked by the ill-founded posse and bystanders keen on action. Encircled by passengers, the commuter closes his eyes. An arm juts through the bodies. The commuter is yanked off the trolley by a large white man.

The crowd attacks him. A black passerby rushes to his aid, non-combative with hands up. He, too, is attacked. The mob pummels them. A few rifle through their clothes, take money. Another removes the pocket watch from one of the men's coats.

A crowd of whites watches on. Some are young children, who hold their parents' hands, mimic their jeers of encouragement. Police appear. The assailants ease the beating. The cops resume it with batons. Handcuff and pull up the ailing men. The police hurl the injured men into a nearby paddy wagon.

MONTAGE - ISOLATED EVENTS MOUNT TO CHAOS

White adolescents brutally attack a black fish peddler. One jump kicks the cart. Smoked trout spill onto the street...

Fed up with her complaints and chiding, a white cop knocks a black lady to the street. As he wraps his head around, it's met by the jarring right hook of a black soldier in uniform...

Black youths spill from a pool hall, armed with cues, balls...

White youths drop mitts, keep bats, as they abandon a park...

INT. ROWDY BAR - AFTERNOON

Packed with whites. Many are soldiers, sailors in uniform. The drinking appears to have been underway for some time. A sailor arm wrestles with an army man, drunkenly cheered on by their respective sides. The sailor wins. His men erupt in cheers. A wound-up TEENAGE BOY rushes into the bar.

TEENAGE BOY

Fellas! Word's out! Niggers have
armed themselves! They're coming!

Outrage explodes on drunken faces. The whole bar mobilizes.

INT. BARBER SHOP, BLACK BELT - AFTERNOON

A broad-shouldered barber brushes shaving foam onto a customer. Another barber sweeps up. A YOUNG BOY dashes in.

YOUNG BOY

Uncle! Uncle! It's happening!

The barber turns. Faces the child.

YOUNG BOY (CONT'D)

Whites are gunning for us! They're
tearing through the neighborhood!

The barber grabs his straight razor. The patron wipes off his face. The other barber clutches his broom. They exit.

MONTAGE

A white gang smashes a restaurant's windows, drops in torches. They surround the exit. Black diners rush out through thick smoke. Escape the flames only to be beaten by the thugs...

Three black men in paint-covered overalls walk with used brushes, paint cans. The soldiers from the bar pour around the corner ahead. Charge. The panicked painters flee...

White firemen battle an apartment building blaze in a black neighborhood. White hooligans rush the scene. They attack onlookers, then the firemen. One culprit wrests away a fire ax, chops the fire hose on the hydrant. Water gushes out...

A massive brawl between blacks and whites takes place in the shadows of street lamps underneath elevated train tracks...

Eugene's mother curls up on the bare, hardwood floor of a dark room. Tears stream down her face. She cuddles Eugene's toy boat, a torn piece of string attached to it...

A dejected Walt walks alone down an empty street...

INT. BAR, BLACK BELT - EVENING

Walt enters. Two large men guard the door. They observe him as he slips between them, into the full but quiet room. Many nurse drinks with apprehensive arms, fatalistic faces. Some move to the rootsy Delta blues an old man plucks on his guitar. Grainy, muddled lyrics roll off his raw voice.

Walt holds his ribs. Gingerly takes a seat at the bar. Nods to the barkeep, who pours some whiskey. Slides a glass over. Walt puts down a coin. The bartender scoots it back.

Walt shoots the whiskey. Looks around. The only movement on faces are beads of sweat that drip from furrowed brows. The singer's ominous pitch, the foreboding wail of his guitar grab the room of those whose moods are echoed in the music.

As the barkeep tops him off, Walt spots a group of men huddled in the corner. At the center, Leroy pounds a table to drive home each point Walt can't hear him make. His intense eyes, determined demeanor contrast sharply with the other patrons'.

Those eyes find Walt's. Leroy cracks a smile. Raises his glass. Walt turns away. After a moment, Leroy leans on the bar. Slides an empty glass across it. Walt ignores him.

LEROY

Seems crackers are sore over what
went on at the lake. Seems they're
expressing it to a few Negroes.

The barkeep places a new glass of whiskey in front of Leroy.

LEROY (CONT'D)

Negroes left for dead in the street.

Leroy drinks. Slams down his glass.

LEROY (CONT'D)

So, me and the fellas are gonna
oblige, hear them out. Care to join?

Walt focuses only on his drink. Leroy's smooth facade cracks.

LEROY (CONT'D)

What happened to you, Walt? You
were the meanest, toughest son of a
bitch around. Now, look at you.
Just a shell-shocked ghost of a man,
a reed that bends to the wind.

WALT

You know nothing about being a man.

LEROY

I know the difference between a man and a bitch. A bitch content to do Uncle Sam's bidding, then come back to get slapped in the face by him.

Walt downs his drink. Motions for a refill.

LEROY (CONT'D)

Suit yourself then.

Leroy shoves himself away from the bar.

LEROY (CONT'D)

Suppose I'll just have to settle for Joe. Not sure how he'll fare though. Lord knows, he ain't his brother.

Walt hits his glass. Leaps off the stool. Hurls Leroy into the bar, pins him against it. The music stops. The room watches. Leroy's goons rush over. Leroy raises his hand behind Walt's back. They stop. He smiles up at Walt.

WALT

Listen up, nigga! This is the last time I'm gonna tell you! Whatever it is you do, it don't concern me. It don't concern my brother. Don't you bring this shit to my doorstep.

LEROY

Look around you, nigga. Look out on them streets. This shit's all over your doorstep. Don't matter who you are, what you did, or where you been.

Leroy uprights himself. Jerks free of Walt's grasp.

LEROY (CONT'D)

So, you can roll over and take it like the rest of them.

He motions to the quiet room of patrons.

LEROY (CONT'D)

Heads down and hands up! But I ain't never had the stomach for that shit.

Leroy fixes his shirt, stares off Walt. Leaves. Turns back.

LEROY (CONT'D)

You know the difference between us, Walt? You always seem to find yourself in fights you want no part of. I take good care to pick mine.

Leroy flashes his grin.

LEROY (CONT'D)

And here we are.

He exits the bar. His men follow. Walt watches after them.

EXT. NARROW SIDE STREET - NIGHT

A black car rattles along. Headlights off. It slows to stop. The doors open. Three men exit into the shadows.

INT. MCSHEA'S ALE HOUSE - NIGHT

Frank sits at the bar. Behind him, two shirtless, bloody men bareknuckle box, circled by rowdy fans. One ends the bout with a vicious blow. Men erupt, toss and grab cash.

The door opens. In walks Hyrum, more-fittingly clad in a black hat, black trench coat. Two similarly-dressed men accompany him. They don grim, hollow expressions.

Every man in the room falls silent. Hyrum makes towards the bar, followed by the other two. He steps directly over the unconscious boxer on the floor. Next to Frank, Vernon vacates his seat. Hyrum takes it. The other two remain standing.

HYRUM

How you living, Frank?

FRANK DOOLEY

One breath after the other. You?

HYRUM

Oh, everything's just peachy.

Frank lights a smoke. Even he seems a little uncomfortable.

HYRUM (CONT'D)

I hear my services are required again.

Hyrum looks past Frank at Assassin #1 in the corner, a crude sling around his hand, a bulky bandage over half his face. He drowns himself in liquor. This seems to amuse Hyrum.

Frank motions at Vernon, who hands a thick envelope to Hyrum. Hyrum pulls back the unsealed flap. Flips through cash.

HYRUM (CONT'D)

Taking up donations on your lunch break then?

Hyrum unleashes his jumbled, dirty teeth, mirrored by his accomplices. Frank doesn't find it so funny.

HYRUM (CONT'D)
So, anywhere in particular?

FRANK DOOLEY
Wherever it hurts.

Hyrum stands, again amused. Taps the envelope on Frank's shoulder. Pockets it. Heads for the door with his men. The bar quietly watches them exit. Frank shoots whiskey.

EXT. INTERSECTION - NIGHT

Cops sit idle on the curb, lean against buildings, chat. Callahan twirls his baton. A SERGEANT spits tobacco juice. It sticks to his lip and chin. He watches it slowly fall to his pot belly. An agitated ROOKIE OFFICER storms over.

ROOKIE OFFICER
Sarge, headquarters says reports are
being wired in all over the city!

The sergeant finally musters the energy to wipe his chin.

SERGEANT
Well, Captain says sit tight on the
Black Belt, so that's what we do.

The sergeant hawks a labored loogie to the rookie's silent protest, then pulls a flask. Takes a swig. Offers it up. The rookie declines. An eavesdropping Callahan swoops in.

OFFICER CALLAHAN
What's it to you anyhow, laddy?
You're getting paid, aren't you?

Callahan gladly accepts the rookie's drink for him. The sergeant reluctantly hands over the flask. Callahan sips.

OFFICER CALLAHAN (CONT'D)
So keen to leap headlong into a mob
and save some darkie dumb enough to
wander where it ain't safe for him?

ROOKIE OFFICER
Forgive me if the concept escapes
you, Callahan, but the whole idea is
to make it safe, you see?

Callahan laughs. Takes a long swig to the sergeant's chagrin.

INT. SPEARS' HOME, SECOND STORY - NIGHT

Miles plays with his toy plane and Eiffel Tower on the sill of an open window. He bumps the tower figurine. Watches it fall to the ground below, bounce out into the street.

EXT. OUTSIDE SPEARS' HOME - NIGHT

Miles retrieves his figurine. He hears NOISES around the corner. Curious, he heads down the block towards them.

INT. SPEARS' HOME - NIGHT

Lt. Spears walks through the foyer. Notices the open door.

LT. SPEARS
Charlotte! Where's Miles?

EXT. OUTSIDE SPEARS' HOME - CONTINUOUS

Spears exits. Sees Miles down the block, rapt by something around the corner. Marches after him. Charlotte follows.

CHARLOTTE
Why he should be in bed, what is it?

Spears reaches Miles on the corner. Turns. Feet away, three white men beat a black man. Two are in dirty, tattered army uniforms, one with a 2x4 board, the other is merely a teen, who spots Spears and Miles. He tugs on a grimy ex-soldier.

The three quit their victim. Approach the witnesses. Spears slides Miles behind him, backs away. The men encroach. He draws up his sleeve. Reveals his regimental tattoo to the uniformed men. His pleading eyes are dismissed by theirs.

LT. SPEARS
Run!

He gives Miles a shove. They attack. Spears fends them off until one connects with the board. Spears falls. They lay into him. Charlotte runs to his aid. Grabs an attacker. He shakes her off. Wallops her head with the board. She plummets to the street head first. Spears explodes, rallies.

One soldier draws a knife. Spears rends it away. Stabs the soldier until he drops. Deftly slashes and skewers the other, who cringes. Retreats. Keels over. Spears takes the teen by the shirt. The young attacker pulls a pistol from the backside of his belt. Jabs it in Spears' gut. Fires.

The shot catches Spears by surprise. As he falls, he tears off the shooter's breast pocket. The teen observes his downed accomplices, then Spears' attempt to stand. He flees. Fires blindly behind him. Spears covers up until the shots end.

He rolls over. Sees his motionless wife, her eyes fixed upon him. Blood pools around her head. He crawls to her. Behind her, Miles is sprawled on the ground. Blood seeps from a bullet hole in his chest. Spears rushes to his son.

LT. SPEARS (CONT'D)

Help me! They've shot my boy! For
the love of God, please help! Help!

The wooden Eiffel Tower figurine rests in Miles' hand.

EXT. BLACK BELT, RESIDENTIAL STREET - NIGHT

Walt ambles like he's had a few. Light flickers in windows.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Hyrum sits shotgun. One of his men drives. The other, in
the back seat, snorts pinches of snuff from a pouch.

HYRUM

Eeny...

The driver's foot is heavy on the gas.

HYRUM (CONT'D)

Meeny...

Hyrum hangs his finger at each cross street they blow by.

HYRUM (CONT'D)

Miny...Moe.

Hyrum points at a street. The driver quickly veers down it.

EXT. BLACK BELT, RESIDENTIAL STREET - NIGHT

Walt sees a black car grind around the corner. Headlights
off. It accelerates at him. Hyrum leans out the passenger
window. Extends himself upright. Thighs on the bottom of
the open window frame, back against the top of the door frame.

He draws two Colt M1911 .45 handguns from inside his jacket.
Man in Black #1 leans out the back window, same side. Pumps
a shotgun. Walt turns. Runs. At once, the men open fire
into the lit windows of the homes behind him. They shatter.

As the GUN FIRE nears, Walt hurls himself down steps that
lead to a basement. Shots rip into the building above him.
The GUN FIRE continues for a few seconds, then stops. The
car takes a sharp turn. Speeds off. Walt pats himself down.
He isn't hit. He cautiously climbs the steps. Peers around.

A horrible WAIL cuts the air. Walt sees the silhouette of a
woman in a lit apartment window next to him, a silhouette of
a limp body in her arms. He takes off in a dead sprint. As
he passes flats, more SCREAMS and CRIES join with the first.

INT. UNLIT THOMAS APARTMENT - NIGHT

The front door flies open. Walt stumbles in, out of breath.

WALT
Mama! Joyce!

A kerosene lamp ignites. Evelyn and Joyce are on the sofa.

EVELYN
Heaven sakes, where have you been?

WALT
Where's Joe? Is Joe out there?

Joe appears in the hallway, to Walt's relief.

WALT (CONT'D)
They're shooting into homes! Men in cars, just driving by and shooting!

EVELYN
Among God knows what else.

Joe enters the room from the hallway.

JOE
Whites have gone mad. I seen mobs of them, combing the whole of the Black Belt, beating down anyone they come across, even women and children.

JOYCE
And setting fire to folks' homes while they're still inside.

Walt finally catches his breath. Looks at his mother.

EVELYN
No day comes without its night.

Walt stares at her. She grabs the lamp. The room goes dark.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Lt. Spears stares at an ambulance marked "Provident Hospital," the Reverend next to him. MEDIC #1 pulls a body bag over Charlotte. Loads her body into the ambulance, next to a smaller bag. Two male bodies are on the street. No police.

MEDIC #2 wraps gauze around Spears' bare torso. Spears holds the Eiffel Tower figurine in one hand, in the other, fabric he tore off the attacker's shirt, with an emblem of two red "H's" in unique font. Spears rubs it between his fingers.

LT. SPEARS

Why? Why here...my home? Tell me.

Spears buckles under the weight of it all.

LT. SPEARS (CONT'D)

A woman and a child...

The reverend searches in vain for a comforting response.

MEDIC #2

You'll need to see a doctor at once.
It's gone straight through but very
well might have struck internals.

Spears jerks away before the medic can finish the bandaging.

MEDIC #2 (CONT'D)

Hey now, you could bleed out in hours!

Spears sheds the reverend's grip with ease. Trudges off.

REVEREND

Lieutenant, you get yourself to a
hospital, you hear? Spears!

Spears pushes through the crowd of onlookers.

REVEREND (CONT'D)

Blessed are they that suffer
persecution for justice's sake! For
theirs is the kingdom of Heaven!

His words fall on deaf ears. Spears vanishes down the street.

REVEREND (CONT'D)

Blessed are they that hunger and
thirst after justice, for they shall
have their fill...

The reverend, emotional himself, closes his eyes.

INT. THOMAS APARTMENT - NIGHT

Walt's pipe smolders in the darkness. He sits by the window. Examines his Croix de Guerre medal, a revolver in his lap. He turns over the medal, exposing the regimental tattoo on his arm. He stares at it, the motto "The Power to Strike."

He looks out the window. Over the buildings, flames emit a hazy, orange glow that takes up the night sky. SIREN BELLS wane. GUN SHOTS echoes, followed by a distant scream. A GUNSHOT claps much closer. Walt snags the pistol.

INT. MAYOR'S OFFICE - MORNING

The mayor storms around to an audience of only Chief Hubbard.

MAYOR THOMPSON

I hope the goddamn Temperance League
is happy! They get their prohibition
bill passed, the whole country takes
to drowning itself in liquor, brawling
and fornicating before it's too late!

The mayor paces about his office. Hubbard eyes the floor.

MAYOR THOMPSON (CONT'D)

Those puritanical shrews will see
how nice their sober city is come
January, when the bars close and the
bandits take up the booze business!

The mayor charges at his desk where multiple newspapers rest.

MAYOR THOMPSON (CONT'D)

And this so-called press with their
insatiable, blood-lust for lies!

He snags a newspaper.

MAYOR THOMPSON (CONT'D)

Chicago Tribune, "Colored Rioter
Rapes Woman, Strangles Child."

He tosses it down, grabs another from his desk.

MAYOR THOMPSON (CONT'D)

Chicago Defender, "White Supremacists
Severe Boy's Head, Dismember Body."

Slams down that newspaper.

MAYOR THOMPSON (CONT'D)

If the sky isn't falling or the gates
of hell haven't opened, it's not
news! No wonder folks are arming
themselves and setting out. These
pencil-pushers are the culprits in
this chaos, bunch of lousy agitators.

CHIEF HUBBARD

Sir, incendiary headlines aside, my
officers aren't trained or equipped
for this madness. I've made every--

The door flies open. GOVERNOR LOWDEN bursts into the mayor's
office, followed by his assistant, then a panicked Mr. Macon.

GOVERNOR LOWDEN

Please explain to me why I assembled thirty five hundred militia, just so they might roam around the armory!

MAYOR THOMPSON

Thank God our good Governor has arrived. A most-welcome surprise.

GOVERNOR LOWDEN

Save it. You know I can't order the militia into the city without your authorization. Sign the paper.

The governor's assistant places a document in front of the mayor. Mr. Macon and Chief Hubbard watch intently.

MAYOR THOMPSON

So you can declare martial law and take the reigns? You've never thought me fit, now here's your proof. Chicago's weak, frantic mayor begs the Governor for relief. No, sir. I'll not be tarred and feathered on account of this blow. I'll not be prodded and jeered out of office. You expect me to sign away my city?

GOVERNOR LOWDEN

Goddamn it, William, wake up! This is not your city! It belongs to mobs, to murderers! Put aside your selfish objectives. Look past your own nose. Listen for once!

Mayor Thompson leaps from his chair.

MAYOR THOMPSON

You listen, Frank! How dare you storm in, unannounced, barking at me like I'm a child! Riding in on your white horse, hey? Where were you during the Great Lakes Storm of '13, while men, women, and children froze in the street? Or the SS Eastland disaster, when call after call for state resources and marine experts went unanswered, as 850 poor souls counted down their last breaths, trapped in that iron coffin at the bottom of the harbor? Now you seek the party's nomination next year in a bid for president and here you are, dragging your pompous ass off your fine Springfield estate!

An indignant Lowden stares at the mayor for a moment.

GOVERNOR LOWDEN

Fine, you old fool. I leave you to
your city. Yours and yours alone.

The governor exits. His assistant follows.

INT. THOMAS APARTMENT - MORNING

Walt sleeps in the same chair, pistol on his lap. Joyce is
in the kitchen, dressed in her maid's uniform. She drops a
dish. Walt jerks awake. Grabs for the pistol. Relaxes.

WALT

Where's mama?

Walt proceeds to a table. Pours a pitcher of water into a
bowl. Scoops water from the bowl onto his face and neck.

JOYCE

Went for milk and eggs. Seems stores
aren't getting their deliveries.
Folks are scrambling for food. Said
she'd try with morning light before
they take to thieving and looting.

A concerned Walt towels off. Eyes Joyce in her maid's outfit.

WALT

Where do you think you're going?

JOYCE

Off to work.

WALT

No, Joyce. It ain't safe.

JOYCE

Walt, I must go! Mrs. Franklin will
give me the boot for sure, and there's
tons of girls to take my place!

WALT

She'll understand. Hell, Joyce,
folks are being killed in the street.

JOYCE

She won't, Walt! You don't know
her. It's safe during the day.
Walt, we need this job! Please!

Joe enters. Glides past a peeved Walt, slumps on the sofa.

JOE

What's wracking your nerves, Walt?
Them fat cats on the Gold Coast ain't
come across a whisper of this mess.

He grabs an old newspaper. Flips through it quickly.

JOE (CONT'D)

They're rich and they're white.
Could be hell on earth, it's all
berries for them. Probably the safest
place in the whole damn city.

He stops at the Funny Pages. Laughs immediately and
obnoxiously at a cartoon. Joyce grabs Walt's hand.

JOYCE

Walt, please, I--

WALT

Alright! Alright. I'll take you
there. Joe, you stay put, you hear?

Joe ignores Walt for the comics.

WALT (CONT'D)

Joe!

JOE

Yeah, yeah. I heard you.

Joe eases back into the sofa.

EXT. OUTSIDE THOMAS APARTMENT - MORNING

Russell smokes a cigarette. Walt bounds onto the street.

RUSSELL

There you are. I was starting to--

Russell sees Joyce. Stands up straight. Removes his cap.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Hello, Joyce. Nice to see you.

Joyce nods him off with obligated pleasantries.

WALT

What are you doing here, Russ?

Russell hesitates somewhat. Eyes Joyce awkwardly.

RUSSELL

I was thinking we'd head on over to
the yard, talk to Mr. Dugan, see if--

WALT

No. It's best I don't go back there.

RUSSELL

Well, why the hell not!?!

WALT

Because, that high horse of mine,
Russ, I fell right off it, real quick.
Now I'm here just trying to make
sure I land on my feet and I ain't
trying to pull you down with me.

RUSSELL

To hell with that! You can't just
quit on me, Walt! I brought you on!

Walt steps closer to Russell. Lowers his voice.

WALT

Ain't no one quitting on anyone.
Stick around 'til I see after Joyce.
I could use the walk and you go right
through them white neighborhoods.

RUSSELL

Forget that, Walt! I didn't come
for a goddamn escort! I'll manage
just fine without you. I have before.

Russell turns. Walks off. Walt watches after him.

EXT. WIDE STREET - MORNING

Walt stands with Joyce in front of a large townhouse stoop.
He looks around the picturesque, unscathed street.

JOYCE

Chewing gum?

Joyce holds out gum. Walt looks irked at her blithe naivete.

WALT

Joyce, I don't want no damn gum.

A slighted Joyce pops a piece in her mouth. Spins around to
go up the steps. Walt grabs her by the wrist.

WALT (CONT'D)

Listen, I'll be back to fetch you.
Stay inside until then, understand?

Joyce nods. Turns back up the stairs. Walt doesn't let go.

WALT (CONT'D)

I mean it, Joyce. You don't go outside for nothing, you hear?

JOYCE

Alright, I won't! I'm already late.

She twists from his grasp. Drops the pack of gum. Hops up the steps without noticing. Walt sees the gum, pockets it.

EXT. ALLEY ACROSS FROM TOWNHOUSE - MORNING

Vernon lurks beneath a window with a sack. A thief inside shoves out two silver candle holders. Vernon puts them in the sack. Spies Joyce climb the steps across the street. Watches her enter the home. Sees Walt turn from the stoop.

Surprised, he watches Walt survey the street, then depart. The thief reappears with more loot. Signals Vernon, who opens the sack. Stares back at the house Joyce entered.

EXT. STRANGELY EMPTY DOWNTOWN STREET - DAY

A sign above a store front has two, large, red "H's" on it, identical to those on the shirt pocket Lt. Spears tore from his son's killer. It reads "Hampton's Hardware" underneath.

Across the street, Spears stares at the sign from the shadows. The typically composed officer is disheveled, run-down. A burgundy splotch on his dirty shirt covers his midsection. He rubs the piece of shirt fabric between his fingers.

INT. HAMPTON'S HARDWARE STORE - DAY

A white LADY SHOPKEEPER is behind the counter of the empty store, back to the entrance. Bells JINGLE as the door opens.

LADY SHOPKEEPER

We're closed. Only came in to board the place up. With this mess getting worse out there, who knows--

Upon turning, she sees Lt. Spears. He scans the store.

LADY SHOPKEEPER (CONT'D)

Whatcha' want? Best not be trouble.

Spears ignores her. She moves onto the floor, towards him.

LADY SHOPKEEPER (CONT'D)

Listen now, you don't belong in here.

She notices Spears' bloody shirt. He acknowledges her for the first time. His look stops her dead in her tracks.

LT. SPEARS

The boy.

LADY SHOPKEEPER

Hey, Abe! You best come on out!

A large man, ABE, emerges from a stockroom behind the counter, a plumber's wrench in one hand, boxes of screws in the other. ees Spears locked on the shopkeeper. Puts down the boxes.

LT. SPEARS

Where's the young man employed here?

Comforted by the lummoX behind her, the lady moves at Spears.

LADY SHOPKEEPER

Get out of here, go on, get!

With a powerful back-hand to the face, Spears sends the lady flying into a pile of goods against the wall. Abe charges.

ABE

Hey, Goddamn it!

He swings the wrench. Spears ducks the wild strike that spins the man around. Punches him in the kidney, then lower spine. The man cries. Drops to his knees, back to Spears. Spears palms the man's head with one hand, chin with the other. Twists. Fluidly snaps his neck. Releases him.

Spears looks up to see his son's killer, frozen with fear in the stockroom doorway. He makes a dash for the exit. Spears closes, slams him into the wall. The young man is no match.

Spears' hands find their way around the teen's throat. He chokes the life from his son's murderer. But the face of last night's killer is now that of a desperate, dying boy. After a moment, as if forced, Spears lets loose his grip. The young man collapses to the floor. Gasps for air.

Spears is overcome. The shaken teenager crawls away. Broken down, Spears edges towards the door. Slips out. Disappears.

EXT. EMPTY STREET - DAY

Under his worn cap, Russell spots the distant stockyard arch. He reaches a cross street, where a man leans on a building. Russell turns. It's Frank. Frank pulls on his cigarette.

FRANK DOOLEY

Most folks are afraid to be out.

Frank flicks the butt. Pushes off the wall. Approaches a receding Russell. Motions at the arch down the street.

FRANK DOOLEY (CONT'D)

The place is empty. The goddamn doors are chained shut. Yet, here you are, right on time, ready to do boss man's bidding come hell or high water, same as every other nigger scab who ever crawled into this city.

Frank undoes his thick, leather belt. Steadily pursues Russ.

FRANK DOOLEY (CONT'D)

I was hoping it'd be your pal I'd find. Maybe I missed my chance. Maybe he wised up some, left you to face the music on your lonesome.

Frank whisks off the belt. The metal buckle dangles.

RUSSELL

Listen, now, I mean you no harm. I never did. I'll leave the yard for good and do as you say. I swear it.

FRANK DOOLEY

Maybe I'll have to hunt him down.

Other white men file out from doorways, behind stoops. Surround Russell. Frank advances. His heavy belt buckle SCRAPES along the street. Russell back-peddles, turns in circles, his frightened eyes met only by those of evil.

Russ plants his feet, raises his fists for a final, futile stand. He slugs the nearest man in the face. Then the blows come, from everywhere. Led by Frank, they descend upon him.

EXT. BLACK BELT, TOP OF FIRE ESCAPE - DAY

The fire escape shakes, accompanied by a man's GRUNTS. A Springfield rifle is hoisted into sight, tossed onto the landing. Lt. Spears follows. Slumps his back against the building. Pain creases his face. He breathes heavily.

He peels away the saturated bandage under his shirt. The wound looks bad. He leans back. Takes the Eiffel Tower figurine from his pocket. Stares at it. Begins to cry. A LITTLE BOY(5) pops his head above the landing.

LITTLE BOY

Hey, Mister, what you up here for?

Spears jerks around. Sees the boy. Slides the rifle alongside his outstretched leg to hide it from view. Wipes his tears. The little boy continues up the ladder.

LITTLE BOY (CONT'D)
You don't live here, do you?

Lt. Spears shakes his head. The boy plops beside him.

LITTLE BOY (CONT'D)
So, why you up here, then?

LT. SPEARS
Figure it's as good a place as any.

Spears wears a vacant look. The boy shifts his curiosity.

LITTLE BOY
What you got there?

He points to the wooden figurine in Spears' hand.

LT. SPEARS
Something I crafted one day.

The boy eyes it. After a moment, Spears holds it out.

LT. SPEARS (CONT'D)
Would you like it?

The boy accepts with the unknowing reverence that's due.

LT. SPEARS (CONT'D)
You know, way over on the other side
of the ocean, men built an iron tower
just like that. It's enormous. It
stretches into the sky, pierces the
clouds, right in the middle of a
beautiful, old city. I've seen it.

Spears seems to momentarily escape into nostalgia.

LITTLE BOY
Gee, I wish I could go to the other
side of the ocean and see that. It
sounds real splendid. I ain't never
seen anything splendid before.

LT. SPEARS
Maybe someday, perhaps.

Tears form in Spears' eyes again.

LITTLE BOY
Perhaps. Well, I best get back. I
live downstairs. Mama would turn me
inside out if she caught me up here.

Spears turns away. Smears his wet cheeks.

LITTLE BOY (CONT'D)

She said I'm to stay indoors, away from the windows 'cause men might shoot through them. I don't know where she gets off. They got no reason to shoot at me. I done nothing wrong. But she insists all the same.

He shrugs. Spears whips around, palms the boy's head.

LT. SPEARS

Listen, son, you obey your mama.

Spears gently moves his hand down. Cups the boy's face. Fights back more tears. Smiles fondly, longingly. After a moment, the uneasy boy pulls away.

LITTLE BOY

Hey, you all right, mister?

Spears snaps to, swallows his emotions. Turns away again.

LT. SPEARS

You get back indoors.

The little boy stands to leave.

LITTLE BOY

Yes, sir. Thank you for my gift.

The boy climbs down the ladder. Spears places his rifle across his lap. Looks up at the sky.

EXT. DESERTED STREET - DAY

Windows smashed, debris scattered. The emptiness and destruction seem to unnerve a wary Walt. He spots something on the street, near a stoop. A brown hat. His face drops. He rushes over. Finds Russell behind the stoop, badly beaten.

WALT

Russell!

Walt drops to his knees. As Russ struggles for a breath, the SOUND of lungs filling with blood wheezes out.

RUSSELL

They were lying in wait, they...

WALT

It's okay, Russ, hang in there.

RUSSELL

I can't catch my breath.

He coughs. Blood spurts out. Joins splotches on his chest. Walt's reaction betrays a grim prognosis of a sight he knows too well. Russell grabs Walt's hand, looks him in the eye.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

I put up a fight. Tell my mama I didn't go out easy, you tell her.

WALT

I know, brother. I will.

RUSSELL

Do I got that look in my eyes, Walt?

Tears well up in Walt.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Do you see that--

Russell chokes. Steals a final breath. Dies. Walt cradles him, squeezes his cap. After awhile, he stands, removes his shirt, drapes it over Russell. He kicks at the dirt. Braces himself, hands on his thighs. He snaps up his head. Pats his pocket. Pulls out Joyce's gum. Sprints down the street.

EXT. STREET IN NICE NEIGHBORHOOD - AFTERNOON

A winded Walt turns a corner. Sees a young lady heading towards him. He can make out Joyce in her uniform. He relaxes, then notices she walks strangely: slow, pained. As he nears her, he sees the look on her face, the tears caked on her cheeks. She has a cut lip. Her dress is torn, bloody.

WALT

Joyce!

Walt rushes to her. She falls into his arms. He kneels.

WALT (CONT'D)

Joyce, what happened? Who did this?

He brushes her hair from her face. She doesn't make eye contact with her fixed stare. Walt sees her dress is ripped up to her waist. There are cuts and bruises on her legs.

JOYCE

Mrs. Franklin told me to go 'round to the cellar. Let in men with a delivery. They grabbed me, Walt. They wouldn't stop. No matter how badly I begged, they wouldn't.

Walt's already labored breathing intensifies even further.

JOYCE (CONT'D)

Mrs. Franklin hollered at me to get on out. Said she could do nothing for me. To go see a Negro doctor.

Anger mixes with agony in her voice. Overwhelming rage consumes Walt, from which he does his best to shield Joyce.

WALT

Okay, it's alright, now. I'm gonna take you home, baby girl.

He gently scoops up Joyce in his arms as if she weighed nothing. She rests her head against his chest.

INT. THOMAS APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Joe and a vexed Evelyn sit silently in chairs. The door opens. Walt carries Joyce in his arms. Evelyn screams.

EVELYN

No! My little girl! Oh, God, no!

Evelyn falls to her knees. Walt lays Joyce on the sofa. Covers her with a blanket. Lingers in the room, hands atop his head. Evelyn crawls over to Joyce, who seems in shock.

JOYCE

It was blood. He had the stain of blood running down his mouth.

She grows visibly frightened. Starts to panic.

JOYCE (CONT'D)

He was stained with blood!

A distraught Evelyn attempts to quell her cries, as a confused and frightened Joe watches from the periphery. Joyce wails.

EVELYN

It's okay, child, Mama's here.

Walt slumps down against the door. He twists Russell's hat in his hands. From outside, more SCREAMS join with Joyce's. Sounds of men CURSING, glass BREAKING, guns FIRING pour in. The GUNFIRE amplifies, becomes EXPLOSIONS, a WHISTLE blares.

FLASHBACK: EXT. WWI TRENCH - NIGHT

Walt sits, back to the trench wall. A fierce battle presses down upon him. He looks over at a fellow soldier, head to his knees, hands pinned over his ears. A big BOOM jolts everything around Walt, a RINGING deafens his ears.

As he comes to, Lt. Spears barks muted orders right in his face. Spit flies as he shakes Walt by the shoulders. Walt's eyes transform. He takes up his rifle. Firmly rises. Turns to leap over the top and meet the enemy, bayonet outstretched.

BACK TO SCENE

Glass SHATTERS. Joe stands over Walt, shakes his shoulders.

JOE

...Walt, Walt! They're outside!

Walt immediately stands. SHOUTS and CURSES climb through the window, panic Joyce further. He marches down the hallway. Returns with an old pistol. Gives it to Evelyn. She eyes him fiercely. Grabs his hand. Kisses it. Squeezes it.

Walt turns away. Approaches a stout, oak dining chair. Snaps off one of the heavy back legs as if it were a twig. He clutches the formidable club with it's sharp, jagged end.

WALT

Come with me, Joe.

Joe hesitates, but follows Walt out the door. Evelyn looks up at the ceiling. She shakes her fist in the air. With her other hand, she points to the bible standing on the shelf, beside herself with emotion. Joyce continues to cry.

EVELYN

O God, smash the teeth in their
mouths; tear out, O Lord, the fangs
of the lions!

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - EVENING

A shirtless Walt bounds onto the street, where five white men, two with baseball bats, pelt rocks through windows, destroy property. He motions at Joe to remain in the doorway.

EVELYN (V.O.)

Make them vanish like water flowing
away; trodden down, let them wither
like grass!

They spot Walt coming. One quite zealous man charges, swings a bat at Walt's head. Walt ducks it. Two hands on his club, he swings too. Cracks the man's knee cap with a blunt POP.

EVELYN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Let them dissolve like a snail that
oozes to nothing; like a stillborn
child, may they not see the sun!

The other bat-wielder swings. Walt deflects it with the club. Pounds his fist into the man's windpipe. The man grabs his throat, chokes. Walt shirks the knife slashes of another attacker, some of which gash his arm and shoulder.

He catches the wrist of the man's knife hand. Smashes the club through his forearm with a downward blow. Snaps the bones. The man shrieks. Drops to his knees. Walt takes a baseball swing to the man's face. He connects. Hard.

EVELYN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Then the just shall be glad to see
they are avenged, as they bathe their
feet in the blood of the wicked!

Walt storms at one foe, who fumbles with a pistol under his shirt. As he clasps it to aim, Walt takes a final bound, releases his club in a powerful throw, inches from his mark. The jagged end plunges right through the man's eye socket.

EVELYN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Then it will be said: there is a God
who is judge on earth!

The man sheds his pistol, staggers, drops. Walt faces the last man standing. His terrified eyes bounce between Walt and the gun on the ground. He opts to flee. Walt waves out Joe. Snags a bat. Tosses it to him. Dislodges his makeshift club. The brothers tread down the street. Darkness falls.

INT. PACKED MCSHEA'S ALE HOUSE - NIGHT

White men drink. HEATED CHATTER. Frank enters with Daniel. Vernon approaches, four scratches down his face, finger-width apart, across his port wine stain. Frank looks Vernon over.

VERNON

Most the clubs are here.

Frank gazes about the room, filled by hard, drunk Irishmen. He seems proud, invigorated. He leaps atop the bar.

FRANK DOOLEY

Listen up, boys!

The men turn towards Frank. Quiet themselves.

FRANK DOOLEY (CONT'D)

Negroes have declared war! We knew
it'd come to this, while our stupid,
lazy mayor let the Hun quietly invade.
Now, he's fled. His coppers, gone.
So, I move we put an end to this
madness tonight! This here is our
city. What say we take it back.

The men erupt in a vicious roar of affirmation. Frank hops off the bar. He's met by a concerned Daniel.

FRANK DOOLEY (CONT'D)

Here's hoping your pansy ass at least learned how to pull a trigger.

Frank nods at Vernon, who pulls a revolver. Offers it to Daniel. Daniel stares at the gun, up at Vernon, then Frank.

DANIEL DOOLEY

This ain't right. This ain't a war, Frank. I'm no coward, but this just ain't right. I want no part of it.

Frank grunts out a laugh. Glances at Vernon. Walks away. Vernon smiles at Daniel. Pistol whips him in the head. Daniel stumbles. Vernon pistol whips him again and again.

EXT. OUTSIDE MCSHEA'S - NIGHT

The door opens. Two men hurl out Daniel. The door closes. Daniel rolls over on the street. Blood pours down his face.

EXT. ALLEY, BLACK BELT - NIGHT

A large group of men gather. Walt and Joe push through to the open center. A lamp burns. Leroy sits on a crate, shirtless, suspenders. Spit polishes brass knuckles. Others brandish menacing melee weapons. All stare at Walt and Joe.

LEROY

Your big brother come to tell me to leave you alone again, Joe?

WALT

This ain't about you and me, Leroy.

LEROY

Oh, no?

WALT

I'm just another man, not a very good one at that. But a man still, who refuses to sit by any longer. Ain't no more cheeks left to turn.

LEROY

Now it's preacher Walt, huh, here to--

WALT

My best pal was murdered on the street, my sister, raped in an alley.

This silences Leroy. He looks at a man pushed over the edge.

WALT (CONT'D)

The time for preaching came and gone.
I ain't your dog on the leash anymore
for you to sic about, but I been
backed into a dark corner and ain't
been left but one way out. I can't
just close my eyes and cover my ears.
Tonight, I'm here, with you.

LEROY

I ain't never taken to preaching
much myself. Preaching is for the
flock. They gather around each other
because it makes them feel better.
They call on the shepherd to lead
them, back and forth, back and forth.

He puts down the polished knuckles, picks up another one.

LEROY (CONT'D)

Now the dog, as you mention, he ain't
much liked by the flock. They scared
of him. They run from him, turn
their backs to him, kick him away,
all in the name of that shepherd.

He spits on the new set, proceeds to polish them.

LEROY (CONT'D)

Then the wolves come down from the
hills. Them sheep get to shaking,
hollering, spinning every which way.
They realize their flocking together
ain't gonna do shit to save them.
They look up and they see, it ain't
the shepherd setting out in the field
to meet them wolves. It's that mother-
fuckin' dog, who they so quick to
condemn and judge in the light of
day, but just as quick to jump behind
when the wolves bear down at night.

He examines the brass knuckles in the lamp light.

LEROY (CONT'D)

The wolves are here. They got that
scent of blood, of fear. It's all
they know. So go ahead, sit there
and declare what you is or is not
anymore if it makes you feel better.
But I hope you still got some bite
left in you, because tonight, you
sure as shit ain't seek out the
company of no god damn sheep.

Walt eyes Leroy, his fearsome men in their alley stronghold.

WALT

Alright, then. I got a plan.

LEROY

Slow up, Walt. My condolences to you and yours, but I make the plans. Who the fuck do you think you are?

WALT

Like I said, just another man. A man who fought his way through the greatest war this world's ever known, a man who picked up a thing or two.

Leroy examines Walt. Notices his bloody gashes.

WALT (CONT'D)

And as I remember, Leroy, your plans ain't always worked out too good.

Leroy's face twists into his trademark smile.

EXT. FIRE ESCAPE - NIGHT

A fading Lt. Spears struggles to stay alert in the quiet darkness. A volley of nearby GUN SHOTS jolts him on edge. He snags his rifle. The stillness lulls him off again, until a SPUTTERING engine pulls him back. A black car grinds around the corner. Spears cocks his rifle. Painfully props it up.

He watches Hyrum emerge from the passenger window, guns drawn. The car accelerates. Confusion cedes Spears' furrowed brow to fury. Hyrum takes aim at homes, Spears at him. Before Hyrum can fire, Spears sends a bullet through his skull. He wilts from the moving car, as he's dragged under, run over.

Spears chambers another bullet with the bolt action, aims at the driver. Shoots through the windshield. Blood splatters inside the car. It swerves. Smashes into a lamp post.

Man in Black #2 stumbles out. Injured, bleeding, he staggers away. Spears cocks the rifle. Patiently aims. Fires at the man's head. It bursts open. The man flops over. A stoic Spears calmly places the rifle in his lap. Reloads.

EXT. INTERSECTION - NIGHT

Callahan holds his post with the other cops, agitated rookie included. A MURMUR hums in the distance. They fall silent. It grows to a ROAR. The sergeant steps up, squints. The ROAR refines to VOICES. A mob of white men round the corner.

They flood the street, flashing bats, hammers, rail spikes. A couple pistols fire in the air. Frank sets the pace towards the cops, armed with a large meat hook from the stockyard.

SERGEANT

Christ, Almighty.

As the cops falter, the rookie pushes up next to the sergeant. Bites his police whistle. Takes up his night stick with one hand. Pulls out leather-bound slapjack with the other.

SERGEANT (CONT'D)

I don't know about you fellas, but I sure ain't standing in the way of that. I'm a cop, not a mad man.

The deflated rookie turns to the sergeant, who withdraws down the cross street. The others gradually follow suit, some behind the sergeant, others, the opposite way on the cross street. The rookie turns to Callahan, who pulls out a flask, winks. After some hesitation, the rookie departs.

Callahan downs the flask, discards it. Tears off his badge, un-tucks his shirt, grabs his baton. Eagerly meets the mob.

OFFICER CALLAHAN

Alright boys, I'm with you! Let's take it to these--

In stride, Frank rends Callahan's gut with the meat hook. Vernon follows with a hammer to his head. The mob tramples him, blazes by the vacated police post without losing a step.

EXT. STREET, BLACK BELT - NIGHT

A lookout spots movement in the darkness, as the white mob enters the other side of a park. He signals down the block to another man, who passes it along via more lookouts. They silently set off. The original spotter steels his nerves.

The mob pours from the park, onto the street where the solitary young man awaits them in the distance. They halt, confusion, amusement on their faces. The man stares them down, arm hanging at his side, rock in hand. He hurls it.

Frank watches it sail above him. It hits an off-guard, hulking man in his fat head. He grunts, grabs his head, falls. The mob erupts. Frank leads a chase of the man.

EXT. STREET, BLACK BELT - NIGHT

The pursued makes a turn. The mob follows. Slows to a halt once more. A solid throng of black men, well-armed, stretches across the street, a few rows deep. Silent. Unflinching.

Leroy is front and center, brass knuckles on each hand. They glimmer under dim lamp light, along with the gold teeth that accentuate his menacing grin. Next to him, Walt holds his club, Joe, a bat. Above them, black teens creep along roofs with bricks. Some of them light Molotov cocktails.

Frank stares at the impressive force. Tightens his gaze on Walt, who steps out, cuts a line in the dirt with his foot. Returns Frank's glare. Frank charges him, the mob in tow. Walt sets out towards them with Joe, Leroy and the others.

White men collapse under plummeting bricks. Fire engulfs some as flaming glass bottles rain from roofs and explode. The cohesive assault scatters. Walt ducks a charging hostile, who flies head over heels atop his back. He swings his club into the next one's face. Drops him under a shower of blood.

Leroy breaks a man's nose with a metal jab. Follows it with heavy blows to the ribs. Frank dodges an attacker's strike. Plunges his sharp hook into the man's back. Heaves him aside.

Men slash at each other with an array of edges. Strike with blunt force. Fire pistols sporadically. The white mob's superior numbers push the black force past a cross alley. There, more of Leroy's men wait. They tear into the white's unsuspecting flanks from either side. Further carnage ensues.

Walt squares off with a man who knocks the club from his hand. The man swings a knife. Walt turns. The knife slices his back. He blocks the next strike. Punches the man.

Joe catches sight of Vernon, drawn to his port wine stain, the fingernail scratches that run across it. Something clicks. Vengeance moves Joe. Vernon stalks Walt from behind, hammer raised. A baseball bat slams Vernon's head. Joe holds it stoutly. Lays into Vernon further with the bat.

In the chaos, Frank spots engaged Walt. Pushes past bodies. Walt turns his head just in time to avoid the end of Frank's meat hook. He dodges it a few more times, loses his footing, falls. Frank kicks him in the face. Then kicks him in the ribs, over and over. Walt drags himself away. Frank follows.

Joe runs to Walt's rescue. Takes a telegraphed swing at Frank, who skillfully hooks the bat away with his weapon. Knocks Joe cold with a single punch to the eye. Faces Walt.

FRANK DOOLEY

An uncanny resemblance. Ain't that nice, rushing to his brother's rescue.

Frank kicks Walt again. Points to Walt and Joe as he counts.

FRANK DOOLEY (CONT'D)

That's one, two...I'll go ahead and count that sweet thing my man got his paws on today as three.

He grins. Winks at an ailing Walt.

FRANK DOOLEY (CONT'D)

How many more you got for me? I told you they'd answer for your gall that night, oh that one night, when you made the worst mistake of your life.

He waves his scarred hand in Walt's face, amid the fighting. Slugs a barely conscious Walt in the cheek with his fist.

FRANK DOOLEY (CONT'D)

See, I'm a man who keeps his word. A man who does his job. A man who's got the sand to beat you back.

He revels at the bloody meat hook in his hand. Laughs. Flips it, catches it by the handle with practiced ease.

FRANK DOOLEY (CONT'D)

Just another day on the job.

Frank yanks up the hook to strike down the death blow. Walt recoils his leg. Fires a kick into Frank's knee. It buckles in the wrong direction. Frank screams, stumbles. Grabs his leg. Walt hurries to his feet. Lands a powerful uppercut on Frank's chin. Frank falls to his back. Shakes off the hit. Gets to his knees. Swings the meat hook at Walt.

Walt catches Frank's arm. Instantly, with his other hand, Frank draws a knife tucked in the back of his belt. Thrusts it at Walt, who blocks that strike with his other hand.

Walt knees Frank in the jaw. Stuns him. Shoves Frank's knife hand into Frank's other arm so the knife skewers it. Walt swipes the meat hook from that arm. Plunges it deep into Frank, hooks him under the rib cage. Rips it out. Frank spews blood. His eyes find Walt's. He falls dead.

The white mob gives way in a full blown retreat. The adrenaline-high victors cheer. Walt drops the meat hook. Examines a gash over Joe's eye. Leroy grabs Walt's shoulder.

LEROY

Shame you quit on me, bruiser. Sure is a pleasure watching you work.

Walt faces Leroy. Leroy's eyes roll up in his head. He stumbles back. Falls. A glass bottle neck protrudes from his stomach. Thick, dark blood pours from the gaping wound.

The other men exclaim concern, gather around Leroy. Silence. Walt kneels next to Leroy. Grabs his shoulder. Looks down at the jagged bottle that moves up and down as Leroy breathes.

LEROY (CONT'D)

Suppose I ain't the first dying man
you held in your arms, huh, soldier?

Leroy gives a harsh chuckle. He and Walt stare at each other.

LEROY (CONT'D)

Where they at, boys!?! Where them
sons of bitches now? Where'd y'all
send 'em to? Where them fools who
wanna see old Leroy on the street?

He cringes, struggles for breath.

LEROY (CONT'D)

Where they--where they at now?

VOICE#1 (O.S.)

They gone, Leroy. Far and fast.

VOICE#2 (O.S.)

They won't be back around neither!

Leroy nods approval. He eyes Walt again as his vigor wanes.

LEROY

I got no family, Walt. There ain't
no one to tell. If anyone ever ask,
don't go on lying for how I lived.
Be sure and tell 'em how I died
though. You tell 'em how I died.

Walt and the others watch on as Leroy takes his last breath.

INT. WAITING ROOM, MAYOR'S OFFICE - MORNING

Miss Ida sits stoically with a monocled Dr. Hall at her side.
RAISED VOICES carry out clearly from the mayor's shut office.

MAYOR THOMPSON (O.S.)

Are you worried if a few get killed,
you'll run out of them?!? Take one
damn look at an inbound train! There
are plenty of other Negroes out there!

MR. DUGAN (O.S.)

I'm worried about my business, which
employs Negro workers! How is my
business supposed to operate, when
the damn workers can't get to work!?!?

MUFFLED VOICE #1 (O.S.)

Their presence keeps the unions at bay. But there ain't no presence if they ain't present, follow, Mr. Mayor?

MUFFLED VOICE #2

Yes, you follow, Mayor. You follow all too well. You receive hefty contributions from us so that a Republican will hold office and crack down on the union craze. There are plenty of other Republicans out there.

Silence. The office door opens. Businessmen file into the lobby where Miss Ida and Dr. Hall wait. Mr. Dugan limps out last. He and Miss Ida exchange looks. The mayor emerges.

MAYOR THOMPSON

Macon, see that--oh Christ almighty.

He withers upon spotting Miss Ida and Dr. Hall, who stand. He rejects them with a burdened hand. Retreats into his office. Slams the door. A flustered Macon slips into the office after him. Miss Ida and Dr. Hall resume their seats.

EXT. APARTMENT DOORWAY - MORNING

A door closes in front of Walt. After a brief moment, a woman's WAILS spill out from behind it. A teary-eyed Walt looks down at Russell's cap, which rests in the palms of his open hands. He turns on the rickety second floor porch. Eases down the unsound set of outside steps to the street.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Walt moves warily along. Eyes smashed windows, charred frames of homes, some of whose residents stare out at him. He comes to a street where the homes are untouched. Sees a black car wrapped around a lamp post down the block. Goes towards it.

He finds the bodies of its former occupants, the Men in Black, joined in the street by corpses of many other white men. Most still clutch weapons. They all look to have been shot, some right between the eyes. Walt treads amongst the bodies.

FLASHBACK: WWI BATTLEFIELD - MORNING

Walt plods through the dead bodies of his fellow soldiers, cast across the field in random places, strange positions.

BACK TO SCENE

Movement in Walt's periphery grabs him. He sees the young boy, who fiddles with something in the the open window of his first floor home. Walt whistles. The kid perks up.

WALT

What happened out here?

The boy makes the hand motion of gun firing. Places the Eiffel Tower figurine clearly on the sill with his other hand. Walt sees it. His face drops. He closes on the kid.

WALT (CONT'D)

Hey, where'd you get that?

The boy ignores him. Walt snags the boy by the shirt.

WALT (CONT'D)

I said where the fuck you get that!?!

YOUNG BOY

I ain't steal it, he gave it to me!

Walt shakes him.

WALT

Who did!?!

The indignant boy motions upwards, hand outside. Walt backs into the street. Looks up. On the fire escape, Lt. Spears holds his position. Dead. Blood over his shirt, rifle laid across his lap. Walt panics. Others now stare out at him.

WALT (CONT'D)

Help! I need some men!

No one moves. Some retreat inside, shutter their windows.

WALT (CONT'D)

Get out here, you cowards! A soldier needs your help! Where are you!?!

A single man exits. Slips onto the street. Approaches Walt. It's Sticky Fingers. He and Walt stare at each other. Two more faces join that of the little boy's in the window, one, a LITTLE GIRL, who extends herself out from it.

LITTLE GIRL

Daddy! I'm gonna tell mama on you!
She said not to--

Sticky fingers chides her with a shush. Makes a dismissive motion for her to zip it. He turns back to Walt. Walt nods. They move towards the fire escape. Thunder CLAPS overhead.

INT. THOMAS APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

A shirtless Walt watches rain pelt an empty street, the pistol in his belt. Fresh bandages share his body with gruesome, odd war scars. Joyce is on the sofa, head in Evelyn's lap.

At the table in his underclothes, Joe eyes a newspaper. Its crumpled, soggy from rain, front page with many blank spaces where articles should be. The headline to one column reads: "Open Race Warfare. Police Desert City, Mayor in Hiding."

EVELYN

Let the rain come, Lord. Let the
flood rise up and wash them all away.

Walt turns from the window. Grabs his shirt.

WALT

Get dressed, Joe.

Joe hesitates, then stands. Evelyn starts to quietly cry.

INT. MAYOR'S OFFICE - STORMY AFTERNOON

Slumped in a leather chair with a glass of brandy, the mayor stares out the floor-to-ceiling window. The glow of flames dances in the murky distance. Mr. Macon reads over reports.

MR. MACON

...bringing the death count to almost
forty. Chief Hubbard wired a third
of his officers failed to report.
The fire marshall has declared the
streets unsafe in which to respond.
Blazes have left thousands homeless--

MAYOR THOMPSON

Thousands, thousands. We've lost
thousands overseas, paid millions.

The mayor creaks up from his chair to unsteady feet.

MAYOR THOMPSON (CONT'D)

For what? Ours is a sick nation,
diseased, afflicted by a parasite
that renders its host rotten and
hollow. It gnaws at us as we shake
and scratch, sabotaging what we
boastfully claim to fight for abroad.

The Mayor shuffles across his office to a wall covered with plaques, framed certificates, awards and photographs.

MAYOR THOMPSON (CONT'D)

I only wanted the best for this city,
for it to realize its true potential.

His eyes find the framed, familiar print of Burnham's envisioned lakefront from his campaign. He slams his fist into the glass of the frame. It shatters. Macon flinches.

MAYOR THOMPSON (CONT'D)
 And what potential is that!?! Is it
 this? Is this the grand triumph of
 our city when left to its own devices?

He holds out his clenched, bloody fist as he yells at Macon.

MR. MACON
 Sir, you're bleeding.

MAYOR THOMPSON
 Indeed. After all, I'm a man of the
 people, am I not? This is my city.

He turns around, faces the shattered print once more, his
 own blood splattered on it. He gulps the rest of his brandy.

MAYOR THOMPSON (CONT'D)
 The City by the Lake, which burns
 between the trenches.

A flustered Macon makes movements but does nothing.

MR. MACON
 Sir--

MAYOR THOMPSON
 Bring me the goddamn paper. I've
 aided in this atrocity long enough.

Relieved to have a task, Macon snags a document off the
 mayor's desk. Hands it the mayor, who signs. Macon runs it
 out. The mayor stares back out at smoke over the skyline.

INT. ARMORY - NIGHT

Militiamen fall in line. A scar-faced OFFICER barks at them
 from a crutch that replaces a missing leg. A pistol is slung
 on his chest, an empty shirt sleeve pinned to his shoulder.

COMMANDING OFFICER
 Listen up! This here is my militia!
 I don't give a shit what back-alley
 you crawled from or what bumble-fuck
 farm you wandered off. Your personal
 preferences and prior allegiances
 mean absolute jack shit to me!

Each man receives a rifle and ammunition at the door.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Armed militia in ponchos patrol the streets in pouring rain.
 Frisk men of all races. Turn back people from their routes.

COMMANDING OFFICER (V.O.)

Where force is needed, you will apply it with restraint and objectivity. There's no color line here, men. Just those who welcome order, those who oppose it. If I catch you on the wrong side of that line, so help me, God, I'll shoot you dead myself.

Steadfast militiamen occupy the city. Total lock down.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Walt and Joe stand guard with Leroy's remaining men. A PATTERN grows louder. Up ahead, militia march around the corner. The men grow tense. Some seem to prepare for a fight. Out front, Walt doesn't look so inclined, Joe in his shadow.

The troops march right for them. Suddenly, from behind Walt, a silent, tight-knit mass of people turn onto the same street. Walt looks back at the mixed races, genders, and ages of people who hold candles, walk steadily. Clergy lead them.

Walt turns back to the rigid soldiers as they advance. He eyes the men around him. Takes Joe by the arm. The toughs watch, as Walt and his brother back-peddle through them. After a moment, they follow. The peaceful marchers absorb Walt and the others into their folds. Continue ahead.

They stop, blocked by the militia, a quiet, still stand off. The OFFICER IN CHARGE eyes them, steps forward.

OFFICER IN CHARGE

We are the National Guard as formed by the Illinois State Militia, with direct orders from the Governor, himself, to secure peace and calm in these streets! We intent to do so!

A white PRIEST steps forward from next to the Reverend.

PRIEST

And for that, we thank you, son.

The priest smiles, eyes the young officer warmly, then motions so they might continue. The insecure officer waffles. Moves aside. Signals the troops, who part way in unison and allow the procession to pass. A marcher hands Walt a lit candle.

EXT. STREET - MORNING

SUPER: *August 8, 1919*

A group of militiamen patrol the street. They pass the open lot of a grain depot, where a crowd buzzes at the entrance.

EXT. GATE AT GRAIN DEPOT - MORNING

Two burly men flank a FOREMAN, who points to day laborers in the bustling mob. Walt jostles for position, hand up. The foreman points to him. He shoves ahead, through the gate.

EXT. GRAIN DEPOT YARD - MORNING

Walt pulls a heavy grain bag off the top of a large stack. Spots Daniel's head on the other side. Throws the bag over his shoulder. Walks to a nearby horse-drawn cart. Heaves it on the flatbed. Daniel does the same. Wipes his brow.

DANIEL DOOLEY

Talk about a sight for sore eyes.
Feared I'd be going at this pile on
my lonesome all day like the last.

Walt ignores him. After a moment, each drops another bag.

DANIEL DOOLEY (CONT'D)

I'm Daniel by the way.

Daniel extends his hand. Walt opts to grab another sack.

DANIEL DOOLEY (CONT'D)

I thought laying duckboard in three
foot of trench mud was tough work.

This gets Walt's attention. The two continue their work.

WALT

Suppose it's hard to complain when
the work keeps your feet from rotting
off. I hear this only pays a dollar.

Daniel laughs, nods, follows Walt back for more grain bags.

DANIEL DOOLEY

So, you were over there too then?

Silence. He tosses down a bag. Looks back at the stack.

DANIEL DOOLEY (CONT'D)

Yeah, I suppose things could be a
whole lot worse. I'll pipe down.

WALT

370th, formerly 8th Illinois.

DANIEL DOOLEY

Well, I'll be goddamned. Had them
Krauts scared stiff, you fellas did.
Had them calling you the Black Devils
on account of your ferocity in battle.

WALT

Well, the French, they stuck medals on us and called us the Partridges, on account of our proud bearing.

DANIEL DOOLEY

I know. I was with the 308th.

At this, Walt stops. Slowly stands up, sans a bag.

DANIEL DOOLEY (CONT'D)

I was there, in the Argonne, at the Bois d'Aprémont, the Lost Battalion. We were trapped in that gully for days while the Krauts slaughtered three quarters of our men. Good men. Would've surely been all of us if you fellas hadn't come along.

Walt makes eye contact with Daniel for the first time.

DANIEL DOOLEY (CONT'D)

I owe you my life.

The men stand in silence for a moment. The foreman appears.

FOREMAN

This ain't no goddamned social hour!

The two men quickly resume their work.

EXT. GRAIN DEPOT - AFTERNOON

The foreman pulls a dollar from a wad. Gives it to Daniel at the head of a line. Daniel turns to Walt behind him.

DANIEL DOOLEY

Good luck to you, friend. Here's to keeping off the duckboard trail.

Daniel extends his hand. Walt hesitates, but this time shakes it. Daniel departs under the disapproving glares of some white witnesses to the exchange. Walt steps up for his pay.

FOREMAN

Did fine work today, son. More than I can say for most the other mollies.

Nods dismissively at Daniel's back. Hands Walt his pay.

FOREMAN (CONT'D)

You keep coming around, you'll keep getting more of it, you hear?

Walt nods emphatically. Delays his departure.

WALT

I got a brother, young but strong.
Me and him, we'll make shorter work
of this here than a hound hunting a
hamstrung, honey-dipped hare.

The foreman laughs. Shrugs consent. An excited Walt leaves.

EXT. MILITIA-OCCUPIED STREET - AFTERNOON

A horse pulls three caskets in a funeral procession. One is small, another, draped in the American flag, a Springfield rifle atop it. Miss Ida and Dr. Williams trail the Reverend.

DR. WILLIAMS

They're all just ashes from the flame
in which this nation is forged. No
one will remember their names.

MISS IDA

You will, I will. So some have faded,
embers to ashes. It's only because
they dared toss themselves into that
flame. Death as testimony, doctor,
a sign that the flame will continue
to burn. We will stoke it to a blaze,
bigger and brighter than ever before.

Silky emerges among onlookers with a beautiful lady. She has marcelled hair under a cloche hat, pearls on her neck.

MISS IDA (CONT'D)

No longer will we sit in the shadows,
wait in the darkness, accept the
night for fear of getting burned.
That is the tale of the Negro past.
Now is the time of the "New Negro."
Indeed it's not their names that
will be remembered, but what they
stood for, what they stood against.
Everyone will know why they died.

Silky eyes Spears' flag-draped casket, the rifle atop it. Gives a rigid military salute as the cart rolls by. A few other young men sprinkled throughout the crowd follow suit.

DR. WILLIAMS

It's like you speak of soldiers fallen
in war. As if something was won.

MISS IDA

Don't be silly, the world's already
fought the war to end all wars.

They spar with loaded looks as the procession continues.

MISS IDA (CONT'D)

In truth, each of us is in a war we have no hope of winning, against an enemy who can never be defeated.

She watches repair work underway on burnt out buildings.

DR. WILLIAMS

And who is that, dare I ask?

MISS IDA

Time, doctor. No matter your cunning, your strength, your allies, your arms, time will always beat you down. You will always lose to the day.

DR. WILLIAMS

How charmingly grim, Ida. Then why even fight at all?

MISS IDA

Because we don't fight for ourselves.

Next to Silky, Rosetta flinches. She smiles. Touches her stomach. As silky drops his salute, she grabs his hand. Places it on her big belly to feel. He beams, leans closer.

MISS IDA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

If we scratch and claw, strike back hard enough against that enemy, we may just maim it, cripple it, deform it enough so that those who go on to face it after us might find a battle less daunting. If we're to die, perish like ashes from the flame, it will not be without leaving our scar upon time. It must not be.

MONTAGE

Joe strikes out a batter with a solid fast ball in pick-up...

Evelyn sees Dr. Hall out of her flat, who gives her two reassuring hands on her shoulders, a positive, warm look...

A wearied Mayor Thompson sits at a table in front of a panel of politicians, who stare down at him from their bench...

Sticky Fingers shoos away his preemptively eager son, as he whittles the finishing touches into a somewhat-crude Lady Liberty wooden figurine with a slaughterhouse knife...

Walt walks the young lady for whom his was smitten outside the church up to her door. She smiles coyly, goes inside...

EXT. HILLSIDE, OAK WOODS CEMETERY - AFTERNOON

Walt eyes a marker: "Walter Thomas, Gone but Never Forgotten."

WALT

I remember when you brought us up here, folks kept going on about it being the Promised Land. Now, the newspapers, they're calling it No Man's Land, just like in the war.

Walt laughs to himself.

WALT (CONT'D)

All I know is, here I am, a man, and no one's ever promised me shit. Suppose it's something in between then, something folks can't quickly hang a handle on. Something you just gotta live in, on, and through. Suppose it ain't where you find yourself standing that makes you, but how you stand while you're there.

Walt pulls out the Croix de Guerre. Stares at it.

WALT (CONT'D)

I done shrugged, slouched, bent, and turned enough. Whatever this land is, whatever they call it next, here I'll stand, tall and straight, like you taught me. Like you always did.

Walt lays the medal at the headstone. Fixes Russell's cap on his head. Walks down the hill. In the distance, sailboats dance across Lake Michigan. One looks strikingly similar to the toy version Eugene Williams owned for a brief moment.

SUPER:

The riot following Eugene Williams' murder is considered the worst of many during America's "Red Summer" of 1919. Over a week of chaos in Chicago left 38 dead, hundreds hospitalized, thousands homeless, and millions in damage. It's said the drive-by shooting was first realized during this time.

In 1922, the Commission on Race Relations in Chicago issued a report citing armed gangs of young white men, a corrupt police force and a complacent mayor as the main culprits in the devastation. In the years following, black businesses and the black community of Chicago grew as never before.

FADE OUT