

In Greensboro

A Screenplay

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In Greensboro (2019)

(Unfinished)

FADE IN:

INT. LEGAL OFFICE — DAY

Inside an attorney's office, a hypnotism is taking place. A video camera is set on a tripod to record the session. But we don't see the hypnotist, just his patient, a reporter named Christine. She has been put under to recall her painful memories of November 3, 1979. Christine's eyes are closed as she is hypnotized. The hypnotist is mostly unseen, sitting in front of her.

HYPNOTIST

Christine? Are you okay? Can you remember anything?

Christine remains still in her chair for a moment, before she starts talking.

CHRISTINE

I just started shouting, "Why won't the shooting stop?! Why won't they just stop fucking shooting!?" And then one of the shooters got closer to me. He looked at me, but he pointed his gun down at the ground, almost like he wanted to help me. He started walking toward me, but I shouted at him, "You fucking assholes started this shit! And now you need to end it!"

Christine continues to cry, wiping away tears.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. / EXT. — DAY / NIGHT

The title card over black dissolves in/out that reads:

Greensboro.

A second title card dissolves in/out that reads:

A Brief History

After this the opening titles dissolve in and out on the bottom of the screen, as a montage of photos and videos detail the history of Greensboro.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Around 1750, Quaker migrants From Pennsylvania made their way to the city that would become known as Greensboro.

Following the Revolutionary War, the city was named in honor of General Nathaniel Greene. General Greene lost the infamous battle of Guilford courthouse on March

5, 1781, but he inflicted serious casualties on the British forces and was so honored afterward.

Now let's jump ahead to 1895, when the already wealthy Cone family opened their first denim manufacturing plant in Greensboro. Proximity cotton mills was a clever expansion of the Cone empire, given the companies quick access to the cotton fields surrounding Greensboro. Money from the Cone family would build parks, schools, churches, and, most notably, the Moses H. Cone hospital that gave Greensboro residents access to quality health care. Greensboro was also the birthplace of famed writer O. Henry in 1862.

And in 1891, North Carolina A&T State University opened, later becoming the largest historically black college in the United States. Civil rights leader Jesse Jackson, and astronaut Ronald McNair, are just a few of the school's many famous alumni.

On February 1, 1960, four students enrolled at A&T sat down at Woolworth's lunch counter in downtown Greensboro, which was at the time reserved for white patrons. The men refused to leave. They were not arrested and the sit-ins spread to other cities, and continued until July of that year.

As the 1970s drew to a close, Greensboro had become a prosperous, diverse, and mostly safe city, steeped in history, while prepared for the future.

But no one could have predicted the events that were about to unfold...

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. KLAN HEADQUARTERS — DAY

A lower third title reads: China Grove, NC. July 23, 1979.

A TV crew stands in front of a group of at least thirty people, male and female members of the Communist Workers Party, who are marching toward a group of around twenty Klan members who are waiting for them outside of a local meeting hall. A group of five police officers stand between the two groups as the CWP members near. When the groups draw upon each other, a young African American man steps out of the crowd holding a Confederate flag. He takes a Zippo lighter and ignites the flag, holding it up in front of the Klan members for them to see. When the flag begins to burn out of control, the man holding it drops it. One of the Klan members standing in front of the crowd looks down at this, then looks up and spits in the face of the man who dropped it. The two groups now run toward each other, punches and kicks are thrown as the police officers reluctantly step in and begin to separate the crowd. The fight is short-lived but hate filled.

CUT TO:

EXT. MEETING HALL — DAY

The TV photographer and Christine, the reporter, are standing interviewing Jackson, an African American man who was one of the organizers of the march for the CWP. The camera closes in on a tight shot of Jackson, who is clearly agitated.

JACKSON

I think they want to put something in your heart that ain't there. It's not in my heart. But the real reason that we're here is to let the Klan know that their days are numbered. There's not going to be any more Klan! We're going to take them out!

CUT TO:

INT. - LIVING ROOM — DAY

In his living room, Pastor Hall is watching the TV interview with Jackson. Somber faced, he stands up and turns off his television. He makes a deep sigh as he turns and walks out of the room.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CHURCH — DAY

Pastor Hall steps out the front door of his church as Jackson is walking up the path that leads to the front door. Jackson greets the Pastor.

JACKSON

Good morning, brother.

PASTOR HALL

That it is. Too beautiful to be inside. I was going to take a walk. Care to join me?

Jackson takes a half step to his right, and he and the Pastor begin walking.

PASTOR HALL

(CONT'D)

A morning like this makes me wonder how many more like this I'll be blessed to enjoy.

JACKSON

Are you feeling okay? Worried about your health?

PASTOR HALL

No nothing like that. I know that God will not put anything in my way that I cannot survive. That is, until the day he does. A man has to make peace with that. And a lot of other things. He has to make peace with the things he says, not just the things he does.

JACKSON

Did you see the TV interview I gave?

PASTOR HALL

Yes. A very nice producer sent me a videocassette.

JACKSON

I wasn't proud of what I said. But I meant it.

PASTOR HALL

Your passion was very apparent. So was your anger. And what did that accomplish?

JACKSON

To be honest, I wasn't thinking about accomplishing anything, pastor.

PASTOR HALL

I think you had something in mind that you wanted to do.

JACKSON

How do you eradicate violence with peace?

PASTOR HALL

That's a very difficult question. Maybe the most difficult question ever asked.

JACKSON

If you don't have the answer then I certainly don't.

PASTOR HALL

I think it's time that you enter the seminary, son. I think that might be one of the answers for you.

JACKSON

I can't. Not yet. I don't have what I need to make you proud.

PASTOR HALL

You have everything you need to serve God.

JACKSON

But I have too much anger in my soul. I can't serve God yet.

PASTOR HALL

Don't wait too long, my son. Your anger might just get bigger than you.

Pastor Hall and Jackson continue walking.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BRIDGE — DAY

On a footbridge in a residential neighborhood, two young boys, Taylor Ward and his unnamed friend, lay on their stomachs facing the steel bar fence that covers the bridge for safety. Taylor has a BB gun in his hands, and is aiming down below. His friend has a pair of binoculars. Taylor is following, with the BB gun, two young boys who are classmates of his, one white, one black. His imagined gunfight alters between each boy. Suddenly a pair of narrators is heard in voiceover.

INVESTIGATOR #1 (V.O.)

Taylor Ward. His sheet starts at the age of thirteen. He doesn't just show a tendency toward violent behavior, he shows a lifelong pattern of it.

Taylor finally trains the gun on the white boy, and then squeezes the trigger on his BB gun. The boy, named Brian, falls off his bike and falls directly onto his face. His friend notices, and stops his bike to help his friend. Taylor and his friend duck and cover on the bridge, hoping they won't be discovered. Taylor's friend doesn't understand.

FRIEND

What the hell! I thought you hated black kids, why did you shoot Brian?!

TAYLOR

My dad told me that white kids that play with black kids were losers.

Taylor rolls back onto his stomach and begins to take aim. His friend gets up and starts to walk away.

TAYLOR

(CONT'D)

You're a pussy.

Taylor watches as his friend walks off. The Investigators rejoin the conversation.

INVESTIGATOR #2 (V.O.)

He got suspended for six months for shooting that boy. But no juvenile hall. What do you make of that?

INVESTIGATOR #1 (V.O.)

I'd say the little shit was good at getting out of trouble.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM — DAY

Inside a hospital room filled with sunshine pouring through the window during the day, we start on a close up of Taylor sitting in a chair, seemingly staring out the window. Wider angles reveal a single hospital bed. Taylor's mother is laying in the bed unconscious, and is being attending to by an African American nurse. After watching the nurse for a while, Taylor says:

TAYLOR

Why you taking care of her?

NURSE

I don't understand, son. I'm a nurse. This is what I do.

TAYLOR

I know what you are. But my daddy told me that a black should serve whites, but they should never be trusted to care for a white person's life.

The nurse stands up straight, clearly offended and angry. She inches toward Taylor slightly.

NURSE

So, that's what your daddy told you? Well I'm not too surprised. He barely looked at me when he dropped you off.

TAYLOR

He told me I needed to spend time with my momma.

NURSE

Do you know why your mother is here?

TAYLOR

She's got the cancer.

NURSE

Yes she does. A pretty bad case of it. Do you know why your mother is in this hospital and not the nice white hospital on the other side of town?

TAYLOR

No, Daddy didn't tell me that.

NURSE

Your mother is here because your family couldn't afford that hospital. So this is where your mama is. I'm the one who's taking care of your mama. And this is probably where she's going to die. So maybe you should feel lucky she has me here to take care of her.

The nurse turns and starts to walk out of the room. Taylor stops her when he asks:

TAYLOR

So there ain't no chance she gonna live?

NURSE

There's always a chance, Taylor. The doctors will do what they can, and then it will be in God's hands. But you might do better to concern yourself with your mother and not with her nurse's color.

The nurse turns and starts to walk out. Taylor suddenly picks up a glass from the floor in front of him and throws it toward the nurse. The glass smashes into the wall next to the door, missing the nurse. The nurse rushes out of the room. Taylor goes back to staring out of the window.

The first Investigator chimes in for a moment:

INVESTIGATOR #1 (V.O.)

The charge nurse made a report about this incident, and she was pushy enough to get it submitted to the police. Predictably, they did nothing about it.

INVESTIGATOR #2 (V.O.)

Today it would probably have been investigated as a hate crime.

INVESTIGATOR #1 (V.O.)

Taylor's mother died two weeks later. After that he got into a fight with one of his classmates, who was black. The principal didn't want to discipline him this time because he had just lost his mother. He got sent home for one day, no suspension.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CAR — NIGHT

Taylor, now an adult, and his girlfriend are sitting in his car, in the parking lot of a fast food restaurant. As the camera swoops in from above the car, a '70s era Chevelle, we hear the discussion between Taylor and his girlfriend.

TAYLOR

What do you mean he touched you?

GIRLFRIEND

You're making something out of nothing. This is just some black guy I work with.

TAYLOR

No, you said he touched you! I want to know where the fuck that he touched you!

Before his girlfriend can even answer, Taylor turns on the car, slams the transmission from Park to Drive, and spins out of the restaurant parking lot in a rage.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR — NIGHT

Now inside the car, Taylor gets even angrier at his girlfriend, who is beginning to get a little afraid.

GIRLFRIEND

Why do you have to be this way? You're the one I love!

TAYLOR

One of them touched you. How do I know you didn't touch him back?!

GIRLFRIEND

Because I promise you I didn't do anything!

TAYLOR

You remember that time you didn't kiss Bobby Gage? And then I found out you did?

GIRLFRIEND

This has nothing to do with that!

Placing his left hand on the steering wheel, Taylor reaches over with his right hand. He unfastens the seatbelt on the passenger side where his girlfriend is sitting. He punches her back for a moment before he grabs the release handle on the passenger side door.

TAYLOR

It has to do with you being a fucking liar!

Taylor slows the car down to about fifteen miles an hour, then opens the passenger door. He brakes extremely to the right, and his girlfriend falls out onto the pavement, bruised and battered. He closes the door without saying anything else, and starts driving away.

Cut to a wide shot. After driving a short distance, Taylor's car turns around, and makes his way back toward the girlfriend. The investigators chime in.

INVESTIGATOR #2 (V.O.)

Are you finally going to tell me that he got charged for this one?

INVESTIGATOR #1 (V.O.)

Well, he was almost charged but it didn't work out. Probably because he went back and picked her up and

took her to the hospital. She didn't want to really accuse Taylor of much. She said they were fighting and the door somehow came open.

INVESTIGATOR #2 (V.O.)

Oh, that happens all the time. This guy must have a deal with devil.

INVESTIGATOR #1 (V.O.)

Either that or the DA. And the DA went after this one. He didn't believe the girl's story, told her she could be honest and that she would be safe —

INVESTIGATOR #2 (V.O.)

But she never accused him. Nobody ever looked at him. So nobody ever saw him. And then what happened, happened.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. KITCHEN — DAY

Beginning on a close up of Richard's young patient, Liam, there is a steady stream of blood dripping down his tiny left arm. Richard reaches in with a cloth and stops the flow of blood as quickly as he can. Liam is still in pain though, and concerned about the blood.

LIAM

Is it ever going to stop bleeding?

Richard maintains his tight grip on Liam's bleeding arm, then turns to him to assure him.

RICHARD

Of course it is. Don't you trust me?

Richard manages to slow the bleeding, then lays Liam's arm down on a table so that he can apply a bandage.

LIAM

Is that it?

RICHARD

We're getting there. Why don't you tell me about how Scooby Doo ended last week while you're waiting?

LIAM

It was the carnival owner, as usual. It's always the same. It's so boring.

RICHARD

Well you have to make sure you don't let your life get boring like Scooby Doo, Liam. Always do something different. Okay?

LIAM

I guess you're right.

RICHARD

But do me one favor, okay? Don't do anything like this again, all right?

LIAM

Okay.

Liam's father comes into the room.

FATHER

Is he going to make it?

RICHARD

Yes. And if I'm lucky I will get to my wife's opening night, too.

LIAM

Your wife is opening tonight?

RICHARD

Well, her play is. And do you know what's going to happen if I don't make it there?

LIAM

No, what??

RICHARD

I'm going to need a doctor worse than you do!

(He then says to Liam)

Now you take it easy for at least the next two days, okay?
You promise? No backflips off the front porch, okay?

Liam nods yes, and Richard steps toward Liam's father.

RICHARD

(CONT'D)

He'll be fine. Just keep an eye on that arm.

Liam's father reaches into his pocket, pulling out a few loose five and one dollar bills.

FATHER

Thanks, doc. Good luck with your wife's opening. I was able to come up with a few dollars for you this time...

Richard kindly refuses the money.

RICHARD

Don't worry about it. When you see me in my office you can pay me. For now, maybe buy him some ice cream. And have a good night.

The father shakes Richard's hand, and then turns around and leads his son out of the room.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DRESSING ROOM — NIGHT

Richard's wife, Karen, is taking off her makeup in the dressing room where the play she is appearing in just premiered. She is sitting in front of a big mirror, as Richard walks in and approaches her. She looks over at him.

KAREN

You made it!

RICHARD

Of course I did. Didn't you see me in the front row? You were brilliant, of course. I heard the News and Record's theatre critic raving about your performance at the bar during intermission. You're a hit!

KAREN

There's only one problem with that story.

RICHARD

I'm waiting.

KAREN

You don't drink.

RICHARD

You really do know me better than anyone else, don't you?

KAREN

That's why I married you.

RICHARD

So, now what do we do?

KAREN

I finish taking off my makeup, and then you take me home? How does that sound?

RICHARD

Your terms are acceptable, young lady.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM — DAY

In the living room of Richard and Karen's home, Richard is sitting on the couch watching the nightly newscast, when Karen walks into the room with a handful of bank statements and bills.

KAREN

Honey? Can I talk to you?

RICHARD

Sure. I think that's in the rules.

KAREN

Well, I was just perusing our monthly expenses and bills, and it looks like you made out check to the Greensboro Urban Ministry, and to the Communist Workers Party. Now the CWP check I could have predicted, but the other one?

RICHARD

Sweetie, I was talking with Mr. Johnson and they really needed that money. I'm sorry I forgot to mention it.

KAREN

Well, that wouldn't be a problem, sugar plum, except now I don't think we'll be able to pay our mortgage.

Karen walks over to the couch and sits down next to Richard, who places his left hand affectionately on her right thigh.

RICHARD

I didn't think about that, honey. I'll transfer some money into the checking account on Monday so we don't lose the house, okay?

Karen edges closer to Richard on the couch, putting her right arm around his neck.

KAREN

You know I support you and the CWP, and I think they are doing great things, don't you?

RICHARD

I know, honey. You just don't want me to give them all of my money, right?

KAREN

Well maybe, but also I wish you guys would realize it's 1979 and the word communist is about as popular as it was in 1959. No offense, but you guys are going to have to rename yourselves at some point.

RICHARD

That's a great suggestion! I'll bring it up.

KAREN

But there's one more thing. You may want to start saving your extra money for your own children...

Richard does a double take.

RICHARD

But we don't have any — wait, what are you saying?

KAREN

What do you think, doctor? Do you need to examine me?

Richard pulls Karen to him closely, and kisses her.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. NEWSROOM — DAY

Christine is standing outside the news director's office. The door is cracked, and she can hear he is having a heated discussion on the phone. Suddenly he slams down his phone, picks up a pile of papers from his desk, and heads toward the door.

Christine is standing there. He walks directly past her, but she follows him and starts talking to him.

CHRISTINE

Boss, you know how you said you have an open door policy?

NEWS DIRECTOR

I have no recollection of that statement.

The news director arrives at a reporter's desk, a man. He takes a stack of papers from his pile and throws it down on the reporter's desk. The reporter looks up from his typewriter.

NEWS DIRECTOR

(CONT'D)

I just read your story about the kindergarten teacher who just went back to work after fighting cancer.

REPORTER #1

Yeah boss, it's really uplifting isn't it?

NEWS DIRECTOR

Yeah, I'm uplifted. But your story is full of typos and could have been written by one of the kindergarteners at that school. Find a dictionary or thesaurus or something, or you're going to be ripping copy at the station infested by roaches in Wilmington by next week, okay?

REPORTER #1

Okay, will do boss.

The new director walks off and Christine follows him, trying to squeeze a word in.

CHRISTINE

Sir, do you think I could have a moment of your time to discuss a really important story?

NEWS DIRECTOR

Maybe, but if it was a really important story I think I would already be discussing it with you. One second.

The news director, with Christine in tow, arrives at another reporter's desk, a woman this time. She looks up at him.

NEWS DIRECTOR

(CONT'D)

You want me to let you do a story about a bunch of witches in Winston-Salem?

REPORTER #2

They call themselves wiccans, boss. And their message is that we should take better care of the planet. And each other.

NEWS DIRECTOR

That's nice. But do you understand exactly which notch of the Bible Belt we live in here, young lady?

REPORTER #2

The second one?

NEWS DIRECTOR

More like the fourth or fifth notch, unfortunately. I can't risk offending anybody. My contract's up and we begin salary negotiations next week. Sorry.

The reporter just throws her hands up in the air. The news director walks off and turns to Christine as she follows.

NEWS DIRECTOR

(CONT'D)

Okay, shadow, alright. So this is your thirty — make it fifteen second pitch. Go.

Christine thinks for a moment, and then spits out —

CHRISTINE

The Communist Worker's Party has been given a permit to hold a rally at Morningside Homes next week, and they're calling it "Death to the Klan." I was in China Grove when the two groups clashed in July. I think it could be a good story, and if the Klan shows up, it could get interesting.

NEWS DIRECTOR

What exactly were you doing at a rally in China Grove in July?

CHRISTINE

I don't know. I was covering the barbeque festival and I heard about The CWP march.

NEWS DIRECTOR

The barbeque festival doesn't happen until October! I live here, remember! And if we were to cover this story, which is likely to be as boring as a book festival, tell me why I shouldn't give it to Conklin. That's his beat anyway!

CHRISTINE

Why? Because I think I have more to offer than just a puff piece about the new elephant that just arrived at the zoo! And I want you to promise me that this one time, a woman, this woman in particular, will be given the chance to report something real on this station! And also because I worked for it, and because I fucking found it! How is that for a real reason?

NEWS DIRECTOR

Okay, stop screaming, calm down. But may I remind you that two months ago you were doing news cut ins at the lowest rated AM radio station in the Southeast? Cool your

jets, Brenda Starr. But it's not a bad idea for a story, okay?
And we'll look into it. Maybe you can tag along and do a
side piece. I'll let you know.

The news director walks off, and Christine stands there silently.

CUT TO:

EXT. GAS STATION — NIGHT

At a small gas station/convenience store, which has a small diner directly next door to it, Floyd's Ford coupe pulls in and parks next Ronson's truck. Ronson gets out of his truck, and into Floyd's car.

INT. CAR — NIGHT

Inside the vehicle, Ronson lights a cigarette as he and Floyd speak. Floyd is drinking from a half pint of whiskey, and after his latest swig, he offers it to Ronson, who raises his left hand to refuse. Floyd takes another swig from the bottle before saying:

FLOYD

Good meeting tonight, don't you think?

RONSON

Of course it was. They all are.

FLOYD

We're doing important work here. Don't ever forget that.

RONSON

That's why I'm here.

FLOYD

Absolutely. So next week, no meeting, it's just going to be a gathering of the head goblins. I heard a rumor they're going to vote on whether or not to choose a new Grand Dragon. If they don't they'll just keep Teague in charge. Who knows. I hear Teague is going to be out, but you didn't hear that from me, okay?

RONSON

You have my word. I don't break confidences.

FLOYD

I know you don't, buddy! That's why we let you in. I just wanted to share that with you. To let you know the organization, it's moving forward, we're like a democracy, really. We don't stand still.

Ronson draws on his cigarette, but doesn't say anything. Floyd looks down for a moment, and then back at Ronson.

FLOYD

(CONT'D)

So we'll see what happens.

(pause)

You know, Ronson, you're kind of an interesting character. You're not like most men. I can't figure you out. What is it that you are looking for?

RONSON

I want to make new friends. I want fellowship with people who share the same moral values that I have. I want to spend my time with people, men, who have fought for this country, not just here but in other countries, and who don't like what's going on right now in this country. The one that we fought for in the first place. How does that sound?

FLOYD

That sounds just fine, of course. Just right. But I don't know, buddy. Sometimes it's hard to get a sense of what's going on in your head, you know? No offense or nothing.

RONSON

A very smart person told me once, "Don't ever let anyone know who you really are, until you absolutely have to tell them. Be a mystery to everyone, except for yourself." You know who I'm talking about, right?

FLOYD

Of course I do. Of course I do.

Ronson puts his cigarette in his mouth so that he can shake Floyd's hand. He nods goodbye to him, and then gets out of the car and into his truck. But before he does, Ronson looks up at the store and decides to walk into it. He waves at Floyd again as Floyd's car pulls off. Ronson throws down his cigarette, stamps it out, and then walks into the store.

A moment later the camera pans to catch him walking out the back door of the store, and then in the front door of the diner next door.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DINER — NIGHT

Inside the diner, Ronson spots the lieutenant who is sitting at a booth in the back. Ronson stands in front of the booth.

RONSON

Mind if I join you?

LIEUTENANT

Please have a seat.

Ronson sits down, reaches into his jacket for his cigarettes and lighter, and lights a cigarette.

LIEUTENANT

(CONT'D)

So how were your meetings?

RONSON

The first one was the same old, same old. But when I was talking to Floyd a few minutes ago he told me something interesting.

LIEUTENANT

I can't wait to hear about it.

RONSON

They're voting this week about changing their leadership. Word is Teague will almost definitely be out. Taylor will be in.

LIEUTENANT

What's the reason?

RONSON

Apparently Teague is getting too liberal. He doesn't want to even burn a cross anymore, let alone crack some heads. They're looking for more "aggressive" leadership.

LIEUTENANT

Teague is getting too liberal? He's the primary suspect in a lynching in 1973. The victim was not white.

RONSON

But not enough evidence to prosecute?

LIEUTENANT

I didn't have enough evidence to interview him. The man that implicated him is as dead as disco. So now the organization has new leadership. Just great. Let the lynchings begin.

RONSON

I'm sorry to be the bearer of bad news.

LIEUTENANT

It's not your fault, of course. But that's the opposite of what we need to hear right now. With this rally coming up, we need them to stay in the background and just spit and curse at the CWP. You think you going to be able to help us with that?

RONSON

Does standing in the background sound like the Klan? I want to help, but they still don't even trust me yet. I'm... I'm an anomaly to them. But I'm trying. I'm trying to fit in.

LIEUTENANT

If you get the chance to have some input, just tell them to take a breather on this one. Greensboro is a big city. If a pussycat gets run over here, it's going to make the nightly news. They have a rally scheduled in Burlington next month. That's a small town. If some melons get mussed up at that meeting, there ain't going to be three TV stations there with cameras to film it live. But in Greensboro...

RONSON

They better be ready for their close up.

LIEUTENANT

Absolutely. We already have TV people calling to confirm the march. The press is going to be there.

RONSON

So what you're saying to me is that I have to try and convince a bunch of liquored up white supremacists that they have to keep their weapons holstered?

LIEUTENANT

Just give it a try. I heard that you're very persuasive. You even got them to consider a new uniform.

RONSON

I've tried to. I don't know about you, but I don't like wearing bed sheets out in public, especially when I'm mucking around with flammable liquids!

LIEUTENANT

You're smart, Ronson. That's why we wanted you with us.

RONSON

That's nice of you to say. But now I'm in deep with them.
And I'm in deep with you. But the problem is none of the
cops know me. I get caught in their sights at the wrong
time during this goddamn thing, and they're going to put
one in my head. What are you going to do to stop that,
give me a badge?

The Lieutenant looks around the diner, and waits a moment for any attention from the other customers to calm down. He looks at Ronson.

LIEUTENANT

We're going to be right with you through the whole thing.
My men know what you look like. And my men are going
to be briefed again about you right before this thing. You will
not go out there naked.

RONSON

I'm not worried about being naked. I'm just worried about
getting killed, especially since I am only getting paid \$25
per meeting and 22 cents a mile.

Ronson doesn't say anything else, just takes another drag on his cigarette while staring at the Lieutenant.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX — NIGHT

Ronson's truck pulls into the parking lot of the apartment complex that he lives in. He parks his truck in the second row of cars. Ronson turns off the engine, and gets out of the driver's side, closing and locking the door behind him. As he walks to his apartment, his brother Bobby gets out of a late model Pontiac sedan, and leans on the trunk of his car. Ronson approaches and extends his hand to his brother. Bobby takes his hand and pulls his brother closer to him for a hug. Ronson pulls away after a second, and asks Bobby:

BOBBY

How the hell are you, brother?

RONSON

I'm okay. You want to come in?

BOBBY

What the fuck do you think?

Ronson doesn't say anything else, and leads Bobby into his apartment. He opens the door, and they both enter.

INT. APARTMENT — NIGHT

Inside Ronson's sparsely decorated apartment, Bobby sits down on the living room couch, as Ronson asks:

RONSON

Do you want a drink?

BOBBY

I heard you didn't drink anymore.

RONSON

I don't. But I can still offer you one, if you want one.

BOBBY

In that case, why not?

Ronson walks into the kitchen, and pours Bobby a rum and Coke. He walks back to where his brother is sitting and offers it to him. Bobby takes it and says:

BOBBY

(CONT'D)

Thanks. Cheers. Here's to you not drinking.

Bobby takes a swig of his drink and asks:

BOBBY

(CONT'D)

So, how are you? What are you doing?

RONSON

I'm the same as I always am. You know I never change.
And you?

BOBBY

Nothing new. Angie's on my ass about child support,
the mill is cutting back on my overtime, and my rent is
overdue. So I'm broke, as usual.

RONSON

Do you need some money?

BOBBY

I need a winning lottery ticket, but North Carolina doesn't
have a lottery. So I guess I do, yeah. But not if it's going to
put you out.

RONSON

I've got a few extra bucks coming in this month. No
problem.

BOBBY

What, you got something going on the side?

RONSON

Something like that. But I can't talk about it. Sorry.

Ronson walks over to a table in the foyer, opens the drawer, and takes out an envelope. He takes three \$20 bills out of the envelope, puts the envelope back in the drawer, closes it, and walks over to Bobby, handing him the cash. Bobby takes it and stuffs it in his left pocket.

BOBBY

Thanks again. You must be doing well! You can't give me a hint about your side job?

RONSON

You remember our next door neighbor growing up? Mr. Richardson? He never called a black man by his name, even if he knew it. He always called them boy.

BOBBY

Yeah that guy was an asshole. I could never understand why no one ever kicked his ass. Why were you thinking about him?

RONSON

I don't know. I just was. You know, I used to see him at that gas station that was two blocks from our house. And every time he came out of the store, if there were any black kids standing outside, he would give them each a dollar. I've been thinking about that.

BOBBY

So, maybe he wasn't a complete asshole?

RONSON

Maybe. Or maybe he put down black men because he thought that was the way he was supposed to act, but he didn't think he was supposed to be mean to black kids.

BOBBY

I guess nobody ever taught him that.

RONSON

Maybe. But my point was that's what my side job is — I'm pretending to somebody I'm not. Does that make any sense?

BOBBY

No, not at all. But coming from you, that's just what I expect.

Ronson doesn't say anything else.

[To be continued...]