

BLOSSOM THRU THE BRICKS

Written by

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TEASER

OVER BLACK:

The sound of SIRENS are heard.

FLASHING LIGHTS slowly come into focus:

CAPTAIN JUAN MARCOS (V.O.)  
We, the members of the Department  
of Public Safety's Police Division,  
serve the diverse population within  
our jurisdiction with respect,  
fairness and sensitivity. We are  
committed to the protection of life  
and property. We represent the  
varied culture in this city, and  
pledge that through our effort, we  
will establish a new standard of  
excellence in law enforcement and  
service to the city of Newark.

FADE IN:

EXT. SOUTH ORANGE AVENUE - SOUTH ORANGE, NJ - NIGHT

There is low visibility on the dark, quiet streets which host  
a less-than-normal flow of traffic.

Two black, male TEENAGERS, with black hoodies pulled over  
their heads walk along the roadway under the dim street  
lights.

TEENAGER #1 sets his eyes on a red HONDA CIVIC parked off a  
side street. He signals to his accomplice to follow his lead  
as crosses over to it.

Teenager #1 slides a SLIM JIM out from under his sleeve, as  
TEENAGER #2 follows discreetly, on the lookout.

Teenager #1 places the slim jim between the driver's side  
window and rubber seal of the door, and slides...

CLICK! The lock pop's up and the boisterous CAR ALARM sounds,  
echoing off the nearby buildings.

The teenagers enter the vehicle.

From the driver's seat, Teenager #1 CUTS the ignition wire  
from underneath the steering wheel, and the engine starts,  
silencing the alarm.

Teenager #2 uses a SCREWDRIVER and breaks the ignition key slot, and hands it to his counterpart. TEENAGER #1 pushes the screwdriver into the broken key ignition and the puts the car in drive.

They roar with laughter and drive off, tires screeching into the night.

Nearby, the red light of a SECURITY CAMERA flashes as it records the action from a nearby convenience.

There was a witness to their crime after all.

END TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

INT. SPORTS BAR - NIGHT

A half-burnt out neon sign buzzes on a wall beside tenants, posters and other sports memorabilia --

"CENTRAL PARK SPORTS BAR -- More Beer, More Games, More Fun!"

The aroma of stale ale and searing food set the tone amongst the crowded, socially diverse atmosphere. Patrons take turns yelling at each other over the extreme decibels spilling out from the speakers of the multiple flat-screens blasting various sporting events.

It's a celebration for DANNY POLOVSKI, 21. The All-American white boy with brown eyes, dark hair and a subtle hint of heartthrob has just been selected as one of Newark Police Departments latest recruits.

He sits at a booth with several of his closest, and rowdiest, friends.

The boys watch as WINGS finesse their way to the table on a tray below two healthy breasts tucked into a tight uniform. Another pair holds together MUGS OF BEER being delicately placed down, the foam seeping through the bar-naps and staining the table. The WAITRESSES leave with a smile.

Danny's husky, arrogant, semi-plastered best friend MICHAEL, 21, raises his glass.

MICHAEL

Let's salute to our boy, Danny!

The rest of the boys follow suit.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Congrats on your new position at the Newark Police Department. We're proud of you, brother.

They CLANK their glasses and SWIG.

BOY #1

Danny, don't forget our PBA cards. These Linden cops are no joke.

DANNY  
 (sarcastic)  
 That's all you guys are using me  
 for, huh?

MICHAEL  
 You signed up to be a NARC, bro.  
 Comes with the territory.

DANNY  
 Fuck you, Mike.

BOY #2  
 Hey, I'm sure we're not the only  
 ones looking for favors. Since when  
 do you curse, anyway? They man you  
 up in the academy, or what?

Danny sighs, irritated.

DANNY  
 You guys are pissing me off. My  
 life's the one on the line out  
 there and all you shitheads care  
 about is how you'll benefit.

MICHAEL  
 Aight aight, let him be. D might  
 arrest us for harassment.

The boys all laugh. Danny shakes his head and turns toward  
 the TV.

ON THE TV: A News Report airs. Riots gather in Detroit after  
 a police officer has been shot and is in critical condition.

Michael watches the report, then leans into Danny.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)  
 I hope you's ready for all that, D.  
 You ain't in Linden anymore. Shit  
 is no joke.

DANNY  
 My grandfather was a cop. I'm well  
 aware of the lifestyle.

MICHAEL  
 Times have changed, bro! Especially  
 in Brick City.

Danny looks down at his empty glass of beer. He calls to the  
 waitress.

DANNY

Can we get a round of shots?  
Whiskey.

New beginnings...

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - WEEQUAHIC PARK - DAY

A paved court in the middle of a public park.

Uniformed Newark Police Officer, JAMAL WATERS, 25, enjoys a friendly game of ball with neighborhood street kid, DAQUAN HARRIS, 14.

We get the sense Jamal is a mentor of sorts for young Daquan.

Jamal dribbles the ball towards the hoop. He jumps for a lay-up and watches the ball HIT the backboard and SCORE!

He passes the ball to Daquan and runs out in front to guard.

JAMAL

One more point and that's game  
little man. Don't miss this shot or  
you know it's over!

DAQUAN

Haven't you heard? I'm the comeback  
kid. Better shut up and guard me.

Daquan dribbles by Jamal toward the basket.

He runs toward the center of the free throw line, JUMPS back and SHOOTS.

Jamal leaps up to block him, but the ball SWOOSHES through the net. Daquan sticks his tongue out at Jamal and passes him the ball.

JAMAL

I'm about to end this game real  
quick.

Jamal immediately runs past Daquan's guard to the 3-point line and SHOOTS. Daquan misses the block and watches as the ball SWOOSHES into the basket. Gave over.

JAMAL (CONT'D)

You're the comeback kid alright.  
Comeback to practice some more.

DAQUAN

Yeah, yeah.

Shit-talk aside, Jamal and Daquan walk over to a nearby bench just outside of the court.

They sit and watch the view of the park, admiring the kids playing in the playground.

JAMAL

How's your mom been?

DAQUAN

Same old game. She livin' as long as I can afford her medication.

JAMAL

I get it, fam. I know it's hard. So if you ever need anything, call me. You have my math.

A CALL patches through on Jamal's radio, asking for his assistance.

JAMAL (CONT'D)

Duty calls!

He hops off the bench and turns to Daquan, hands him a \$20.

JAMAL (CONT'D)

Get yourself some food for you and your mom. Especially you since it's exhausting losing all the time!

Daquan chuckles and snatches the money.

Jamal salutes Daquan with two fingers and walks back to his patrol car.

INT. THE CROSBY GASTROPUB - MONTCLAIR, NJ - NIGHT

The fireplace sparkles beside the bar of the local, high-end gastropub. Guests take in the relaxing atmosphere as they partake in an evening of craft-cocktails and quality fare.

Detective VINCE DONATO, 52, the charismatic yet diligent Detective veteran enjoys dinner with his wife, IRENE, 50.

Vince POPS open a bottle of wine, and pours himself and Irene a glass. Irene takes her glass and smiles, leaning in to gaze at her husband before she takes a sip.

IRENE

I'm so proud of you, Vince. And I appreciate the shit outta ya!

Vince grabs Irene's face and pulls her in for a kiss.

VINCE

Did you really fuckin' think I wouldn't make sure my family was taken care of?

IRENE

Well, you been so busy with these cases and all...

VINCE

I don't want to talk about that right now. Our baby girl is going to be okay.

Irene turns away and starts to tear up, choked up with a little sarcastic laughter. She's trying to hold back her sensitivity, but her facial expression shows differently.

IRENE

It's just not fair...

Vince moves to her side of the table to comfort her.

VINCE

Irene, can we please just have a nice dinner? I set this up for us.

IRENE

OK! I'm sorry. Wrong time. Shit.

She wipes her tears and gathers herself. She knocks back her wine, then snags the bottle and takes a swig right out of it.

VINCE

What are you a fuckin' fera? This is a nice place.

IRENE

I don't care. I'm stressed out and horny. Let's get our shit to go and get outta here. I wanna fuck.

VINCE

I could have been with any other dirty woman in the world, but I chose you.

They share a loving smile.

VINCE (CONT'D)

Let's get da fuck outta here. No more fancy shit either.



Vince and Irene embrace in a slobbery kiss.

Their WAITRESS approaches.

WAITRESS

Umm, ready for your check?

Vince slaps a couple large bills on the table. The waitress seems amused.

VINCE

Keep the change.

Vince takes Irene's hand and they get up from the table and make their way toward the exit.

Just then, Vince's CELL buzzes. He checks the screen -- It's a TEXT from Donald:

--DONALD: *"Hey brother, we have to go. It's urgent."*

Vince slumps over, annoyed. He looks to Irene.

IRENE

C'mon, what the fuck. Really, now?

VINCE

Fuck it, we got time. Remember the times I use to park down the block before dropping you off to your father's? We gonna re-enact those scenes.

She giggles with excitement and they hurry off.

EXT. ROOFTOP - NEWARK, NJ - NIGHT

Vince and his long-time partner Detective DONALD JACKSON, black, 52, stand on the rooftop of a low income, residential apartment building.

They hover over the dead body of a BLACK TEEN MALE. The boy's body lays stiff, covered in dried blood with four noticeable gunshot wounds to his chest.

A couple of EMT's examine the body, while a crime scene PHOTOGRAPHER takes pictures and documents his observations.

In the distance, other uniformed OFFICERS are taking witness statements from a black ADULT MALE, various NEIGHBORS, and one HYSTERICAL MOTHER.

Vince steps away to the edge of the roof, watching out over the nightly view of the city. He pulls out a box of Newports from his jacket and slaps the box three times over the palm of his other hand. He pulls out a cigarette and lights it.

Donald observes the body as he takes in the emotions that surround him. He steps back and crosses over to Vince.

VINCE

Remember when Newark use to be a beautiful place, even after the riots? Now it's the same bullshit, over and over. You think you would get use to it by now, but this shit still takes a toll on me.

DONALD

I hear you, brother. City changes every day.

VINCE

We grew up around here, Don. Doesn't matter which block. Now it's cuttin' into my pussy.

Donald nods in agreement. Vince takes a puff from his cigarette.

VINCE (CONT'D)

Go home. We'll go over the details in the morning. I don't feel like talking about this case right now.

DONALD

Thanks a lot, Vince.

Donald turns back to the scene, leaving Vince alone, still looking out over the city with a moment of clarity.

EXT. NEWARK POLICE DEPARTMENT - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Danny pulls his car into the lot, wearing his new academy jumpsuit, ready to take on his first shift and get his hands dirty.

INT. DANNY'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Danny watches through the window, observing all the other NEW RECRUITS as they anxiously run inside. No matter what color, shape, size, or mood someone was in, they seemed to have left it behind them as they ran ahead into the unknown.

The building lights shine bright on the employee entrance door, as if God himself is calling Danny to walk through it. But the look on Danny's face tells us there is a whole 'nother animal through that door and beyond these streets, with more problems piled up than the bricks it was made from.

DANNY

You're not in Linden anymore.

He looks down at the THIN GOLD CHAIN around his neck, a Jesus charm attached to it. He grabs the chain, closes his eyes, and says a prayer in silence.

He reaches for his CELL and sends a quick text message to his MOM -- "I love you."

Then, he grabs his duffle bag from the passenger seat and opens the door.

Time to move in...

INT. NEWARK POLICE DEPARTMENT - WOMEN'S LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

Corporal KEYANA NASH, 36, black, second in command of her squad, stern, militant, but attractive, puts on her patrol gear in front her locker.

Keyana's locker is precisely organized. The creases in her hanging uniforms are crisp, and her makeup and hair pins are all organized accordingly on the top shelf.

She adjusts her bullet proof vest in front of the mirror inside the locker door. Beside it are several photos which reflect her life and character -- receiving a military award, promotion ceremony as corporal, and family photos of her daughter, JADE, 6, and husband, DONOVAN, 36.

She gives herself one last look over. Satisfied, she performs one final ritual -- she kisses her hand and touches a photo of her daughter.

Other FEMALE OFFICERS enter, chattering in the background. Their voices echo off the locker room walls. Keyana immediately changes her soft expression as one of the officers addresses her.

FEMALE OFFICER #1

Corporal, great job the other night assisting the gang unit on that arrest.

FEMALE OFFICER #2

Keyana just came in there, hopped on that asshole's back and took him down!

KEYANA

Shit, had no option. Couldn't just let go of his big ass. I'm just glad everyone made it out safe.

She closes her locker door.

KEYANA (CONT'D)

I'll see you ladies upstairs in briefing. Don't be late.

The female officers give her a salute. Keyana exits.

INT. NEWARK POLICE DEPARTMENT - BRIEFING ROOM - LATER

Shift change is underway at the department, with the overnight squad gathering in the briefing room.

Patrol Lieutenant, MARCUS GLOVER, black, 55, stands at the podium and shuffles his paperwork in prep for the briefing announcements, over the sounds of officers' conversing.

Danny finds a seat in the back of the room. He anxiously shakes his right leg, waiting to start his training.

Marcus TAPS the podium microphone twice. FEEDBACK from the mic quiets the room.

MARCUS

Before I begin my announcements, I would like to introduce our newest recruit, Danny Polovski. Polovski, introduce yourself.

Danny stands and is met with blank stares. Nervous, he stutters his speech.

DANNY

I'm Danny Polovski. I want to say thank you to the department for accepting me. I'm excited about joining the brotherhood of the Newark PD.

Some of the officers chuckle, quietly mocking Danny's cliché speech.

OFFICER #1  
Sure thing, golden boy.

INT. NEWARK POLICE DEPARTMENT - BRIEFING ROOM - LATER

Marcus introduces Danny to the somewhat disheveled Sergeant  
FREDDY MALONE, white, 52.

MARCUS  
Danny, meet Sergeant Freddy Malone.  
I've assigned him as your partner.

DANNY  
Pleased to meet you, Sergeant.

Danny and Freddy shake hands as the other officers start  
clearing the room.

EXT. NEWARK POLICE DEPARTMENT - PARKING LOT

The OFFICERS of the overnight shift spread out to find their  
designated vehicles. Gear in hand, and game faces on.

Danny and Freddy emerge from the building walking side-by-  
side. Freddy gives a sideways glance to Danny, sizing him up.

FREDDY  
This is your day, Rookie. I hope  
you're ready for this.

DANNY  
I was born ready, Sergeant.

Freddy doesn't even crack a smile. His stern demeanor makes  
Danny nervous, but he does his best to hide it.

They arrive at their assigned patrol vehicle, and Freddy  
climbs in the driver's seat. He adjusts the rearview mirror,  
so he can observe Danny's performance.

Danny doesn't get in. Instead, he walks around the vehicle  
and performs a thorough inspection, ensuring all equipment is  
in place -- shotgun, first aid kit, flares, radio, etc.

With everything good to go, Danny takes his place in the  
passenger seat.

INT./EXT. PATROL CAR/STREETS OF NEWARK - CONTINUOUS

Freddy and Danny ride in uncomfortable silence for several  
moments, before Freddy finally breaks the ice.

FREDDY

I wasn't in the department when your grandfather was here, but I heard he was a sharp cop. You have some shoes to fill, Rookie.

DANNY

He's the reason I pursued a career in law enforcement. He's getting pretty old, doesn't have much time left. But I want to make him proud while he's here.

FREDDY

Lots of people want to be cops, but very few can handle it. We'll see if Newark will make a man out of you.

Danny says nothing.

FREDDY (CONT'D)

What's your background, Russian?

DANNY

Polish, sir.

FREDDY

One of my good friends is Polish. Strong guy. Sobieski. You actually might find him in the glove box.

DANNY

The glove box, sir?

Freddy gestures for Danny to go ahead, so he reaches for the glove compartment and pulls it open.

Inside, a flask slides down with two 1-milliliter bottles of vodka, labeled "Sobieski."

Danny looks at it, stunned.

FREDDY

He's been a very good friend to me!

He laughs. Realizing Danny isn't, his expression turns sour.

FREDDY (CONT'D)

If you tell anyone he rides along in the car with me, you're going to have some fuckin' problems. Sobieski helps me cope.

Danny SLAMS the glove box shut and turns away to look out the window.

DANNY

I don't know what you're talking about, Serge.

Freddy smirks.

FREDDY

Not sure about the bullshit they taught you in the academy, but since you're training under me, follow my motto -- everyone is full of shit until proven otherwise. Everyone lies, even witnesses.

Danny turns back to face him.

FREDDY (CONT'D)

Most importantly, cover your ass from all angles. Never know who might try and stick you, including your own. Not everyone in the department is your friend. Remember that.

Danny remains quiet, but acknowledges he understands with a head gesture.

END OF ACT ONE