

detroit wild

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Inspired by true events.

EXT. MICHIGAN WILDERNESS. DAY. 1672

Unblemished serenity. A world untouched by conflict. Only the sounds of nature. Sloshing waves. Songbirds.

IROQUOIS NATIVES bathe each other in the shallow straits of Lake Erie. The high summer sun sparkles in a cloudless sky.

On shore, a deeply focused NATIVE GIRL skins DEAD BEAVERS -- it's as grueling of a task as it is gruesome.

LATER

IROQUOIS CHIEFS find themselves in a headed debate with strong-willed FRENCH MISSIONARIES.

Fights break out at the base of a TOTEM POLE honoring The Great Peacemaker -- a Native prophet who counseled peace amongst warring tribes. The violence spills into the lake.

A NATIVE MAN grabs a FRENCH MISSIONARY and DUNKS his head underwater -- the Missionary SCREAMS -- all BUBBLES.

As we resurface for air--

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. FORT DETROIT. DUSK. 1701

ANTOINE DE LA MOTHE CADILLAC and other FRENCH EXPLORERS establish and expand their settlement on the north bank of the Detroit River, working tirelessly.

Cadillac and some others pray together in a circle -- *Amen* -- then, axes swing -- wood is chopped -- branches are broken.

Cadillac plants a handmade crucifix into the mud--

WHIP PAN TO:

EXT. RIVER RAISIN. NIGHT. 1813

CHAOS.

We're in the middle of the RIVER RAISIN MASSACRE -- everything is blanketed in snow and stained with blood.

An AMERICAN SOLDIER nearly slips on a patch of ice before driving a bayonet into a BRITISH SOLDIER's abdomen.

The fighting is sloppy and unchoreographed -- brutal and unceremonious -- the deadliest conflict in Michigan history.

A grunting SHAWNEE INDIAN slowly scalps an AMERICAN PRISONER, brutally sawing through his forehead.

Muskets FIRE -- canons COUGH -- SOLDIERS get overpowered -- stabbed -- gutted -- bodies break through the ice.

A thick stream of black blood spills onto the frozen river -- pouring across the frost -- formless at first -- then shaping itself into the familiar cityscape skyline of--

EXT. DOWNTOWN DETROIT. AERIAL TIMELAPSE. 1900s

Buildings, towers, skyscrapers, churches, roads, streetcars, parks, boulevards, avenues, houses, stores, mansions -- we're watching the Motor City build its engine.

We move in closer -- hovering over an expansive fairground--

EXT. ELECTRIC PARK. DOWNTOWN DETROIT. DUSK

-- and we're pushing through the pandemonium of a 20th century amusement park -- an enormous playground of vintage attractions -- the Tunnel of Love -- soaring over the rides -- the ferris wheel -- the carnival games -- the freak shows.

On screen we see...

Detroit 1924

CEDRIC D'ANGELO -- late-20s, biracial, darkly handsome -- cuts through the crowd.

Beneath his newsboy cap, his pale gray eyes look focused.

Up ahead -- a wealthy WHITE COUPLE purchases cotton candy from a jovial ITALIAN VENDOR.

Cedric casually quickens his pace.

He "accidentally" bumps shoulders with the WEALTHY MAN, making *just* enough body contact to lift his billfold.

CEDRIC
(without breaking stride)
Pardon me, sir.

Cedric tips his hat. Keeps walking.

We're struggling to keep up.

LATER

Cedric approaches the ticket booth for *The Derby Racer*, an enormous roller coaster erected over a large sign that reads:

Trip Thru the Clouds - Detroit's Greatest Ride

As an ATTENDANT knots a blue balloon around a CRYING CHILD'S wrist, Cedric slips through the turnstile, disappearing into the pulsating crowd.

ON THE ROLLER COASTER

CLICK! CLICK! CLICK!

Braving the steep ascent, Cedric looks over at the YOUNG LADY sitting next to him.

CEDRIC

Hi. Hey.
(offers hand)
Cedric.

She blushes -- tucks her hair behind her ear -- flattered.

The roller coaster DROPS -- barreling down the narrow tracks. The Young Lady SCREAMS, terrified, as we--

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT./INT. PITTSBURGH INN. SUNSET

A tea kettle -- WHISTLING -- blows out thick ribbons of steam like a locomotive.

We're inside a humble, home-based establishment catering to all-black clientele -- the headquarters for urban business.

ON THE PORCH

Two elderly black MEN sit in a screened-in sun room, rocking in their respective easy chairs, sipping iced tea.

There's a YOUNG BOY sitting on the stoop with no shirt, no shoes and a pump-action shotgun draped across his lap.

He SNEEZES -- the gun tumbles from his lap.

IN THE KITCHEN

Cedric is led through the massive house by ROSCOE CASSIDY (30s) and OTIS HAMMERLIN (30s) -- two high-ranking, well-dressed Black bootleggers. JAZZ MUSIC plays in the distance.

OTIS
 (to Cedric)
 Stayin for dinner?

Cedric shakes his head.

ROSCOE
 He only here for dessert.
 (winks)
 Caint blame ya.

Dogs BARK excitedly -- a YOUNG BOY clumsily pours too much kibble into their bowls -- an ELDERLY WOMAN tightly cornrows a YOUNG GIRL's frizzy hair.

IN THE BILLIARDS ROOM

Displayed on a red-felt pool table are a dozen stolen items: glimmering RINGS and NECKLACES -- a handful of POCKETBOOKS -- inscribed POCKET WATCHES -- even a small HANDGUN -- all sprawled out across a spread of newspaper.

Otis sits on the edge of the pool table, quietly inspecting the jewelry beneath the stained-glass island light.

Roscoe tests the weight of the handgun.

Cedric waits. Nibbles at his thumbnail -- checks his watch -- sparks a cigarette -- exhales smoke through his nose.

OTIS
 You got a beautiful collection here.

CEDRIC
 Yes sir.

Otis slowly reveals his money clip. He peels off a crisp \$100 -- hands it over to Cedric.

Cedric nods. He folds the bill and tucks it into his pocket. He shakes hands with Otis, then Roscoe.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BOARDINGHOUSE. NIGHT

A squat red brick building. Cedric approaches and enters through the heavy wooden doors.

INT. BOARDINGHOUSE. CEDRIC'S ROOM. NIGHT

A single occupant room -- Cedric's home.

There's a modest-sized cot for a bed, a hand-sewn pillow, a wooden wardrobe half-filled with clothes -- a framed funeral prayer card for his deceased BROTHER -- a blackened pipe next to small vials of both white and brown powders.

From the shadows, Cedric shines his shoes, a cigarette dangling from his lips.

A female VOCALIST croons softly on vinyl.

Once finished, Cedric tries on the shoe -- stumbling at first, slowly strutting across the hardwood floor -- studying his gait in the reflection of the full-length mirror.

PRE-LAP the sound of a raucous crowd ROOTING loudly--

EXT. NAVIN FIELD. DUSK

A dazzling 23,000 seat baseball stadium constructed of steel-and-concrete -- the original skeleton of Tigers Stadium.

The baritone ANNOUNCER narrates the game's activity. The crowd CHEERS uproariously.

The dirt parking lot is flooded with SPECTATORS and Packards and Fords and even a Chalmers "30" with a waiting DRIVER.

Waving away the dust, Cedric sells scalped tickets to a small group of COLLEGE KIDS.

In return, Cedric is handed a fistful of cash -- which he pockets without pause.

CEDRIC
Enjoy the game. Go Tigers.

INT. NAVIN FIELD. SAME

CRACK! The sound of a wooden bat colliding with a fastball. The crowd reacts.

Overlooking the green-and-brown baseball diamond, Cedric shoves his way through the crowd with his friend -- ISAIAH LOVEJOY (early-20s, black) -- both fighting towards the fence.

Isaiah watches the game through a pair of operaglasses while eating from a small sack of venison jerky.

From across the ballpark, Cedric notices a small section of SPECTATORS that look unlike everyone else -- well-dressed in loud, expensive, pastel suits and fedoras -- talking shit -- half-watching the game.

Cedric eyes them from afar, biting a black braid of licorice. He motions for the operaglasses.

IN THE STANDS

These WELL-DRESSED MEN are top-ranking members of Detroit's underworld -- dapper, rich, no nonsense bootleggers.

ABRAHAM BURNSTEIN, 29, the acting boss of the Purple Gang, the oldest brother of four -- reserved and contemplative, wise beyond his years -- whispering into the ear of

CHARLES LEITER, 50s, wearing a bow-tie, bowler hat in his lap, co-owner of the Oakland Sugar House, which sells corn sugar used to make liquor -- sitting next to his partner:

HENRY SHORR, 40s, breezy in a white linen suit, monitoring the crowd -- hyper-vigilant -- handsome as an ex-husband. He's a bagman, delivering money to his friends in New York and Chicago.

JOSEPH BURNSTEIN, 26, the feared Purple Gang underboss -- deceptively intelligent -- uniquely handsome -- cunning and aggressive -- he's the meanest Jew in Detroit.

Cedric lowers the operaglasses.

ON THE FIELD

TRACKING as TY COBB sprints down the third baseline -- cleats digging into dirt -- only the CLEVELAND CATCHER stands in his way -- Cobb slides into home plate -- the throw is late -- the UMPIRE sweeps his arms -- *SAFE!* -- the crowd goes absolutely crazy.

Cedric and Isaiah hug and laugh excitedly, high-fiving other CHEERING SPECTATORS.