

INT. POLICE INTERROGATION ROOM

In the room, we see a metal bench against a wall with a pipe running behind it, and a wooden table with two perfunctory chairs. A cop stands in the room with a young man in a zippered hooded sweatshirt and jeans; the cop motions for Jocko, the young man, to sit on the bench. The cop unlocks one cuff, and affixes it to the bench's pipe.

COP
More comfortable?

JOCKO
(nods comfortably)

The officer sits at one of the chairs behind the table, facing Jocko.

INSERT: THE TABLE

Carved into it is scratchy graffiti: "FUK U", "Arbeit Macht Frei", "Blow Me", etc.

The officer sets down a clipboard with white, yellow, pink carbons on it - police paperwork.

COP
Okay, Mr. Cliff. Looks like you got yourself into some trouble, hey?

The door opens and the other arresting officer peeks in, looks at Jocko, smiles at him.

COP #2
(to first COP)
Everything okay, Bill?

BILL
Yah. I'll finish this, if you want.

COP #2
Sounds good.
(he smiles at Jocko again and leaves)

BILL
So.
(he starts filling out forms - produces Jocko's driver's license and begins referencing it)
This address correct?

JOCKO
Yeah.

BILL
(still writing)
Mmmm hmm. You make your phone call?

JOCKO
Yeah.

BILL

(filling out paperwork)

Hey. Buck up, kid. Your buddy is in a lot worse trouble. All we found in your jacket was a quarter bag. Small time. Misdemeanor.

JOCKO

What?

BILL

Yeah, your friend Mr. Jackson? "The Pearl"? He had an ounce on him - that's intent to sell. That's trouble.

JOCKO

He had - wait, you know him?

BILL

(stops writing)

"The Pearl"? He is semi-famous around here. And I don't mean "around here."

(gestures to room with pen)

JOCKO

Music lover, huh?

BILL

Oh, I get it. Cops don't listen to music. And we're all straight arrows, never partied. Never would have heard of Pearl and the Undertones... (looks up) Shit, kid, didn't you see Serpico?

JOCKO

(He has no idea what Bill's talking about)

BILL (CONT.)

Know what? I used to play in a band.

JOCKO, imagining:

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET

We close in on a suburban garage, the origin of a dull, thudding, noisy metal music. As we close in, the garage door opens, and there is a young Bill, dressed in a mechanic's uniform, yelling a hoarse, unintelligible vocal upwards into a microphone suspended by its cord from the garage rafters. Behind him a crew of teenage degenerates plays loud, sloppy metal riffs. Bill's guitar dangles unused from his shoulder. A flying vee, it is in danger of falling from his shoulder, so he stops singing and pulls it around to his front. He attempts to play slide guitar using a full and open can of Schlitz as a slide, spilling beer all over himself. Satisfied with this attempt, he drops the guitar and returns to the mic.

BILL, close up

BILL
Weeeeeeeeeooooow!!!

His free hand crushes the Schlitz can, splattering beer.

JOCKO, IN INTERROGATION ROOM

Looking dubiously at Bill.

BILL
(still filling out paperwork)
No, seriously, man. It was back when I was living in Florida.
(makes fingering positions)
I used to play the saxophone.

INT. APARTMENT - LATE AFTERNOON

A black man's bicep and forearm. A strip of thin rubber hose is wound around it. We pull back to a living room room sparsely decorated with brown 70s furnishing. On various pieces of furniture lounge four happy musicians, their horns resting nearby them. In the middle of the living room is a coffee table that has a record player built into the top of it.

BILL (VO - CONT.)
I was playing in a horn section called the Jazz Refugees; we billed ourselves as guns for hire. We were good; could learn whole shows in days.

The men in the living room silently joke at each other. A young Bill, with a Bill Evans haircut, tosses a throw pillow that hits one of the other musicians in the face. On one wall hangs a framed album poster, Coltrane's *Giant Steps*.

BILL (VO - CONT.)
See, back in those days, everyone wanted to be John Coltrane, Charlie Parker. We'd all been down that road, starving in flop-houses, shooting up with dirty needles, living together, practicing for eight hours a day, and finally we realized two things: we just didn't have the genius, and no one wanted to see strung-out horn players imitate dead guys when they could buy *Giant Steps* and listen to the real thing at home. So we got together and ended up giggin with this big-time R&B bandleader. Real slave driver, but payed well, though.

A doorbell rings. The four horn players look expectantly at each other. One of the white musicians, the tallest, goes to the door, while Bill quickly reaches under the coffee table into a secret compartment and pulls out a shiny wooden box.

INSERT - THE BOX

It opens, quickly, and we see a thin but ample rubber banded stack of twenty-dollar bills and bundled packets of heroin. Bill pulls a twenty out of one stack and, in a fluid motion, closes the box, latches it, and returns it to its slot in the coffee table.

The twenty is passed from hand to hand, to the musician at the door.

THE DOOR

The tall white musician looks back to make sure all is put away, then rhythmically unlatches the door and opens it. A short Chinese man in a white coat stands there smiling. He produces a white paper bag and accepts the money from the tall musician. He gives a hand sign and walks away. The door closes.

The tall white musician turns back to the room. The musicians are expectant.

TALL WHITE MUSICIAN (LEONARD)
Lunch!

A nondescript record is set on the player, the needle is placed, and the cover is closed. We hear 60s soul jazz. A red-and-white checkered tablecloth is thrown over the record player's cover and the bag of food is set lightly down on it. Everything the musicians do indicates their familiarity with each other's manners, rhythms. The Chinese food containers are distributed with behind-the-back tosses and no-look catches.

HISPANIC MUSICIAN (MANUEL)
(digging in)
Love this shit, man.

BLACK MUSICIAN (JAMES)
(his mouth full of food)
Mmmm hm.

LEONARD
(shoveling with his chopsticks)
Oh yeah.

BILL
(he grins, his mouth full of food, and chopsticks that point up, like tusks, to the ceiling)

THE ROOM

The four horn players eat and smile at each other. The sounds of their mastication, burping, the clacks of the chopsticks are all subtly in time with the music. They don't notice this and can't help it anyway. Slowly these sounds die away. In progressive cuts, the musicians pass out in food-and-drug stupor, splayed unconsciously against the living room furniture. Finally, Bill is the last one half-awake, twirling his fingers in time with the undulating scratching noises coming from the speaker.

INSERT, INSIDE RECORD PLAYER LID, CLOSE-UP

The needle, draped in darkness, scratching against the cardboard interior of the record.

A PHONE RINGS several times. The sound of someone picking it up. (OS)

BILL'S VOICE (VO)
Hullo? Yeah. Yeah, okay.

Click. (OS)

BILL'S VOICE (CONT.)
Shit. Hey! Hey, wake up, guys, he's coming.

MANUEL (VO)
(groggy)
Shit man, is it time already?

Light spills on the needle as the tablecloth is withdrawn.

THE ROOM

The players wake and stretch. Manuel is at the window.

MANUEL
(checking out the window)
Here he comes, man.

OUT THE WINDOW

Jerry curls bob down the sidewalk directly below the window. The shoulders of a silk purple suit and white wingtip shoes seem to dangle below the curls. The man's hand goes to his nose and back to his pocket.

A STAIRWELL

The wingtips clack quickly up the steps as the owner of the jerry curls bounces up. We still do not see his face.

THE DOOR, from inside the apartment. It bursts open and in flails a very dark-skinned black man, Jens Jefferson Ensign, his arms pinwheeling to the horn fanfare that greets him. The horns continue to punctuate his movements as he drops to the splits, falls back to his hands, does a handstand into a backflip, runs in place, slaps himself enthusiastically in the face several times, and the coup de grace: a frontflip, a backflip, a frontflip, each with horn hits sharply matching the percussion of his shoes on the floor. He lands the final time with his hands triumphantly outstretched.

JJ
Yeah!

THE HORN PLAYERS

All with their horns at the ready, smiling. Manuel is on the trumpet, James is on the trombone, Leonard is on the alto, and Bill on the tenor sax.

BILL
Hey, JJ!

JJ
What a greetin. Boy oh boys!

INSERT - A single drip of sweat escapes the jerry curls and starts down JJ's forehead

JJ
(dabs the bead of sweat with his finger; shows it to the horn section)
Damn! Sweat for that! I must be slippin.
(he does the splits and comes up giving the boxing "slip" sign, brushing his palms)
Nah, nah, just kidding fellas, just kiddin.

THE HORN PLAYERS
Still smiling, they have not moved.

JJ
(still in the doorway)
Okay, "It's All Right." One. Two. Three.

He does a spin and slams the door on what would be the call of "Four." In time with this cue, the horn players start directly into hits, with spaces timed for JJ's vocals.

JJ
(running, prancing in place)
How she got goin
(hits)
She got it up underneath
(hits)
I'm a knock knock knocking
(hits)
In her christmas wreath
(hits)
Ahhhh, it's alright baby, ahhhhh, it's alright.
(hits)
-Uptight!
(long horn hits)
-Aaaaaaand....

He puts a fist up in the air and the horns immediately stop. He eyes the horn players suspiciously. JJ wipes his nose several times.

JJ (CONT.)
Oh, that was shit.

THE HORN PLAYERS

MANUEL
Man!

JJ
Shit.

JAMES
Come on, JJ. That was tight.

JJ
(chiding)
What?! Who's payin the cost? Is the money not good enough for ya? It's tight when I say it's tight, Manny.

MANUEL
Fuck.

LEONARD
Come on, JJ, let's forget it. We'll hit it next time.

MANUEL
(under his breath)
We hit it this time. That was perfect, man!

JJ
What? What? You better watch that lip, amigo; you're on your way out of a hundred bucks a week.

LEONARD
Easy now, JJ. We're not splitting up the section.

JJ
OH YOU'RE NOT?! YOU'RE not?!

JAMES
No, we're not.

JJ
You mother. I'm puttin you all on notice. I'm the show! Alright, "Good For Me." On the top.

JJ

He stands silent with his arms folded as the horns (OS) play the intro hits. The context of the lyrics is not lost on him.

JJ
I'm on top!
(hits)
I'm on top!
(hits)
I'm on top!
(hits, in which Manuel squeaks a bad note).
I'm -
(he grabs the trumpet out of Manuel's hands as it's in playing position, splitting Manuel's lip.

MANUEL
(recoiling)
Ah! Fuck!

JJ
(with Manuel's trumpet)
It's this:
(he plays the line perfectly, spits on the floor, and tosses
Manny's trumpet back at him)

JJ (CONT.)
Come on guys, let's get it together. You're my guys. You're
my guys, right?

MANUEL
Fuck!
(he checks his lip)
I'm bleeding!

JJ
Well I told you to watch it. Put some vaseline on it and have
a seat; we'll go on without you. James, you take his part.

James brings his trombone to his lips; then pulls it down. Manuel is still
standing in the horn row, his fingers to his lip, in disbelief. James crosses
to Manuel, puts his arm around him.

JAMES
Come on Manuel, let's get you fixed up, you'll be okay.

LEONARD
What the fuck, JJ? He can't play now!

JJ
Oh, come on boys, he'll be fine.

BILL
Not for this weekend, JJ. We'll have to go without him.

JJ
Well, he ain't gettin paid if he don't play.

Silence.

INT. THE BATHROOM

MANUEL'S FACE IN THE MIRROR

James is helping clean him up.

MANUEL
Fuckin pentejo!

JAMES
Si amigo.

MANUEL
(growing worried)
Shit man, if this doesn't heal up right...

JAMES

Yeah, ya gotta look after them chops.

MANUEL

I'm gonna kill that motherfucker.

THE ROOM

JJ

(surveying the situation)

Well, I guess we ain't gonna get any more rehearsing done.

(he goes and sits on the couch)

Let's get fucked up.

LEONARD

Shit.

BILL

Might as well.

They go over to the couch. JJ is looking around, pleased. He fishes in his pocket and sets a vial of coke on top of the record player.

James comes out of the bathroom and sits down.

JAMES

Manny's cleanin up. He'll be allright.

JJ

Good, good. Too bad about the whole thing.

The horn players treat this comment with silence.

JJ dumps the vial of coke out on the top of the record player.

Manuel emerges from the bathroom and stands before JJ. He offers him his hand.

MANUEL

Hey, I'm sorry I blew that line man. It wouldn't happen during a gig. Please don't take it out on the rest of the guys.

JJ

(takes his hand)

Hey, cool it, man, don't sweat it, I'll put you back on the payroll as soon as you're-

Manuel bends down and pulls JJ toward him with his clasped hand. With his free hand he tightly squeezes JJ's jaw. His pointed boot slams into JJ's crotch, and this frees his first hand from JJ's grasp and in a lightning maneuver this produces a razor blade, wielded at JJ's lips.

JJ

(in pain, through Manuel's hand)

Not the face! Not the face!

MANUEL

You fuck! You respect your musicians! You got it! I'll cut your tongue out! Don't fuck with my livelihood, my music, my soul, you motherfucker!

JJ squirms, his hands wrapped around Manuel's wrists; Leonard snorts; James watches coolly.

BILL, rising

Easy Manuel! It's not worth it.

MANUEL

Fuck this, man, fuck the gig.

BILL

Well, it's fucked now.

MANUEL

We don't need to work for this piece of shit.
(to JJ) It's all over for you man.

Bill leaps up to restrain Manuel's hands. There are six fists at JJ's face.

BILL

Easy. Easy man. You do this and I guarantee you we're all going to jail.

JJ

I forgive you brother.

MANUEL

You fuck.

BILL

Think of the playin, man. Think of your horn. You'll never play again if you cut him.

MANUEL

...Shit, man!
(he relaxes and slowly lets go of JJ. It is just his and Bill's hands)

BILL

You're okay, man, you're okay.

JJ scrambles over the back of the couch and makes for the door.

JJ

You're all fucked! You're done!

He leaves.

Leonard and James eye each other.

LEONARD

He left the coke.

Manuel drops the razor blade on the record player cover and puts his head in his hands.

INT. THE INVESTIGATION ROOM

Bill is leaning back in his chair, fiddling with his pen. The paperwork is stacked neatly to the side.

BILL

JJ saw to it that none of us ever had another gig. Manuel's lip got infected and never healed up properly, and he never played the trumpet again. Leonard was shot a year or so later trying to score heroin; after that I decided to clean up.

JOCKO

What happened to the trombone player?

BILL

I don't know.

JOCKO

Damn.

BILL

Yeah.

Jocko scoots over toward his handcuffed wrist and tries as nonchalantly he can to put both hands in his sweatshirt pockets.

JOCKO

(from Bill's POV)

So, uh, when can I claim my property?

BILL

What do you mean?

JOCKO

(embarrassed, trying not to push his luck)

Well, I had some money...

BILL

Uh, we didn't take any money off you.

JOCKO

Pearl? He had the money and uh... his weed?

BILL

"What money?"

JOCKO

What?

BILL

Lemme tell you something, Mr. Cliff. An ounce, your friend will probably get a lawyer and be just fine. He's got some wealth and he's neat and clean. Understand? An ounce and seven fifty in cash, and he's going away.

JOCKO

That's a fuckin rip off!

BILL

(gathers paperwork)

Yeah. Better for everyone though.

JOCKO

Listen, man, I need that money for a gig tonight.

BILL

You do? That's too bad. If I were you, I'd just hope The Pearl doesn't try to set you up as the dealer. Then we're all going to court.

JOCKO

Shit.

BILL

So what's the name of your band?

JOCKO, disdainfully

"The Police."