

The Grey Area

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FROM BLACK WE HEAR--

The release of a sigh that has been turbulently brewing... followed by a single gun cock.

CUT IN:

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE PARKING LOT - AFTERNOON

THEIF

Listen, I don't have time for this shit, not today yo. Just put the money in the fucking bag and there won't be a problem.

CUT TO:

1 EXT. CORNER STORE PARKING LOT - AFTERNOON

We find members of the PHL-PD crowded on the curb of a rundown mom & pop style corner store in the heart of the "Badlands" in North Philadelphia. There patrol cars overwhelm the sidewalk.

OFFICER MICHAEL E. YATES III, a Philadelphia native, is the epitome of tall, dark, and handsome. But, he approaches most of life's situations as "white" or wrong instead of right or wrong.

OFFICER YATES

That's the third time we've been there this month and we still can't get a decent ID on this bastard.

COP #1

Surveillance no good?

COP #2

Owner says they haven't had their system set up for years.

COP #1

Can't you call someone for shit like that?

COP #2

(mumbles)

Not if you can't "speaky de English"

POLICE CHIEF

You'd think that would be the first thing they learn when they come here.

(CONTINUED)

A young prostitute saunters by the officers. Her tragic beauty catches one of them off guard.

COP #2

You would... I guess they got distracted.

POLICE CHIEF

Don't you have a wife at home?

COP #2

She says I need to lose some weight. A little extracurricular never hurt anyone right?

COP #1

That's someone's daughter man.

OFFICER YATES

Yeah someone's whore of a daughter, with 3-4 siblings Moms welfare check can't cover and a step pops that's only there because her pussy and credit score are better than average.

POLICE CHIEF

Jesus Christ Mike.

COP #2

In so much debt yet they can't afford the MCM, H&M, BMW, Michael Kors, bullshit.

COP #1

Do they even know what an acronym is?

OFFICER YATES

They do.

COP #2

How you figure Mike?

OFFICER YATES

O.P.P G.E.D. E.B.T. H.I.V.

The officers break into laughter which is then disturbed by a radio call.

(CONTINUED)

## PATROL CAR RADIO

187. 187. 19th and Berks. Suspect in pursuit. Black male. Large in build. Armed and dangerous.

## COP #2

Trotting backward toward his patrol car.

(Screams)

Some shit just never changes. See you bastards tomorrow.

COPs #1 & #2 enter their patrol car. They speed off with their sirens wailing. Officer Yates and the Police Chief enter their individual cars and follow each other back to the police headquarters.

## 2 INT. POLICE HEADQUARTERS - EVENING

Officer Yates and the Police Chief are seen entering the doors of their pristine, state of the art, Police headquarters tired after a long day with no luck. The light once shining brightly through the glass building is diminishing as day turns to night.

## POLICE CHIEF

Good work out there today Mike.

## OFFICER YATES

Thanks Chief, wish we could have got him though.

## POLICE CHIEF

Can't catch them all, but we can sure as hell try.

## OFFICER YATES

You still need me to look over the Wilson case?

## POLICE CHIEF

No, we all know he's gonna be acquitted. Leave it to his attorney.

## OFFICER YATES

The boy should have never charged him sir. I just don't understand how those peopl...

## POLICE CHIEF

Consider this a gift Yates, go home. Go do something... "extracurricular".

(CONTINUED)

OFFICER YATES  
Thanks, chief.

CUT TO:

INT. HEADQUARTERS LOCKER ROOM - EVENING

Stereotypical wash and locker room with a single fluorescent ceiling light shining through the darkness.

Officer Yates showers and changes into his civilian clothing. After placing his uniform in his locker, he gently caresses a picture of him with his white wife. He is distracted in thought till the phone rings. Officer Yates picks up.

WIFE (V.O)  
Why hello Officer Yates.

OFFICER YATES  
(Jokingly)  
And how did you get this number?

WIFE (V.O)  
I have my ways Sir.

OFFICER YATES  
And to what do I owe the pleasure of speaking to you this evening?

WIFE (V.O)  
We need Juice... and eggs.  
Breakfast- for dinner. I've been craving it.

OFFICER YATES  
And to think you called to tell me you love me.

WIFE (V.O)  
I have other ways of showing you that I-  
(loud thud)  
shit.

OFFICER YATES  
What was that?

WIFE (V.O)  
(beat)  
Next door, they moving their crap around again. I saw a box for a crib on the curb. Another crib  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

WIFE (V.O) (cont'd)  
means another baby. Christ, do  
those people ever stop?

OFFICER YATES  
Still surprised they can even  
afford the place.  
(louder thud)

WIFE (V.O)  
Dammnit! Mike- please hurry home  
I'm gonna lose it.

OFFICER YATES  
Juice. Eggs. Home. Cranberry?

WIFE (V.O)  
Cranberry! Bye!

Mikes wife hangs up the phone.

MONTAGE: Mike gathers the rest of his belongings and heads out of the headquarters in search of his wife's juice and eggs. He walks for some time till he reaches his subway stop. He then disappears down the stairs. Mike then reappears walking up subways steps leading to the sidewalk. The area doesn't look familiar to the viewer.

3 INT. CORNER STORE - EVENING

Mike enters a corner store, similar to the one he was in earlier. He heads to the register.

OFFICER YATES  
Excuse me miss, could you direct me  
to where the eggs are?

STORE CLERK  
(Timidly)  
I'm- I'm sorry, you walked right  
past them on your way in.  
Right-hand side. Next to the door.

Officer Yates walks back to the front of the store. The store clerk discreetly pushes the panic button under her station.

OFFICER YATES  
(Yells)  
Do all you guys have is half  
dozens?

(CONTINUED)

STORE CLERK  
N-n-n-n-o, keep digging. They  
should be there.

Officer Yates is searching for the eggs while the store clerk continues to press the distress button. Sirens begin to be heard in the background. Officer Yates walks back up to the counter.

OFFICER YATES  
Man these things were hidden. Youse  
don't have like a convenience  
section?

STORE CLERK  
We do... next to the jui-

OFFICER YATES  
(Grunts)  
Shit- the juice.

OFFICER J.W. WARREN appears at the door.

OFFICER J.W. WARREN, LATE 70's, is systematic racism personified. Everything about him is white, from his skin to his hair. Two steps shy of a Klansman, for his uniform serves as a robe.

Officer Yates picks the eggs up off the counter and walks towards the juice and the door. Due to his haste, Officer Yates collides with Officer Warren. The eggs splatter on the ground and the uniform of Officer Warren.

OFFICER WARREN  
(Grumbles)  
Son of a bitch-

Officer Warren keeps composure as he wipes the egg from his uniform.

OFFICER YATES  
Sorry man. Hey, there are worst  
things to get on that aren't there?

OFFICER WARREN  
I wouldn't know. I like to keep  
things clean and orderly.

OFFICER YATES  
You and I both brother. Just wish  
everyone was like that you know.

Officer Yates makes eye contact with the store clerk.

(CONTINUED)

OFFICER YATES (CONT.)

You know, for convenience. Quick and easy.

OFFICER WARREN

I suppose- guess you need more eggs now.

Officer Warren makes eye contact with the store clerk. Officer Yates catches their glances. His body tenses as he grows suspicious.

OFFICER YATES

Yeah (beat) I guess I do. Is there a problem here officer?

OFFICER WARREN

Why would there be- Mr. ?

OFFICER YATES

Yates, Michael Yates-

OFFICER WARREN

Mr. Yates- why would there be a problem?

OFFICER YATES

(beat)

Ahh, nothing nevermind. Just a little paranoid is all.

Officer Yates picks up the juice and another container of eggs from the front of the store and heads to the register. He places his items on the counter and notices Officer Warren still looking at him.

OFFICER YATES

You buying something officer?

Officer Warren walks toward the register and picks up a pack of gum. Officer Warren shoulder checks him ever so slightly.

OFFICER WARREN

Yes, but you go first.

OFFICER YATES

Don't mind if I do.

STORE CLERK

That would be \$4.67.

Officer Yates passes the store clerk a credit card.

(CONTINUED)



STORE CLERK (CONT.)

Sorry, no credit transactions under \$10.

OFFICER YATES

Ah come on, just this one time.

STORE CLERK

I'm sorry sir but I can't do that. No credit transactions under \$10.

OFFICER YATES

(Grunts)

Look, I don't have any cash and i'm in a rush can you please just let me buy my damn food.

STORE CLERK

(Mumbles)

Sir, I'm sorry. I can't. It's against policy.

OFFICER YATES

Policy? What policy could you possibly have in this shit hole?

STORE CLERK

(whispers)

I'll go ask my manager.

The store clerk disappears to the back of the store.

OFFICER WARREN

I believe the lady said they can't take your card.

OFFICER YATES

(Whispers)

You know these people have no policy. We have to make it for them. That goes for everyone in this damn neighborhood.

OFFICER WARREN

(Yelling)

Look if you can't make the purchase sir please buy your crap elsewhere.

OFFICER YATES

(Scolding)

And who the hell do you think you're talking to? My tax dollars go towards trying to keep the

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

OFFICER YATES (cont'd)  
lights on in shitholes this and  
you're gonna tell me to go  
elsewhere? I have a right to be  
here. Why don't you ask her if  
she's even allowed to be in this  
country let alone this store!

The store clerk reappears from the back of the store.

OFFICER YATES  
About time!

In this moment the store clerk nods her head and Officer  
Warren tackles Officer Yates into the ground.

OFFICER YATES  
(Screams)  
Get the hell off of me! What the  
fuck is going on?!

OFFICER WARREN  
Michael Yates, you are under arrest  
for multiple counts of Armed  
Robbery.

OFFICER YATES  
I didn't rob anybody! Now get off  
of me.

OFFICER WARREN  
You have the right to remain  
silent. Anything you say can and  
will be used against you in-

OFFICER YATES  
I know my rights damn it but I  
didn't do anything to anybody!

STORE CLERK  
You were here earlier! I remembered  
you were at my store! I just  
checked the cameras!

OFFICER WARREN  
You're on film BROTHER! You have  
the right to speak to an attorney,  
and to have an att- don't move  
Michael!

OFFICER YATES  
(Screaming)  
GET OFF OF ME IM A COP!

(CONTINUED)

Wrestling ensues. The Officers roll around on the ground. The store clerk runs to the back of the store.

OFFICER YATES (CONT.)

Just let me get my badge damn it!  
I'm an officer in the PHL PD. GET  
OFF!

Officer Yates and Officer Warren continue to wrestle. He reaches for his pocket to get his badge.

CUTS TO: BLACK

Shots fire.

4 EXT. CORNER STORE PARKING LOT - LATE EVENING

Members of the PHL PD, Cop #1, Cop #2, the Police Chief, and others surround the corner store almost identical to the way they did earlier. We hear sirens and patrol car radios roaring in the background.

COP #1

We finally got the bastard.

POLICE CHIEF

Relax. We still have to ID him.

COP #1

Officer on scene said the store clerk went to the back and ID'ed the man herself on the surveillance.

COP #2

That's impossible, this place hasn't had their surveillance set yo for years.

The Officers look at each other confused. In that moment a gurney rolls by. The Police Chief reaches down and unzips the bag.

CUT TO: INT. CONER STORE - LATE EVENING

A cell phone is on the ground in a puddle of blood ringing. The voicemail goes off.

WIFE (V.O)

Mike, you won't believe this. The neighbors gave us a crib! I'm stunned. The thing is immaculate. It even has one of those Sudden

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

WIFE (V.O) (cont'd)  
Death Syndrome protectors. I guess  
they aren't so bad after all.  
Anyways, where are you baby?! I'm  
starving. Love you. See you soon.

CUT TO: BLACK

CUT TO: EXT.CORNER STORE PARKING LOT - LATE EVENING

The body of Officer Michael J. Yates III lies motionless in  
the body bag.