

TEMPEST

(Entry for the Industry Insider Screenwriting Contest)

Written by

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FADE IN:

SUPER: NEW YORK CITY

EXT. BROADWAY AND 72ND STREET - DAY

Pouring rain. Heavy traffic. A pickup truck hydroplanes through the eastbound red light at the confusing crossroad. Car horns BLARE. CRASH. The truck smashes into a sedan.

INT. UNMARKED POLICE CAR NEAR THE INTERSECTION

The driver is NYC POLICE DETECTIVE FIRST CLASS SOLOMON (SOL) MICHAELS (M, 60s) an older non-religious Jewish man wearing a rumpled rain coat.

In the passenger seat is his new partner, DETECTIVE THOMAS JEFFERSON (TJ) BROWN (M, 30s) a fashionably dressed black man.

TJ

Shit. We better get out and see if anyone is hurt.

SOL

Oh no! Just call it in.

TJ

You sure?

SOL

I'm not going to spend my last week on the force dealing with goddamn traffic accidents. We have more important work to do. We have to investigate those missing ducks.

EXT. PARK AVENUE ARMORY - DAY

The stone lintel, above the main entrance, reads "SEVENTH REGIMENT." Next to the entrance is a SIGN advertising a musical concert.

SOL (PRE-LAP)

Are you Colonel Burwell?

COL. BURWELL (V.O.)

Yes, sir.

SOL (PRE-LAP)
I'm Detective Solomon Michaels and
this is my partner Detective Thomas
Brown.

COL. BURWELL (PRE-LAP)
Thanks for coming out on a
miserable day like today. If the
weather reports are accurate we're
in for quite a storm.

SOL (PRE-LAP)
So, what can the New York City
Police Department do for the New
York State National Guard?

COL. BURWELL (PRE-LAP)
We discovered that four of our
Ducks were missing about a week
ago. We commenced an internal
investigation but came to the
conclusion that they must have been
stolen.

INT. PARK AVENUE ARMORY/DRILL HALL - DAY

COLONEL RICHARD BURWELL (M, 50s), of the New York State
National Guard, is briefing Sol and TJ.

The three men walk through the Armory's 55,000 square foot
Drill Hall which is in the process of being transformed into
a musical concert venue.

SOL
Now, when you say "Ducks" you are
referring to the vehicles that have
disappeared?

COL. BURWELL
Yes sir, the GMC DUKW. An
amphibious vehicle that was used
from World War II to the Vietnam
conflict.

SOL
And you think they might have been
stolen?

TJ
You still have military vehicles
here? I thought the Armory was
taken over by an Arts group.

COL. BURWELL

In 2006 New York State leased it to the Park Avenue Armory Organization. Prior to that the building belonged to the Seventh Regiment of the New York State National Guard. My outfit. But the National Guard retains jurisdiction of the underground space. That's where we still have quite a number of vehicles. However, from the ground floor on up, the Armory has been converted into a cultural institution. Let me take you down to the basement level and you can see where we have the motor pool.

They exit through a door at the end of the Drill Hall and enter a service elevator.

INT. PARK AVENUE ARMORY/BASEMENT

They exit the service elevator. The basement takes up half a city block and is filled with military Jeeps, Trucks, other vehicles and several remaining Ducks. They walk to the spaces where the four Ducks used to be.

COL. BURWELL

These are the Ducks. Up until a week or two ago there used to be four more just like them.

TJ

So when did the Ducks actually disappear?

COL. BURWELL

We're not sure. We're guessing a little more than a week ago.

TJ

Could they have been borrowed for some military purpose?

COL. BURWELL

Not without my knowledge.

TJ

(looking around)
How would someone drive these things out of here?

COL. BURWELL

(pointing)

There are ramps leading to the side streets, 66th and 67th.

TJ

Are there doors or gates on those ramps?

SOL

(interrupting)

You have to forgive the kid. He's new to this. He's only been a detective for a week. I, on the other hand, am on my way out. This is probably my last case before I retire.

(beat)

I wouldn't be surprised if the Ducks were just taken for a joy ride. I'm sure they'll turn up eventually.

TJ is a little miffed that Sol interrupted his line of questioning and steps off to the side. He makes use of the time to kneel down and use a FLASHLIGHT to look under the vehicles next to the empty parking spaces.

COL. BURWELL

(changing the subject)

You know, if the storm is as bad as they predict, a DUK would be the perfect vehicle for getting around town

SOL

Maybe, whoever borrowed your Ducks was thinking of that.

TJ spots something glinting behind a truck tire. He puts on a pair of BLUE LATEX GLOVES and retrieves it. It is a metallic-green tin which reads --

ROBERT MCCONNELL - THE ORIGINAL - SCOTTISH BLEND - PIPE TOBACCO

He takes a CLEAR PLASTIC BAG from his coat pocket and places the tin inside.

TJ

Do any of your people smoke a pipe?

COL. BURWELL
 Not that I know of. And if they did
 they certainly wouldn't leave any
 trash down here.

TJ
 Maybe our car thieves did.
 (beat)
 When were the Ducks used last?

COL. BURWELL
 We don't use them very often. Maybe
 a couple of months ago.

TJ
 Are they regularly maintained?

COL. BURWELL
 Sergeant Ramirez runs the motor
 pool. He seems to be fascinated
 with them. He's always tinkering
 with the engines.

TJ
 We'd like to speak to him. Is he
 available?

COL. BURWELL
 He just went on an extended leave.
 He's not expected back for a couple
 of weeks.

(beat)
 The Seventh Regiment is no longer a
 fully active unit. But we do have a
 number of soldiers still assigned
 here. And we are proud to wear the
 insignia.

He points to the --

EMBROIDERED SEVENTH REGIMENT INSIGNIA
 on the upper arm of his uniform jacket.

CUT TO:

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

A large printed version of the --

SEVENTH REGIMENT INSIGNIA

is on the front of an olive green tee-shirt worn by SERGEANT RAMIREZ (M, 30s).

He is in the rear of a GMC DUKW working on the engine. It is one of four, parked in a warehouse located on the west side piers of midtown Manhattan.

The warehouse is a brick and cinder-block building with an open interior. The loading dock door is wide open and faces the Hudson River and New Jersey which can be seen in the b.g. It is pouring rain outside.

COMMANDER MACDONALD (M, 40s) is in the pilot's position. He wears military insignia of the United Kingdom. He has a Scottish accent. He is filling the bowl of his PIPE from a --

GREEN TIN OF ROBERT MCCONNELL SCOTTISH BLEND

SGT. RAMIRIEZ
Commander MacDonald. Try it now.

Cmdr. MacDonald starts the engine, which fires right up.

CMDR. MACDONALD
Sounds just like a little lamb.

COLONEL JOHNSON (M, 50s) comes up to the Duck. He is parading around the warehouse inspecting the other men on his team and the work they are doing. He wears military insignia of the United States Army.

COL. JOHNSON
Sergeant. How do the engines look?

SGT. RAMIREZ
In excellent shape, Colonel. Just the way I left them.

COL. JOHNSON
Outstanding. When you're finished with this one, go help Ensign Davidson.

SGT. RAMIREZ
Yes, sir.

As Sgt. Ramirez and Cmdr. MacDonald continue their work on the DUC engines in b.g., Col. Johnson continues his inspection and sees:

ENSIGN DAVIDSON (M, 30s) - Pilot. He is on the deck of the second DUC. He wears the insignia of the Canadian Navy;

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER TARRINGTON (M, 40s) - Supply. He is in the corner of the warehouse, taking inventory of Storm Weather Gear. He wears the insignia of the US Coast Guard.

CAPTAIN SCHMIDT (M, 40s) - Armory. He is counting and inspecting the assault weapons and ammunition. He wears the insignia of the German Army;

SERGEANT MAYER (M, 30s) - Explosives. He is working with wooden crates of C4. He wears the insignia of the Israeli Army;

LT. COMMANDER SVENSON (M, 40s) - Hydraulics. He is organizing pumps and hoses. He wears insignia of the Norwegian Navy;

and LIEUTENANT BAKER (M, 30s) - Communications. He is setting up an array of computers and monitors. He wears insignia of the US Air Force.

INT. UNMARKED POLICE CAR - DAY

Sol is driving a nondescript dark colored mid-sized car. TJ is in the passenger seat. It is still pouring rain.

SOL

Well, this one is a little out of the ordinary but all in a days work for the robbery division. The only question I have is do we file the report as a grand theft auto or a grand theft boat?

(beat)

How about lunch? You up for a sandwich? Ever been to the Second Avenue Deli?

TJ

No, can't say that I have.

SOL

It's one of my favorites. We'll give it a try.

(beat)

You know, if you don't mind my saying so, for a rookie detective you sure do ask a lot of questions.

TJ

That's because I want to get the answers.

(MORE)

TJ (CONT'D)

It's kinda my way of talking to myself - of trying to figure things out.

SOL

Take my advice. Just watch and listen. That's the best way to learn to be a detective.

TJ

You really think some one took those Ducks for a joy ride? But why four of them? That would mean that there would have to a gang of at least four.

SOL

Kid, in my career I've seen thousands of grand theft auto cases. And I can tell you that this is no different. Either they were taken for a joy ride or they were taken to a chop shop. And I don't think the parts on those things are worth a damn. Those Ducks will turn up sooner or later. You can make book on it.

TJ

But four? It doesn't make sense.

SOL

One thing you'll learn as a detective, kid, is that crime never makes sense. Criminals just aren't that smart.

The car drives through a big puddle at an intersection, splashing the sidewalk.

TJ

We're going to get hit with a double whammy. There's a huge hurricane making its way up the eastern seaboard and a giant low pressure area moving in from Nova Scotia. They're both set to meet up in New York City on Saturday.

SOL

Yeah, all bridges and tunnels will be closed. Even the subways will be shut down.

(MORE)

SOL (CONT'D)

You know, with this crazy weather
an amphibious vehicle wouldn't be a
bad idea

TJ

(thinking)

No. No it wouldn't.

(looking out the window)

I thought you said the deli was on
Second Avenue.

SOL

The deli is called the Second
Avenue Deli. It used to be on
Second Avenue on the lower east
side. But there was a fire years
ago and they moved to midtown. Then
they opened the location up here at
First Avenue and 75th Street.

INT. 2ND AVENUE DELI - DAY

A HOSTESS seats Sol and TJ. She leaves two massive menus on
the table.

Next a SERVER comes by with two glasses of water, a plate of
rye bread, health salad, a bowl of pickles and a couple of
small plates.

SOL

You like pickles? We have sour and
half-sour.

TJ

Not so much. But I do like cole
slaw.

TJ takes some of the health salad and puts it on a plate. He
takes a bite and makes a face.

TJ (CONT'D)

There's something wrong with this
cole slaw.

SOL

It's not cole slaw, kid. It's
health salad. It has a sweet
vinegar instead of mayonnaise. Jews
don't usually have mayonnaise with
their meals. So what are you going
to have?

TJ
This is a big menu. Too many choices. I think I'll just stick with my old standby, a grilled ham and cheese.

SOL
(smiling)
That's not gonna work. This restaurant is kosher. First, they don't have ham. Pigs are considered unclean in the Jewish religion. And second, you don't mix meat and dairy. That's also not allowed. Have you ever had a pastrami sandwich?

TJ
What's that?

SOL
It's like a spicy corned beef. Give it a try.

TJ
Okay. What are you gonna have?

SOL
I think I'll have two with.

TJ
Two what?

SOL
That's shorthand for two hot dogs with sauerkraut.

MAX (M, 60s), a waiter, comes over.

MAX
Hi, Solly. How are you? Are you on the clock?

SOL
Yeah Max, we're working on a case down the block. This is my new partner, TJ. He's never been here before.

MAX
Well, welcome to the Second Avenue Deli. Do you know what you want?

SOL
My partner will have a pastrami on
rye and a potato knish. I'll have
two with.

MAX
Good choice. They'll be right up.

TJ
Potato knish?

SOL
It's like a fried potato pie. It's
perfect with pastrami.

Sol notices ABBI ROSENBERG (M, 30s) entering the restaurant.
He is a modern orthodox Jew, clean shaven but wearing a
yarmulka. He is also wearing a raincoat.

SOL (CONT'D)
(shouting and waving)
Abbi.

Abbi sees him, waves and comes over to the table. Sol gets up
and they hug.

SOL (CONT'D)
Abbi, it's so good to see you.
Come, join us. This is my new
partner, TJ. How's your father?

ABBI
Good. Good. We just came back from
South Africa last week and our
allocation just arrived this
morning. We got a 15 carat canary
yellow that is simply beautiful.

TJ
A canary yellow what?

ABBI
Diamond.

TJ
A 15 carat diamond?

SOL
Abbi and his father own one of the
shops in the Diamond District.

ABBI
We're also sightholders.

TJ
What's that?

SOL
The diamond business is very selective. Only certain businesses are allowed to buy rough diamonds. They're called sightholders.

ABBI
We get the rough diamonds and cut them ourselves. So, we got our allocation this morning. In fact, everyone on the street got their's too. Moisha, across the street got a 20 carat blue. Perfect color.

TJ
I didn't know diamonds came in different colors.

SOL
Abbi, why don't I bring the kid around for a visit. You can give him a tour.

ABBI
Sure. Anything for the New York City Police Department. Are you doing anything after lunch?
(beat)
By the way, what does TJ stand for?

TJ
Thomas Jefferson.

ABBI
Very patriotic.

They smile.

EXT. ABBI'S STORE - DAY

Abbi's store is on West 47th Street between 5th and 6th Avenues: The New York City Diamond District. It has a storefront with a display of hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of diamond jewelry in the front window. The rain is still pouring.

INT. ABBI'S STORE - DAY

Abbi is giving Sol and TJ a "tour" of his store. The ground floor is jammed with display cases full of row after row of diamond rings, earrings, bracelets and necklaces. Sol has been there before and tags along behind the others.

ABBI

Down here is our retail operation. On the second floor is our wholesale market, and upstairs is our factory.

TJ

Factory?

ABBI

Where we cut and polish the stones. Have you ever seen a diamond being cut?

TJ

No.

ABBI

Then you're in for a treat.
(beat - then to Sol)
Oy, business is slow today because of the weather. It's a good thing we'll be closed on Saturday. This storm is going to be something. The whole street will be shut down.

TJ

What do you do for security when you're closed?

ABBI

We have a new video system. Sol, I don't think you've seen it yet. Everyone on the street is hooked into it. We have closed circuit cameras in each store and out on the street as well. All the systems are tied together. Let me show you.

Abbi leads them into a back room filled with computer screens.

ABBI (CONT'D)

We have several cameras on each floor.

He points to the different computer screens.

ABBI (CONT'D)
Here's the retail floor, wholesale
and the factory. Over here we have
the cameras out on the street.

COMPUTER SCREENS

Several computer monitors show the inside of the store and
several show a street view.

BACK TO SCENE

TJ
Aren't you concerned that someone
could hack into the system?

ABBI
Nah. It's a private system. No one
can get in. Let me show you the
cameras. They're so small. It's
amazing.

CUT TO:

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Lieutenant Baker puts the finishing touches on his array of
computer monitors and throws a MASTER SWITCH into the "ON"
position. All the monitors turn on at the same time.

As the monitors come on we see --

COMPUTER SCREENS

Lieutenant Baker's computer monitors show the inside of
Abbi's store and several views of the street.

These are the exact same views as seen on the monitors in
Abbi's store.

On one monitor, showing the inside of the retail operation,
TJ can be seen looking directly at the camera.

BACK TO SCENE