

EXT. SOUTH CENTRAL L.A. CA - DUSK APRIL 30TH, 1992, 7:27 PM

Lawlessness erupts... Angry BLACK PEOPLE tear South Central LA apart. Sirens HOWL. Dogs BARK.

Flames overwhelm a Seven Twelve - the hood version of a 7/11 near Mondawmin Mall.

Like a wicked domino effect, car after car is set ablaze, the unholy racket of auto alarms ratcheting ever louder.

Rocks and bottles hurled into shop windows, reduced to sickening rivers of broken shards. Decades of struggle ruined.

Jubilant and emboldened by the retreat of RIOT POLICE, a group of YOUNG MEN break the padlock to Tom's Liquor, allowing a MOB of over 100 people to loot its alcohol supply.

A crackhead rolls a shopping cart full of sewing machines down the street.

EXT. SANDERS' RESIDENCE - CHINATOWN, LOS ANGELES - CONTINUOUS

The mantel is a mess. On it are an empty beer bottle, streamers leftover from some party, a boy's kindergarten diploma in a frame faced down, and an 18" stuffed panda bear.

Asleep on the sofa is MERCEDES SANDERS, a beautiful Asian woman, SNORING loudly and cradling a bottle of beer.

A chicken named CHICKEN LITTLE, SQUAWKS and pecks around for food comes up empty.

TROY SANDERS, 6, bi-racial, complete with Eurasian features, and his half brother ALEXIS aka "LEX", 12, effeminate, dark complected, wide nose, with disobedient hair, play under a makeshift tent.

LEX

Stop pulling my hair!

TROY

Don't be ridiculous. That's a towel on your stupid head.

LEX

No, I'm Erica Kane with blond hair.

ON THE TV - The "I Love Lucy" theme song is interrupted with a special news report update of the Rodney King riots.

INT. SANDERS' RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - LATER

Mercedes, in her outdated, shoulder-pad-polyester '80s finery, sashays into the kitchen a la Peggy Bundy. She downs the rest of her warm beer.

MERCEDES

Lex, Troy, you two heathens get
your black asses in here now or I'm
throwing all this shit in the
trash!

The Boys hustle to the table as Mercedes serves up scraped burnt-on-the-bottom rice and cold, leftover oxtails. She splits a single can of chocolate Yoo-Hoo between them.

MERCEDES (CONT'D)

Ya'll get in the tub after dinner.
And don't use up all my dishwashing
liquid either.

Mercedes, kisses each of the Boys and heads out.

MERCEDES (CONT'D)

I'm singing at the club tonight.
Love you a thousand loves.

TROY LEX

Love you a thousand loves.

MERCEDES

And no more news, it's too
depressing. Put somethin'
educational on like that creepy
puppet show with the countin' and
what not.

INT. SANDERS' RESIDENCE - FRONT DOOR - 3:17 AM

LOUD LAUGHTER is heard approaching the front door as Mercedes returns with a group of friends.

MERCEDES

Shhh... Ya'll niggas keep it down.
My boys are sleeping.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

The Boys hear their mother's voice and jump in the sofa bed. Chicken Little drinks cold coffee out of a large mason jar.

INT. SANDERS' RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - LATER

The kitchen swarms with BOOZE-SWILLING GUYS and a few sweaty FEMALE CLUB DANCERS.

Music PUMPS at an indecent volume. Mercedes sings the shit out of a song to rival Patti Labelle.

A couple of ASIAN MEN, clearly stoned, hair dripping with jheri-curl juice, sit at the kitchen table, smoking, drinking, and playing cards.

ASIAN MAN

You sho' nuff sang tonight. Girl, you had them chinks on their feet!

MERCEDES

Child, I better. It pays the rent.

Mercedes plays the queen of diamonds while another male screws one of the dancers perched on top of a polluted sink. Fast and furious.

BLACK MAN 2

I still smell that smoke. Can't understand why them South Central niggahs burning down their shit.

Cocaine granules are all lined up and ready as Mercedes bends down to snort. As she does, she winces: the nostril is very tender. She switches nostrils. She snorts it up.

Troy enters. The adults ignore him. He walks to the fridge. There's nothing inside but a small canister of Maxwell House.

POUNDING amidst the TV and the barking of MUFFLED VOICES.

MERCEDES

Who the hell's banging on my door like that?

MUFFLED VOICE (O.S.)

Police! Open up!

Everyone in the room flies into action, some bee line for the back of the house. It's too late, nobody can escape. Lots of YELLING as chicken feathers fly everywhere.