

MAYOR FOR LIFE

by

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CHYRON: "The following is based on a true story."

FADE IN.

INT. DISTRICT BUILDING - DAY

A pair of polished, dayglow-brown loafers glide over a manicured, reflective tile floor. Leather tassels dance over the tongues. Wooden and rubber heels CLICK and CLACK with each pace, reverberating down a cavernous, marble-lined hallway.

CHYRON: "Washington D.C. - 1977"

Two legs in a pin-stripe pant move at a measured gait: three parts confidence, one part vanity. The SWISH and SWASH of starched crease against skin seem downright noisy in the palatial corridor.

MARION BARRY (Black, 41), strides into focus. He's full-bodied under his tailor-made suit, though filling it out took him years after a skinny childhood spent sharecropping.

A kente-cloth tie and matching pocket square adorn his chest, more powerful than muscular. He's broad-shouldered, with eyes that radiate, perfect teeth, and a manicured handlebar on his upper lip.

He reaches the elevator and pushes the call button. A female bureaucrat, RENEE, lingers past.

RENEE

Liking the suit, Councilman.

Expensive lunch today?

He moves his briefcase from his right hand to his left, concealing a thick gold wedding band with practiced ease.

BARRY

Is the Roma Restaurant expensive? I really wouldn't know, the Kiwanis Club picked up the check.

RENNE

(unimpressed)

Uh-huh.

BARRY

We had my favorite table in the joint, right underneath the javelina. You know the one?

RENEE  
I don't, Councilman. I've never  
eaten at the Roma.

BARRY  
Criminal. You'll have to come as my  
guest.

RENEE  
What will the Kiwanis Club say?

BARRY  
Oh, they're not invited to this  
one.

RENNE  
Then what will your wife say,  
Marion?

Barry moves closer, the pretense of a secret inviting more  
intimacy.

BARRY  
(hushed)  
I think if Mrs. Barry saw me  
talking to a woman looking like  
you, she'd hunt you down with a  
shotgun.

RENNE  
You gonna let your wife shoot me  
over some lunch?

BARRY  
Absolutely. The Roma could mount  
your beautiful head on the wall.  
Then I'd have a new favorite table.

RENEE  
(relenting)  
Marion, you are bad news.

The elevator bell DINGS.

BARRY  
That's the kind everybody likes to  
read, sweetheart.

She continues away.

RENEE  
(giggling)  
You're gonna miss your elevator,  
Councilman.

Barry smiles to himself. He enters the elevator, hits "5."

MAURICE (O.C.)  
Could you hold that?

Barry holds a hand in front of the door, peers at his watch.

MAURICE WILLIAMS (Black, 24), runs onto the elevator. His young adult mustache isn't half of Barry's, but his tight afro and idealistic eyes are the picture of the youth movement.

BARRY  
What floor, son.

The elevator doors SHUT.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. WASHINGTON HOSPITAL CENTER

Doors SLAM open as a gurney rushes into the Emergency Room, paramedics calling wildly. Barry is sitting upright, clutching his chest, as they cut off a BLOOD-SOAKED SHIRT. Panicked and ashen, he's nothing like the picture of confidence from before.

PARAMEDIC  
I've got a GSW to the upper chest.  
Stable, but he's lost a lot of  
blood.

ER DOCTOR  
Code Yellow Team, on me. Sir, I  
need you to lay back.

BARRY  
I'm gonna die if I lay back.

ER DOCTOR  
You've got the best trauma team in  
the city coming to meet you. You're  
not going to die.

BARRY  
188 murders in the District last  
year, more than half from gunshot  
wounds. Don't bullshit me, Sister.

PARAMEDIC  
(off doctor's look)  
He's a City Councilman.

The doctor rolls her eyes. Barry's starting to panic.

BARRY

Help me, goddammit, I'm dying.

ER DOCTOR

All right, lets get him to the ICU.  
Page Dr. Champion!

He's wheeled through another door, out of sight.

Across the hall, the nurse's station houses a RATTY TELEVISION. The news plays, static and blurry, narrating a dramatic rescue:

Fifth floor, high up: A wounded man stumbles through a window into a basket. The crane holding it backs away, revealing a screaming gunman scaring unarmed hostages away from the window.

Zoom in on Barry, the man in the basket, looking equally terrified and relieved. He's lowered to waiting paramedics and quickly rushed to an ambulance.

NURSE 1 (O.C.)

They should be bringing in a security guard any minute now.

NURSE 2 (O.C.)

I heard there were three. What about the kid?

NURSE 1 (O.C.)

Paramedics pronounced him at the scene.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

MAURICE

Five, please.

BARRY

Headed back to your beat, Mr. Williams?

MAURICE

(stammering)

Uh, yeah. I, uh--...  
You know my name?

BARRY

WUHR is one of the only black-owned radio stations in the country, son. And a young, Black journalist with a fire in his belly like you, you're damn right I know who you are.

MAURICE

Thank you, Councilman.

BARRY

You just tell Kojo the news division can't keep sucking up to Uncle Walter this close to an election year. The people of the District want a mayor, not a steward for the White minority in Rock Creek Park.

MAURICE

He and Coleman ever let me come to lunch, I'll let him know.

BARRY

They locking you out of the big boys table, huh? Not to worry, Maurice. You're young, your time will come.

The elevator dings, the compass rose points "5." The doors open.

Maurice Williams steps into the hallway and-- A SHOTGUN BLAST rings out. Maurice-- without a gasp-- drops to the ground, blood SPURTING from a wound in his chest. A security guard in blue is already on the ground, SCREAMING LOUDLY.

Barry is already halfway out. He drops his briefcase, and does his best to flounder over the young Williams, completely silent, his red sweater turning a deep shade of carmine.

He's in the hallways no more than a second when--

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

A blank wall is marred by the skid mark of a pellet ricochet. The elastic sound-- PEYOONG!-- is straight out of an Old Western. Barry CRIES OUT in pain.

Down the hall are a group of Black Men, the HANAFI MUSLIM TERRORISTS, in unmatching, military-like fatigues.

Armed with shotguns, automatic rifles, pistols, and knives, they hold guard over terrified government workers sitting on the floor.

Scarier still, their faces are not covered- they're prepared to die today.

They YELL COMMANDS at each other over the hubbub of melee.

DESKS and CHAIRS are awry in a makeshift barrier. SHATTERED GLASS, once the entrance to the DC Council's Office, lies strewn about the floor. Walls are pockmarked with BULLET HOLES you could jam a fist into.

BARRY

They shot me in my damn chest!

A samaritan, outside the captivity of the gunman, runs into the hall and drags Barry to a safe chamber.

BARRY (CONT'D)

I'm hit. Get me a doctor.

SAMARITAN

We've got you, buddy. Just hang on.  
Just hang on.

CUT TO:

INT. PRIDE, INC. HEADQUARTERS - DAY

MARY'S FRIEND

Hang on, Mary. I'll drive you.

The headquarters of Pride, Inc. is awash with workers and volunteers. The room, housing an employment organization fronted by Barry and his wife, is shabby. PILES OF FOLDERS stock the desks, the telltale sign of an overworked staff. All employees are dressed professionally and, usually, hard at work.

A TELEVISION squats in the center of the bullpen. Askew on an undersized cart that's been wheeled out of some mystery closet, it spews out the unfolding hostage situation. The staff is glued to it.

MARY TREADWELL (Black, 36), round face, sharp eyes, and lips that never smile, grabs her coat and purse. She rushes out the front door, followed by her chauffeuring friend.

Back in the bullpen, RAY, a Pride, Inc. employee, approaches COLLETTE, his colleague, with two cups of coffee and hands her one.

RAY  
What happened?

COLLETTE  
Khaalis, the leader, called Channel  
9 direct. Said they'd only talk to  
Max.

On television, MAX ROBINSON (Black, 37) composed with the mien reserved for professional newsmen, speaks into a telephone while on the air.

MAX ROBINSON  
(on TV)  
*You are asking that those  
responsible for the deaths of- who  
killed your children...*  
(continues in background)

RAY  
What?

COLLETTE  
He's talking to him now. Man says  
he's gonna start chopping off heads  
and throwing them out the window.

RAY  
Jesus.

COLLETTE  
Yeah.

RAY  
But I meant, what happened with  
Mary?

COLLETTE  
You didn't hear? That guy they  
pulled out of the District  
Building, with the firemen. That  
was Marion.

RAY  
Marion Barry?

COLLETTE  
Damn, Ray, how many "Marions" you  
know in this town? Yes, Marion  
Barry.



Ray leans in for a more discreet conversation.

RAY  
I heard Mary kicked him out.

COLLETTE  
About two months ago. Guess this  
changes things.

RAY  
Guess so. Wow. Shot in the chest by  
Muslims.

A beat.

RAY (CONT'D)  
Guess he's lucky they beat Mary to  
it. She wouldn't have missed.

COLLETTE  
(stifling laughter)  
Shh.

INT. HALLWAY, WASHINGTON HOSPITAL CENTER - EVENING

Mary Treadwell stands in front of an x-ray chart, chatting  
with the attending, DR. CHAMPION.

DR. CHAMPION  
You can see here, the pellet  
fragment entered only two inches  
above his heart. But he's a very  
lucky man. There was no injury to  
vital organs.

MARY  
Thank you, Doctor.

DR. CHAMPION  
You can go in and see him now.

INT. RECOVERY ROOM - SAME

Barry, shirtless, with bandages wrapped and wires protruding  
from his chest, sits upright in his bed.

Mary enters.

BARRY  
Mary? Mary, baby, come here.

Mary's too aghast not to cry, but too tough not to stifle it.

MARY

Oh, Marion. I was so scared.

BARRY

It's all right. I'm all right. Come here, sit with me.

She sits on the edge of his bed.

MARY

Can I hug you?

BARRY

Don't even mind this shit here.  
Come in close, baby.

Finally unable to hold back, she sobs into his chest. He holds her for a long time.

BARRY (CONT'D)

Mary, this? This was a message from God. Now I know that we belong together.

MARY

Marion, don't worry about all that now. Let's just get you safe and healthy and then-

The door SWINGS OPEN abruptly. It seems to scare the both of them.

NURSE 1

Excuse me, Mrs. Barry?  
(nods towards curtain)  
...May I?

Mary shakes off her tears, joins the nurse behind the curtain.

MARY

Yes?

NURSE 1

Mrs. Barry, there's a woman here to see Mr. Barry. She-

Mary waits.

NURSE 1 (CONT'D)

Well, she says she's his girlfriend.

Mary holds her gaze for an eternity without so much as flinching.

MARY  
Is her name Cowell?

The nurse nods.

MARY (CONT'D)  
Tell her I'll be out in a moment.

Mary moves back into the light, avoiding her husband's gaze.

BARRY  
Mary, honey, I don't want to see  
her-

She turns, suddenly, her eyes practiced in shutting him up. She gathers herself for a moment, then moves to the doorway.

Barry, alone in his room, hears voices softly from the hall. They become more agitated.

BARRY (CONT'D)  
Shit.

EXT. HOSPITAL PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Two men in suits hurriedly walk towards the entrance to the hospital.

IVAN  
I spoke to Mary on the phone, he's  
doing OK.

IVANHOE DONALDSON (Black, 36), thin, crooked smile and gaunt eyes. He's pale, with chonky, oversized teeth and kind eyes. He and THORNELL PAGE (Black, 30s), straighten their ties and fix their hair, aware of the TV cameras they must cross to reach their destination.

IVAN (CONT'D)  
He's talking to WTOP as we speak.

THORNELL  
At least it's not so bad he can't  
do an interview.

IVAN  
But bad enough he can't talk to us  
first.

An MAN calls out from a row over.

MAN  
(yelling)  
Hey, Thornell! I hear Marion  
Barry's in there.

THORNELL  
That's right.

MAN  
I bet somebody shot your boy  
because of a woman.

The pair keep walking.

IVAN  
(under his breath)  
Why don't you turn on the news, you  
ignorant motherfucker.

THORNELL  
Wait, Robinson's in there?

IVAN  
In where?

THORNELL  
In the hospital?

IVAN  
No, he's on the - how could he?  
He's the one talking to the damn  
terrorists on the phone.

THORNELL  
Right.

IVAN  
Listen, Thornell: I know Marion  
Barry better than you do. A more  
dedicated a public servant you will  
not meet. But even if--especially  
if--he brings it up, now is not the  
time to talk politics.

THORNELL  
You're kidding, right? This is  
drama, it's- it's heroism. His term  
on City Council is coming up  
anyway, and if there was a time to  
run for Mayor, this is-

IVAN

That's precisely the kind of shit  
we're not going to talk about when  
we get up there.

THORNELL

Then what am I doing here? I'm a  
political advisor, not a priest.  
Why even bring me along?

Ivanhoe sighs.

IVAN

Because he told me to.

INT. RECOVERY ROOM - SOON AFTER

A camera is trained on Barry, showing his bandaged chest. A  
microphone is held to his face. Despite his wounds, he looks  
completely natural and comfortable, as though everybody talks  
to the news after a near-death experience.

BARRY

...it just goes to show, the  
handgun ban City Council passed  
last year didn't take account for  
larger arms, like shotguns. And  
I've got a pellet in a glass jar  
over there that backs up my story.

REPORTER

That'll do it.

The reporter and cameraman wrap up their equipment.

REPORTER (CONT'D)

Thanks for the time, Councilman.

BARRY

Thank you, gentlemen.

Ivanhoe enters, treading softly.

BARRY (CONT'D)

Ivan? Ivan! Get in here.

IVAN

How you feeling, Brother Man.

BARRY

Like I been shot. Everything  
settled with Mary out there?

IVAN

Yeah, the Reverend took care of it.  
He's got Mary coming on one  
schedule, and Effi...

BARRY

Cowell.

IVAN

Effi Cowell on another. Damn near  
came to blows, the way Rev tells  
it.

BARRY

(off Ivan's look)  
Don't.

IVAN

I wasn't. Listen, Marion. Word is,  
Hammas Abdul Khaalis and his  
Hanafis were looking for justice  
after the Nation of Islam raided  
their house in '74-

BARRY

That doesn't matter.

IVAN

It doesn't matter?

BARRY

Doesn't matter.

IVAN

Marion, I'm trying to tell you  
about the men that did this to--

BARRY

What's happened is in the past. It  
doesn't matter. All that matters is  
what we do now.

IVAN

True...

BARRY

Did you bring Thornell?

IVAN

Yeah, he's outside.

BARRY

Go get him.

Ivanhoe opens the door.

IVAN  
Thor. Marion wants you.

Thornell enters.

THORNELL  
Marion, praise Jesus, you're OK.

BARRY  
Praise Jesus.

THORNELL  
How do you feel?

BARRY  
Ambitious.

THORNELL  
That right?

BARRY  
Fellas, look at all this stuff.

He motions to the window sill, where no less than a dozen giant flower arrangements and fruit baskets, each with a card meticulously handwritten, adorn the sill.

BARRY (CONT'D)  
Six hours, I've been in here. Every power broker and major donor in the District has paid his respects.

THORNELL  
Marion, are you saying what I think you're-

IVAN  
Yes. Yes he is.

Barry motions for Thornell to come closer.

BARRY  
(hushed)  
Open the campaign account.

TITLE CARD: 'Mayor for Life'