

GUNFIGHT

Written by
Jake Disch

Based on the true story of the Revolt at Cincinatti

MANAGEMENT:
Linne Radmin
The Radmin Company
linne@radmincompany.com
(310)274-9515

"I have never believed in the general practice of carrying weapons. I think it should be sharply restricted and only under license." - *Karl Frederick, President, NRA, 1935-1936*

"From my cold, dead hands!" - *Charlton Heston, President, NRA, 1998-2003*

BLACK.

Then, a slight glimmer of light. It grows brighter, larger, the black of the screen shimmering until we reveal we are --

EXT. A LEAF - DAY

Looking at an extreme close-up of the black eye of a tiny jumping spider resting on a wide leaf. It twitches.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA (V.O.)
You know jumping spiders?

The little spider raises a leg in the air, testing the wind. Suddenly, a large fly -- large enough to dwarf the spider -- lands on the leaf.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA (V.O.) (cont'd)
Fearless little freaks. They'll take out prey twice their own size. Know how they do it?

The spider positions itself, moving in short, sharp bursts. The fly rubs its front legs together, none the wiser.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA (V.O.) (cont'd)
They're smarter than the other bugs. Sneakier. And when it's time to pounce --

The spider LEAPS onto the fly, latches on hard, and sinks its fangs through its carapace before we --

CUT TO BLACK.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA (V.O.) (cont'd)
They're utterly fucking ruthless.

FADE IN:

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - MODERN DAY

A nondescript room: a comfy chair, a potted plant in the background, a small side table with a glass of water and a small, empty dish on it. Sitting in the chair is --

SUPER: TANYA K. METAKSA, GUN RIGHTS ACTIVIST

Pushing 80, with thick glasses and short hair that's dyed a bright blonde, she chews on toothpick that she removes when she speaks. She looks like America's angry grandma.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA

That was Harlon Carter. The Bullet. My mentor. Taught me everything I needed to know. Like how to pounce on the biggest prey around if I thought I could win. And goddamn, did Harlon know how to win. What he pulled off in Cincinnati is... legend. Among the NRA crowd, at least. Not so much for the rest of you.

She puts the toothpick back between her teeth.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA (cont'd)

But I can't just start with Harlon. You're gonna need some context first.

CUT TO BLACK.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA (V.O.)

So we'll start with a man who called himself Alek J. Hidell.

FADE IN:**INT. HIDEELL'S APARTMENT - DAY - FLASHBACK**

Sunlight filters through drawn blinds as ALEK HIDEELL (24), thin with sharp features, carefully clips a coupon out of the pages of a glossy magazine.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA (V.O.)

In March of 1963, he opened his issue of the NRA's *American Rifleman* magazine and found this ad. "Lightly-used, fast-loading, fast-firing 6.5 Italian carbine," it said. Beautiful weapon. With a coupon, it would cost him twenty-one dollars and forty-five cents. So Hidell clips this coupon and mails it, along with a check...

We follow close on the coupon as Hidell pairs it with the check and slips it inside an envelope --

INT. MAIL ORDER HOUSE - DAY

Close on the Italian carbine itself, resting on a rack with others like it.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA (V.O.)
 ...to a mail-order house in Chicago.
 They pack it up and ship it off to
 Hidell in Texas. Remember that.
 Illinois to Texas.
 (then, chuckles)
 Bet they wouldn't have done that if
 they knew what was coming.

INT. HIDEELL'S DOORSTEP - DAY

A long, narrow cardboard box plunks down on the cracked
 cement stoop.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA (V.O.)
 Anyways, a few days later the carbine
 shows up on Hidell's doorstep.

The door opens and Hidell snatches up the package.

I/E. HIDEELL'S APARTMENT - DAY

A rapid-fire series of shots as Metaksa continues talking --

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA (V.O.)
 He opens it, loads it, and tests it.
 Like any responsible gun owner would.

Hidell removes the gun from its packaging.

Hand-loads rounds into it.

FIRES at a tree in the building's small backyard.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA (V.O.) (cont'd)
 And it works like a dream. So he
 stores it until the next November.

Hidell places the rifle upright in the back of a closet.

INT. HIDEELL'S APARTMENT - CLOSET - TIMELAPSE

The gun sits and waits as the closet door opens, closes,
 opens, closes. Spring jackets become winter coats hanging
 from the crossbar.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA (V.O.)
 Then, on November 22 of 1963, Alek J.
 Hidell picks up his rifle...

Hidell opens the closet door and snatches the carbine up.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA (V.O.) (cont'd)
 ...and heads to Dealey Plaza in
 downtown Dallas.

EXT. DEALEY PLAZA - DAY

A parade is on. People line the streets, cheering as --

A PRESIDENTIAL MOTORCADE rolls by. PRESIDENT KENNEDY waves
 from the back of a roll-top limousine.

INT. TEXAS SCHOOLBOOK DEPOSITORY - THAT MOMENT

Hidell aims the Italian carbine at the President's head.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA (V.O.)
 See, Alek J. Hidell's real name was
 Lee Harvey Oswald.

Hidell, AKA LEE HARVEY OSWALD, takes a deep breath. Exhales.
 And pulls the trigger. But instead of a gunshot, we hear --

INT. US SENATE CHAMBER - DAY

The BANGING of a gavel as SENATE MAJORITY LEADER MIKE
 MANSFIELD signals the end of voting on a new bill.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA (V.O.)
 Five years later, the traitors in
 Congress ram through the Gun Control
 Act of 1968...

INT. OVAL OFFICE - DAY

PRESIDENT LYNDON JOHNSON signs the bill with a smile on his
 face. Cameras flash.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA (V.O.)
 ...and LBJ signs that steaming pile
 into law. Among its provisions, a
 total ban on mail-order firearm sales
 across state lines. No more Illinois
 to Texas.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - MODERN DAY - END FLASHBACK

Metaksa discards the toothpick in the little dish and takes
 another from a small container of them on the table.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA

The goddamn Gun Control Act of 1968. That proved to us gun owners, myself included: our government did not trust us. We scared 'em. So in their infinite wisdom, our leaders decided to take our rights away one by one until they weren't scared anymore. And we weren't gonna let that happen. Not a goddamn chance. Someone had to put a stop that bullshit, and why not us, right?

EXT. A LEAF - DAY

The little spider again, alone. Before the fly has landed.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA (V.O.)

Why not the NRA?

INSERT TITLE:

GUNFIGHT

Over the image of the spider.

SMASH TO:**INT. NRA-ILA OFFICE - MORNING**

SUPER: NOVEMBER, 1976

Above the door, mounted in a place of honor, is an old 12-GAUGE SHOTGUN. From there, we take a tour through --

A rented office space on the top floor of a hotel: a large bullpen littered with desks. Most cleaned out, others have PINK SLIPS atop them. This place has the air of a funeral.

We zip past BOB KUKLA (42), all thin, greasy hair and oversized bifocals, looking distraught, as we move to --

A corner where two men, JOHN D. AQUILINO (25) and JOSEPH P. TARTARO (39) comfort one another. Aquilino cries. We float by them, finding --

A younger TANYA K. METAKSA (38), still with the short, sensible hair and thick glasses, chewing a toothpick.

She sits at her desk in front of her typewriter. She looks left, to the neighboring desk: a pink slip rests on it.

To her right, another desk with another pink slip.

She exhales and rests her fingers on the keys of her typewriter as --

The office door BURSTS open and in strides HARLON BRONSON CARTER (64). A big, broad bulldog of a man with a shining bald cranium, he wears a suit, carries a briefcase, and moves like a brick wall with a bad attitude. But --

He stops cold when he sees the state of the office, dropping his briefcase to the floor with a resounding THUD.

The remaining employees freeze. No typing, no talking, no breathing. All eyes are on Harlon Carter's scowling face.

CARTER

(bellows)

What in the hell is goin' on in here?

FREEZE-FRAME.

SUPER: HARLON BRONSON "BULLETHEAD" CARTER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NRA INSTITUTE FOR LEGISLATIVE ACTION

END FREEZE-FRAME.

Carter picks up a pink slip from the nearest desk and glares down at the signature on it: MAXWELL E. RICH.

CARTER (cont'd)

I'll be goddamned.

(looks up, seething)

How many?

Kukla approaches like a scared puppy.

KUKLA

Well um, let's see. He got Steve, Joan, Fat Steve, Mike, Scooter --

METAKSA

Seventy-four.

Carter grimaces, surveys the room. When he speaks, it's with the remains of a Texas accent he's tried and failed to lose.

CARTER

Rich, you son of a motherfuckin'...

He pulls the 12-gauge down from above the door and stalks right back out of the room, leaving his briefcase behind.

EXT. NRA HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Carter crosses the street, toting the shotgun on his shoulder like a marching soldier. The ILA's offices are in a hotel just across from --

NRA HQ. An eight-story glass monolith.

SUPER: NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION HEADQUARTERS. FAIRFAX, VA.

Carter storms through the doors, alarmed pedestrians scattering in his wake.

INT. NRA HEADQUARTERS - LOBBY - DAY

Carter strides quickly past the reception desk, where an immediately nervous young RECEPTIONIST greets him --

RECEPTIONIST

Uh, good morning, Mr. Carter.

CARTER

Yeah, not so much, Sheila.

He moves to the elevators, past a BLANK WOODEN WALL that we linger on for a moment. In just a few months' time, this wall will be famous.

INT. NRA HEADQUARTERS - EVP'S OFFICE - DAY

The top-floor corner office of the Executive Vice President of the NRA is all dark wood and huge windows. Standing behind the large oak desk is --

GENERAL MAXWELL E. RICH (60), a stern and stone-faced boy scout, phone pressed to his ear in a white-knuckled grip.

RICH

Aw Christ, Sheila, and you just let him walk by?

(then)

I'm sorry, he had a what?

FREEZE-FRAME on his frustrated face.

SUPER: FORMER GENERAL MAXWELL E. RICH, EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, NRA

END FREEZE-FRAME as --

Carter THROWS the office door open and strides in.

RICH (cont'd)
 Sounds good, sounds good. Looking
 forward to it. Bye, Greg.

Rich hangs up the phone and looks up into the red, angry
 face of Harlon Carter.

RICH (cont'd)
 Harlon! Jesus, what are you doing
 with that thing?

CARTER
 This here "thing" is my daddy's
 shotgun. This gun saved my life, and
 I keep it in the office to remind
 myself, every day, of why we fight so
 hard to keep gun ownership a
 fundamental right in this country.
 This gun is a symbol of my right to
 defend me and mine. And that is what
 I'm here to do, General. To defend
 the ILA.

RICH
 (sighs)
 Finished?

FREEZE FRAME again as Metaksa interrupts --

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA (V.O.)
 Actually, he's not. But before we go
 any further...

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - MODERN DAY

The older Metaksa pulls the toothpick from her lips, holding
 it between two fingers like a cigarette.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA
 ...it'd probably be good to explain
 what the ILA actually is.

INT. US SENATE CHAMBER - DAY - FLASHBACK

Metaksa speaks over images of floor debate: white men in
 navy suits make competing speeches, using diagrams and
 graphs adorned with pictures of guns.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA (V.O.)
 When these waves of gun control
 legislation hit, Harlon knew exactly
 what to do. The ILA was his idea.

INT. NRA HEADQUARTERS - BOARD ROOM - DAY

A long boardroom table lined with old white men, many of them blowing smoke into the hazy air. Up at the front, Carter makes an impassioned speech. All eyes on him.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA (V.O.)
A whole arm of the NRA dedicated to political action, built to put a stop to gun control legislation. The Board, they loved it. Thought it would really fire up the membership.

In the corner, Max Rich watches darkly.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA (V.O.) (cont'd)
Max Rich, on the other hand, was not a fan. The man hated politics. And fair enough, if we're being honest.

INT. HOTEL BALLROOM - DAY

Streamers and deflated balloons hang limply from the ceiling. Remnants of a wedding.

Carter stands at the window, glowering out at NRA HQ across the street. This is the future office of the ILA.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA (V.O.)
Rich did his damndest to make sure the ILA was a failure from the jump. Put us in a goddamn ballroom across the street from HQ, for one.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - MODERN DAY - END FLASHBACK

Metaksa still holds her toothpick like a cigarette.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA
And never gave us the funding we needed to do any real lobbying, for another.

(then)
Why don't we have Harlon himself explain how the ILA went so wrong? It's really more his purview, anyhow.

And we're WHISKED off to --

INT. UNIVERSITY LECTURE HALL - OUTSIDE OF TIME

We're in a cavernous, darkened lecture hall with Carter front and center before a chalkboard.

On the chalkboard, a series of illustrated steps. As Carter speaks, the chalk illustrations animate, coming to life to act out each step.

CARTER

It's simple. A lobbyist's job is to incentivize legislators to help his cause. So we take 'em out to dinner. Invite 'em to fancy parties. Dump money into their campaigns. Just kiss all the Congressional ass we can.

A cartoon Harlon Carter shakes hands with a number of cartoon Congressmen on the chalkboard.

CARTER (cont'd)

While we've got their ear, we tell 'em what kinda laws we wanna see and what kind we don't. And if they're amenable to our agenda, we'll keep 'em elected and workin' for us.

The cartoon Carter hands a Congressman a stack of bills. Another cartoon Congressman lights a cigar with a bill of his own. They all laugh and slap each other's backs.

CARTER (cont'd)

(with rising anger)

But all that wheel greasin' costs money. And say your organization is under-funded because some snake-in-the-grass former General won't loosen the purse-strings...

The cartoon Carter now entertains a group of cigar-smoking Congressmen at a restaurant.

CARTER (cont'd)

In that case, well... you're pretty much fucked.

The bill arrives at the cartoon table. The Congressmen all look to the cartoon Harlon Carter, who sinks in his seat.

CARTER (cont'd)

So the ILA, to this point, has been about as effective as a blank on a battlefield. All thanks to Max Rich.

INT. NRA HEADQUARTERS - EVP'S OFFICE - DAY

We're back with Carter as he confronts his boss. Rich shifts a bit nervously.

RICH

Harlon... I'm sure from your end this looks like an ambush --

CARTER

Ha! You think I didn't see this comin'? I've been waitin' for you to try somethin' like this, you sneaky little piece of shit.

RICH

Please. This isn't personal. Just hear me out.

Carter smirks.

RICH (cont'd)

It's purely budget-based. The Board thought your lobbying would bring in members, and it didn't. So we've agreed -- we're drawing back on your Second Amendment... stuff.

CARTER

You mean our battle for your rights?

RICH

Um... sure. That's how you put it. But the ILA hasn't been as effective as we'd hoped.

CARTER

Because you never gave us the chance to be! We've been under-funded from day fuckin' one and you know it.

RICH

I've done the best I could with what I have, Harlon. It's not like lobbying is big business, it was always a gamble.

Carter sneers as he pulls out a cigarette case: silver, embossed with the image of a 12-gauge shotgun. The same shotgun on Rich's desk.

RICH (cont'd)

I'd appreciate it if you didn't smoke in here.

CARTER

I bet you would.

Carter lights a cigarette. Rich sighs.

RICH

Okay. The fact is, we're preparing to leave the lobbying behind. The NRA isn't built for politics. Never was.

CARTER

Because you never gave us a chance --

RICH

So, we're shifting all of our resources back to basics, the way Ambrose Burnside intended. Marksmanship. Gun safety, hunting.

CARTER

Gonna have a hard time huntin' once the ATF confiscates your rifle.

RICH

C'mon, don't start with that paranoid bullshit again.

FREEZE-FRAME.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA (V.O.)

Okay, stop, stop, stop.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - MODERN DAY

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA

I'm sorry, but Max Rich is dead wrong about this. Yes, the government does come for people's guns. It's not some lunatic conspiracy theory.

INT. SHABBY APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY - NIGHT

A squad of ATF AGENTS batter down a scuffed apartment door.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA (V.O.)

See, back in 1971 the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms busted in the door of an NRA member named Kenyon Ballew, just because they heard he had some unregistered firearms in his apartment. And maybe a few grenades.

(then, *Obviously*)

What? He was an antiques collector!

INT. SHABBY APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Kenyon Ballew's stunning display case of Civil War, WWI, and WWII-era weapons. Mostly guns, but a few grenades. A hand reaches out and grabs an 1847 COLT PISTOL from the shelf.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA (V.O.)
 ...who happened to be in violation of
 the Gun Control Act of 1968.

INT. SHABBY APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY - NIGHT

The door splinters and the ATF agents stream inside.

INT. SHABBY APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

They stop: a barrier made from furniture blocks the way: a sofa, dining chairs, an ottoman.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA (V.O.)
 The ATF claimed Ballew came at them
 with a replica 1847 Colt cap-and-ball
 pistol. Another beautiful gun.

KENYON BALLEW stands, completely nude, on the other side of the barrier, aiming the Colt.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA (V.O.) (cont'd)
 They also said he was nude. Just
 trying to be historically accurate.

An ATF agent FIRES, hitting Ballew in the head.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA (V.O.) (cont'd)
 The bullet lodged in Ballew's brain,
 paralyzing him from the waist down.
 He could only form about fifteen
 words after what the ATF did to him,
 all because Ballew, an NRA member,
 tried to defend his home from what he
 thought was a criminal break-in.

As Ballew hits the floor in SLOW MOTION, we go back to --

INT. NRA HEADQUARTERS - EVP'S OFFICE - DAY - END FLASHBACK

RESUME FREEZE FRAME on Carter.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA (V.O.)
 So don't you tell me that the idea of
 the government coming for us is some
 paranoid fantasy. It's real. It
 happened.

END FREEZE-FRAME. Carter seethes. Rich sighs.

RICH

I didn't expect your support on this. I know better than that. But we're hurting here. Membership's been on the decline for years --

CARTER

Because of the stigma the government is puttin' on guns. I'm out there tryin' to change that.

RICH

Please. It's over. Done. The NRA doesn't represent guns, we represent gun owners.

CARTER

Who are havin' their rights stripped thanks to pieces of shit like you --

RICH

Come on, Harlon. I'm not the villain here, and calling me the villain isn't gonna make it true.

Carter snorts, amused by this. Then, his eyes land on a piece of paper on Rich's desk. He picks it up. On it, a logo. Similar to the NRA's seal, but it doesn't say NRA.

It reads *National Outdoor Association*. Carter looks first at the shotgun on the table, then at Rich.

CARTER

The hell's this, General?

RICH

We've already put in a bid for some land in Colorado. Forests, rivers, wildlife. An Olympic-level training facility with the best marksmanship coaches in the country.

CARTER

You're... movin' the NRA to Colorado?

RICH

You could have a job out there if you wanted one. Hell, with your shooting skills I bet you could coach the US Olympic Rifle team.

(MORE)

RICH (cont'd)
 (then)
 Gonna be a whole new day for the NRA.

CARTER
 Well. In that case, it's gonna have
 to fuckin' be one without me.

RICH
 (blinks)
 I'm sorry?

SMASH TO:

INT. NRA-ILA OFFICE - DAY

Harlon bursts into the room, thundering --

CARTER
 National Outdoor Association?
 National fuckin' Outdoor Association?

Metaksa and the few remaining ILA employees look up.

METAKSA
 What?

CARTER
 Goddamn son of bitch thinks he's Davy
 fuckin' Crockett.

Carter snatches up his briefcase from where he left it and
 heads to his office at the back of the room.

METAKSA
 What's happening?

CARTER
 (turns back)
 They're movin' the whole damn
 operation to Colorado. Leavin' DC,
 shuttin' down the ILA.

Bob Kukla trails him into his office.

KUKLA
 What're you talking about, Harlon?

Carter punctuates certain words by hurling office supplies
 into his briefcase.

CARTER

I am talkin' about Rich tryin' to relocate to goddamn Colorado and let the government and the goddamn hippies control the gun debate.

KUKLA

That -- that can't be right. Max wouldn't do that to us.

CARTER

Why don't you go ask him yourself then, Bob? Given that you're the man in charge here now.

KUKLA

I'm -- I'm the man in -- what?

CARTER

I resigned.

Carter SLAMS his briefcase shut and strides out of the office. Kukla scrambles to follow --

KUKLA

You can't just -- hey! Harlon! We need you here.

Metaksa rises from her desk, calls to Harlon --

METAKSA

If you're resigning, so am I.

Carter stops, turns to her.

CARTER

No. Absolutely not. Just keep your head down. I'm gonna need good, strong men on the inside.

The younger Metaksa looks into the camera and gives us a charming wink as we --

FREEZE-FRAME on her.

SUPER: TANYA K. METAKSA, HEAD OF LOCAL OPERATIONS, NRA-ILA

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA (V.O.)

That's right. I'm Harlon Carter's strong man on the inside.

END FREEZE-FRAME.

METAKSA

For what?

CARTER

You'll see.

(to Kukla, darkly)

Good luck there, Bob.

Then he turns and leaves. As he goes, his expression darkens from confidence to something resembling rage, with maybe just a hint of fear.

INT. CARTER'S APARTMENT - DAY

MARYANN CARTER (58) sits in a worn rocking chair, cleans and oils a deconstructed pistol on the coffee table while keeping one eye on the TV, where --

JIMMY CARTER makes a last-minute campaign speech. She scoffs at some political platitude. We hear the apartment door open. Maryann perks up.

MARYANN

Harlon?

THUD. The sound of Carter once again dropping his briefcase to the floor. He trudges into the living room, looking shell-shocked and defeated.

MARYANN (cont'd)

What's wrong, why aren't you at work?

CARTER

I resigned.

MARYANN

You what?

CARTER

It's over, Maryann. They're killin' the ILA. Rich -- he's givin' up the whole fight.

Carter sinks down into a squatting position in the middle of the living room with a heavy sigh.

CARTER (cont'd)

We lost. We lost...

He's like a child, hugging his knees with despair.

MARYANN

Hey. Hey, Harlon. Come here.

(MORE)

MARYANN (cont'd)
 (he doesn't move)
 Come here.

And he does: Harlon Carter crawls on his hands and knees to rest his head in Maryann's lap. She strokes his bald scalp.

MARYANN
 Tell me. Why'd you go to work for Max Rich in the first place?

CARTER
 You know that.

MARYANN
 But I want you to say it. Out loud.

CARTER
 Because it's my duty. Our duty, to defend ourselves from the government when they try to overstep.

MARYANN
 And you still believe that?

CARTER
 Of course I do.

MARYANN
 Then I can't for the life of me gather what you're doin' here in this apartment right now.

Carter lifts his head and looks at his wife, confused. She strokes his cheek.

MARYANN (cont'd)
 I have never known you to give up on any damn thing, not once. You think I'd be here right now, married to you, if Harlon Carter knew how to take no for answer?
 (then)
 I mean, look how far you've come already.

As Maryann stares into her husband's icy blue eyes, we're transported to --

EXT. CARTER FAMILY HOME - DAY - FLASHBACK

LAREDO, TEXAS, 1931: the sun beats down on a small ranch house. Bleached, chipped paint and a sagging porch.

Everything is idyllic: drenched in golden-hour sunlight, a perfect, peaceful recollection of a rustic upbringing.

A YOUNG HARLAN CARTER (17, and we'll come back to why his name is spelled that way) rolls up to the house on a rickety bike, hops off, and climbs those precarious steps.

INT. CARTER FAMILY HOME - CONTINUOUS

We follow Harlan inside. He's strong, tall, handsome -- our Harlan's idealized version of his younger self.

YOUNG HARLAN
Mama? You home?

We hear a SOB from the next room.

YOUNG HARLAN (cont'd)
Mama?

We follow Harlan into the --

KITCHEN

Where we find MRS. CARTER (42) seated at the kitchen table, clutching a 12-GAUGE SHOTGUN with white knuckles. She wears a worn house dress, her hair a frizzy mess.

Harlan immediately goes to her.

YOUNG HARLAN
Mama! What's wrong, what happened?

MRS. CARTER
It's -- it's them damn wetback boys.
They're back, they been loiterin' by
the river all afternoon...

Harlan hurries out of the kitchen, back to the --

LIVING ROOM

Where he peers out a window. Fifty or so yards away, a small river lazily winds its way through the landscape. Beside it, three MEXICAN BOYS ranging from ages 12 to 15 skip rocks.

Harlan stares at them for a moment. His blood begins to boil. He straightens up and marches back to the --

KITCHEN

Where his mother looks up at him.

MRS. CARTER
They still there?

Harlan nods, stoic, brave, All-American.

MRS. CARTER (cont'd)
They already stole your daddy's car.
I'm sure it was them. Who knows what
they'll take next?

Mrs. Carter's breath comes in short, sharp sobs. She's terrified. Harlan reaches out and grasps the shotgun --

YOUNG HARLAN
Nothin'. That's what.

He snatches the gun out of her hands, cocks it, and marches out of the kitchen and out of the house. As sunlight fills the frame, turning it stark white, we --

FADE TO:

INT. CARTER'S APARTMENT - DAY - END FLASHBACK

And back to Carter's face. No longer filled with despair, his expression has hardened into resolute determination.

He takes a breath. Maryann smiles.

MARYANN
There. There's the tough Texas son of
a bitch I married.
(then)
Now what're you gonna do?

Carter leans over, kisses Maryann on the mouth, and stands.

CARTER
I'm gonna call Neal.

SMASH TO:

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - MODERN DAY

Tanya Metaksa discards her toothpick. Thinks as she pulls out a new one. Then --

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA
What can I say about Neal Knox?
(thinks)
He and Harlan had a lot in common.
They both loathed any form of gun
control.

(MORE)

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA (cont'd)

Both wanted to lead the charge on fighting it. But they had very different reasons. Harlon believed in the right to bear arms for self-defense, protecting your family, that kinda thing. But Neal... Neal's reasons were a little more, let's say batshit.

INT. UNIVERSITY LECTURE HALL - OUTSIDE OF TIME

Now, it's CLIFFORD NEAL KNOX (42) standing before the chalkboard. Jowly, with dark hair in a slicked part and large, thick glasses perched on his nose.

He wears an ill-fitting suit and speaks quickly, almost feverish. Eager to convince us.

KNOX

Our rights are being stripped from us. That much is crystal clear through cataracts. Why? Because they -- y'know, the government -- caught a little glimpse of the real power of the people during Vietnam and it scared 'em shitless. So now they're takin' away that power. And do you trust the so-called "people" who sent kids -- kids! -- to an impossible war for twenty goddamn years to ever know when to stop? Ha! Sure, today they just wanna take your cheap handguns that break apart when you fire 'em, but tomorrow it'll be your granddad's pistol from the War. Then your hunting rifle. And step by step until you're not allowed to go to church on Sunday and can't say the word "fuck" in your own bedroom and --

Knox looks around, scowls.

KNOX (cont'd)

Where are we, anyhow? This some liberal university classroom? No decent learning's happening in a place like this. C'mon.

Knox walks off camera and into --

EXT. DEALEY PLAZA, DALLAS, TX - DAY - FLASHBACK

In the distance, MUSIC, CHEERING.

KNOX

You wanna know how they're getting away with it? I'll tell you: they're making you afraid.

Knox starts walking up a small hill. One might even call it a knoll. It has grass on it.

KNOX (cont'd)

People actually believe that Lee Harvey Oswald shot the bullet that killed JFK. He didn't. Nah, that bullet came from right here. From a gun fired by an agent of the CIA.

A CIA SHARPSHOOTER lies prone on the grassy knoll, sighting through a sniper rifle.

KNOX (cont'd)

And Martin Luther King, Jr.?

INT. BOARDING HOUSE, MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE - EVENING

Suddenly, Knox is standing in a bedroom across the street from the Lorraine Motel. If you squint, you might make out the figure of MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. on the motel balcony.

Another CIA ASSASSIN, decidedly not James Earl Ray, sights down the scope of a rifle at him.

KNOX

Same damn thing. Then there's Bobby Kennedy.

INT. AMBASSADOR HOTEL, LOS ANGELES - BACK HALLWAY - NIGHT

A MAITRE D'HOTEL leads ROBERT F. KENNEDY through a narrow back hallway as Knox, in the foreground, continues.

KNOX

Oh, you bet your ass that was the CIA.

A GUNSHOT in the background, a scuffle, shouting, as Knox moves around a corner to block our view.

KNOX (cont'd)

And then suddenly --

(mocking)

"Oooo, guns are too dangerous for ordinary Americans! We need restrictions, for the public good!"

(MORE)

KNOX (cont'd)

(then)

But this is just the first step: a few more CIA killings, and they'll be taking all of our guns. Knives too, probably. And most folks, most sheep, they'll give 'em up willingly. After that, they'll be able to do anything they want. And anyone who resists...

INT. SHABBY APARTMENT - NIGHT -

Kenyon Ballew, bullet wound bleeding in his head, lies on the ground, blinking. Alive, but barely present.

KNOX (V.O.)

Well, you already saw what they did to Kenyon Ballew.

SMASH TO:

INT. HOTEL BAR - EVENING - END FLASHBACK

Carter, cigarette in hand, glass of seltzer in front of him, sits beside Knox, also smoking, drinking bourbon.

The air around them is hazy with more smoke from the small table of SUITED WHITE MEN behind them. Congressmen.

KNOX

It was the ATF. Or the FBI. Or the CIA. One of those three-letter devils, I guarantee it. They got to the General, squeezed him. Threatened his family or --

CARTER

Or. Or the man just loves hunting.

Knox sighs, rolls his eyes.

KNOX

We can sit here and argue about the General's motives all damn night. But you didn't call me here for that.

CARTER

No. That I did not.

KNOX

Why then?

CARTER

'Cause I figure if anyone was interested in findin' a way to keep up the fight, it'd be you. We could start a new organization, like Americans for Liberty. Or... Firearms for Families, or somethin'.

Knox grins, shifts in his seat to face Carter.

KNOX

You wanna keep lobbying?

CARTER

'Course I do. I figure you might be able to drum up some support with those magazines of yours, rally some members to get us started.

FREEZE FRAME on Knox.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA (V.O.)

Oh, that's right. Neal Knox was the editor of no less than two gun publications.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - PRESENT DAY

Metaksa holds up aged copies of Knox's magazines. The covers look like 70's porn mags, but for guns instead of girls.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA

At that time I believe they were *Rifle Magazine* and *Handloader Magazine*.

INT. HOTEL BAR - EVENING

Knox nods thoughtfully. Then --

KNOX

I could. But...

Knox trails off, the gears in his addled mind shifting.

CARTER

You got a better idea?

KNOX

Why don't we just take back the NRA?

Carter almost chokes on his seltzer. He COUGHS a bit.

CARTER

I'm sorry?

KNOX

Think about it. If we could oust the General, we could turn the NRA into everything it always needed to be. Rebuild it entirely around the ILA. No more money to fucking target ranges in New Mexico, nothing to Colorado. Whatever resources we have, it's all funneled straight to lobbying. Membership dues, donations.

CARTER

Once we start seeing real results the gun makers won't be able to empty their pockets fast enough.

KNOX

And with that kind of money, we'd be the most powerful lobby in DC.

Carter quickly becomes lost in a daydream. We drift past the men, over to the table of Congressmen behind them...

KNOX (O.S.)

Paints a mighty pretty picture...

And now Carter himself sits among the Congressmen, chomping a stogie and flashing some cash. And we ZIP TO --

INT. GUN STORE - DAY

A gleaming selection of pristine pistols, rifles, and semi-autos. A handsome gun store owner smiles at them as --

Carter guides the cigar-smoking Congressmen on a tour of the shop's offerings. Grins all around as we ZIP TO --

INT. NRA MEETING OF THE MEMBERS - NIGHT

A crowd ROARS as Carter, a massive toothy smile splitting his face in two, raises a 12-gauge shotgun over his head.

He wears a cap with the letters N-R-A on it, and as we push in on his crocodile grin and bright red hat, we ZIP TO --

INT. REPUBLICAN NATIONAL CONVENTION - NIGHT

Harlon Carter on a stage, going in for a handshake with none other than RONALD REAGAN himself. As Reagan bypasses the handshake, going straight for the hug, we ZIP BACK TO --

INT. HOTEL BAR - EVENING

Carter blinks, coming out of his reverie.

KNOX
Nice thought, huh?

CARTER
(breathless)
Yeah. Yeah, sure is. I just don't see any kinda path to it.

KNOX
'Cause you're still thinkin' like police, not a politician.

Now it's Carter's turn to look at Knox, intrigued.

KNOX (cont'd)
You know about the voting rules at the Meeting, yeah?

CARTER
Well, sure...

KNOX
Anyone can bring a measure to the floor and it has to be voted on. So, we wanna get rid of Rich, we gotta bring it to a vote.

CARTER
But the Board elects the Executive Vice President. That ain't membership.

KNOX
Yeah, 'cause that's a rule. And rules can be changed...

CARTER
Hot damn.

KNOX
Now you're getting it.

CARTER
By a vote from membership.

KNOX
Meeting's in six months. Think that's enough time to lobby the whole of the NRA's membership to our side?

Carter drains his seltzer and stubs out his smoke.

CARTER

If we get started right fuckin' now?

He breaks out that big crocodile grin of his again...

EXT. A LEAF - DAY

The jumping spider again, still alone. The fly lands on the leaf. The spider turns its attention toward it, twitching...

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA (V.O.)

So now they had a plan.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - MODERN DAY

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA

We had a plan. But of course, in order for it to have any chance of working, Harlon and Neal needed to get the word out. And they couldn't do that alone. They were gonna need help. A team of true believers.

She pops a toothpick between her lips and grins.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA (cont'd)

That's where the rest of us came in.

INT. CARTER'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - EVENING

CLOSE ON: An old radio sitting on the kitchen counter. Bing Crosby's "Santa Claus is Coming to Town" plays through the tinny speaker as --

Carter paces. Knox sits at the table, pad of paper in front of him. Maryann sits at the table, too.

CARTER

John Aquilino?

KNOX

He's young, though.

MARYANN

Plenty of energy.

INT. DISCO - NIGHT

A deeply uncool late '70's disco club. Dancing like an idiot full of youthful energy booze is JOHN AQUILINO (26).

CARTER (V.O.)
 Hard worker, too. Can't imagine
 anybody could've been more pissed
 about what the General did than me,
 but he'd give me a run for my money.
 And yeah, kid's got a lotta energy.

Aquilino dumps a small pile cocaine from a vial onto his
 hand and hoovers it up, then dances even more stupidly.

INT. CARTER'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - EVENING

Knox jots down Aquilino's name on his notepad.

KNOX
 Fine. John Aquilino.
 (then)
 What about Joe Tartaro?

MARYANN
 Do I know Joe?

CARTER
 You've met Joe.

INT. TARTARO HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Huddled in the corner of the modest bedroom is JOE TARTARO
 (34), his WIFE, and their whimpering GOLDEN RETRIEVER.
 Tartaro white-knuckles a shotgun as --

A FLASHLIGHT BEAM plays under the doorjamb. An intruder.

KNOX (V.O.)
 Good family man. And he comes at his
 Second Amendment views from
 experience. Used a shotgun to defend
 his family from a break-in.

INT. CARTER'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - EVENING

KNOX
 So you've got a little something in
 common, Harlon.

Carter scowls, disapproving of Knox's comment.

CARTER
 Joe's good. I like Joe.

Knox writes the name down, mumbling --

KNOX
Joseph... Tartaro.
(then)
You know my guy in California?

MARYANN
You got a guy in California?

KNOX
Ray Arnett? Used to be the head of
Fish and Game out there.

CARTER
Sounds like more of a Max Rich guy.

KNOX
Nah. He'd be with us. Plus --

INT. CALIFORNIA STATE CAPITOL - DAY

G. RAY ARNETT (46 here, 52 in 1977), a tan, square-jawed California man, smiles and clings to a stack of folders in the back of a group of suited men.

KNOX (V.O.)
The man worked directly with Reagan.

PULL BACK to reveal Ronald Reagan at his desk, utterly ignoring our man Arnett.

CARTER (V.O.)
Reagan lost the nomination.

KNOX (V.O.)
But I hear whispers he might run
again.

INT. CARTER'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - EVENING

KNOX
Can you imagine getting Reagan's
endorsement?

Carter grins.

FLASH TO:

INT. REPUBLICAN NATIONAL CONVENTION - NIGHT

Ronald Reagan skips Carter's handshake and goes for a hug.

INT. CARTER'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - EVENING

CARTER
Sure would be nice.

KNOX
Alright. Ray Arnett.

Knox rights it down. Maryann clears her throat.

MARYANN
What about Tanya?

CARTER
Metaksa?

MARYANN
You know she'd work hard for you,
Harlon. And it'd be nice to have a
woman's perspective. Another woman's
perspective, I mean.

Carter slips the notepad away from Knox and studies the
little list of names.

CARTER
Yeah. I can call Tanya. I'll call 'em
all tomorrow.

KNOX
You'll call 'em -- call 'em all?

Carter blinks at Knox, surprised by his indignation.

CARTER
Well, if I'm gonna be in charge of
this little operation they oughta be
hearin' from me first, right?

KNOX
You're gonna be...?

CARTER
Who else?

Then Carter realizes Knox had hoped he'd be in charge.

CARTER (cont'd)
It'd look a little funny if the
magazine editor ran the NRA over the
former NRA president and executive
director of the ILA, wouldn't it?

Carter shoots Maryann a sly grin. She smiles back. Knox notices the exchange.

KNOX
Just thought, considering the whole plan was my idea --

CARTER
There'll be plenty for you to do, Neal. Don't get your panties in a bunch about it.

Carter laughs. Knox gives a low chuckle before we --

SMASH TO:

INT. KNOX'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Knox pacing back and forth in front of the bed in his tighty-whities, his wife WENDY (40) sitting up in bed watching. A pistol rests on the nightstand beside her.

KNOX
That son of a bitch, Wendy. That son of a bitch.

WENDY
Calm down, Neal --

KNOX
He's trying to take this from me. Just using my ideas, my connections, just using me to get what he wants.

WENDY
But what he wants is what you want, isn't it?

KNOX
That's not the goddamn point.

WENDY
Why not? Let it go, honey. If you just work with him --

KNOX
I'd be working for him. My best friend, supposed best friend --

WENDY
You need each other to get this done. He knows that.

Knox sits on the edge of the bed and groans. Wendy scoots down to him and starts caressing him moving her hands steadily toward his crotch.

KNOX
Son of a goddamn...

WENDY
Honey. Work together.

KNOX
Yeah, yeah.

He gives her a perfunctory kiss.

KNOX (cont'd)
Fuck.

She kisses him, puts her hand in his briefs, but his mind is clearly elsewhere.

INT. NRA-ILA OFFICE - DAY

The younger Metaksa sits at her desk, stone-faced, dutifully typing away on some document or proposal. The phone on her desk RINGS. She picks it up.

METAKSA
Hello, NRA Institute for Legislative
Action. This is Tanya Metaksa, Head
of Local Operations.
(then)
Oh, hi Harlon!

The right side of the screen pushes in to make room for a --

SPLIT-SCREEN

INT. NRA-ILA OFFICE/CARTER'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN

CARTER
Any news from the front lines?

Metaksa lowers her voice and turns away from prying eyes.

METAKSA
Nothing to report.

CARTER
Ah, that's fine, I ain't callin' for
news, anyways. I'm callin' because I
need your help.

The bottom of the screen pushes up now, so we have three frames. The third is --

INT. NRA/ILA OFFICE/CARTER'S APARTMENT/INTERVIEW ROOM

Present-day Metaksa speaks as the younger Metaksa listens to Harlon speak, her eyes growing wider and wider.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA

When Harlon told me what they were planning, I damn near flipped my desk over and quit the ILA on the spot. Here was the man that hired me, promoted me, showed us all what the NRA could really do... I was in before he finished the first sentence. I remember he said --

CARTER

So what do you --

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA

And I said --

METAKSA

I'd love to. I'd love to.

CARTER

And what about ol' Bob over there? Think he'd be on board?

Metaksa glances over to Kukla, sitting in Carter's old office across from Max Rich himself. She scowls, letting us know what she thinks of that idea.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA

Yes. What about old Bob Kukla?

END SPLIT-SCREEN

INT. NRA-ILA OFFICE - EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Bob sits behind Carter's old desk. The desk itself is covered in wrinkled papers and ink, just as disheveled as Bob himself. Rich sits opposite him.

KUKLA

All I'm saying here is that you really ought to consider that the will of the membership brought the ILA into being in the first place --

RICH

Because they got sold a bill of goods. Gun control is here and the ILA's whining won't change that.

KUKLA

We're not whining. There's plenty in Congress who agree with us --

RICH

Then where are they? Why aren't you meeting with them right now?

KUKLA

(off-balance)

I -- I just think you're underestimating --

RICH

Aw, can it, Bob. I'm not underestimating shit.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - MODERN DAY

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA

(through a toothpick)

Hmm. Not doing so well, by the looks of it. Ah, shit.

She licks her lips, spits a little.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA (cont'd)

Splinter. Can't believe I gave up cigarettes for this shit.

(then)

Anyways, now that Harlon had rallied his troops, it was time to meet. And for some unfathomable reason, we chose to meet in --

EXT. LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY - VARIOUS

The skyline of Louisville, mirrored in the Ohio River.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA (V.O.)

Louisville, Kentucky. Just a hundred miles southwest of our final destination in Cincinnati.

Images of the city: horses on the track at Churchill Downs, the Louisville Slugger factory, the Louisville Waterfront Park, Whitehall House and its lush gardens.

A plane ROARS in for a landing at Louisville International.

EXT. BROWN HOTEL - LOUISVILLE - DAY

The historic Brown Hotel in downtown Louisville: a massive concrete facade with a burgundy awning proclaiming THE BROWN in golden letters.

Tanya Metaksa hurries up to the front door, dragging a suitcase behind her.

INT. BROWN HOTEL - BAR - LOUISVILLE - EVENING

Dark wood, burgundy carpet, flowers and candles on the tables, warm evening light filtering through the windows in the open lobby/bar/restaurant area.

A glass of bourbon is raised --

KNOX (O.S.)
To the Second.

And several more glasses of bourbon -- along with a single glass of seltzer -- follow.

ALL (O.S.)
To the Second!

Carter, Knox, Metaksa, Aquilino, and Arnett all sit at a table in the plush hotel bar. All drink -- Carter is the one with the seltzer.

A moment as everyone downs their bourbon. Carter takes the opportunity to light a cigar with a silver lighter. He holds it up, showing off the 12-gauge shotgun embossed on it.

CARTER

This gun right here -- my daddy's
shotgun -- saved my life. This gun.
(to Tartaro)
Joe, I know somethin' similar
happened to you.
(to all)
And I just want y'all to know how
happy I am, how proud I am, to be
sittin' here gettin' ready to defend
that right to ownership with all of
y'all true Americans.

AQUILINO

Here, here!

He raises his glass. No one else does. He quickly lowers it and takes a sip of bourbon.

KNOX

Agreed. Harlon and I couldn't be happier that you're all here.

ARNETT

And um, beg pardon but what exactly are we here for? What's the plan?

METAKSA

That's what we're here to figure out. Right, Harlon?

CARTER

That's right. Before we get into anything like that though, don't y'all think we need to come up with a name? For the group of us, I mean. We ain't the NRA, not yet at least.

TARTARO

You're saying we need a brand?

CARTER

Why not?

AQUILINO

How about... The Straight Shooters?

KNOX

The New NRA.

METAKSA

But we're not trying to be a new NRA, we're just trying to fix the old one.

ARNETT

The Society of the Second?

AQUILINO

I like Straight Shooters more.

TARTARO

No one else does.

CARTER

Folks. Folks.
(all eyes on him)
I got it.

With a twinkle in his eye, Carter opens his mouth to utter the name of the group --

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - PRESENT DAY

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA

The Federation for the NRA. That's what we wound up calling ourselves. Not great, but... fine. It was fine.

INT. GUN RANGE - LOUISVILLE - DAY

An indoor shooting range: Tartaro watches Aquilino FIRE a handgun at a target, hitting more often than not. Aquilino blows on the barrel like a cowboy out of an old Western.

AQUILINO

Beat that.

TARTARO

Oh, I'm meant to be impressed?

We drift to the next lane, where Metaksa loads a handgun of her own as Arnett drones on.

ARNETT

You didn't hear it from me, but Reagan's definitely running again. One hundred percent.

METAKSA

He'd have my vote.

Knox saunters over and joins their conversation. Carter watches from the sidelines, arms crossed over his chest.

KNOX

Damn right. Politicians been running Washington for too damn long, and look where it's got us.

BANG. Tartaro fires at the target. Bullseye. Aquilino huffs.

AQUILINO

We've been dicking around long enough. Shouldn't we get started?

KNOX

Aw, don't be mad, Johnny. It's all moot anyways.

Aquilino looks at him.

KNOX (cont'd)
Harlon's got y'all beat on the
marksmanship front.

TARTARO
That so?

KNOX
How many records you got there,
Harlon?

CARTER
Still standing? Three.

KNOX
You got one of the best shooters that
ever lived right there.

TARTARO
Well, let's see it, then.

Tartaro offers Carter his gun. Carter looks at it.

CARTER
Actually, I gotta hit the head.

He saunters off. The others watch him go.

AQUILINO
And we got work to do. Right?

ARNETT
That kinda marksman and he never
served in a war, huh? Seems like a
real waste of talent.

KNOX
Border Patrol starting in '36. He
stuck with that, kept him out of the
war. But that doesn't mean he never
put them skills to good use.

At the bathroom door, Carter pauses. He listens briefly.

TARTARO
What do you mean?

KNOX
You hear things, is all. Rumors...

Carter steps into the bathroom and emerges in --

EXT. CARTER FAMILY HOME - TEXAS - DAY - FLASHBACK

LAREDO, 1931. The nostalgic, sepia-toned sunlight gives everything a gorgeous golden glow. Harlon has become Harlan, the younger version of himself, looking down at --

The 12-gauge shotgun in his hands. Gathering his senses, Harlan strides across the yard toward the river.

There, the three young Mexican boys continue to skip rocks. The oldest is RAMÓN CASIANO (15), lanky, skinny, with the ghost of a mustache on his lip.

Harlan hops easily over the fence marking the property line and approaches the boys.

YOUNG HARLAN
Beg pardon, boys.

Ramón turns to him, sees the shotgun. Smirks.

RAMÓN CASIANO
Piérdase, gringo.

YOUNG HARLAN
(indignant)
Boy, you're on my property.

Ramón shakes his head, amused.

RAMÓN CASIANO
No. Your fence is back there. And my name is Ramón.

Ramón turns back to his younger friends, who are eying Harlan and his gun nervously from the riverbank.

YOUNG HARLAN
I know what you done, Ramón.

Ramón turns back.

RAMÓN CASIANO
¿Qué?

YOUNG HARLAN
My daddy's car? I know you stole it.

RAMÓN CASIANO
(amused)
What do I want with your papá's shitty car?

YOUNG HARLAN

I dunno, but you're gonna come with me and we're gonna call the police. You're gonna tell 'em where you stashed it.

Ramón LAUGHS. Harlan's face twists with anger: if there's one thing he hates, even at this age, it's being laughed at.

He steadies the shotgun, aiming it at Ramón's chest.

YOUNG HARLAN (cont'd)

C'mon, boy.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY - LOUISVILLE - END FLASHBACK

Carter stands at the sink in the bathroom, ramrod straight, studying himself in the mirror. The flat white fluorescents contrast sharply with the sepia glow of 1931.

Carter puts his hand on his reflection. Almost tenderly, before marching out of the dingy bathroom, leaving a handprint fading on the glass.

INT. GUN RANGE - LOUISVILLE - DAY

Knox has Metaksa and Arnett's attention as Tartaro and Aquilino continue their little competition next door.

KNOX

All I'm saying is, you look up "Harlon Carter" with an O, you get no records. Look up "Harlan" with an A, on the other hand...

METAKSA

Why are you looking this up to start with? You're just causing trouble.

KNOX

Why would you ever trust anyone to be who they tell you they are? That's how you get in real trouble.

Carter stalks into the room toward the rest of the Federation. Tartaro is taking his turn with the handgun, and Carter simply strides up to him and --

Slips the gun from his hand and empties it at the target. An effortless tight grouping. He sets the gun down.

CARTER

Enough dickin' around.

He turns and walks away. The other Federation members look at each other, at the grouping on the target.

AQUILINO

Yeah.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - MODERN DAY

There's a growing pile of toothpicks in the dish beside Metaksa. She adds another one to it.

METAKSA

Speaking of dicking around, what do you think Max Rich was up to while we were in Louisville?

EXT. COLORADO CONSTRUCTION SITE - DAY

Max Rich, wearing a yellow hardhat, walks through a clearing with a REAL ESTATE AGENT. Fallen pines litter the ground, the Rocky Mountains loom in the background.

Nothing has been built here yet; it's just a piece of real estate that's being cleared by bulldozers and dump trucks.

RICH

So actually the guy's patent just expired. Which means you're going to see a lot more companies manufacturing the AR-15. For my money though, you want to hunt a buck, a Remington 700 rifle is still your best friend.

REAL ESTATE AGENT

Is that a semiautomatic?

RICH

Why do you need that? If you're a good hunter, all you need is one clean shot.

REAL ESTATE AGENT

Just doesn't seem as fun that way.

RICH

How much more of this forest is getting cleared?

REAL ESTATE AGENT

They're about eighty percent done.

RICH
 (points)
 We'd put the main facility over there. So we're standing in the parking structure right now.

Rich pauses, takes a huge SNIFF of the fresh air. Surveys his future kingdom wistfully.

RICH (cont'd)
 I can really see it.

REAL ESTATE AGENT
 Does that mean you're ready to sign the preliminary paperwork?

RICH
 You bet I am.

REAL ESTATE AGENT
 And um, you actually don't have to wear the hardhat. They're just clearing brush today.

Rich just takes another big breath of mountain air.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - MODERN DAY

Metaksa smirks into the camera.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA
 Yeah. Really focused on what matters, that guy. Anyways, back in Kentucky...

INT. DINER - LOUISVILLE - DAY

CLOSE ON: A cup of coffee being filled to the brim. A plate of bacon, eggs, toast, and grits. A flask tipping a splash of bourbon into the coffee.

The Federation is crammed into a pleather booth in a greasy spoon. Cigarette smoke hangs in the air.

KNOX
 We'll start by going around the table, and if you know any local NRA organizers or chapter leaders, Tanya will write their names down.

METAKSA
 Why am I writing them down?

KNOX
You're the secretary.

METAKSA
Oh no, I absolutely the fuck am not.

In the neighboring booth, a MOTHER with two young CHILDREN looks over her shoulder and gives Metaksa a filthy look.

The other men at the table laugh. Knox burns with embarrassment, eyes down on the table. Carter, watching all of this with a slight smirk, clears his throat --

CARTER
Actually.
(all eyes on him)
The first thing we gotta do is come up with a platform. Ain't no one gonna get on board with us if we can't tell 'em exactly what they're gettin' on board with.

Aquilino sips his coffee, winces. It's not good.

ARNETT
(mouth full)
First step in any successful campaign.

KNOX
You've never run a campaign, Ray. You were an appointee.

Aquilino, pouring a bit more bourbon into his coffee --

AQUILINO
So uh, what is our platform?

TARTARO
It's... no gun control, right?

A WAITRESS with terrible bangs appears with a pot of coffee.

WAITRESS
Y'all doin' okay?

They all collectively ignore her.

METAKSA
But there already is gun control. The 1968 act --

TARTARO

Okay, so no more gun control.

KNOX

Nuh-uh. There's things in that 1968 Act that we cannot allow to stand. The government gets to decide who is and isn't mentally fit to own a gun.

ARNETT

That's not so bad.

KNOX

'Til they tell you you're mentally unfit to own one.

ARNETT

But -- I'm not.

KNOX

Exactly.

WAITRESS

Well, alright then.

She slips away, still unnoticed.

TARTARO

We can live with the Saturday Night Special ban, at least.

Carter SNORTS in derision. The others look at him.

CARTER

That ban opened a door, Joe. It might only be open a crack for now, but mark my words, it's get gonna get wider. And before you know it, it's gonna blow wide open and there'll be nothing we can do to stop it.

TARTARO

But that ban's done some good --

FREEZE-FRAME on Tartaro.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA (V.O.)

Y'know what, it might help if we pause to explain just what the hell a Saturday Night Special is. Joe?

INT. UNIVERSITY LECTURE HALL - OUTSIDE OF TIME

It's Joe Tartaro's turn in the lecture hall this time.

TARTARO

A Saturday Night Special is a cheap,
small caliber handgun. Like this.

He holds up a Röhm Gesellschaft RG-5: a small .22 pistol,
with a black barrel and cheap faux-wood grip.

TARTARO (cont'd)

They'd come in under thirty bucks, so
just about anyone could afford one...

INT. LIQUOR STORE - NIGHT

A ROBBER in a ski mask points an RG-5 at a cowering CLERK.
He thrusts a paper bag at the terrified man. Tartaro talks
as the clerk hurried pulls cash out of the register.

TARTARO (V.O.)

Including your common criminal, which
is why they caught a lot of flack
during that urban crime wave in the
'60's. The gangs, the robbers, the
muggers: y'know, the negros. They
could buy 'em, use 'em once, and get
rid of 'em.

And now, Tartaro himself steps into the scene. The robber
and clerk don't see him; it's like he's walking through a
moving, life-sized diorama.

TARTARO

Totally disposable. Which meant
they'd occasionally --

The robber FIRES the gun. It backfires, disintegrating in
the robber's hand and blowing half of his face off in
excruciating slow motion.

TARTARO (cont'd)

Just blow up in your hand.

He pinches the grip of the pistol between two fingers and
gingerly lowers it onto an endcap display of beer.

TARTARO (cont'd)

So when they were banned by the Gun
Control Act of 1968, most folks said
good riddance.

INT. DINER - LOUISVILLE - DAY

Back in the diner, Carter holds court.

TARTARO (V.O.)
But not Harlon Carter.

AQUILINO
I dunno, we put those guns back on the street and they're just gonna be used to kill decent folk again.

CARTER
That's the price of freedom, John.

Carter takes a huge bite of pancakes. As he chews --

METAKSA
He's right.
(all eyes on her)
That's how Stalin started. When my parents were living in the USSR -- he started small, just like they're doing here. But before you knew it, the son of a bitch had all the guns and the people had fuck-all. And if anyone complained... BANG!

She SLAPS the table. The men jump, except for Carter. The mom at the next table shoots Metaksa another glare.

ARNETT
So you want to, what? Advocate the repeal of the entire 1968 Act?

CARTER
You bet your ass I do.

KNOX
I'd love that as much as you, but you think it's realistic?

CARTER
I don't care about what's realistic, I care about what's right. When I'm walkin' down the street in DC and I see some shadowy figure comin' my way, the only reason I feel safe is because I got my sidearm on me. Everyone deserves to feel that safe. Every day. That's what's right.

TARTARO

I think we all agree on that, but there must be some kinda compromise we can find --

CARTER

No. No compromise.

AQUILINO

Harlon --

CARTER

(a sudden epiphany)

No. That's it. That's the platform. No compromise. No gun control.

The group pauses. They look at one another.

CARTER (cont'd)

Simple. Clear. Clean. A goddamn three-year-old could understand it.

ARNETT

It's good.

The attention goes to Arnett now.

ARNETT (cont'd)

We get to fight on as few fronts as possible and make the other guys fight on as many as we can. We say, "No compromise. No gun legislation." They gotta say, "Some gun legislation," and then we make them justify every single piece of it while our message stays exactly the same. It's smart politics.

CARTER

It ain't just that.

(then)

This ain't just about winning. It's about this. Our whole country. We let the government chip away at the Second Amendment, how long before they come after the First? And when they do, what's gonna stop 'em?

A sobering pause. Knox picks up his mug of coffee and raises it in a toast.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. NRA HEADQUARTERS - PRESIDENT'S OFFICE - DAY

A mug with the NRA seal on it gripped in a hand that belongs to MERRILL RIGHT (60), handsome with salt and pepper hair and a crisp suit. He nods as the man across from him talks.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA (V.O.)
 Meanwhile, Bob Kukla was trying desperately to get anyone to listen to him. Even the President of the NRA. Who, despite the title, is just a figurehead with a pretty face.

SUPER: MERRILL RIGHT, PRESIDENT, NRA

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA (V.O.) (cont'd)
 And he's not even that pretty.

Right continues to nod as Kukla's voice takes over.

KUKLA (O.S.)
 I just don't think Max is taking this seriously. These guys -- they mean business. If you ignore them...

RIGHT
 (nods thoughtfully)
 You think they could get Max ousted?

KUKLA
 I think they're sure gonna try. And listen, I happen to agree with the guys. But I still wanna do this right. If Max can address their concerns now maybe there won't have to be a circus in Cincinnati.

RIGHT
 Alright. I hear your concern. I'll bring it up with Max, maybe we can find some kind of compromise.

Right sips his coffee again and we --

SMASH CUT TO:**INT. BROWN HOTEL - BAR - LOUISVILLE - EVENING**

A glass of bourbon held aloft in Knox's hand.

KNOX
 No compromise! No gun control!

A ROAR of approval from the Federation members, who are all gathered around the table. A few other hotel bar patrons shoot annoyed looks at them.

KNOX (cont'd)

Okay. Local chapter leaders you know.

AQUILINO

I got this guy Wayne in Virginia. He's not into guns, but he'll fight like hell against the government.

CARTER

Wayne what?

AQUILINO

LaPiedro or something?

KNOX

Call him up. Anyone else?

METAKSA

I'm in touch with a woman in Florida who could be helpful. I'm not sure if she's leading a chapter yet but she wants to be as involved as possible.

CARTER

Name?

METAKSA

Marion Hammer.

TARTARO

Good name.

KNOX

Great name.

CARTER

Mark it down. Anyone else?

INT. GUN SHOP - LOUISVILLE - DAY

The Federation members admire the wares. Carter holds up a shiny silver Colt revolver, examining its glittering finish.

Aquilino stands beside him, leaning in close.

AQUILINO

What about the Panthers?

CARTER
(distracted)
What?

AQUILINO
You know...

CARTER
Y'mean the Black Panthers?

He looks at Aquilino sharply. Aquilino gives him a look back: *Yeah, I'm serious.*

CARTER (cont'd)
(chuckles)
You are outside your mind on that one, son.

Carter turns his attention back to the Colt, but Aquilino squares up to him.

AQUILINO
Think about it, man. They believe in the Second, same as us. Hell, they might even believe it harder than us. Remember that stunt they pulled in -- what was it, '67?

EXT. CALIFORNIA STATE CAPITOL - DAY

Reagan stands before a crowd of gathered third-graders, who all sit cross-legged on the grass, rapt as he speaks.

Meanwhile, a group of fifteen ARMED BLACK PANTHERS, guns on their shoulders, saunter by toward the capitol building.

AQUILINO (V.O.)
They marched all locked and loaded straight up to Reagan himself after he signed that bullshit gun law.

The kids, and even Reagan, turn their attention to the Panthers as they head up to the capitol, berets and all.

INT. GUN SHOP - LOUISVILLE - DAY

Back with Aquilino and Carter.

CARTER
That's just theatrics.

AQUILINO
But those theatrics might really help
our cause, don't you think?

CARTER
Forget it, Johnny. We're not gangin'
up with a bunch of... gangsters.

AQUILINO
(to himself)
Well I thought they were cool.

Carter focuses back on the Colt for a beat, leaving Aquilino disappointed. Then --

CARTER
Although that does remind me...
(over his shoulder)
Hey Ray, what about the Gipper?

Arnett, standing in an aisle, jumps and drops the box of bullets he's examining. A hundred or so of them CLINK as they scatter across the floor.

ARNETT
Ummm...

EXT. CALIFORNIA STATE CAPITOL - DAY - FLASHBACK

Arnett himself stands behind Reagan as the Black Panthers march by. He subtly shifts his position so he's more or less hiding behind Reagan, who --

Senses him there, turns, gives him a look: *What the hell?*

INT. GUN SHOP - DAY - LOUISVILLE - END FLASHBACK

Arnett gulps.

ARNETT
I'll uh -- I'll see what I can do.

CARTER
That's all we ask.

METAKSA
You don't think calling up members is
gonna get the job done on its own
though, do you?

CARTER
No. That I do not. That's why we got
our secret weapon. Neal?

EXT. DRIVING RANGE - LOUISVILLE - DAY

A sudden cut to a driving range as Knox THWACKS a golf ball. It sails through the air as the others watch approvingly.

KNOX

I got a total circulation of one-hundred thirty-eight thousand, two-hundred seventy-three between the two of 'em.

He hands his club to Carter. Behind them --

AQUILINO

That's a helluva lot of members.

CARTER

It ain't bad.

He scoops up a ball and places it on the tee.

CARTER (cont'd)

Tell you what, Neal. Set some pages aside for us. Put in some calls to action. "Keep Rifle in National Rifle Association." "Defend Your Rights," that sorta thing.

KNOX

We aren't worried about tipping off the General?

CARTER

Fuck the General.

THWACK. His ball sails over the green and lands just past Knox's, edging him out.

INT. BROWN HOTEL - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

The group sits around a conference table. Carter stands before them, drawing on a paper display resting on an easel.

He diagrams as he speaks --

CARTER

He's got the NRA using membership dues to provide services: classes, workshops, and shit. The membership then pays in again to retain access to those services.

He's created a diagram that looks something like this:



He continues with a new diagram --

CARTER (cont'd)

But. We get lobbying going, the NRA's money goes to campaigns and programs instead. We start getting sponsorships. Gun makers, outfitters, the folks we're benefiting. That's more income, which we use to get more influence. It's a beautiful circle.

His new diagram looks like this:



Most of the Federation members nod. Tartaro raises his hand.

TARTARO

But... what about the members?

Carter just blinks at him and looks back at his diagram, not comprehending the problem.

CARTER

They'll still pay dues.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA (PRE-LAP)

And that was that for Louisville.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - MODERN DAY

The older Metaksa removes the toothpick from her mouth.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA

Everybody ran off to their corners of the country and got to work. Me and Ray went back to DC. John, too. Joe was back in Buffalo with his family. Harlon and Maryann left DC and went back to their house in New Mexico. He always did hate the city.

(MORE)

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA (cont'd)
 (chews toothpick)
 And Neal? Neal went to DC as well.
 And he went right to work.

EXT. WOODS - HUNTING BLIND - MORNING

CLOSE ON: A full-page glossy magazine advertisement. A gleaming rifle clutched in a fist, along with the words *KEEP RIFLE IN NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION!*

REVEAL: Merrill Right stares at down at the ad. He wears khakis and a blaze-orange vest. So does his hunting companion, who sits beside him:

Max Rich, sighting down the scope of a brand new rifle. He adjusts, aiming at a squirrel.

Right holds out the glossy: *Handloader Magazine*.

RIGHT
 You seen this?

RICH
 One second.

The squirrel hops behind a tree. Rich sighs, takes the magazine, peers at the cover.

RIGHT
 I think we got a small problem.

RICH
 With *Handloader Magazine*?

RIGHT
 Look at the insert.

Rich flips to it, looks at the ad. He focuses on the smaller print at the bottom: *Join the fight in Cincinatti!*

RICH
 The hell is this?

RIGHT
 Neal Knox's magazines. Looks like him and Harlon are plotting something.

RICH
 Harlon? What makes you think that?

RIGHT
 You know they don't agree with your plan for --

RICH
You been talking to Bob?

RIGHT
I'm -- I'm sorry?

RICH
Kukla! Bob Kukla. He tried the same
shit with me, telling me Harlon
Carter is gonna somehow stop our deal
in Colorado. You talk to him?

RIGHT
He uh, he might've mentioned
something...

RICH
Sneaky little piece of shit.

Rich sets the magazine aside and starts fiddling with the
scope on his rifle again.

RIGHT
So you don't think we should worry?

RICH
(looks at him)
Merrill. You know why folks call
Harlon Carter "Bullethead?"

RIGHT
Because his head is shaped like --

RICH
Because his head is as hard as a
bullet. He'll never admit he's wrong,
but these guys got nothing. They
wanna scream about decade-old gun
laws, let 'em. No one's listening.
Except maybe Bob fucking Kukla.

RIGHT
Are you sure?

RICH
I'm sure of what the NRA needs and
what the membership wants. I'm also
sure I didn't invite you here so we
could talk work. We're here to hunt.
So keep it down.

Rich goes back to his scope briefly, then glances back down
at the magazine's cover.

RICH (cont'd)
 And who the hell reads *Handloader Magazine*, anyhow?

He takes aim at the squirrel again, and --

BANG.

MONTAGE: WHO THE HELL READS HANDLOADER MAGAZINE?

- Knox sits at a desk in his dim study, hammering away at a typewriter. Wendy sets a beer beside him.

- Copies of *Handloader Magazine* and *Rifle Magazine* fly off the presses.

- A pile of mail, *Rifle Magazine* on top, is shoved into a mailbox.

- *Handloader Magazine* goes in another mailbox.

- Another mailbox, another *Rifle Magazine*.

- A bundle of *Handloader Magazines* held by a pair of hands: John Aquilino's. He wears a shirt and tie and hands them to people as they exit a church.

- Bob Kukla glances around before entering Max Rich's empty office. He leaves a *Handloader Magazine* on Rich's desk.

- Joe Tartaro, in a Buffalo public library, glances around before dumping a load of *Rifle Magazines* on a shelf beside some *LIFE* and *TIME* magazines.

- Harlon Carter, wearing a bright yellow Lion's Club vest, hands *Handloaders* to other aging vest-clad Lions seated in rows of folding chairs in a community center.

- Rich finds the *Handloader* Kukla left on his desk. He scoffs at it and tosses it straight in the trash.

- *Handloader* in the hands of MARION HAMMER (38), wearing a red blazer and sporting a severe bob haircut, sitting in her Florida living room. Her phone RINGS.

She picks up. We enter a --

SPLIT SCREEN

With Metaksa in the ILA office.

METAKSA
 Marion Hammer?

HAMMER

Yes?

As their conversation quiets, the screen divides into four quadrants with --

WAYNE LAPIERRE (28), soft-spoken, already wearing his signature face-subsuming spectacles, in a nondescript office. He's utterly boring and mundane.

His desk phone RINGS. He picks up.

In the final quadrant, John Aquilino in a messy bedroom, clothes strewn everywhere, empty whiskey bottle on the nightstand.

JOHN AQUILINO

Wayne!

LAPIERRE

Um, yes?

And now the screen splits again. More members calling more people. It splits again and again, exponentially growing into a cacophony of "Hellos" and ringing phones. Then --

- Neal Knox sitting at a desk in his office, typing away on his typewriter, generating copy for his magazines.

- CLOSE ON a magazine ad: *COLORADO? COLORA-NO!* Marion Hammer raises it in front of a community center crowd, shouting --

HAMMER

If you can, if you are able, get on a plane, on a bus, in a car, and --

- Knox pulls a type-filled page from his typewriter.

- Tartaro, in a smoky Elk's Club Lodge, pontificates before an audience of tipsy middle-aged men.

TARTARO

Get your ass up to Cincinnati!
Because gentlemen, this --

- Knox feeds another page into the typewriter.

- LaPierre speaks from a podium in a church basement.

LAPIERRE

Is deeply troubling news, to say the least.

(MORE)

LAPIERRE (cont'd)

The NRA is um, is abandoning the
Second Amendment to the wolves of
government, and that means --

- Knox furiously pounds the keys.
- Aquilino, standing on the porch of a frat house, talking to a cluster of clean-cut, sweater-clad FRATERNITY BROTHERS.

AQUILINO

You are the last line of defense
against the tyranny of Washington.
How's that sound? Badass, huh?

The frat brothers all grin at each other, totally into it.

- Knox pounds out the last couple words and rips the page from the typewriter.
- CLOSE ON a copy of *Handloader Magazine*. Pulling back, we see feet on a very expensive desk. The magazine is lowered to reveal the grinning face of Ronald Reagan himself.

INT. CARTER'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

THWUMP! A stack of magazines lands on the table in a bright, well-lit kitchen in Carter's Arizona home.

Carter sits at the table across from Maryann. Both eat eggs and bacon, drink orange juice as Carter cracks a magazine.

CARTER

"Defend your rights in Cincinatti!"

Maryann looks at him as he holds up a new ad: fists holding up rifles in front of the Cincinatti skyline.

CARTER (cont'd)

Neal's been on fire.

MARYANN

I'll say.

CARTER

Hand me the book?

Maryann slides a LEDGER across the table to him. He opens it up: it's filled with lists of names and phone numbers. Some are crossed out, most have CHECK MARKS next to them.

CLOSE ON: Check mark after check mark after check mark.

CARTER (cont'd)
 Sorry. I just like lookin' at it.
 (whistles)
 Damn, that's pretty.

MARYANN
 You think it's enough?

CARTER
 Guess we'll find out in a couple weeks.

He glances over at a CALENDAR on the wall. It's already turned to MAY, 1977.

EXT. A LEAF - DAY

Our little spider friend raises its front legs, preparing to attack the enormous fly just a few inches away. It adjusts its position, hunting...

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA (PRE-LAP)
 So. Seemed like Neal's magazines were doing the trick.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - MODERN DAY

Metaksa looks up from a copy of *Handloader Magazine*.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA
 So were the calls, the meetings, etcetera. But Neal, well. The son of a bitch had a hard time leaving well enough alone.

INT. WASHINGTON, DC STEAKHOUSE - NIGHT

Knox and Arnett have a quiet dinner: white tablecloths, cigar smoke hanging in the air. A copy of the *NRA RULES AND REGULATIONS* on the table beside Knox as he --

Slices into a rare T-bone. Blood pools on the plate.

KNOX
 Okay, so point one is more power to membership. Make it a 501(c)4. Rich is gonna have a hard time arguing against that. Then --

ARNETT
 We come in hard against Colorado.

KNOX

The asshole won't know what hit him.

Arnett nods, but looks doubtful.

ARNETT

You really think this is gonna work?

KNOX

It's a risky play. But it's the only one we got. Just...

(leans in, conspiring)

The only thing I'm not sure of is Harlon.

Arnett blinks, taken aback. Knox takes a bite of steak.

ARNETT

You -- what, you don't think he's all-in? Because if anything it seems like he's too all-in.

KNOX

(chewing)

You remember Operation Wetback?

EXT. DESERT ROADSIDE, TEXAS - DAY - 1950'S

Blinding sunlight blasts a bone-dry landscape. A 1950's bus idles at the side of the road, a long line of MEXICAN MIGRANT WORKERS kicking at the dirt beside it.

BORDER PATROL OFFICERS work the line, checking ID's, asking for papers. Their leader is Harlon Carter himself, in his early 40's but no less imposing and no less bald.

ARNETT (V.O.)

When they deported all those Mexicans without due process?

KNOX (V.O.)

He oversaw that whole thing when he was with the Border Patrol.

Carter strides over to a MEXICAN MAN who's standing up straight, proud and defiant. He gets uncomfortably close to the man, threatening.

KNOX (V.O.) (cont'd)

And he saw something more than a government operation, too. Always one step ahead. He saw an opportunity.

MIDDLE-AGED CARTER
I'm gonna need bus fare from you.

The Mexican man looks at Carter, uncomprehending. Carter takes a step back to address the whole line.

MIDDLE-AGED CARTER (cont'd)
Y'all think these buses are free?
They're takin' you all the way to
Juarez! This shit is not free!

The migrants glance at one another, but none make move. Until one of Carter's Border Patrol guards SLAMS the butt of his rifle into the proud Mexican man's gut.

The others scramble to hand their money over to Carter.

INT. WASHINGTON, DC STEAKHOUSE - NIGHT

KNOX
Took every red cent those Mexicans
had and pocketed it for himself.

ARNETT
(concerned)
Who uh, who told you all this?

KNOX
Old Bullethead himself.

EXT. DESERT ROADSIDE, TEXAS - DAY - 1950'S

Carter smiles his wide bullfrog grin as he slips the migrants' money into his front shirt pocket.

KNOX (V.O.)
He's goddamn proud of it.

INT. STEAKHOUSE - NIGHT

ARNETT
You're saying Harlon -- Harlon
bragged about stealing everything
these people had?

KNOX
Well, when you put it that way it
sounds practically sinister.

ARNETT
We are about to enter the political
arena here, Neal.
(MORE)

ARNETT (cont'd)
 Our opposition is gonna do everything
 they can to dig up dirt on whoever's
 leading us.

KNOX
 So... what should we do?

ARNETT
 If it were me? I'd nominate someone
 other than Harlon Carter to lead the
 NRA once we're rid of Max Rich.

KNOX
 Got anyone in mind?

ARNETT
 I uh, I dunno. I suppose... you were
 the other half of the team that came
 up with the idea in the first place.

Knox shoves another bite of steak into his mouth to suppress
 his sly grin.

KNOX
 Hm.

EXT. WAREHOUSE - TEXAS - DAY

The middle-aged Carter glances around outside a large
 government warehouse. He wears his Border Patrol uniform as
 he approaches a truck stacked with crates of ammunition.

ARNETT (V.O.)
 This is a man who was running the
 Border Patrol when 20,000 rounds of
 ammunition went missing right out
 from under his nose.

Carter picks up a box of ammo, scans his surroundings again,
 and hustles over to a shiny new 1950's Ford pickup.

TARTARO (V.O.)
 That doesn't mean he stole it.

Carter opens the gate of the pickup. Several more crates of
 ammo are already waiting there.

ARNETT (V.O.)
 Not necessarily. But that's not the
 point.

EXT. KNOX'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY

A cookout at Neal Knox's house. The entire Federation minus Carter is there. They're in a new subdivision: houses spread out with sprawling backyards leading to bare fields.

Hammer holds a rifle while next to her, Aquilino holds a clay pigeon, discus-style.

HAMMER

PULL!

Aquilino HURLS the clay pigeon.

BANG! It explodes in the air.

A handful of NEW FEDERATION MEMBERS are scattered around the yard. KNOX'S SONS, twelve and ten, chase through the little groups of adults, FIRING cap guns at each other.

Over near a charcoal grill, Knox and Arnett chat with Tartaro and LaPierre, who JUMPS at the sound of the gunshot.

ARNETT

The point is, he had to testify before a Grand Jury. The man's been accused of stealing from good American law enforcement officers.

TARTARO

Sure, but he wasn't convicted.

KNOX

This is just you not understanding politics, Joe. He doesn't have to have done it if his enemies can make people believe he's done it.

Knox goes about flipping burgers on the grill. Flames LEAP into the air.

HAMMER (O.S.)

PULL!

BANG!

LaPierre jumps again.

LAPIERRE

So um, so what -- what are we going to to do about this?

ARNETT

Well, when the time comes, I think it'd be a smart move to support Neal for Executive VP.

LAPIERRE

Over Harlon?

TARTARO

But this whole thing was Harlon's from the get-go.

KNOX

It was both of us. Harlon and me.

ARNETT

And Neal has plenty of name recognition from the magazines.

Metaksa edges into the conversation, peering at the grill.

METAKSA

How're those burgers coming?

KNOX

Almost done. Just give us a couple more minutes.

METAKSA

Lookin' good.

Metaksa stands there with the men, Knox giving her a look that says, *Go away, the adults are talking.*

Metaksa gets the message. She raises the beer in her hand.

METAKSA (cont'd)

Well.

Takes a sip and saunters off.

HAMMER (V.O.)

PULL!

BANG!

LaPierre jumps. Again.

KNOX

So what do you think, boys?

LaPierre and Tartaro glance at each other, unsure...

EXT. KNOX'S HOUSE - FRONT YARD - DAY

Carter approaches the front door, carrying a suitcase and wearing a dark look on his face.

He mounts the steps, takes a breath. Replaces his grimace with a grin, raises his fist to knock, and --

The door opens. Wendy Knox smiles and goes in for the hug.

WENDY

Harlon! How are you?

EXT. KNOX'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY

Metaksa sits in a lawn chair removed from the rest of the group, a beer in hand, observing. Knox laughs with Tartaro and LaPierre, then glances her way.

Metaksa looks away, but it's too late. Knox is already sauntering toward her.

KNOX

How you doing there, Tanya?

METAKSA

I'm good. Good.

(then)

Excited.

KNOX

Damn right. So uh...

(leans in)

How much of that did you hear back there? About Harlon?

Metaksa just looks at him, sips her beer.

KNOX (cont'd)

You know him as well as any of us. You really think he's the right man to lead this thing?

METAKSA

You really think you are?

Before Knox can answer, Wendy opens the back door for Carter, who now has a beer in hand. All eyes turn to him. Metaksa stands up and walks right past the speechless Knox.

METAKSA (cont'd)

Harlon! Welcome back!

CARTER
 I don't know if I'll ever feel
 "welcome" in DC, but I thank you for
 the sentiment. Good to see ya, Tanya.

They hug as, in the background --

HAMMER (O.S.)
PULL!

BANG! A clay pigeon EXPLODES in the sky, and we --

SMASH TO:

INT. KNOX'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Wendy stands exasperated in the living room as the two Knox boys chase each other around the furniture, firing their cap guns and laughing.

WENDY
 Boys! Boys, it's time to go to --
 boys! Bed!

Laughter from the boys as we push out the window and into --

EXT. KNOX'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - NIGHT

Where Carter and Knox drink in the dim light from a fixture on the back of the house, lounging in patio chairs. Carter lights a cigar with his shotgun-embossed lighter.

CARTER
 So. You think we pulled it off?

KNOX
 Christ. I dunno.

CARTER
 (snorts, then)
 I owe ya a big thank you, Neal. I
 don't want you to think I'm not
 appreciative of what you've done.

KNOX
 Nah, you don't have to --

CARTER
 No, I do. I do. I think -- I think my
 whole life, I've been fightin' for
 something without really knowin' what
 it was. And now I know. And that is,
 in part at least, thanks to you.

KNOX

Well. I appreciate that. And we're gonna win on Sunday, I'd stake my life and my wife on it.

CARTER

And once we do, I want you to know -- you're gonna be my right hand man. I might get the General's office, but you and I -- we're still gonna be a team. I can't do this without you.

Knox hides a reflexive scowl at being considered the sidekick behind his beer.

KNOX

Thanks. I'm... lookin' forward to it.

He picks up a NOTEBOOK resting on the table beside him.

KNOX (cont'd)

Whaddya say? Wanna go over the manifesto one more time?

Carter rests his cigar on the edge of the table as Knox opens the notebook. The two begin to conspire.

EXT. NRA HEADQUARTERS - DAY - ESTABLISHING

A bright, sunny spring day: the impossibly shiny facade of NRA HQ reflects the fluffy white clouds in the sky.

INT. NRA HEADQUARTERS - BOARDROOM - DAY

A large boardroom, with Max Rich at the head of it, Merrill Right at his right hand. The Board, entirely male and almost entirely white, lines both sides of a conference table.

Behind Rich, a large window looks out at the hotel across the street where the remains of the ILA reside.

RICH

Just a couple more points before we all head to the airport. The Colorado deal is set to close immediately after the meeting. Oram International, the consultants Tom brought on, tell us fundraising should increase significantly as long as we limit the use of firearms on outdoor firing ranges --

The boardroom door opens and Bob Kukla enters. He's timid, hunched, one hand in a pocket. The entire room turns to look at him. Rich sighs.

KUKLA

Hello?

RIGHT

Bob? What are you doing?

KUKLA

Well, um... I wanted to -- before we go to Cincinnati, I wanted to bring up -- I think we may be underestimating the um, the seriousness of Harlon Carter and Neal Knox's um... movement.

RICH

Oh Christ, not this again.

KUKLA

No, I -- just hear me out.
(then)

I know you ran the numbers and that gun legislation -- it doesn't seem important to the membership. Or it didn't. But Neal and Harlon...

QUICK CUTS: PREPARING FOR REVOLUTION

As Bob speaks in voiceover, we get images of Federation members prepping their supplies for Cincinnati.

- Tanya Metaksa presses large CAMPAIGN BUTTONS with the slogan *KEEP RIFLE IN NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION!* on them.
- Knox types out the manifesto from his notebook.
- Aquilino packs a ludicrous number of BLAZE ORANGE HATS into his suitcase.
- Harlon Carter straightens his tie in a bedroom mirror.

KUKLA (V.O.)

What they're doing -- they're making people think that their rights might really be at risk here. And most of these folks had never even considered that, so of course the legislation wasn't important to them, but -- I'm worried it might be very important to an awful lot of them now.

INT. NRA HEADQUARTERS - BOARDROOM - DAY

RICH
Are you done, Bob?

KUKLA
Um, yes.

RICH
So what is it you want us to do?

KUKLA
Just -- reconsider Colorado? Or at least getting rid of the ILA. We could do great work with enough funding. We could be the public face of the whole organization.

The entire room looks at Kukla. Sweaty, oily, balding Kukla.

RIGHT
You want to be the face of the NRA?

KUKLA
Well no, not me specifically, but --

RICH
That's enough. It's not gonna happen. You really think our members care more about the freedom to carry a goddamn tommygun than they do about their own kids' safety? Because I think that's downright insane.

KUKLA
Are you willing to wager the entire NRA over that point?

Rich, already annoyed, stands up.

RICH
I'm not wagering. I'm sure of it. Lobbying against settled law is a waste of resources, it's not what the NRA was built for --

KUKLA
(to the Board)
We've been fielding complaints across the street, people wondering why the ILA was cut back --

RICH
It's a waste of time. Just like you.

KUKLA
I'm telling you --

RICH
Get the fuck out!

Kukla looks like he might say something more, but instead nods and scurries out of the room. We follow him out to --

INT. NRA HEADQUARTERS - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

As the door CLICKS shut behind him, LAUGHTER can be heard from the Boardroom.

Kukla straightens his tie, mops his forehead with a handkerchief, and strides away. His gait is surprisingly confident for a man who just got dressed down by his bosses.

We stay on him as he recedes down the hallway and disappears around a corner, slowly cross-fading to --

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA (V.O.)
Kukla tried to warn him.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - MODERN DAY

Present-day Metaksa sits smugly in her chair, the little pile of toothpicks growing on the side table next to her.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA
(shrugs)
But instead Rich strolled into
Cincinnati like Napoleon marching
into Russia.

EXT. CINCINNATI CONVENTION-EXHIBITION CENTER - DAY

A blocky building with a grid-like design on its wall that spells out CiNCiNATTi. It's kind of an eyesore.

SUPER: MAY 22, 1977

Sweaty folks in camo, blaze orange, red, white, and blue, and yes, even nondescript streetwear all stream into the building. Heat haze obscures the distance.

INT. CINCINNATI CONVENTION-EXHIBITION CENTER - VARIOUS - DAY

The place is bustling with gun-loving, gun-toting patriots. We see them in a series of shots --

The ATRIUM: NRA members stream through the doors. Then --

A long, narrow EXHIBITION HALL lined with booths:

One for the BLACK PANTHERS, dressed in their self-styled military garb and chatting amicably with white passersby.

A MAN in full Revolutionary War garb shows off some period weaponry in another booth.

Even a booth for *Handloader Magazine*, a tired-looking EMPLOYEE manning it.

The interior of the CONVENTION HALL itself: rows upon rows of folding chairs, and still more being set up.

Up on the dais, Max Rich looks out upon his kingdom, flanked by American flags and framed by the seal of the NRA.

INT. CINCINNATI CONVENTION-EXHIBITION CENTER - ATRIUM - DAY

The airy entryway, one wall of which is all glass. The Federation members stand in a sea of people, who part like water to move around them. Carter stands in the center.

CARTER

Alright everybody, walkies on.

Everyone in the group has a walkie talkie. They switch them on as Aquilino hands out BLAZE ORANGE HATS: their uniform.

KNOX

Everybody has the manifesto?

Affirmative murmurs from the gathered Federation members. Wayne LaPierre holds his copy up: several stapled pages.

METAKSA

Oh, I almost forgot --

Metaksa opens her purse and pulls out a stack of her *KEEP RIFLE IN NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION* buttons. She hands one to Carter, who grins at her.

CARTER

Very nice.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - MODERN DAY

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA

Harlon and Neal got to write a manifesto. I got to make buttons.
(MORE)

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA (cont'd)
 (pops in a toothpick)
 Go figure.

INT. CINCINNATI CONVENTION-EXHIBITION CENTER - ATRIUM - DAY

The Federation members pin their buttons to their chests.

CARTER
 Everybody ready?

A chorus of "yes."

KNOX
 Alright, let's --

CARTER
 Let's get to it! Fan out!

Knox shoots Carter a glare, but nobody notices. They all put their orange hats on their heads and --

Spread out into the crowd. A brief beat of them all walking in SLOW MOTION in a line, the other NRA members giving them plenty of space for their cool group walking shot.

INT. CONVENTION HALL - DAY

Up on the dais, Max Rich adjusts the podium and glances back at IRVINE C. PORTER (66), a straight-and-narrow lawyer with an Alabama drawl who's fiddling with some audio cables.

RICH
 Hey, Irv.
 (he looks up)
 I want you to keep a real tight rein
 on the voting tonight. No weird shit,
 got it?

PORTER
 What kind of weird shit you
 expectin', sir?

RICH
 I'm not sure yet. Just -- keep things
 moving, would you?

PORTER
 Things ain't gonna move at all if I
 can't get this mic workin', sir.

Porter approaches the podium, and Rich awkwardly steps out of his way.

RICH
 Oh, sorry.

INT. CINCINNATI CONVENTION-EXHIBITION CENTER - HALL - DAY

The narrow exhibition hall, lined with booths. Carter and LaPierre cut through the crowd, Carter pointing at a large cluster of men.

CARTER

You said you wanted to learn how it's done? Watch a master work, kid.

Carter strolls toward the group with a big grin on his face.

CARTER (cont'd)

Excuse me, gentlemen, can I have a moment of your time?

LaPierre stands there watching. He glances to one side and sees Aquilino laughing it up at the Black Panthers' booth. He blinks at the spectacle, unsure what he's looking at.

INT. CINCINNATI CONVENTION-EXHIBITION CENTER - HALL - DAY

Elsewhere, Hammer and Metaksa have cornered an NRA WOMAN, one of very few in the room.

METAKSA

The government's already taking away people's rights. They decide someone's dangerous, bam! No more Second Amendment for you.

HAMMER

How long before they decide it's too dangerous to let us "weak-willed" women carry a gun at all?

METAKSA

Then what'll you do when some drug-crazed man attacks you in an alley?

NRA WOMAN

(terrified)

I, uh, I --

INT. CINCINNATI CONVENTION HALL - DAY

Knox, Arnett, and Tartaro scope out their battleground from the back of the room, watching Rich and Porter on the dais.

KNOX

We just gotta be first to the mic once this kicks off.

TARTARO

What do you think Harlon will do?

KNOX

If we catch him off guard? There won't be a damn thing he can do.

Knox strolls up the center aisle, leaving Arnett and Tartaro to look at each other nervously.

EXT. A LEAF - DAY

The little spider prepares to jump. But as it does, the fly buzzes away. A beat, then --

The fly returns. The spider repositions itself.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA (V.O.)

And now we come to it.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - MODERN DAY

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA

After all we'd done, we still had no idea if it was gonna be enough to unseat Max Rich and his Old Guard.

INT. CINCINNATI CONVENTION HALL - EVENING

Later. The chairs are quickly filling up, NRA members of all stripes streaming in and jostling for position. The Federation's orange hats are scattered throughout the crowd.

Carter finds his place up near the front of the room. Arnett saunters up and takes a seat next to him.

ARNETT

Mind if I join you?

Carter nods his approval.

A hush comes over the crowd as Porter steps up to the mic. It WHINES, making the collected membership wince.

Behind him, the ENTIRE BOARD sits in a row of chairs. On one side, a row of MEN in Revolutionary War uniforms and triangle hats stand at attention with period rifles.

PORTER

Sorry. Sorry. Um, please find your seats. We are about to begin.

Down on the floor, Hammer and Metaksa scan the crowd. Hammer elbows Metaksa and points at another WOMAN.

HAMMER

Got one!

METAKSA

Nah, we talked to her already.

PORTER

Okay. Good evening, everyone.

Mumbled "good evenings," like we're in church.

PORTER (cont'd)

Hi. My name is Irv Porter, and I'll be your master of ceremonies for the evening. I'd first like to welcome everyone to the National Rifle Association's Annual Meeting of the Members. The NRA has been going strong for one hundred and six years now, and the past year was our best one yet. Some highlights...

As he talks, Metaksa eyes Knox as he strolls up the center aisle. He finds a seat on the edge near the front.

APPLAUSE, and we're back on the dais with Porter.

PORTER (cont'd)

I'd now like to welcome to the podium President Merrill Right, who will lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Right steps up to the podium. Clears his throat.

RIGHT

Let us now honor America by reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

The whole room stands, hands over their hearts.

EVERYONE

I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America.

Down in the crowd, Knox's eyes take in each mic: one stage left, one stage right, one front and center, and one in the center aisle toward the back.

EVERYONE (cont'd)
 And to the republic for which it
 stands, one nation under God,
 indivisible, with liberty and justice
 for all.

The Revolutionary War guys snap into action, FIRING blanks into the air to honor America. In the crowd, Wayne LaPierre jumps, startled.

RIGHT
 And now, a welcome message from our
 Executive Vice President, General
 Maxwell E. Rich.

As Rich steps up to the mic, we hear a few BOOS scattered in with the applause. Rich looks up sharply, perturbed.

RICH
 Good -- um, good evening. Welcome to
 Cincinnati. The jewel of Ohio!

A few native Ohioans applaud. Someone in the back coughs.

RICH (cont'd)
 We're very pleased to see the largest
 ever turnout for a Meeting of the
 Members! This year marks a great
 turning point for the NRA. Tonight,
 we're going to be discussing some
 changes that will see our
 organization leading the way into a
 safer, stronger, and better future
 for firearms in America.

Again, scattered applause. Carter SNORTS derisively.

RICH (cont'd)
 Before we get into all of that, we'd
 like to first allow members to bring
 up any points of order they would
 like to discuss. Irv?

CARTER
 (to himself)
 Here we go.

Rich steps aside and Porter once again takes the mic.

PORTER
 There are four microphones on the
 floor.

(MORE)

PORTER (cont'd)
 If there are any items you would like placed on the agenda, now is the time. Please keep statements brief and on-topic.

Carter and Knox both go at the same time. Carter is closer to the front-most mic than Knox, but Arnett stands in his way, taking up the whole aisle.

CARTER
 Pardon me, Ray.

Arnett pretends not to hear as --

CARTER (cont'd)
 Hey. Ray --

Knox throws a smug look at Carter as he hurries to the mic.

CARTER (cont'd)
 What the fuck're you doin'?

Knox reaches out. Grabs the mic. A subtle WHINE of feedback, and Neal Knox wins the first round.

KNOX
 Hello. My name is Clifford Neal Knox, I'm the editor-in-chief of *Handloader* and *Rifle* magazines.

CARTER
 What the goddamn hell you think you're doin', Ray?

ARNETT
 Oh, I'm sorry! You were trying to -- geez, my apologies, Harlon.

Carter growls, but calms down a bit as Knox continues, leaning into his Texas drawl for effect.

KNOX
 I wanna read something for all of y'all tonight.

He reaches into his pocket and pulls out a crumpled piece of paper. Clears his throat. Then --

KNOX (cont'd)
 Hell, I don't even need to read it. I got this memorized.

He tosses the paper over his shoulder.

KNOX (cont'd)

"A well regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed."

(APPLAUSE, then)

Shall. Not. Be. Infringed. Now, let's talk about a little law that was passed in 1968.

A few more scattered BOOS in the crowd.

KNOX (cont'd)

Damn right, boo. Boo to a general prohibition on interstate firearms sales. Boo to mandated licenses for gun merchants. Boo to the ban on Saturday Night Specials. Those things sure sound a helluva like infringements to me. How about you?

CHEERS and affirmations from the crowd.

KNOX (cont'd)

But it's all just fine and dandy with Max Rich and Merrill Right! They want the NRA to give up on politics. They want to abandon the Second Amendment to the whims of big government so they can build vacation homes in Colorado. What say you to that?

Louder BOOS from the crowd. Up on the dais, Right glances at Rich, nervous. Rich remains stoic.

PORTER

Would the gentleman please make his proposal and leave the microphone?

KNOX

Damn right, I'll make my proposal. In fact, I've written a series of fifteen proposals to save the NRA.

CARTER

(snorts)

He's written?

PORTER

One proposal per member, please.

KNOX
 Alright. That's fine.

Knox makes eye contact with Arnett and points at the other microphones around the room, trying to be subtle about it. Arnett pulls out his walkie and heads to the nearest mic.

Carter sees him leave, glowers, and slips out of his seat.

KNOX (cont'd)
 My first proposal: to change the NRA's nonprofit certification to 501(c)4. This would allow membership to vote the out-of-touch old guard the hell out!

ROARS of approval from the crowd. In the aisle, Carter pauses, soaking in the cheers.

CARTER
 Holy shit.

On the dais, Porter turns and looks at Rich. He's frozen.

PORTER
 (into mic, confused)
 Um, we cannot change the nonprofit status of the NRA right now. That requires significant paperwork --

KNOX
 Prepared and ready to file first thing in the morning.

PORTER
 Um, alright. The uh, the proposal is to change the NRA's nonprofit filing status to 501(c)4 to allow for a strengthened role for membership. Is there anyone who would like to speak against this?

A hush falls over the crowd. Porter looks back at Rich, panic in his eyes. Right starts to stand, but Rich grabs his arm and pulls him back.

RICH
 How're you gonna speak against democracy, Merrill?

Chastened, Right sits back down.

PORTER

Um, alright. Those in favor say aye.

The "Ayes!" echo thunderously from all corners of the room.

PORTER (cont'd)

Those opposed say nay.

The "Nays!" are hugely outnumbered. Porter, wide-eyed, glances back at Rich again. Rich grinds his teeth.

PORTER (cont'd)

The uh -- the ayes have it. Motion passed.

BANG. He slams his GAVEL on the podium.

PORTER (cont'd)

Next proposal?

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - MODERN DAY

The elder Metaksa smiles into the camera, supremely satisfied. She shakes a toothpick out of its container.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA

Alright. Listen, I know parliamentary procedure isn't thrilling stuff. It's boring as hell and -- y'know what, screw it. I'm just gonna let Aquilino handle it. Take it away, John.

INT. UNIVERSITY LECTURE HALL - OUTSIDE OF TIME

Behind Aquilino, the chalkboard is scrawled with terms, names, and a massive web of crisscrossing arrows connecting everything. It looks like the work of a madman.

AQUILINO

(sarcastic)

Gee, thanks Tanya.

(then)

What you just saw was the membership of the NRA voting to give themselves power to elect their own leaders, who used to be elected by the Board.

Using a pointer stick, he points to MEMBERS, LEADERS, and OLD GUARD ASSHOLES (AKA the Board) on the chalkboard.

AQUILINO (cont'd)

So now that we've got that power, we have to vote to --

INT. CINCINNATI CONVENTION HALL - EVENING

Tartaro on the mic now.

TARTARO

Restore the Institute for Legislative
Action to the number of employees it
had prior to November, 1976!

A thunderous round of "AYE!"

A BANG of the gavel.

INT. UNIVERSITY LECTURE HALL - OUTSIDE OF TIME

Aquilino again.

AQUILINO

Then we gotta bat a little cleanup.
Stuff like --

INT. CINCINNATI CONVENTION HALL - EVENING

Hammer takes the floor this time.

HAMMER

Abolishing the corrupt NRA management
committee in favor of more power for
the membership!

"AYE!"

BANG.

Merrill Right pales, looking like he might barf.

INT. UNIVERSITY LECTURE HALL - OUTSIDE OF TIME

As he talks, Aquilino tries to follow his own story with the
pointer, tracing the maze of lines on the chalkboard.

AQUILINO

So we're voting on the right to vote,
voting to vote out the old guard,
then voting their ideas down and
voting to nominate new people, and...

He's lost his place on the chalkboard.

AQUILINO (cont'd)

And it's -- it's just, listen. You
get it. It's a lot of voting. It's
just a lot of voting, and --

(MORE)

AQUILINO (cont'd)

(then)

Seriously, Tanya? Neal got to do the grassy knoll and Joe got that guy's face blown away and I get this shit? What gives?

There's no answer from off-screen. Aquilino scoffs and stomps off the lecture hall set in a huff.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - MODERN DAY

Present-day Metaksa looks uncomfortable, shifts. Then --

METAKSA

Ookay. Moving on, I guess. With the passage of that preliminary shit all taken care of, it was time for Carter to strike a real blow.

INT. CINCINNATI CONVENTION HALL - EVENING

Carter stands at the mic closest to the dais so he can look Max Rich in the eye. He clears his throat.

CARTER

Harlon Bronson Carter, NRA President, 1965 to 1967, ILA Executive Director, 1975 until... well, some bullshit.

(TITTERS in the crowd)

I'd like to bring up a temporary moratorium on all expenditures on facilities in Colorado. These plans are fraudulent, corrupt, and compromised by our leadership.

MURMURS throughout the crowd. Metaksa watches, rapt.

CARTER (cont'd)

Oram International is a fund-raising consulting firm with no stake in our Association or our mission. But when they came to Max Rich and the Board and told them to tone down our stance on the Second Amendment and -- and -- limit shooting at our new Olympic-level shooting center, Rich and his sycophants said --

(mocking tone)

"Sure thing, boss! Anything for more money!" They sold you out.

A mixture of BOOS and applause from the crowd. Onstage --

RICH
 (to Right)
 How the hell does he know about Oram?

CARTER
No more money spent in Colorado or
 New Mexico. Not one dime until we are
 assured that the NRA will focus on
 protecting the Second Amendment
 rights of every single American.

CHEERS.

PORTER
 Okay. The proposal is for a temporary
 moratorium on spending for projects
 underway in New Mexico and Colorado.
 Is there anyone who would like to
 speak against this proposal?

On the dais, Rich gives Merrill Right a look. Right sighs,
 stands, and takes the mic.

RIGHT
 Hello, Mr. Carter.
 (clears throat)
 Merrill Right, NRA president. It has
 never been the NRA's mission to deal
 in politics --

CARTER
 (into mic)
 Oh, come on --

RIGHT
 Please, Mr. Carter. You had your
 chance to speak.
 (then)
 Furthermore, Harlon Carter and Neal
 Knox believe that anyone should be
 able to carry any gun they please.
 They're extremists. So if you think
 every criminal should be able to get
 their hands whatever firearm he
 wants, by all means vote vote with
 them. That's what they're fighting
 for. But that's not who we are.

Right steps back from the mic as THUNDEROUS APPLAUSE fills
 the room. Knox is red-faced, furious.

KNOX
That's -- that's goddamn libel!
That's libel!

Behind him, a MAX RICH LOYALIST scoffs.

MAX RICH LOYALIST
You don't even know what that word
means, do you?

KNOX
I'll show you exactly what I know,
you motherfuckin' --

A FEDERATION SUPPORTER beside Neal grabs his arm --

FEDERATION SUPPORTER
Whoa, whoa! Hey!

Knox steps down, still fuming, and scowls at the loyalist.

On the dais, Right settles in beside Rich --

RICH
Nice work.

Right nods his thanks.

PORTER
Okay. All those in favor, say aye.

"AYE!"

PORTER (cont'd)
Those opposed say nay.

"NAY!"

A pause. The two responses were almost identical in volume.
Porter glances at Rich, unsure. Then back to the mic --

PORTER (cont'd)
I um -- the nays have it.

CARTER
Bullshit!

The crowd ERUPTS.

Knox turns back to the Rich loyalist behind him and tries to
take a swing, but the Federation supporter catches his arm.

Carter looks over to the Federation as he pulls his walkie talkie from his pocket. He holds it up.

Metaksa sees this and pulls out her own walkie. Channel three. She hits the button.

METAKSA
 (into walkie)
 Everyone, keep it going. Keep it
 loud, push for a re-vote!

HAMMER
 RE-VOTE! RE-VOTE! RE-VOTE!

Off in another part of the crowd, Aquilino lowers his walkie and takes up the chant --

AQUILINO
 RE-VOTE! RE-VOTE!

He turns to the people around him: Black Panthers.

AQUILINO (cont'd)
 C'mon man, you gonna let them get
 away with this shit?
 (then)
 RE-VOTE! RE-VOTE!

The Panthers start chanting, too.

Even LaPierre, positioned toward the back, chants quietly as he nods his encouragement at those nearby.

LAPIERRE
 Re-vote. Re-vote. Re-vote.

On the dais, Porter is bewildered. The fuming Rich finally stands and stalks over to him, gets in his ear.

RICH
 For Christ's sake, just do it a-
 fucking-gain!

Porter nods, swallows, leans into the mic.

PORTER
 Okay. Okay! Quiet please, everyone!
 Or -- order!
 (bangs gavel)
 Order! Order!

At last, the crowd quiets.

PORTER (cont'd)
We'll vote again.

JEERS from Rich loyalists. Some FEDERATION FAN in the audience shouts --

FEDERATION FAN
You're goddamn right!

PORTER
(*Shut up!*)
Alright!
(then)
All those in favor say aye.

A deafening "AYE!!!" from the crowd.

PORTER (cont'd)
Those opposed, say nay.

"NAY!" Notably quieter than the ayes this time.

PORTER (cont'd)
The ayes have it. The motion passes.

Porter BANGS the gavel. The Federation members and their supporters erupt into cheers. Metaksa and Hammer hug. Carter grins and shakes hands.

Knox flashes a trolling grin at the Rich loyalist.

On the dais, Rich glares at the crowd for a moment, then stalks off --

RIGHT
Max? Max!

And out a side door to a --

BACK HALLWAY

Dim, dingy. He turns a corner, moving with purpose.

RICH
Hello?
(then)
Hello?

He turns another corner and there he is: a JANITOR taking a break from mopping, smoking, leaning against the wall.

RICH (cont'd)
Hey. Hey, I need your help.

JANITOR

Huh?

Rich takes out his wallet, fumbling with it as he pulls out a wad of cash.

RICH

Where are the controls for the air conditioning?

He holds up the wad: all hundreds. The janitor is impressed.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - MODERN DAY

Metaksa fans herself with a paper fan as she chews her latest toothpick.

METAKSA

Alright, full disclosure: all we know is that the AC broke down in the convention hall on the hottest day of the year. We don't know for sure that the General was responsible, but...

(dramatic whisper)

The son of a bitch did the thing.

INT. CINCINNATI CONVENTION HALL - NIGHT

Rich strides back onto the dais and sits beside Right, who's fanning himself with a piece of paper.

They watch as Porter tries to wrest control of the voting from Aquilino, who's at a floor mic.

RIGHT

Jesus, it's hot in here.

(then, to Rich)

Where'd you go?

RICH

Don't worry about it.

At the podium, Porter has calmed Aquilino and the crowd.

PORTER

The proposal is to hold a vote for the position of second vice president, currently held by Alonzo Garcelon. Any nominations?

No one volunteers. Rich scans the lineup of the Board. His eyes land on THOMAS BILLINGS (55), overweight, balding.

RICH

Tom!
 (he looks)
 Get up there!

Billings looks confused.

RICH (cont'd)

Just -- take as long as you can. We
 gotta start wearin' 'em down.

BILLINGS

O -- okay.

Billings hustles to the podium. Porter steps aside.

BILLINGS (cont'd)

Thomas Billings, Vice President of
 Finance. Uh, when I first met Mr.
 Garcelon over a decade ago...

Down in the crowd, Knox fans himself with his copy of the
 manifesto and checks his watch. It's nearly 11PM. He slides
 out of his seat and heads for the door at the back.

From his seat, Carter watches Knox go, then gets up to
 follow. As he strides down the aisle --

Metaksa spots the brewing confrontation and follows Carter
 out into the --

**INT. CINCINNATI CONVENTION-EXHIBITION CENTER - ATRIUM -
 CONTINUOUS**

A few NRA members hang out in the relative cool of the
 atrium as Knox strides through. One of them, wearing a
 COWBOY HAT, calls out --

COWBOY NRA MEMBER

Good goin', Mr. Knox!

KNOX

Yeah, thanks.

He keeps walking, his eyes on a set of VENDING MACHINES
 against the far wall.

He PLINKS some quarters into one before noticing --

All of the little "Empty" lights are lit up next to every
 single option. Same with every other vending machine.

KNOX (cont'd)

Fuck.

He hits the coin return button: nothing.

KNOX (cont'd)

Fuck!

He BANGS on a machine, turns, and --

Finds himself face to face with Carter.

KNOX (cont'd)

Jesus Christ!

CARTER

Aw, sorry. Didn't mean to scare you.

KNOX

It's -- fine.

CARTER

Goin' pretty good in there, huh?

KNOX

Seems to be. Listen, if you're lookin' for a Coke, they're all out.

CARTER

Nah, I ain't lookin' for a Coke. I actually wanted to ask you -- when you got up there on the mic, you said you wrote that manifesto. Yourself.

KNOX

Well, I did. I typed it up --

CARTER

Using points we devised.

KNOX

But you didn't write it.

CARTER

That's not what I'm sayin' and you know it.

KNOX

Then what are you saying?

Carter studies Knox for a moment. Leans in --

CARTER

I know you been tellin' our friends stories about me. About the Border Patrol. Maybe even before that.

Knox freezes for a beat -- he wasn't expecting this. He tries to shrug it off with a little LAUGH --

KNOX

Aw, c'mon Harlon --

FLASH TO:

EXT. CARTER FAMILY HOME - DAY - FLASHBACK

LAREDO, 1931. Young Harlan stands, shotgun pointed at Ramón Casiano's chest. Ramón's LAUGHING, just like Knox.

Ramón pulls a SWITCHBLADE from his pocket and flicks it open in a single smooth, practiced motion.

Harlan's finger tenses on the trigger, and --

INT. CINCINNATI CONVENTION-EXHIBITION CENTER - ATRIUM - NIGHT - END FLASHBACK

BAM! Carter's fist SLAMS into the vending machine.

CARTER

Don't. Lie to me.

Knox suddenly looks terrified. Carter is much bigger than him, and much more experienced when it comes to violence.

CARTER (cont'd)

We were in this together, right? We started this whole goddamn thing. And now you're in there pullin' a Brutus, and I can't for the life of me figure out the hell why.

KNOX

I'm -- I'm not --

CARTER

You told Ray to stop me from gettin' to the mic first, didn't you?

KNOX

(a beat, then fiery)

You -- you never gave me credit for an ounce of what we did.

(MORE)

KNOX (cont'd)

You stand up in front of God and everyone and make your big damn speeches, soaking in the glory, taking it all for yourself, and you promise me, me, the man who came up with this whole fucking plan, that I'll be allowed, by the grace of Harlon Carter, an executive position when all's said and done?

Knox, having built up a full head of steam, leans in, gets in Harlon's face, full of venom --

KNOX (cont'd)

I don't want an executive position. I want the executive position, because I'm the best goddamn man for the job. Not least of all because I'm not a murderer or a criminal.

Carter takes a step back, considering. Nods. Sniffs. Then --

Winds up and THROWS A FUCKIN' PUNCH at Knox, who --

Does an awkward half-dodge, half-block, avoiding the blow.

KNOX (cont'd)

Fuck --

METAKSA (O.S.)

Harlon! Harlon!

She races onto the scene and grabs Harlon's beefy arm before he can take another swing.

METAKSA

Stop it! Stop it! For Chrissake!

She gets between the two, instantly diffusing the threat of physical conflict.

METAKSA (cont'd)

You're on the same damn side, you morons!

Carter and Knox glower at each other.

METAKSA (cont'd)

Honestly, I don't give a fuck anymore which of you takes the General's place.

(MORE)

METAKSA (cont'd)

But I swear to God above, if you let your dicks put a stop to what's about to happen in there, I will personally cut 'em off. Okay?

(no answer)

Okay.

She strides off in a huff. A tense beat. And when Carter speaks, he's convincing himself as much as Knox.

CARTER

(growls)

I ain't a murderer. Don't you ever say shit like that to me again, got it? I ain't a murderer.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - MODERN DAY

Present day Metaksa chews a toothpick and rolls her eyes.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA

Goddamn testosterone. Sometimes I feel like you men would rather fight than win.

INT. CINCINNATI CONVENTION HALL - NIGHT

It's hotter than ever. Porter, sweat soaking his shirt, his tie loosened, buttons unbuttoned, runs the voting.

PORTER

The proposal is to hold a vote for the role of Vice President for Finance, currently occupied by Thomas Billings. Are there any nominations for the post?

Hammer is on a floor mic.

HAMMER

I'd like to nominate Joseph Tartaro, life member of the NRA.

In the crowd, Aquilino shouts --

AQUILINO

Seconded!

As the voting continues, Carter slips in at the back and makes his way back toward his seat down a side aisle.

On the dais, Rich spots him. He quickly dismounts from the stage and stalks toward him.

RIGHT

Hey, Max --

Too late. Again. Rich approaches Carter, a full head of steam worked up.

RICH

Just what in the hell do you think you're doing?

CARTER

Oh. Didn't someone warn you this was how it was gonna go down? I'm sorry, I told someone to warn you.

RICH

What do you want?

CARTER

I just wanna make my voice heard, Max. It's what America's all about.

RICH

You're too fucking late, y'know. The Colorado deal is closing as we speak. It's over.

CARTER

Nah. We ain't done. Just you watch.

Carter brushes past Rich and heads back toward his seat as the resigned Porter keeps the voting going --

PORTER

Alright. Joseph Tartaro is the new Vice President for Finance.

RICH

Goddammit.

Carter slides back into his seat beside Arnett.

ARNETT

Joe just won.

Another light TAP of the gavel.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - MODERN DAY

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA

Nine. Hours. That's how long floor debate and voting went on. Ousting every single Board member.

INT. CINCINNATI CONVENTION HALL - NIGHT

PORTER

The proposal is to hold a vote for the position of First Vice President, currently occupied by Mr. Irvine Reynolds.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - MODERN DAY

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA

Voting in our own in their places.

INT. CINCINNATI CONVENTION HALL - NIGHT

Porter TAPS the gavel.

PORTER

The gentleman from New York is elected First Vice President.

A middle-aged FEDERATION MEMBER shakes hands with those around him.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - MODERN DAY

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA

Over. And over.

INT. CINCINNATI CONVENTION HALL - NIGHT

"AYE."

TAP goes the gavel.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA

And over.

Sweat-soaked folks fan themselves, an exercise in futility. But no one leaves: the place is still just as packed as when this marathon began.

"AYE."

TAP goes the gavel.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - MODERN DAY

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA

Until two thirty in the goddamn morning. We'd ousted everyone else. We just had one thing left to do.

EXT. A LEAF - DAY

The little spider creeps closer than ever to the fly. Its legs tense, ready to pounce.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA (V.O.)
Get the hell rid of Max Rich.

INT. CINCINNATI CONVENTION HALL - NIGHT

Dark circles under his eyes, sweat soaking his hair and shirt, Porter grips the sides of the podium to stay upright.

PORTER
Are there any other proposals our members would like to bring forward?

He looks around. No one on the microphones.

At the back of the room, Knox looks around frantically for his cohorts.

Arnett is asleep in his chair.

Tartaro is chatting with a couple of supporters.

Neither is paying any attention.

Knox springs into action and hurries toward a mic.

PORTER (cont'd)
Anyone? I think we're all more than ready to call it a night.

Knox is working against a crowd of people standing in the aisles, fanning themselves --

KNOX
No. No --

And he emerges from the other side of that crowd near a mic. He reaches for it, and --

Someone steps in front of him. Takes the mic.

It's Bob Kukla. In a blaze orange hat.

Knox stops cold, confused. Kukla was never a part of the Federation. Never a part of his plan.

Kukla glances across the room and makes eye contact with Carter. Carter nods back at him.

KUKLA

Um, Bob Kukla, Executive Director of
the Institute for Legislative Action.

Rich sits up in his chair, alarmed.

KUKLA (cont'd)

I would like to um, I'd like to
propose a vote by membership for the
position of Executive Vice President.

Murmurs ripple through the exhausted crowd as --

Kukla starts to pull something from his pocket.

KUKLA (cont'd)

I believe that Maxwell Rich is unfit
to represent the interests of the
majority of the gathered members. And
um, this is why.

A HANDHELD TAPE RECORDER. He holds it up to the mic.

Rich sees it and almost topples out of his chair.

INT. NRA HEADQUARTERS - HALLWAY - DAY - FLASHBACK

Kukla stands just outside the door to the boardroom,
recorder in hand. Through the door, muffled --

RICH (O.S.)

Oram International, the consultants
Tom brought on, tell us fundraising
should increase significantly as long
as we limit the use of firearms --

Kukla hits RECORD, slips the device into his pocket, and
walks into the --

BOARDROOM

Where the whole Board looks at him.

RICH

Bob?

INT. CINCINNATI CONVENTION HALL - NIGHT - END FLASHBACK

Kukla holds the tape recorder up to the mic as the recording
finishes playing out.

RICH (TAPE)

Get the fuck out!

Kukla hits STOP and --

The crowd goes NUTS. People SCREAM. Empty soda cans from the vending machines are HURLED onto the stage. These sweaty, exhausted people are suddenly fully tuned in again.

Rich stands, almost charges off the stage and into Kukla before Right grabs him and holds him back.

RICH

What -- what the fuck! Bob, you son of a bitch! You backstabbing piece of fucking shit --

RIGHT

Max! Max! C'mon!

Porter ducks a flying can, yells into the mic --

PORTER

Pl -- please! Please! Let's --
 (BANGS gavel)
 ORDER! ORDER!
 (nothing)
 ORDER, GODDAMMIT!

At last the crowd starts to settle down.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - MODERN DAY

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA

Yeah. That really happened. Little old Bob Kukla and the enormous brass balls swingin' in his trousers really did that shit.
 (chuckles)
 Lord, what a night.

INT. CINCINNATI CONVENTION HALL - NIGHT

Back to Porter on the mic.

PORTER

Alright! Would you like to nominate anyone for the position, Mr. Kukla?

KUKLA

Um, yes I would.

Behind Kukla, Knox watches, sweating profusely, fists balled at his sides, desperately hoping for some kind of miracle.

KUKLA (cont'd)

I'd like to nominate Harlon Carter,
former president of the NRA and
former Executive Director of the ILA.

Scattered APPLAUSE. On the dais, Rich is apoplectic.

Over by Carter, Arnett sees Knox scowling.

ARNETT

Shit.

He starts making his way toward Knox as, on the mic, Kukla makes the case for Carter in a surprisingly impassioned speech for such an anxious, unassuming man.

KUKLA

Harlon Carter put up with the
poisonous, uncaring, and frankly
unpatriotic attitude of our Executive
Vice President for two years at the
ILA, and when Rich stabbed him in the
back, he gave up his job and a steady
paycheck to fight for us. That's who
Harlon Carter is.

A HUGE OVATION from the crowd. Kukla looks over at Carter,
who soaks it in with a huge grin on his face.

PORTER

I'll take it the nomination is
seconded.

(crowd CHEERS)

Any other nominations?

RICH

Yes.

Rich stands, smooths out his suit jacket, and approaches the
podium. Porter stands aside.

RICH (cont'd)

I'd like to nominate myself.

(crowd BOOS)

Harlon Carter, Neal Knox... Bob
Kukla, these men, they claim they're
trying to protect your rights. But
really, my friends, they are afraid.
Of the government, of their
neighbors. Their own friends. And
they want you to be afraid, too.

The gathered members slowly start sitting up straighter, paying attention as Rich makes a compelling case.

RICH (cont'd)

It was General Ambrose Burnside himself who created this organization. Not to fight against the government or his neighbors, but to support them. To protect them.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

1871. A green, grassy field. AMBROSE BURNSIDE (47), with his killer sideburns/mustache combination and full military regalia, walks along a lineup of --

YOUNG MEN firing rifles at straw targets.

RICH (V.O.)

He wanted to teach American boys to shoot straight, so should the need for war ever arise again, they could more readily defend America from all enemies, foreign and domestic.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

1950. An NRA INSTRUCTOR walks along a lineup of young men firing more modern rifles into paper targets.

RICH (V.O.)

And for generations, that's what we have done. We have taught marksmanship, gun safety, and gun maintenance to law-abiding Americans.

INT. CINCINNATI CONVENTION HALL - NIGHT

Back with Rich at the podium.

RICH

We have never been a political organization. To become one now, well... we wouldn't be the NRA anymore. Not one I'd recognize, and not one I want to be a part of.

(then)

We're at a crossroads here, folks. Please. Make the right choice.

Rich steps down. APPLAUSE fills the room. On the floor, the smile has disappeared from Carter's face.

Porter approaches the podium as --

Knox heads for the floor mic Kukla just vacated, but --

Arnett grabs him before he gets there.

ARNETT

Neal, don't do this.

KNOX

Lemme go.

ARNETT

You're gonna split the damn vote! If you nominate yourself, you could hand the General a victory.

KNOX

I said let me go.

Arnett looks into Knox's resolute face and relents. Knox continues to the mic.

PORTER

Does anyone second Mr. Rich's nomination?

Behind Porter, Right pipes up --

RIGHT

Seconded!

PORTER

Very well. Any further nominations?

He spots Knox at the floor mic.

PORTER (cont'd)

Mr. Knox?

KNOX

Yes. I would like to...

Knox pauses. Clears his throat. Surveys the crowd. All eyes are on him, including Carter's. His expression is inscrutable. Knox sniffs.

KNOX (cont'd)

I would like to endorse Harlon Carter for the position.

More applause and cheers. Carter smiles, and we --

FLASH TO:

EXT. CARTER FAMILY HOME - DAY - FLASHBACK

LAREDO, 1931. Ramón Casiano brandishes his knife with a cocky grin.

Young Harlan's mouth twists into a snarl --

INT. CINCINNATI CONVENTION HALL - NIGHT - END FLASHBACK

PORTER

Thank you, Mr. Knox. Mr. Carter's nomination was already seconded. Any further nominations?

(then)

Very well. All those in favor of Harlon Carter being appointed to the position of Executive Vice President of the NRA, say "aye."

"**AYE!!!!!!**"

The sound threatens to blow the roof off the place.

PORTER (cont'd)

Those in favor of Mr. Rich?

A few scattered "ayes." It's a resounding defeat.

PORTER (cont'd)

By a vote from membership, Harlon Carter is elected to the position of Executive Vice President.

FLASH TO:

EXT. CARTER FAMILY HOME - DAY - FLASHBACK

Ramón's smile falters when he sees Harlan's expression. A moment of recognition: he knows what's about to happen.

Shotgun aimed square at Ramón's chest, Harlan pulls the trigger and --

INT. CINCINNATI CONVENTION HALL - NIGHT - END FLASHBACK

BANG.

Porter's gavel falls on the podium, and the eleven hundred gathered NRA members CHEER.

Right leans over to Rich.

RIGHT
What in the hell just happened?

RICH
They took it. They just fucking took
it right out from under us.

On the floor, Metaksa applauds and cheers --

METAKSA
Speech! Speech! Speech!

The crowd picks up the chant, THUNDERING, "SPEECH! SPEECH!"

Feigning humility, Carter heads for the dais, mounting the
steps. As he approaches --

Rich gets out of his seat and stalks offstage, brushing by
Carter, who gloats --

CARTER
Bad luck, Max.

Before heading to the podium, Carter goes to one of the
Revolutionary War reenactors, who hands him his musket.

Carter raises it above his head triumph. The crowd goes
absolutely fucking bananas, and Carter's bullfrog smile is
wider than it's ever been in his life.

As the ovation slowly dies down, Carter takes the podium.

CARTER (cont'd)
Thank you, ladies and gentleman.
Thank you. I can't tell you what an
incredible honor this is. And I can
promise you this: with me as your
leader, there will be no more civil
war in the National Rifle
Association. There will be no more
compromise and no more gun control!

The crowd ROARS rabidly, and their screams carry us to --

EXT. A LEAF - DAY

The spider LEAPS, and in extreme closeup it --

Sinks its fangs into the fly's head. The fly scrambles, but
can do nothing as the venom takes it over.

The CHEERING of the crowd continues.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - MODERN DAY

The present-day Metaksa just smirks into the camera, satisfied, a toothpick hanging from her lips.

INT. NRA HEADQUARTERS - LOBBY - DAY

The wooden wall that, when Carter walked by it at the beginning of our story, was blank.

Now, a JANITOR cleans the brand new shining stainless steel cursive lettering there. It reads --

*"...the right of the people
to keep and bear arms,
shall not be infringed."*

A broad, bald, besuited man strides by these words, carrying a duffle bag into the elevator.

INT. NRA HEADQUARTERS - NEW ILA OFFICES - DAY

The top floor of the building. Out the window, the hotel the old ILA offices were crammed into is visible.

The new office is packed with shiny new computers, their tiny state-of-the-art CRT monitors glowing green.

Smiling employees type, laugh, work. Metaksa is among them. Ray Arnett leads a smiling CONGRESSMAN in a suit out of his office. This is Harlon Carter's dream, and we --

Drift through it, past a door reading *EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NEAL KNOX*, and out into a --

HALLWAY

Where we find Carter walking with purpose. He pauses at the door to the ILA office and looks in, smiling.

Metaksa sees him and smiles back. Carter waves, then --

Continues down the hallway and through a door into the --

BOARDROOM

Where the new Board of Directors awaits him. Knox is there, as is Tartaro. A group of new and familiar white male faces all look up as Carter enters and --

THUNKS his duffle bag on the table. Unzips it. And pulls out his daddy's shotgun.

He turns and carefully, reverently places it on a mount already installed on the wall above the door. Then --

He goes to the head of the Board table. Clears his throat. A beat as the Board waits for Carter's first words as the unquestioned leader of the new NRA.

CARTER

I hope you are all ready to fight like hell, because we are never going to win this.

Carter's loyal soldiers look at one another, uncertain

CARTER (cont'd)

There'll always be folks lookin' to strip the Second Amendment from us. Weak people scared of our freedoms. Politicians tryin' to seize more power. There's always gonna be someone. So no, we're never gonna win. But that's okay. Because victory doesn't look like peace. Not for us. For us, victory looks like war without end. We give not one inch. Not one. They'll throw everything they got at us, and we'll stand strong and tall. Because from here on out, gentlemen, the NRA's got one mission and only one mission: zero gun legislation in America.

Speech over, he takes his seat at the head of the table.

CARTER (cont'd)

What do you say we get started?

SMASH TO BLACK.

A beat. Then, a --

SERIES OF SUPERS:

In 1980, the NRA endorsed its first Presidential candidate: Ronald Reagan.

His victory cemented the NRA's importance as a powerful lobby.

In 1981, the public finally learned of Harlon Carter's fatal shooting of fifteen-year-old Ramón Casiano in 1931.

When the story hit the presses, his approval rating with NRA membership skyrocketed.

These words fade. We wait in darkness for a beat, then --

SERIES OF SUPERS:

96 people per day are killed with firearms in America. Four more died while you were watching this movie.

There is a nearly 15% chance that one of those people was a child.

Harlon Carter's NRA currently has over 5 million members.

EXT. A LEAF - DAY

The little spider sinks its fangs into the fly and begins to feed. We watch for a moment.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA (V.O.)
Why not us, right?

SMASH TO BLACK.

PRESENT-DAY METAKSA (V.O.) (cont'd)
Why not the NRA?

THE END.



Harlon Bronson Carter and Clifford Neal Knox in 1978.