

Burnside

by Mark Lyons

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FADE IN:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Barren. Only an old card table sits in the middle of the room.

OSCAR BURNSIDE, 70's, stands at the table and packs a pair of dress pants into a trash bag. A duffel bag also sits on the table.

Oscar walks to a nearby closet, reaches down, and pulls out a hammer and crow bar. He grips them tightly to make sure they feel comfortable in his arthritic hands.

He shoves them into the duffel bag on the table and zips it up.

He slings the duffel bag over a shoulder, picks the trash bag up, and gives one last look around the house for anything he forgot.

He walks out the door.

EXT. PORCH - DAY

Raindrops slap slowly off the house's tin awnings. Oscar looks up, shakes his head, and smiles at the wet sky.

It's a defeated smile. He just can't win today.

He closes the door and stares at a yellow laminated paper with fine print on it stuck to the window.

He jiggles the doorknob to make sure the door is locked secure, turns, and begins walking up to the corner of the street.

EXT. CORNER - CONTINUOUS

Once he reaches it, Oscar turns around and looks back at his neighborhood one last time.

Most of the houses are abandoned and in ruins. The windows broke and doors kicked in.

Oscar's house is one of the few with a manicured lawn, and the only one with landscaping care.

Behind him, a bus slows and opens its doors.

Oscar turns around, but waves it on.

OSCAR
Nah, not today. I need the walk.

The bus driver waves and pulls away.

Oscar gathers his strength, slings the bags over his shoulder, and follows the direction the bus had went.

EXT. MARKET STREET - DAY

The town is decrepit. The only buildings that aren't abandoned are convenient stores proudly displaying beer and cigarettes; and porn shops.

Every side street Oscar looks down is much like his own neighborhood, only a few houses taken care of and the rest vandalized, abandoned, and a blight.

Oscar struggles to carry the trash bag and duffel bag comfortably.

EXT. BEER AND LIQUOR STORE - DAY

Oscar walks past the Fish-Samaritan House; a charity thrift shop, and into the neighboring liquor store.

INT. BEER AND LIQUOR STORE - CONTINUOUS

Oscar sets his bags down and chooses a bottle of vodka.

A regular drunkard, ERNIE McNICHOL, 60's, recognizes Oscar and approaches him, excited.

ERNIE
Oz? Ozzie Burnside? Holy high hell!
What's it been?

Oscar sees him and smiles.

OSCAR
A long time, Ernie.

ERNIE
It couldn't've been long after...

OSCAR
Black Monday.

Ernie nods, remembering.

ERNIE

Black Monday. Goddamn, man.
Word is you've been doing okay
since?

OSCAR

On and off. I'm one of the luckier
ones, I guess.

ERNIE

Yeah, I didn't do too bad there for
awhile myself. Stayed afloat for a
bit, had a repair shop and all. An
old man's muscle runs out sooner or
later, though.

OSCAR

Don't I know it.

Ernie looks at the trash bag Oscar had carried in.

ERNIE

How are things?

Oscar shrugs and looks him in the eye.

OSCAR

Things are shit.

Then he gives a genuine smile.

OSCAR

But I'm doing good.

ERNIE

Well that's good. I'm glad to hear
it, man.

Ernie sees the bottle of vodka in his hand.

ERNIE

Word was you weren't drinking
anymore.

OSCAR

I'm not.

Ernie can only laugh and treat it like a joke.

ERNIE

Well, if you get the chance, stop
by the old stomping ground. A lot
of people'd get a kick out of
seeing you again.

Oscar nods and starts walking to the register.

OSCAR
Have a good one, Ernest.

Ernie watches him walk away and shakes his head.

EXT. MARKET STREET BRIDGE VIADUCT - DAY

Oscar approaches the bridge and downtown Youngstown opens up.

It's a typical rust belt city. Buildings once built to be banks, now only rented out floor by floor months at a time.

A huge abandoned mill with broken windows sits off to the left of the bridge on the Mahoning River.

Oscar looks at it in nostalgia.

DISSOLVE TO:

SUPER: 1977

EXT. MILL PARKING LOT - MORNING

Empty, except for a few cars.

Oscar, in his 30's, steps out his pick-up and looks at how empty it is.

He sees EDWARD CAMPBELL, 30's, sulking back to his car.

Oscar approaches him until a door of the mill opens up and JOHN WEBSTER, 40's, steps out and yells

WEBSTER
Oscar!

Oscar looks. Webster motions him to come along.

Campbell shakes his head at Oscar and talks under his breath.

CAMPBELL
It's bullshit, man.

Oscar watches Campbell get in his car and start it up.

INT. WEBSTER'S OFFICE - DAY

Webster motions for Oscar to sit down as he closes the door behind him.

OSCAR
They did it?

Webster sits down at his desk and grimaces. He nods.

WEBSTER
Yeah. They're shutting us down.

Oscar puts his head down.

WEBSTER
We knew it was coming.

OSCAR
Not this fast.

WEBSTER
No, not this fast. Today'll be the last day of operations, and it's just supervisors shutting it down and getting ready to load anything mobile. You will be paid in full for today.

OSCAR
Just today?

WEBSTER
As supervisor, they're giving you a one-year severance and a glowing recommendation wherever you go.

OSCAR
Why? So we'll have to go through this again in a year? And then in two years?

WEBSTER
No one's happy about this, Oscar.

Oscar takes a moment to let it all sink in.

OSCAR
Pensions?

WEBSTER
(shakes his head)
They're in jeopardy. No one knows yet.

OSCAR
This town's going to turn into a wasteland.

Webster nods.

WEBSTER

I know.

Oscar stands up.

EXT. MILL PARKING LOT - EVENING

Oscar's one of the last to leave. He locks up the door behind him and pockets the key.

He jiggles the doorknob one last time to make sure the door's secured shut.

INT. BAR - EVENING

Oscar drinks heavy. Shots of vodka in between sips of beer.

He hangs his head, not talking to anybody.

EXT. MARKET STREET BRIDGE VIADUCT - DUSK

Half a dozen workers stand on the sidewalk of the bridge.

They drink and take turns throwing their empty bottles at the lonely, darkened mill.

Edward Campbell and Ernie McNichol, now in his 30's, are among them. JOHN WICK and LEONARD BUTLER are also there.

Oscar drives by and parks his car just off the bridge. He joins them.

OSCAR

Let me guess? Trying to hit the top corner window?

WICK

Hell yeah.

Wick hands him a beer.

WICK

Drink up and give it a try.

Ernie throws his bottle, but only hits one of the lower-tier windows.

Oscar laughs and takes the beer. He starts chugging, but not all of it. He leaves it about a quarter full.

OSCAR

You guys gotta start using physics.
You have to leave some in for
velocity.

Oscar chucks his beer bottle off the bridge at the huge building.

It smashes the third window from the top corner. The closest yet.

OSCAR

If I wasn't already drunk, my aim
would've been better.

They laugh and continue to drink and chuck their bottles off the bridge at the side of the mill.

Campbell gets quiet and stares at the dark iron building.

CAMPBELL

It's not right seeing the lights
off.

Everybody looks at the other mills lit up and running and smoking in the distance.

OSCAR

This is only the first dark beast
this town'll see. It's all downhill
from here.

A police car stops and two OFFICERS approach them.

OFFICER #1

Hey!

They all stop and face the officers. The officers stare at everybody up and down, and then behind them at the mill.

They look at each other and frown.

OFFICER #1

Make sure none of these bottles end
up in traffic.

The millworkers agree.

OFFICER #2

Anybody going to be needing a ride
home?

They all look at each other and shake their heads no. Except Oscar.

OSCAR
Yeah, I might.

The officer nods.

OFFICER #2
We gotta make a run over on Old
Furnace about a struck deer, but
we'll be back in a bit to bring you
home.

OSCAR
I'll be here. Thank you.

The officers leave and the ex-workers get back to their
drinking and throwing.

Butler takes out a tiny pneumatic chipping hammer and kneels
down to the concrete base railing of the bridge.

BUTLER
All right. Who hit what?

WICK
I got the second row, fifth window.

Butler begins chipping John Wick's name into the concrete and
which window he hit.

BUTLER
Oscar you got first row, third,
right?

OSCAR
Yessir.

Campbell looks at the far side of the building and sees the
large '**Youngstown Sheet & Tube**' sign hung high on the mill.

CAMPBELL
Hey, John. You still got that
extension ladder?

WICK
Yeah, it's behind my garage.

Campbell smiles and nods.

CAMPBELL
Let's take a drive real quick. I
got an urge to do some painting.

Oscar watches the two leave as Butler continues putting everybody's names into the concrete.

**DISSOLVE BACK TO
PRESENT:**

EXT. MARKET STREET BRIDGE VIADUCT - DAY

Elderly Oscar stares at the old and faded sign on the far side of the mill.

It's graffitied with black paint but can still be read:

'Youngstown Shit Tube'

Oscar bends down and looks to all their names chiseled into the concrete barrier of the bridge. He looks at his.

'Oscar Burnside. 1st row, 3rd window. 1977.'

He smiles at it. He looks at the other names. Some have come back through the years and tried again.

Butler and Wick tried again at different times in the 80's, and McNichol tried again in the 90's.

Dozens of other windows are broken out of the side of the building, but the top corner window is still untouched.

Oscar sets his bagged vodka down and digs through his duffel bag for the chisel and hammer.

He bends down to the concrete barrier and begins chiseling.

'Oscar Burnside. 1st row, 1st window. 2011.'

Finished, Oscar throws the hammer and chisel over the concrete barrier and railing and into the Mahoning River below.

He picks his duffel and trash bag and vodka back up, and walks down the bridge to downtown Youngstown.

EXT. MILL ENTRANCE FROM THE RIVER - DAY

Woods have grown close to the mill.

Oscar sets his bags down and approaches the door with only the vodka in his hand.

He takes out an old rusted key, but sees he doesn't need it. The door's been kicked in already.

He pushes it open the rest of the way and walks in.

INT. MILL - CONTINUOUS

It's long been pilfered. Oscar studies the rotting iron innards of the building.

Ancient machines rest, rusted and moldy. They're stripped of their copper.

In a corner of the large skeleton building, Oscar walks to a rickety staircase leading up to a foreman's platform.

He tests it and, once secure, walks to the top.

He takes the bottle of vodka out of the bag, spins off the cap, and looks three stories down to the dirty mill floor.

He pours the vodka out and it splashes to the moldy floor below. But he keeps some of the alcohol in for velocity.

He spins the cap back on and stares at the top corner window, only mere feet away from him.

Oscar readies himself, then chucks the bottle hard through the top corner window.

The glass shatters and lands to the concrete ground outside.

Oscar smiles and soaks the moment in.

He takes a deep breath and prepares to climb down the rickety iron steps.

EXT. DOWNTOWN YOUNGSTOWN - EVENING

Oscar walks the streets with his bags and approaches a police cruiser where two COPS stand by and chat.

OSCAR

Excuse me.

The cops turn their attention towards him.

OSCAR

I haven't been down here in a while
and I heard they moved... Which
way's the rescue mission?

The cops look at Oscar and his trash bag full of clothes.

One of them points up a couple of streets.

COP #1

It's up off Martin Luther King now,
down about a mile and a half.

COP #2

There's a bus that goes by every
hour. It should be here in a bit.

OSCAR

I don't have any money for the bus.

COP #1

(shrugs)

Well, like I said, it's only about
a mile and a half.

Oscar nods.

OSCAR

Thank you.

The cops return to their conversation.

Oscar slings the garbage and duffel bag over his shoulder and
begins walking up to Martin Luther King Boulevard.

Behind him, the dead iron giant by the bridge looms in the
distance, dying with the city.

FADE.