

C A N A D A   J O E

by Daryl Henry

FADE IN:

EXT. CANADA CUSTOMS & IMMIGRATION - U.S. BORDER - DAY

The drab, red-brick government station straddles the derelict four-lane highway connecting Washington State to British Columbia. To the east, the fogged foothills of the Coast Range; to the west, the island-studded beginnings of the Pacific Ocean. In front of the building, a sand-bagged guard post under a soiled Canadian flag. Two SOLDIERS, armed with sub-machine guns, lean against the parapet, smoking.

The CAMERA MOVES IN as two blue-uniformed OFFICIALS, pistols on their belts, emerge from the office and gaze down the road. In the distance a dusty Greyhound BUS approaches, escorted by a U.S. Border Patrol armed jeep. The bus, its marquee reading: VANCOUVER, B.C., glides to a stop under the cantilevered canopy. The American jeep wheels around and returns to the south. The two officials move to the door which now opens as the driver, carrying a sheaf of papers, climbs down.

DRIVER

Eleven. Two deportations, eight  
returning residents and some guy comin'  
back after a hitch in the Marines.

The first official nods, takes the bundle of papers, glances through them and hands them to the second official, yawning.

FIRST OFFICIAL

Check 'em out.

The second official boards the bus, closing the door behind him. The first official looks at the soldiers and tosses his head toward the bus. The soldiers butt their cigarettes and move up. One brings a long-handled mirror with which he begins to examine the vehicle's underside. The other goes with the driver to the luggage compartment, squats down and starts to poke around inside with his machine gun. The driver and the first official stand aside.

FIRST OFFICIAL (CONT'D)

(lifts his chin toward  
the south)  
Things cooled off down there?

DRIVER

(lighting a cigarette)  
A bit. They're still shootin' up  
Portland, but Seattle's quiet as a tomb.  
You gettin' much overflow?

(CONTINUED)

FIRST OFFICIAL  
Not lately. Say, you got a smoke?

DRIVER  
Sure, I forgot.

The driver offers a cigarette, then nods toward the soldier at the luggage compartment who is removing the suitcases one by one.

DRIVER (CONT'D)  
They stop sharin' their rations with you?

FIRST OFFICIAL  
Yeah, they're down to two packs a week.

At this moment the soldier backs away from the open compartment with a yell, jabbing the snout of his machine gun into the darkness.

SOLDIER  
Hey! Come outta there, you little black bastid 'fore I blast yuh clean out the other side!

The first official grabs for his pistol and moves to the compartment. The driver, frowning, stands still. The second soldier hurries around the other side of the bus, mirror in one hand, gun in the other. From the tangle of suitcases in the compartment, a small, black head appears. It is a BOY of 12 or 13, wide-eyed and terrified.

DRIVER  
Son of a bitch! How'n hell'd he get in there?

BOY  
Don' shoot! Jesus, don' shoot... Ah's comin'!

SOLDIER  
Hustle your ass, boy!

The soldier drags the boy clear of the compartment and jerks him to his feet as the second official climbs out of the bus.

SECOND OFFICIAL  
(closing the door)  
There's eleven, all right, all Canadians.

FIRST OFFICIAL  
The hell there is. Look what we found.  
(to second soldier)  
Call the Patrol. Tell 'em we're bringin' one back.

(CONTINUED)

DRIVER

Let's hear it, kid. How'n hell'd you get in there? You got a key to that rack?

BOY

Ah ain' got no key-- the door was open, hones'. Hones' it was.

DRIVER

That's a damn lie! Where'd you get on, kid? Speak up! Boy

BOY

Jes' back there a ways. In Bellin'ham. The door was open an' my Maw says to git inside whiles Ah had the chance.

FIRST OFFICIAL

(to driver)

You're slippin' up.

A bus window slides open and a young man peers down on the group clustered at the baggage compartment. His gaze is silent yet piercing. He is CANADA JOE, whom we will meet in a moment. The driver snarls up at the window.

DRIVER

You know the goddamn regulations-- close it up!

The young passenger looks through the driver then slowly closes the window.

A jeep appears around the corner, driven by the second soldier, and pitches to a stop beside the bus. The first soldier pushes the boy into the front seat, handcuffs him to the dash and climbs in behind him. The jeep starts off with a screech and heads for the border, a quarter-mile south.

FIRST OFFICIAL

(to driver)

Okay, let's see 'em, one at a time.

The driver boards the bus, reappears at once with the young man from the window seat.

DRIVER

This here's the Marine.

JAMES JOSEPH is a First Nation's Canadian, about 30, tall, spare, lazy but alert. He moves toward the First Official, his progress more a slow-motion lope than a walk. He wears denims, a loose sweater, sandals, needs a shave and a comb run through his short shaggy black hair.