

THEN CAME BRONSON

"The Monkey Cage"

Prod. #6478

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. - CLOSE SHOT - BRONSON'S FACE - DAY

1

Hot wind cutting it. ZOOM BACK INTO WIDER SHOT. Hills to his right. Dangerous precipice to his left. Narrow road. Fairly sharp curve heading down hill. Bronson maneuvers it. DISAPPEARS FROM CAMERA.

WIDE SHOT - BRONSON'S POV

2

Late afternoon and nothing in sight. Another curve. Open country. A lake at the bottom of the hill. Boats moored and cottages sprinkled along the far shore.

PANORAMIC VIEW OF LAKE AREA

3

Bronson, a speck moving toward the bare side of the lake. ZOOM IN as Bronson stops by water's edge. He sits taking it in. Been here before? Not sure.

WIDE SHOT - BRONSON'S POV

4

Fishing, swimming, boating and beer joints. A resort resorting to no exertion. Leisure. Pleasure.

LOW WIDE ANGLE

5

Along the shore of the lake. CAMERA RIDING WITH Bronson. Tearing up the sand. Lake houses hit the CAMERA'S EYE. A bike parked here and there. Not so familiar now. Cluttered. Rats and doves and gulls and sweet young things strewn all over and locking horns with la dolce vita. Sudden stop as a gate looms ahead.

MED. SHOT - A MAKESHIFT GATE

6

A lopsided wooden cross on one side and a faded Buddha on the other. PAN TO a scrawly, hand-written sign. It reads:

"God is man--love is the only religion"

CLOSE SHOT - BRONSON

7

looking up at the sign.

BRONSON (reading)

"God is man love is the only religion...." The only?

He shakes his head and guns the motor. Over the roar of his motor MUSIC IS HEARD. The makeshift sign melds into a blinking sign -- "The Monkey Cage." PAN PAST the beer joint to Bronson looking up at sign. HOLD him with the glistening lake in the background. MUSIC IS LOUDER. Something like "Three Dog Night." He's thirsty.

ANOTHER ANGLE

8

Bronson dismounts and we PAN him to the front door and inside.

INT. MONKEY CAGE - BRONSON'S POV - DAY

9

CAMERA is Bronson's eye. The place is almost empty. Stale beer smell. Familiar like all these establishments in the middle of the afternoon. Bronson makes his way toward the bar. It's pretty dark. A shaft of sunlight intrudes from one high window and gives the place a kind of warm beer afterglow. Bronson and CAMERA MOVE PAST the blasting juke box and in and out of the sun shaft. PAST empty tables and a couple of guys in the corner. A sotto voce parley. Two guys at one end of the bar, sipping. One bearded BARTENDER wiping glasses as if he were underwater. Farther away two girls in bathing suits covered by men's shirts seemingly conversing with a sleepy guitar player plunking something at odds with the juke box. Bronson pauses just before he hits the bar.

ANOTHER ANGLE

10

SHOOTING DOWN the bar past the beers of the two sippers to the slow motion bartender. Bronson moves INTO SHOT and leans on the bar. CAMERA CREEPS ALONG the top of the bar to finally HOLD Bronson and bartender. Bronson must be waiting for the bartender to say "what'll you have?" or some such. But nothing. Just looks. Finally:

BRONSON

A draft.

The bartender gets the beer without a word, sets it in front of Bronson and goes on about his chores. Bronson has a long pull. Then sips. As he turns CAMERA TURNS WITH him and PANS TO the table where the girls are sitting. The long-haired girl slumps to her feet and moves toward the juke box. Bronson and CAMERA GO WITH her. She must cross in front of Bronson to get to the juke box. When she is just about on a line with Bronson, but still ten or fifteen feet away she stops. Looks at him. ZOOM IN ON her face. MOOK CARLYLE is her name. Now Bronson has been thrown a lot of looks by a lot of girls but this glance shoots across the dim room like a Bob Gibson fast ball. MUSIC STOPS. CAMERA ZOOMS BACK TO HOLD her as before. Bronson's seen hundreds like her. Long, stringy hair - hang-dog eyelids - expressionless mouth - slim body with long almond legs. But it's the look, no casual flirtation - this. No obvious come-on --- but a real express train stare.

CLOSE ANGLE - ON BRONSON

11

He glances down at his beer for a split second and then back up at those eyes. They are still there.

QUICK CUTS

12

Back and forth to each face during following. She hasn't moved. Her same look. A sneaky smile crosses her mouth. Was that a smile, Bronson? He sips his beer eyes on her.

WIDER ANGLE

13

She abruptly breaks the spell and moves to the juke box.

MED. SHOT

14

HOLDING the girl. Juke box lights playing on her face with Bronson in the B.G. She drops a coin, pushes three numbers. She waits, her arms outstretched with her hands clutching the sides of juke box. MUSIC BEGINS. It's a hymn. "Just A Closer Walk With Thee." She peeks under her arm to Bronson and smiles.

WIDER ANGLE

15

She swings away from the juke box and heads back by the same route. Halfway across, she veers right and moves toward Bronson. Hoping she wouldn't, he knew she would. There she is. Right in front of him. Mouth twitching and all.

ANOTHER ANGLE

16

SHOOTING FROM BEHIND bar as she moves to a bar stool next to Bronson. She looks up at him, opens her mouth, but nothing comes out. Then after a beat:

MOOK

Hey man, you dig the Borgias?

BRONSON (playing dumb)

Dig?

MOOK

Barrabas, Herod and Stokely?

BRONSON

Name dropper. I like beer.

MOOK

Yeah, you would while pestilence, contamination and self-righteousness stalk the land...

BRONSON

And the sea and air.

MOOK

Buy me a beer.

Like some specter she moves away and the CAMERA PANS ALONG the bar and HOLDS her until she sits at an empty table across the room.

ANGLE ON BRONSON

17

The hymn ends. Bronson figures he'll finish his beer and cut out. MUSIC AGAIN. This time back to rock. She is trouble. As an ex-newsman he can sense this whole place is trouble. So he buys another beer.

ANGLE ON MOOK

18

She sits looking straight ahead moving her shoulders ever so slightly to the music. Bronson with the beers walks INTO THE SHOT. He puts a beer in front of her and moves to the other chair.

CLOSER ANGLE - ON THE TWO

19

Silence for a moment as they sit. She finally looks at Bronson with a sneakier smile, a sneaky challenge.

MOOK

Never talk to strangers.

Bronson feigns nonchalance.

BRONSON

Why is that?

MOOK

Get you in trouble.

BRONSON

That's the chance you take.

ANOTHER ANGLE - FAVORING MOOK

20

She suddenly throws her head back and laughs a long laugh that takes Bronson by surprise. If he were to guess this girl's character the laugh would throw him off. Raucous, full throated and knowing beyond her years. Almost a Bankhead croak.

MOOK

You like to take chances?

ANGLE FAVORING BRONSON

21

He just sips. Then a bigger drink and a longer look.

MOOK

Ever been to college?

BRONSON

Yeah.

MOOK

How long ago?

BRONSON

Few years.

MOOK

Last year. I was in college last year. Ever hear the fairy tale about the college dean having a heart attack while his office was being occupied by SDS gnomes?

She laughs again and looks around the room.

ANOTHER ANGLE

22

CAMERA PANS Bronson's look around the room. All the others seem to be looking their way. Eery.

BACK TO SCENE

23

MOOK

You can call me Mook.

BRONSON

Mook.

MOOK

You're a Jim or John.

BRONSON

It's important which.

MOOK

Only to you.

BRONSON

And my mother.

23
CONT'D
(2)

MOOK

Oh yes, mothers...you still have
that hang up.

BRONSON

I don't. My mother does.

MOOK

All mothers do.

BRONSON

Of course.

He decides to mumble a put-on truism. He holds up his
beer.

BRONSON

Without motherhood the whole super
structure of our society would
crumble overnight.

MOOK

It's already crumbled.

BRONSON (laughing)

No. It's just shook up in the
Nabisco box.

ANOTHER ANGLE

24

She looks at him as if he were challenging her. She
challenges him right back.

MOOK

I was sitting on his lap when he
had it.

BRONSON

What?

MOOK

The heart attack. The one the dean
had in the fairy tale. I was always
a very affectionate revolutionary...

BRONSON

Only kind to be.

24
CONT'D
(2)

MOOK

But now I'm only affectionate.

She suddenly rises and announces in a loud voice.

MOOK

An affectionate, hedonistic
anarchist! Hey, how about that!

She is moving to the music.

MOOK

Ain't many of us left -- hey,
stranger Jim John, there's no
tomorrow -- did you know that?

ANOTHER ANGLE - FAVORING BRONSON

25

He gets up. The MUSIC STOPS.

BRONSON

You're way ahead of everybody.
Not only do you know what you are
but you got all the words --- the
slogans ---He downs his beer. The girl fascinates him but the trip
wouldn't be worth it. He heads for the front door.

WIDER ANGLE

26

Bronson is walking toward the front door. The same hymn
MUSIC is playing. Mook makes a run for it and arrives
at the door ahead of him.

CLOSER SHOT - THE TWO

27

MOOK

You ride a bike, huh?

BRONSON

Yeah.

MOOK

Give me a ride.

27
CONT'D
(2)

BRONSON

Why should I?

MOOK

Because I asked you to.

He looks at her and laughs.

BRONSON

Ask me again.

MOOK

Give me a ride.

BRONSON

Where you going?

MOOK

Up the beach.

BRONSON

Sorry. Not going your way.

MOOK

You parked in front? Pull around
back. I'll be there. Give me a
ride up the lake. Not very far.

WIDER ANGLE

28

CAMERA PANS her away from Bronson, across the room and out the back door. The CAMERA THEN PANS the faces of the people left in the place. They seem to be looking at Bronson as if they had some secret.

CLOSE ANGLE - ON BRONSON

29

What kind of conspiracy is this? He goes out the door. CAMERA LINGERS for a moment in the place. The strange sound of "Just A Closer Walk With Thee" cuts at the shaft of sunlight. CAMERA HOLDS on the glow.

FADE OUT.

END ACT ONE