

BrooklynStart Draft 2

written by

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INT.-KAYMIA'S BEDROOM-MORNING

KAYMIA INGRAM, an AFRICAN AMERICAN TEENAGE GIRL, is lying on her bed in a SMALL BROWNSVILLE APARTMENT in BROOKLYN. She's watching STAGE MANAGERS call BROADWAY SHOWS in "real time" on a YOUTUBE CHANNEL on her IPAD.

She is down-to-earth, organized, socially awkward and blunt, but very mature for a 15 year old. If she could rid the world of OBNOXIOUS TEENS her own age, she would. Ever since she discovered the organizational and authoritative nature of STAGE MANAGING, she's wanted to be a THEATRICAL STAGE MANAGER. She was born to tell people what to do.

She has a NOTE APP out on her PHONE. There is a LIST on there that reads: "Pro and Cons of being a stage manager". She types under the CONS COLUMN: "Theatre people smoke a lot of weed."

KAYMIA'S MOM, MELANIE INGRAM, enters the room. She is a LOVING SINGLE MOTHER in her late 30s/early 40s, but is currently struggling on a number of levels. Her husband is no longer around, so she is struggling emotionally, mentally, and financially. The financial struggle is the most concerning issue of her life at the moment. Parenting alone has taken its toll on her, but she's done well keeping her humanity and empathy for others in the face of PERSONAL TRAGEDY.

MELANIE has lived in Brooklyn her whole life.

Kaymia pops her head up.

MELANIE

Hey Kaymia. Someone didn't show up, and there's a shift open at the store today, so I took it. I need you to stay here and watch your brother until Ms. Branch comes, then go to school.

KAYMIA

But I have a quiz this morning.

MELANIE

Do you have money to help buy groceries?

KAYMIA

No.

MELANIE

Then you're staying here with your brother until Ms. Branch comes.

(MORE)

MELANIE (CONT'D)

You got 10 minutes to get up, then
I got to leave.

KAYMIA

Okay, but Mrs. Welch is going to be
mad I missed the quiz.

MELANIE

Well, Mrs. Welch is an evil relic.
She's like that horrible professor
from Harry Potter that everyone
hates.

KAMIYA

Professor Umbridge?

MELANIE

That's the one. Love you baby.

KAYMIA

Love you too.

Kaymia lies her head back on her PILLOW and returns to
watching her STAGE MANAGING VIDEO. Missing school to watch
her brother is a STANDARD in her life currently.

Once she lies back down, we can see a photo frame on Kaymia's
BEDSIDE TABLE. The PICTURE in the frame is of a MAN in his
LATE 40s, KAMIYA'S FATHER.

EXT.-BROOKLYN PUBLIC BUS STOP-SAME MORNING

Melanie waits at a CROWDED BUS STOP. The BUS pulls up. Its
EXITING PASSENGERS unload. Melanie and the CROWD from the bus
stop LOAD IN.

CUT TO:

INT.-LIVING ROOM-KAYMIA'S APT-SAME MORNING

Kaymia STUMBLES into the LIVING ROOM, still waking up to the
morning. Her TWO YEAR OLD TODDLER BROTHER, HAROLD, is sitting
on the couch with a TV REMOTE.

KAYMIA

What are you watching Harold?

Harold POINTS to the T.V.

KAYMIA (CONT'D)

(enraged by what she sees
on the television)

(MORE)

KAYMIA (CONT'D)

No. Nope. Nope. Nope. We're not watching this Cocomelon shit. I hate it. Especially that creepy wolf.

CUT TO:

INT.PUBLIC BUS-SAME MORNING

Melanie sits on the bus, WINDOW SIDE, looking at the busy BROOKLYN PEDESTRIANS walking on the SIDEWALK. She notices a WOMAN OF COLOR pushing a STROLLER with a WHITE BABY in it.

After a few more PEOPLE pass by on the sidewalk, Melanie notices ANOTHER WOMAN OF COLOR holding the hands of TWO WHITE CHILDREN, leading them down the street. There is NO EXPRESSION on Melanie's face as she watches these women of color perform their AU PAIR DUTIES.

She continues to look out the window. PHONE RINGS. She answers it.

MELANIE

Hello? Hey Deb...Deb, Deb, Deb slow down sweetie...What's going on...Deb, it's okay. I understand...Can you get it to me on the 18th? Then, that'll work. That's fine...okay...have a good day Deb.

Melanie hangs up the phone and lets out a 'sigh', thinking about how the 18th is TWO WEEKS AWAY and how she needs the money now.

CUT TO:

EXT.-PUBLIC BUS-SAME MORNING

The bus comes to a stop. THE BUS DOORS OPEN and a LINE OF PEOPLE exit onto the sidewalk. Melanie is one of them.

CUT TO:

EXT.-BOB'S TRADING POST (GROCERY STORE)-SAME MORNING

Melanie is walking. She gets to a SIDE DOOR of a DEPARTMENT BUILDING. The door reads 'EMPLOYEES ONLY'. Melanie PULLS OPEN the door and walks through.

As she walks through the door, a BEAT-UP WHITE TOYOTA PRIUS drives by.

CUT TO:

INT.-BRANDON'S CAR-SAME MORNING

BRANDON GREENE, a WHITE MALE in his early 40s, is DRIVING through Brooklyn in his White Toyota Prius. He is a recent transplant to Brooklyn.

Brandon and his wife MANDY STOLES are A PAIR OF SUBURBAN RAISED, WHITE BREAD, LOWER-MIDDLE-INCOME PSEUDO-LIBERALS, the kind of "semi-woke" couple who would go to church and BAPTIZE their child for cultural reasons, but wouldn't support CIRCUMCISION because they'd consider it forced genital mutilation..

A CLOSET OPTIMIST, Brandon hides as a HUMOROUS CYNIC. He can be BLUNT, LOUD, and STUBBORN which may be a good or bad thing depending on the situation. His heart is usually in the right place though.

Both Brandon's job as a THEATRE/ENGLISH TEACHER and Mandy's PART-TIME BOOKSTORE JOB are DISGUISES. The pair are really aspiring TV/FILM/Theatre WRITERS seeking to create a SHOW IDEA to pitch to WILLING PRODUCERS.

They have chosen to REJECT THE SUBURBS in order to raise their kids in the multi-culturally vibrant, arts-infused liberal city, the dream of anyone who grew up as a musical theatre nerd.

As Brandon continues to drive, his PHONE RINGS. Brandon reaches out to his phone, which is secured to his DASHBOARD PHONE HOLSTER, and answers it. It hits the SPEAKER button.

BRANDON

What's up man?

The PERSON on the other end is his best friend JOEY, who still lives in BIRMINGHAM, Brandon and Mandy's childhood home.

JOEY (V.O.)

Hey, sorry it's taken a few days to get back to you.

BRANDON

All good.

JOEY (V.O.)
 So, how's it feel to be back in the
 New York City?

BRANDON
 New York Joe. That's how New
 Yorkers say it here.
 (laughing)
 Ya' fuckin' tourist.

Joey laughs.

JOEY (V.O.)
 (imitating lines from
 GOODFELLAS, Brandon and
 Joey's 'best bud' movie)
 "You breaking my balls?"

BRANDON
 "Calm down Tommy. I'm just breaking
 your balls a little bit."
 "Now go home and---

BRANDON AND JOEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 (together)
 and get your fucking shine box!"

They laugh at themselves, like the nerd bros they are.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
 It's good man. Feels different this
 time for sure, with the baby on the
 way and everything. Plus, all of
 Brooklyn smells like weed now,
 which I love.

JOEY V.O.)
 Nice. That's awesome.

BRANDON
 Like you care. You don't even
 smoke.

JOEY (V.O.)
 But I'm happy FOR you.

BRANDON
 Right.

JOEY (V.O.)
 (to Brandon)
 So how's the new teaching gig?
 (MORE)

JOEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 What's the name of the part of
 Brooklyn your school's in? The one
 in GOODFELLAS?

BRANDON
 Canarsie. It's called Canarsie
 Performing Arts High School. It's
 kinda' shitty, if I'm being honest.
 Building's unmaintained and crummy.

JOEY
 And you're the theatre teacher
 there?

BRANDON
 Theatre and English. Didn't even
 know I was teaching English until
 we got up here.

FLASHBACK-TWO DAYS BEFORE

INT.-CPA HIGH SCHOOL THEATER SCENE SHOP-DAY

Brandon stands outside the SCENE SHOP DOOR trying to UNLOCK the PADLOCK sealing the door shut. He finally gets it unlocked and pushes against the door. It's STUCK. He PUSHES a few more times until it FINALLY opens. Brandon enters the scene shop. It's PITCH BLACK. Brandon searches for a LIGHT SWITCH on the WALL. He finds it and FLIPS it ON. Brandon scans the scene shop. It's SMALL and COMPLETELY UNKEMPT. OLD WOOD lying around. OLD and RUSTED shop tools. OLD paint cans and FRAYED PAINT BRUSHES on a shelf. Brandon sighs and heads back out the scene shop door.

The FOLLOWING VOICE OVER takes place while the ABOVE ACTION is occurring:

BRANDON (V.O.)
 All black kids too dude. Well, and
 a few Latinos. I'll probably be
 there two years, tops. This is just
 the school to get into the New York
 system. Hopefully, I'll be able to
 transfer to a real arts school
 eventually and make some
 connections with some rich kids'
 producer parents and pitch them
 some amazing new show Mandy and I
 haven't thought of yet. The last
 thing I want to do is teach for the
 rest of my life, especially at this
 school.

INT.-CPA STAGE-SAME DAY-FLASHBACK CONTINUED

AUDITORIUM INSPECTION MONTAGE

Brandon is looking over the state of auditorium. The STAGE FLOOR is WORN and missing FLOOR PANELS.

CUT TO:

Brandon is inspecting the FLY SYSTEM backstage. The ROPES are FRAYED. The system is obviously ancient. There's an INSPECTION SIGN THAT READS "Last Inspected:19--"(the final TWO NUMBERS have been SCRATCHED OUT). Brandon starts to undo the BREAK on one of the LINE SETS, but as he does, something above him starts to CREAK and MOAN. Brandon looks up and SLOWLY MOVES his HAND from the brake and SLOWLY backs away from the FLY SYSTEM.

CUT TO:

Brandon is at the SOUND BOOTH in the back of the auditorium.

He turns on the SOUNDBOARD only to be welcomed with a BARRAGE of FEEDBACK from EVERY SPEAKER and MONITOR in the auditorium.

CUT TO:

Brandon is BACK STAGE LEFT at a LIGHT PANEL that controls the STAGE LIGHTS. He TURNS ON the STAGE LIGHTS. A few of the LIGHTS struggle to come on, but eventually, they do. Brandon HEARS what sounds like a LARGE TURBINE WINDING UP so fast it's about to EXPLODE. He quickly SWATS the light panel's OFF BUTTON, and the sound GOES AWAY.

The FOLLOWING VOICE OVERS take place while the ABOVE ACTION is occurring:

JOEY (V.O.)

An all black school in America that sucks? So surprising.

BRANDON (V.O.)

I know, right? My first school with all black kids and it's shitty. Fucking public education in this country.

INT.-BRANDON'S CANARSIE CLASSROOM-DAY-FLASHBACK CONTINUED

Brandon's FIRST CLASS is starting. It's the FIRST day of SCHOOL and only a FEW students come into the CLASSROOM.

Brandon has a CONFUSED LOOK on his FACE. He checks the CALENDAR hanging on his WHITEBOARD. 'SEPTEMBER 13TH' is CIRCLED in EXPO MARKER. In the DATEBOX, a MESSAGE READS: "FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL". Brandon looks down at his watch. The DATE on it is: 9/13.

CUT TO:

Brandon's SECOND PERIOD CLASS is starting. A GOOD NUMBER OF STUDENTS enter the CLASSROOM. As they do, Brandon STARTS TALKING, but none of the STUDENTS seem to listen. They TALK over him WITH EACH OTHER, LAUGHING, GREETING ONE ANOTHER.

Brandon tries to SPEAK LOUDER, but with no success. He appears stressed and defeated. He STARTS his introduction, but STUDENTS just get up and WALK TO OTHER STUDENTS in DESKS ACROSS the ROOM. PHONES ARE OUT, and STUDENTS are TEXTING and showing ONE ANOTHER VIDEOS from SOCIAL MEDIA APPS. Brandon doesn't know what to do, and RETREATS to his TEACHER'S DESK.

CUT TO:

Brandon is doing his ATTENDANCE SHEET. As he's CALLING ROLL, he struggles with the PRONUNCIATION OF SOME OF THE STUDENTS' NAMES. They are UNIQUELY URBAN/CULTURAL, and Brandon starts to SWEAT as he gets them wrong.

BRANDON

Sa-Ick-hah?

STUDENT-SAIKA

Saika!

BRANDON

Right. Saika. Sorry about that.

Brandon nervously moves along to the next name.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

Ku-Eon?

STUDENT-QUEON

Queon bro!

BRANDON

Queon. Got it. Sorry--JAH-SEE-REE

STUDENT-JAHSIREE

Jahsiree!

BRANDON

Jahsiree. 10-4.

(under his breath)

(MORE)

BRANDON (CONT'D)
 Jesus Christ, it's like an unfunny,
 reverse Key and Peele sketch.

The FOLLOWING VOICE OVERS take place while the ABOVE ACTION
 is occurring:

JOEY (V.O.)
 (continuing his
 fascination with
 Brandon's school)
 Man, that's crazy to think about.
 Being a white teacher at an all
 black school. I'd be so intimidated
 to be a with all black students.
 Hey, maybe you'll all become real
 tight, and they'll let you use the
 n-word around them.

BRANDON (V.O.)
 (sarcastically)
 Yeah, that won't be happening, and
 I definitely won't be teaching *To
 Kill A Mockingbird* here. I can't
 even say 'n-word' when talking
 about the 'n-word'.

END FLASHBACK

BACK TO:

INT.-BRANDON'S CAR-SAME MORNING

JOEY (V.O.)
 Any love for college football up
 there?

BRANDON
 Shit. I can't even find sweet tea
 up here.

(returning to the topic of
 football)
 If there is any love for college
 ball, I haven't found it. I'm so
 ready for the first game though. I
 hope Bama just slaughters Texas.

JOEY (V.O.)
 If we can get our D-line meshing to
 stop that running back of theirs.

BRANDON
 Everyone getting together for the
 first game?

JOEY (V.O.)
 Yeah, at your sister's place. Gonna
 be weird not having you guys there
 for the first game...
 You know we miss you guys.

BRANDON
 (sighing)
 Yeah...Miss you guys too.

JOEY
 Talk soon.

BRANDON
 Later.

CUT TO:

EXT.-CANARSIE PERFORMING ARTS HIGH SCHOOL PARKING LOT-SAME
 DAY

Brandon pulls into the parking lot of the school.

CUT TO:

EXT.-CANARSIE PERFORMANCE ARTS HIGH SCHOOL-DAY

The OUTSIDE of CANARSIE PERFORMANCE ARTS HIGH SCHOOL. It's
 pretty RUN DOWN and worn by TIME. There's a LARGE BANNER on
 an outside BRICK WALL of the SCHOOL COMPLEX that reads
 CANARSIE PERFORMANCE ARTS HIGH SCHOOL:NYC SCHOOLS-PUTTING
 STUDENTS FIRST, ALWAYS. The banner is UNEVEN and one of the
 ENDS is FOLDED OVER because a SUPPORT ROPE isn't secured.

Canarsie Performing Arts is one of seven schools at the South
 Shore School Complex.

Brandon APPROACHES the BACK ENTRANCE DOOR to the school.

CUT TO:

INT.-STEPHEN'S CLASSROOM- SAME DAY

STEPHEN MEEKS, a young, thirty something JAMACIAN-AMERICAN
 MAN and HISTORY TEACHER, is standing in front of his
 CLASSROOM.

Teaching is his passion, and his reason for being a teacher is his desire to see young black students step into leadership roles in their community. He is a native of his CANARSIE COMMUNITY in Brooklyn, but in his adulthood he now resides in BED-STUY. He is very active in Canarsie still because he wants to see his community 'continue to rise' from the bleak pictures painted by WHITE-DOMINATED NEW YORK CITY MEDIA throughout the past decades.

He is a teacher who relates well to his students. Easy to talk to, although he is sometimes accused of 'DRESSING TOO WHITE' by some of the students, as well as ARTICULATING HIS DIALECT 'to SOUND white'. The walls of his room are inundated with POSTERS of PROMINENT BLACK HISTORICAL FIGURES: W.E.B. Du Bois, Frederick Douglas, Harriet Tubman, Malcom X, Thurgood Marshall, etc.

It's 'OPEN DISCUSSION FRIDAY' in his class, and he and his STUDENTS are discussing CURRENT EVENTS.

STEPHEN

So, we've learned some white people around the country, and some black and other people of color too, are debating the-

(using air quotes)

--"controversies" of Critical Race Theory and expressing fears of it being taught in public schools. Some school districts and states have even gone so far as to ban CRT from the curriculum in schools, which is ironic for two reasons. One, no public schools actually teach CRT. It's a sociological theory developed in law schools and studied in higher education. And two, all the talk about banning CRT at the high school level has made it a current event, thereby making me responsible as a teacher to cover CRT in my class. So, let's talk about Critical Race Theory some more in our 'Open Discussion Friday'.

Stephen begins walking around the classroom, his normal routine to make sure students are engaged and participating in the discourse.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)

Based on our unit these past two weeks in which we explored Jim Crow and its effects on African-American lives post-Civil War and Reconstruction up to the Civil Rights Movement: segregation, red-lining, Jim Crow laws, Du Bois' black 'double-consciousness, etc., etc., etc.--how do you feel about Critical Race Theory? Is it something that should be explored in our public schools by students?

A FEW of the more ENGAGED STUDENTS raise their hands. Stephen scans the HANDS in the air and picks a STUDENT.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)

Tatiana. Go for it.

TATIANA

I think students should learn about CRT. White kids and black kids. The enslaved basically built the country white people live in.

Another STUDENT interjects.

DEREK

(interrupting Tatiana)

What's that got to do with white people today? None of them owned slaves.

TATIANA

We're not talking about just slavery Derek. We're talking about white people in history deciding where black people could live and what kind of education they could get. Even the first police in this country were used to control black people.

DEREK

When's the last time a cop arrested you for being black Tatiana? Or stopped you from working in Park Slope? What apartment have you been kicked out of because you're black?

ANOTHER STUDENT joins in on the conversation between Derek and TATIANA.

JAYSON

Derek, Are you blind? Just look at our school. You see shitty schools like ours in Brooklyn Heights? Dumbo? Windsor Terrace?

DEREK

So all those white people there are racist because they got nicer schools than us?

JAYSON

Tell me the last time you saw a white nanny walking kids in strollers through Brooklyn Heights.

DEREK

Hey, those nannies got jobs because of those rich-ass white people, don't they? And they get paid well.

TATIANA

Derek, that's different. He's talking about a different type of racism.

ANOTHER STUDENT favoring Derek's view chimes in.

MALIK

Man, you all just sound like victims.

DEREK

Exactly. Who's that black lady with that podcast that calls out other black people? Just like she says, you guys act like a bunch of victims. My dad's a police officer, and no one ever stopped him from advancing in work. He just worked his ass off.

JAYSON

That woman you're talking about sued her own high school for racial discrimination. She's full of shit.

DEREK

Good for her. She worked the system and made bank doing it.

TATIANA

She talks shit about black people to make herself rich.

(MORE)

TATIANA (CONT'D)

What's she done for black people trying to get out of the ghetto?

JAYSON

(back to Derek)

Derek, you just live off your dad's money. You don't even work man.

DEREK

Bitch, please, don't start that--

STEPHEN steps in to cool temperatures.

STEPHEN

(interjecting)

Okay guys, ease up, ease up. It's debate. Discourse shouldn't be personal. We all have worthy opinions here.

Stephen walks by a student, RAHEEM, whose HEAD is resting on his CROSSED ARMS at his DESK.

JAYSON

Mr. Meeks. How come you always let Raheem sleep through class, but you make us talk and shit?

STEPHEN

One, I'll speak to Raheem on my own terms, thank you very much, and two, mind your business.

DEREK

So, how about you Mr. Meeks? You believe in Critical Race Theory? That road blocks are still put in place to stop black people from success in America?

The students attune themselves to hear Stephen's response.

STEPHEN

I believe that you are the strongest and ultimately the only advocate for yourself in this life. If you work hard for what you want, I think you can get it. If you want something bad enough, you won't ever let anyone or anything stop you from achieving your dreams and goals. I think our country, despite all its problems, can still provide us all with opportunities.

TATIANA

Now that's some elegant bullshit
Mr. Meeks.

JAYSON

(jokingly to Mr. Meek and
the class)
Mr. Meeks can dress AND talk like
white dudes. Watch out for this
man.

The class laughs. Mr. Meeks laughs too, but his laugh is a
slightly uncomfortable one.

TATIANA

Mr. Meek You get that little self-
made speech from Hannity?

STEPHEN

Please, fuck Fox News.

The STUDENTS ALL LAUGH.

CUT TO:

INT.-STEPHEN'S CLASSROOM-SAME DAY

Stephen/Mr. Meeks' class has ended. STUDENTS leave his room.
Kamyia makes her way into the classroom as the final students
saunter out. She sees Stephen/Mr. Meeks at his desk talking
to Raheem. She waits her turn to see her 'favorite' teacher.

STEPHEN

Your mom doing okay?

RAHEEM

Yeah. She got out of the hospital
last week. She's home now. Just
weak still.

STEPHEN

I can't imagine. How you holding
up?

RAHEEM

It is what it is, but I'm pushing
through best I can. Working a few
more shifts at the warehouse to
help out at home, that's why I keep
falling asleep in class.

STEPHEN

Brother, you work four days a week until 1 AM, don't worry about it. You do what you need to do, and if that means catching a few Zzz's every couple of classes, that's fine with me. Night shifts ain't no joke.

Stephen grabs a MANILLA FOLDER from his desk.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)

Here's the notes for next week on Langston Hughes and the Harlem Renaissance. We'll have a quiz next Friday, so if you work late on Thursday, don't worry about coming in the next day. All we're doing is taking the quiz, so you can just stay home and take it on Google classroom. Just text me on Thursday and remind me to post it.

RAHEEM

Thanks Mr. Meek.

STEPHEN

Thank yourself my man. I'm proud of you, son. Just keep working hard. It won't be like this forever.

RAHEEM

I sure hope not.

STEPHEN

Just get through today. That's all you got to do.

Stephen fist bumps Raheem. As Raheem leaves, Stephen notices Kamiya standing in at the ENTRANCE of the classroom.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)

Kamiya. What's up girl?

KAYMIA

Nothing. Just thought I'd stop by and say, 'hi'. Happy new school year.

STEPHEN

I was wondering when you were going to stop in. Don't know if you know this, but school's been back for two weeks now.

(MORE)

STEPHEN (CONT'D)

Granted, no one shows up the first week--Good to see you.

KAMIYA

Yeah, sorry. Would have come by sooner, but had family stuff at home to deal with. Did you know Mrs. Welch gave us a test already?

STEPHEN

Yeah, well, that's because she's like that mean ass teacher from Harry Potter. Don't tell her I said that.

KAMIYA

(laughing)

I won't. Hey, how come I don't have you this semester?

STEPHEN

We're short-staffed again. A few teachers left last minute. We're getting two more next week, luckily. You'll have me 2nd semester though.

KAMIYA

Cool. So, I heard we got a new theatre teacher.

STEPHEN

Yeah, we did. Have you met him yet?

KAYMIA

No, not yet. Was going to see if you have.

STEPHEN

We did a faculty meet/greet thing. Just talked to him for a second. Didn't get any "weirdo" vibes from him. I think he'll be cool.

Stephen can SENSE Kaymia has a request, but is hesitant to ask.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)

Did you want me to introduce you to him? Get in good from the start?

KAMIYA

I wanted to see if he needed a stage manager.

STEPHEN

That's right. The stage manager thing. You did that with Roundabout Theatre last summer in the city, right?

KAMIYA

Yeah, it was a lot of fun, and I wanted to do it here.

STEPHEN

Absolutely. You should go for it.

Stephen reaches for some PAPERS off of a PAPER TRAY at the EDGE of his DESK.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)

I got some errands to run right now before 5th period; otherwise I'd take you to him now. How about tomorrow? Come a little early before school starts, and I'll introduce you to him. Sound good?

KAMIYA

Sure. Thank you.

STEPHEN

You got it.

KAYMIA

(out of the blue)
You think he smokes weed?

STEPHEN

(laughing)
Why do you ask that?

KAMIYA

My middle school theatre teacher smoked a lot of weed, and the lady who was our Roundabout Theatre Youth Ensemble teacher smoked weed too in the prop closet. It seems like theatre people just smoke a lot of weed. I just don't like it.

STEPHEN

Oh, I know. I remember your 'culture and society' project. What was it called again?

KAMIYA

"I'm tired of ghetto black people
and weed in Brooklyn".

(beat)

The smell just reminds me of my dad
too.

There is an awkward moment between the two, as Stephen internally empathizes with Kamiya's comment about her dad. He tries to pivot the conversation.

STEPHEN

I'm sure not all theatre people
smoke weed.

EXT.-CANARSIE PERFORMING ARTS HIGH SCHOOL PARKING LOT-SAME
DAY

Stephen EXITS the school building, followed by SEVERAL OTHER
TEACHERS.

FELLOW TEACHER

See you tomorrow Meeks.

STEPHEN

Later.

A FEW MORE TEACHERS exit the building as well. Brandon is one
of them. He walks to his car, UNLOCKS IT and get in.

EXT.-ESTABLISHING SHOTS OF DIFFERENT PARTS OF BROOKLYN-SAME
DAY

THE BROOKLYN BRIDGE, during the day. GRAND ARMY PLAZA. The
North Entrance to PROSPECT PARK, PEOPLE OF ALL COLORS
RUNNING. FLATBUSH AVE./WELCOME TO FLATBUSH SIGN. FAMOUS VIEW
of the MANHATTAN BRIDGE from a DUMBO STREET. BROOKLYN
BROWNSTONES near DOWNTOWN BROOKLYN, clean, no graffiti with
mostly WHITE PEOPLE walking down the street and sitting on
their STOOPS.

BUSHWICK- RUNDOWN BUILDINGS next to NEW, HIP, RENOVATED
BUILDINGS. EAST FLATBUSH- mostly AFRICAN AMERICANS also
sitting on their stoops, BARBECUING in front of the stoops of
their BUILDINGS, enjoying themselves.

BUSHWICK- LATINX FRIENDS/FAMILY with COOLERS and SMALL,
PORTABLE BARBECUES, PLAYING VOLLEYBALL on the OUTDOOR
TRACK/BASKETBALL COURT of a SCHOOL. LOTS OF WALL
ART/GRAFFITI.

WILLIAMSBURG- TRENDY HIPSTERS (white, black, Latinx, Asian)
EATING at OUTSIDE TABLES of TRENDY,QUAINT CAFES.

MIDDLE EASTERN MEN hanging outside of their CORNER STORE, laughing and smoking cigarettes. Shots of Asians and Latinx people on ELECTRIC BIKES, riding through different parts of Brooklyn DELIVERING FOOD.

A FINAL, ARIAL shot of DOWNTOWN BROOKLYN.

EXT.-BOB'S TRADING POST (GROCERY STORE)-THAT AFTERNOON

Brandon is PARALLEL PARKING his car on the street. It's an OLDER TOYOTA PRIUS. Brandon waits for a FEW CARS to pass, and when it's clear, he starts crossing the street. As he gets half way across, and a CAR passes BEHIND HIM. Brandon hears a LOUD NOISE, like a POP followed by a CRUNCH. He turns around. The CAR parked in front of his has its DRIVER SIDE REAR-VIEW MIRROR just hanging by an ELECTRICAL CORD, slightly swinging from side to side. Brandon watches the car that just passed him continue on down the road. Brandon looks back at the dangling mirror, trying to fathom that he basically just witnessed a car knock off a parked cars side mirror, and continue driving. Brandon looks at the other CARS parked on the STREET. All of them have their driver side mirror PUSHED IN. Brandon goes back to his car and folds in the mirror on his car.

He looks across the street and sees his wife, Mandy. He walks across to see her.

Brandon kisses her.

MANDY

Hey, how was your day?

BRANDON

I, um...survived. You take the subway here?

MANDY

Yup.

BRANDON

Well, look at you, hip-pregnant city mom using public transportation.

Brandon gets all kissy/lovey-dovey with her.

MANDY

(laugh, and letting him give her love)

You're so stupid.

CUT TO:

INT.-BOB'S TRADING POST-SAME AFTERNOON

Brandon and Mandy are standing BEHIND THEIR FULL SHOPPING CART in a VERY LONG line that wraps ALL THROUGHOUT THE STORY

EIGHT MONTHS PREGNANT, MANDY is a CONFIDENT, EASY-GOING 21st CENTURY WOMAN. She can be SILLY, as well as HILARIOUS, given the MOOD. She saves it MOSTLY for Brandon though. Ironically, within a lot of her liberalism hides a lot of cultural tradition. BRANDON is a CLOSET OPTIMIST who hides as a HUMOROUS CYNIC a lot of the times. Mandy is really the only one who can break through to him in those times. He can be BLUNT, LOUD, and STUBBORN which may be a good or bad thing depending on the situation. His heart is usually in the right place though.

Both Brandon's job as a THEATRE/ENGLISH TEACHER and Mandy's PART-TIME BOOKSTORE JOB are DISGUISES. The pair are really aspiring TV/FILM/Theatre WRITERS seeking a SHOW IDEA to pitch to WILLING PRODUCERS. They BOTH lived in NYC previously while SINGLE, but have decided to reject the suburbs and move back to the city, to raise their CHILD, who is due to be born in about a month.

Mandy looks at the long grocery line ahead of them. In the distance she can hear the DINGS of CASH REGISTERS at the CHECK-OUT LANES. Brandon is on his PHONE.

MANDY

Whatcha' doing babe?

BRANDON

A buddy of mine who's an actor here has connections with showrunners at HBO and Netflix. He just sent me a contact list, so I'm sending him a 'thank you' text.

MANDY

Well, that sounds promising. How does he know those people?

BRANDON

Nepotism. America. His rich and powerful parents know some other guy's rich and powerful parents.

MANDY

(annoyed by the line)

Why would you make me come here for groceries? I hate this place. Look how many fucking people there are in here. It's insane.

BRANDON

What? Oh my god, I love this place.
You can get foods here that don't
exist anywhere else

(picks up a bag from a
shelf)

Edamame Straws.

(picks up another bag)

Cornbread Crips. It's cornbread AND
a chip. These guys are geniuses.
This is how we need to think when
pitching our show.

MANDY

We need to think like a hip grocery
store chain to have a successful tv
show?

BRANDON

No, what I'm saying is we need to
have that catchy, trendy hook with
our show like Bob's Trading Post
has with its earthy food choices.
Everything in here looks like it's
fucking healthy and gluten free.

MANDY

Babe, this is just a trendy grocery
store for white, urban hipsters to
feel organic while shopping. It's
not a blueprint for a show.

BRANDON

Not everyone in here is white.
Look, there's two Asians over
there, some black people around
that way. Plenty of minorities.

MANDY

People of color babe, not
minorities.

BRANDON

(correcting himself)

Sorry, People of color--Anyway,
they're here. We're here. So, see?
The melting pot of America is
working, and we're a part of that
again. We're New Yorkers again.

Brandon gives her a goofy ELBOW-TO-RIBCAGE POKING.

BRANDON (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
 (in a thick and terrible
 Brooklyn accent to Mandy)
 "Now go home and get your fucking
 shine box."

MANDY
 Excuse me?

BRANDON
 Sorry, GOODFELLAS quote. Was trying
 out my Brooklyn accent.
 (now gushing over the
 nostalgia of GOODFELLAS)
 Such a good line.

MANDY
 (changing tones)
 We've been back here two weeks
 babe. Don't do that thing where you
 get yourself too worked up too
 quickly. It's gonna take time and a
 lot of hard work.

BRANDON
 Oh it's going to happen. Sooner
 rather than later this time. I can
 feel it. I've been manifesting the
 universe like a mother fucker. I
 almost shit myself yesterday in the
 apartment reaching out to the
 cosmos.

MANDY
 Calm down Sorken.

BRANDON
 I'm just saying, we're in a better
 position now. It's GOING to happen.
 And you know why? Because it HAS
 to. I'm not fucking teaching high
 school theatre for the rest of my
 life, and you're not going to half-
 ass it at bookstores for the rest
 of yours.

Mandy gives a look to Brandon, taking slight offense to his
 "half-ass it" comment.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
 (confidently declaring)
 The Lord shall finally bless the
 Stoles'/Greene's--even though we're
 still not convinced he/she/they
 exists. Whatever pronoun
 he/she/they prefers.

Brandon notices they have made their way in the line to the
 end of the aisle.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
 We're almost to the end of the
 aisle. Check out is in sight.

MANDY
 And you're lucky too, mother
 fucker. Making me stand in this
 long line when there's a perfectly
 good Ideal Grocery right around the
 corner from us.

BRANDON
 Come on, it's not that bad.

MANDY
 If my father saw you making me
 stand here in this shit, he'd come
 out of retirement, put on his badge
 and gun and make you taste justice.

As Mandy and Brandon TURN THE CORNER, BOTH are HORRIFIED to
 realize that the LINE goes all the way DOWN THE AISLE and
 WRAPS AROUND YET ANOTHER CORNER.

MANDY (CONT'D)
 Your need to be a Brooklyn hipster
 today is going to hurt your sex
 life. Just so you know.

BRANDON
 Babe, I'm wearing clear-framed
 glasses--

Brandon adjusts his GLASSES and pulls out his phone again to
 distract himself from the long line.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
 --I'm 80 percent douchebag hipster
 already.

CUT TO:

INT.-BOB'S TRADING POST-SAME MORNING

MELANIE is working at her CASH REGISTER. She finishes PACKING GROCERIES for a CUSTOMER, then hands her the BAGS.

MELANIE

Thanks for shopping Bob's Trading.
Come again.

As the customer leaves Melanie holds up her REGISTER FLAG to SIGNAL the next customer to her station.

Mandy and Brandon APPROACH Melanie's station and begin PULLING ITEMS from their CART.

MANDY

(To Melanie)

Hi. How's it going?

MELANIE

Doing good. And you?

MANDY

Glad to finally be through with
that line, that's for sure.

MELANIE

Yeah, it's bad. Today's not as bad
as Sundays though.

BRANDON

(to Melanie)

Noted. Thanks for the tip.
(way too out loud and to
himself)
Don't come on Sundays or no sex for
me.

Melanie ABRUPTLY stops SCANNING groceries, trying to figure out a RESPONSE. Mandy gives Brandon a "WHAT THE HELL?" look.

MELANIE

(trying to comprehend the
context of Brandon's
statement, but then
noticing Mandy's
pregnant, then to
Brandon)

Looks like you've got the job done
already though.

Brandon smiles at the thought of his "minor contribution" to Mandy's pregnancy.

MANDY

Sorry about my husband. He thinks every thought that enters in his head should be spoken out loud.

MELANIE

(laughing)

Hey, husbands do that sometimes, right?

Mandy laughs back.

BRANDON

(thinking he should continue to explain)

Sorry, I meant that the lines are too long and that's why I won't get sex if we keep coming here when it's crowded.

His explanation does not clear up the context.

MANDY

(under her breath)

Okay, babe. That's enough.

MELANIE

(continuing to laugh)

So--

(to Mandy)

How far along are you?

MANDY

Eight months.

MELANIE

First one?

MANDY

Yeah.

BRANDON

(to Mandy)

You have any kids?

MELANIE

Two little angels/terrors. A teen and a toddler.

MANDY

(in a positive tone)

Oh wow.

MELANIE

Yeah.

BRANDON

Jesus, how do you do it?

MANDY

Brandon!

BRANDON

Sorry. Didn't mean it to sound like that. Just meant, I'm exhausted, and we don't even have the one yet.

MANDY

You're exhausted?

Melanie laughs again at the couple's banter.

BRANDON

(to Mandy, being
absolutely serious)

Yeah. Totally. You're not?

MANDY

(ignoring his stupidity)

Well, maybe we get groceries in Bushwick next time, if YOU'RE so tired.

MELANIE

You guys live in Bushwick?

MANDY

Yeah. We just moved there.

MELANIE

You guys did come quite a ways for groceries. I live in Brownsville.

MANDY

Is that near Bushwick?

MELANIE

Yeah, right next to it.

MANDY

Oh okay.

Melanie finishes RINGING UP the last few ITEMS and puts them in the couples' GROCERY BAGS. She then TOTALS the CHECK.

MELANIE

\$84.65 is your total.

Mandy pulls out her DEBIT CARD and inserts it into the CREDIT CARD PROCESSOR. After a few moments, a RECEIPT PRINTS OUT and Melanie hands it to Mandy.

Mandy and Brandon exchange pleasantries one last time with Melanie, then LEAVE. One of Melanie's AFRICAN-AMERICAN CO-WORKERS next to her station gives her more GROCERY BAGS.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

Cute little white couple.

AFRICAN AMERICAN CO-WORKER

They're all cute until they move into your neighborhood and drive the price of rent up.

MELANIE

(laughing)

Girl, stop.

AFRICAN AMERICAN CO-WORKER

What? It's true. White people can't even afford to live in the white parts of Brooklyn anymore. They buy what's left of Black Brooklyn. Going to smell like pumpkin spice every fall before long.

Melanie laughs at her friend's joke as she raises her REGISTER FLAG to signal the next customer.

EXT.-BRANDON AND MANDY'S APARTMENT- SAME EVENING

The OUTSIDE of Brandon and Mandy's apartment. Their building is a newer building BETWEEN two older buildings that obviously haven't been RENOVATED in decades. There are CARDBOARD MOVING BOXES, BROKEN DOWN, and leaning up against TRASH CANS near their STOOP. They've obviously just moved in to their BUSHWICK APARTMENT recently.

Brandon pulls the car up to STREET CURB in front their APARTMENT BUILDING.

Brandon and Mandy UNLOAD the groceries from the TRUNK OF THEIR CAR. Brandon opens the GATE to their building. They walks around the STOOP to their WALK IN UNIT. Brandon opens the door and walks in. Mandy follows. As she does, she turns back and sees an ELDERLY WOMAN pushing a CART FILLED with PLASTIC BOTTLES and ALUMINIUM CANS. Mandy watches her for a moment as the elderly woman digs through a THE TRASH RECYCLE GARBAGE CAN belonging to the building. She's looking for more bottles and cans. Mandy walks into her apartment.

EXT.-BUSHWICK NEIGHBORHOOD-THE NEXT MORNING.

ESTABLISHING MORNING SHOTS OF BUSHWICK. A shot of a man UNLOCKING the ROLLING GATE of his CORNER STORE. A shot of an MTA BUS stopping to PICK UP PASSENGERS. A shot of the ELEVATED J TRAIN riding above Broadway Street. FOOD DELIVERY DRIVERS weaving through MORNING TRAFFIC on their SCOOTERS.

INT.-MANDY AND BRANDON'S APT. BEDROOM-SAME MORNING

Brandon's PHONE ALARM goes off and he starts to wake up.

CUT TO:

Brandon is in the shower.

CUT TO:

Brandon, dressed for the day, leans down to Mandy, who's still asleep in their bed. He kisses her.

BRANDON

Love you. See you after school.

MANDY

(mumbling and still mostly asleep)

Love you too.

EXT.-STEPHEN'S BED-STUY APARTMENT- SAME MORNING

Stephen comes out of his apartment with his SATCHEL and a TUMBLER full of coffee. He is dressed in his usual school attire, a PAIR of TAPERED, TRENDY DRESS PANTS, HIP SEMI-DRESS SHOES, SLEEK BUTTON UP SHIRT, and TIE. He waves to a group of MALE NEIGHBORS, in their late 60s/early 70s, sitting on their STOOPS. This is a usual weekday routine.

As Stephen passes them, they "cat call" him on his attire.

CARLO(NEIGHBOR #1)

(playfully joking)

Damn Stephen, looking sharp!

The other male neighbors laugh.

STEPHEN

(playfully back)

What are you talking about Carlo? I always look this good. You going to get your ass off that stoop today?

CARLO

Shit. I'm retired. Now get the fuck out of here and go teach them kids something that sticks.

STEPHEN

Challenge of my life Carlo.
Challenge of my life.

Stephens waves to them.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)

(to his male neighbors)
Have a good morning guys!

The male neighbors wish him well too.

INT.-SUBWAY CAR- SAME MORNING

Stephen is SITTING in a SUBWAY CAR, READING a BOOK, his morning, work commute ritual. The subway car comes to its next stop and the DOOR open. PEOPLE transfer in and out of the train. As the doors close again, a VOICE can be heard in the background coming from a HOMELESS MAN who has just STEPPED into the subway car.

HOMELESS MAN

Ladies and gentlemen. I'm sorry for the interruption. My name is Gary, and I am homeless--

Stephen looks up for a moment at the man, then continues reading his book. He's heard this speech a million times before and has learned to ignore it easily.

INT.CANARSIE PERFORMING ARTS HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY-SAME MORNING

Ms. Welch, an OLDER TEACHER stands outside her CLASSROOM DOOR. She is staring angrily at a SIGN taped to it. She rips it down and GLARES AT IT WITH EVEN MORE DISDAIN. It's a picture of Ms. Umbridge from HARRY POTTER. Written on the picture with SHARPIE are the words, "Ms. Welch."

Stephen is walking down the HALLWAY with Kamiya. School has not yet begun, and STUDENTS are SOCIALIZING in the halls. He overhears some STUDENTS' CONVERSATIONS about Brandon.

STUDENT #1

The new white teacher couldn't pronounce like half the class' names. It was hilarious.

STUDENT #2

It was like that Key and Peele sketch with the teacher who mispronounces all the white kids' names, but in reverse.

STUDENT #1

It's always the white teacher who fucks up names though.

STUDENT #3

It's not just the white teachers. The crazy Puerto Rican teacher does it too. Quit being racist man.

STUDENT #4

Yeah, quit picking on the white teacher. Besides, Mr. Meek dresses more white than he does.

INT.-BRANDON'S CANARSIE CLASSROOM- SAME MORNING

Brandon is WRITING down OBJECTIVES and ASSIGNMENTS on the WHITEBOARD for the coming SCHOOL DAY.

Stephen knocks on his OPEN CLASSROOM DOOR.

STEPHEN

Hey, Mr. Greene?

Brandon stops writing on the board and welcomes Stephen in. Kamiya enters behind him.

BRANDON

Hey--
(struggling to remember
Stephen's name)
Mr.--Meats?

STEPHEN

Meeks.

BRANDON

Sorry, it's been a week for dropped names for me.

STEPHEN

Hey, don't worry about it. Just wanted to see how you're settling in to CPA.

BRANDON
(hesitant)
Um, it's--going.

STEPHEN
I feel ya. Adjusting back after
summer sucks.

Brandon acknowledges Kamiya.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)
This is Kamiya. She's a theatre
student here, and she's into stage
managing. Just wanted to introduce
you two.

BRANDON
Oh, awesome. What's up Kamiya?

KAMIYA
Nothing. I just wanted to see if
you have a stage manager for the
year, and if not, I'd like to do
it. It's kind of what I want to do
one day.

BRANDON
That'd be great. I don't have one
as of yet, and as you know, it's
the most important job in theatre.

KAMIYA
I know. I'm really good at
organization, plus I like to boss
people around.

BRANDON
Hey, that's most of the reason why
I'm a teacher. Being a dictator of
my own country has always been a
dream of mine, so until then, a
classroom will do to slake my
thirst for power.

KAMIYA
I'm not sure what you mean by that.
(changing the tone)
Question: Do you smoke weed? It's
okay if you do. I've found out most
people in theatre do, so I just
wanted to ask.

BRANDON

(laughing through his lie)
 Haha. Well, I've found out that's true too in my experience, but no, I uh--I don't smoke weed.

KAMIYA

Cool. If you're lying that's okay too. Adults lie to teenagers, and I understand that, because we lie to you guys all the time about stupid stuff.

Brandon likes this girl, immediately. She's the awkward teenage theatre nerd he was growing up.

BRANDON

(thinking through his answer)

Kamiya. I think you're going to be a kick-ass stage manager, and I'm glad to have you on board. We'll set up a date to get together and talk about fall shows and auditions soon, okay?

KAMIYA

Okay. It was good to meet you.

BRANDON

You too Kamiya. Take care.

KAMIYA

Bye.

Kamiya leaves the room. Stephen turns to Brandon.

STEPHEN

So, that's Kamiya. Girl is sort of a subdued eccentric--kind of lives in her own little world. Good kid though.

BRANDON

That is the most 'theatre' theatre kid I've met so far here.

STEPHEN

By the way. It's cool if you smoke man. I do.

BRANDON

(lying)
 I don't.

STEPHEN

Really?

Brandon hesitates.

BRANDON

(finally breaking down)

Every single night. Couldn't teach
if I didn't.

STEPHEN

Nice.

They laugh at the instant connection that only comes from
knowing someone else who enjoys weed as much they do.

BRANDON

Since you dropped by, actually, I
was wondering if you'd be down for
grabbing some coffee or a drink
sometime? I'd kind of like to get
to know more about the school and
get an idea of what really goes
down here. I don't feel like
administration has been very clear
on basically-- anything.

Stephen shakes his head and cracks a smile, not out of snarky
arrogance, but this is textbook NEW TEACHER confusion at CPA.

STEPHEN

Yeah, that sounds about right.

BRANDON

I'm just not sure how I should
prepare my classes. When I
interviewed with Mr. Dard, I was
told it was for the theatre
position, but like, two days before
school started, he told me I was
also teaching AP English too.

STEPHEN

Yeah, that's Mr. Dard for you. Our
last-minute-information, fly by the
seat of his pants administrator,
makes it up as he goes along. One
of the many issues here at CPA.
Plus, students think he tries too
hard to connect with them.

BRANDON

CPA? What's that mean again?

STEPHEN

Canarsie Performing Arts.
 (steering back to the
 original conversation)
 Tell you what, there's a diner
 across the street from the school.
 I think we both have planning
 period before lunch?

BRANDON

Yeah, I do.

STEPHEN

Good, so we can grab coffee and
 food there, and I'll give you the
 rundown on all the bullshit and
 good things that happen here.

Brandon laughs at Stephen's bluntness and honesty.

BRANDON

Sounds great. Thanks man.

EXT.-MANDY AND BRANDON'S APT.- LATER THE SAME DAY

Mandy WALKS out of her and Brandon's apartment dressed in
 RUNNING ATTIRE. She does a few QUICK STRETCHES, then begins
 her RUN.

CUT TO:

EXT.-BUSHWICK NEIGHBORHOOD-SAME DAY

As she runs through her BUSHWICK neighborhood, she notices A
 WOMAN, with A SMALL CART (similar to the woman from the night
 before, digging through NEIGHBORHOOD RECYCLE TRASH BINS for
 GLASS and PLASTICS.

CUT TO:

Mandy continues RUNNING. She passes a HOMELESS WHITE MAN
 without SHOES SLEEPING on some CARDBOARD outside a CORNER
 STORE.

CUT TO:

Mandy continues her run through Bushwick. She gives a
 DISGUSTED look to all of the TRASH she sees on the SIDEWALK.

She notices a GIANT MURAL OF BIGGIE SMALLS AND ALFRED HITCHCOCK on the side of GROCERY STORE building.

CUT TO:

EXT.-LOCAL BUSHWICK GROCERY STORE-SAME DAY

There is a FREE KITCHEN PANTRY right outside of the grocery store, where people can FREELY TAKE FOOD AND DRINKS as they need. Mandy sees a woman STANDING in front of the pantry HOLDING A REUSABLE SHOPPING BAG WITH THE GROCERY STORE LOGO ON IT. Mandy recognizes her. The woman is Melanie. Mandy PAUSES her run.

MANDY
(to Melanie)
Oh hey. It's you.

Melanie looks up, trying to remember how she knows Mandy.

MANDY (CONT'D)
Do you remember me? From Bob's
Trading Post?

The light bulb in Melanie's brain goes off.

MELANIE
Hey... Yeah, the Bushwick couple.
(jokingly)
Your husband still tired from you
being pregnant?

Mandy laughs.

MANDY
(sarcastically)
How will he ever survive, right?

Melanie laughs.

MELANIE
Exercising while pregnant? I'm
impressed.

MANDY
Aw, thanks. Sometimes I think I'm
just doing it to hurry her along.

Mandy points to her PREGNANT BELLY. Mandy changes her gaze to the food pantry.

MANDY (CONT'D)

I've heard about these free food pantries, but I've never seen one, like-- in person. See, this is what I love about Brooklyn. It's so cute and just says, "we're a community."

Melanie tries to stop her face from contorting into one of disgust as she hears Mandy's ignorant comment echo over and over in her head.

I'd love to help out with something like this. You guys take donations for it?

MELANIE

(confused by Mandy's question)

Who?

MANDY

The store.

Mandy points to Melanie's REUSABLE GROCERY BAG WITH FOOD IN IT. Melanie looks down at the bag.

MANDY (CONT'D)

(steering the conversation in a new direction)

Working at two grocery stores, at least you've got variety to bring home, right?

MELANIE

(trying to come up with something)

Oh, yeah--

MANDY

(continuing to clarify because she's not sure Melanie made the connection)

Lots of food variety and choices, working here and Bob's Trading Post. Kids probably have a hard time complaining about eating the same things over and over.

MELANIE

(confused for a moment, then laughing to cover up the truth)

(MORE)

MELANIE (CONT'D)

It definitely makes it easier for a home menu without repetition.

(taking the conversation back to the food pantry)

Yeah, we try to keep the pantry stocked for people around here who need it.

MANDY

That's great. I'd really love to donate some food too, I mean, if that's allowed.

Melanie continues to talk, but there is still a nervous tone to her voice, again, as if she's lying.

MELANIE

Oh, absolutely. Um, Just hit up a manager inside, and they can add you to the 'needs' list.

MANDY

Great.

Mandy LINGERS, as if she wants to ask something.

MANDY (CONT'D)

Hey, I hope you don't mind me asking, but could I get your number?

MELANIE

My number? Why?

Melanie seems highly concerned by Mandy's request. She's not used to Mandy's attempt at "southern manners".

MANDY

Sorry. Alabama girl in me.

MELANIE

People from Alabama collect phone numbers from grocery store clerks?

Mandy laughs and tries to clear up the confusion.

MANDY

I'm sorry. It's the southern hospitality thing in me.

(MORE)

MANDY (CONT'D)

Brandon and I don't really know anyone in this area, and since you live close by, we'd love to have you and yours over for dinner some time, hang out, get the 411 on the neighborhood and this area of Brooklyn.

MELANIE

Oh. I'm sorry. Just not used to people I barely know doing something, well,--nice like that.

(almost as an aside to herself)

That might be a northern thing.

They both laugh.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

Thank you. We'll definitely consider it. Just kind of busy lately.

MANDY

Oh, yeah, no worries. I mean, no pressure. And bring the whole gang too. You, kids--

Mandy glances down at Melanie's RING FINGER. There's no RING on it.

MANDY (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

-- your husband/partner/
boyfriend. Not really sure what the P.C. term is now.

MELANIE

Seriously, thank you. It'd be just me and the kids though. My husband is deceased.

MANDY

Oh, Jesus. I'm sorry.

(to herself)

Wow, Mandy.

MELANIE

(reassuring her)

It's okay.

MANDY

I'm sorry. I was just caught off guard--

MELANIE
 (a little confused by
 Mandy's 'self-scolding')
 Don't worry about it. You're fine.
 It's usually the normal reaction I
 get. I'm used to it.

There's a moment of silence as the two try to figure out how to transition out of the awkward situation. Melanie finally makes the first move.

MELANIE (CONT'D)
 You got your phone on you? I can
 just put my number in.

MANDY
 Yeah, here.

Mandy hands Melanie her PHONE. Melanie TYPES HER NUMBER IN. Mandy takes it back.

MANDY (CONT'D)
 Great. I'll give you a call
 sometime.

MELANIE
 Looking forward to it.

Mandy WAVES goodbye and starts back on her run. Melanie waves bye too. She waits until Mandy TURNS THE CORNER, Melanie picks up her reusable grocery bag and OPENS the pantry. She puts TWO CANNED FOOD GOODS in her bag.

She wasn't restocking the food pantry at all. She was collecting food to put in her own bag.

CUT TO:

INT.-CANARSIE SCHOOL HALLWAY-AFTERNOON, SAME DAY

It's the end of the school day. MR. DARD, the principal, as well as a WILLIAMSBURG HIPSTER, stands in the HALLWAY as STUDENTS FLOOD the HALLWAY from the CLASSROOMS. A man in his EARLY 50s, he's dressed in SKINNY JEANS, no SOCKS, and HIP LOAFERS.

Mr. Dard tries "to relate" to students as they leave.

MR. DARD
 Tyreem! My man!

TYREEM
 Hey Mr. Dard.

MR. DARD

What's up brother! See the Nets game last night? Aw, man. So dope! Jasmine, I see you girl! Working that new weave! Omari! See me on your Tiktok FYP yet? Dard's blowin' up big time!

A pair of students look at Mr. Dard as he's shouting out to students.

MR. DARD (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

Going viral like a playa'!

RANDOM STUDENT #1

(to other student walking with them)

What the fuck does that even mean?

RANDOM STUDENT #2

I don't know. He's so weird.

EXT.-OUTSIDE CANARSIE DINER-AFTERNOON-SAME DAY

A SMALL DINER juxtaposed from the Shore South School Complex. PEOPLE entering and exiting. Stephen approaches the diner door and enters.

INT.-CANARSIE DINER-SAME DAY

Stephen and Brandon are DRINKING COFFEE in a DINER BOOTH. They have been seated and conversing for a short while.

BRANDON

So, it's us and what, eight other schools in this building?

STEPHEN

Yup. Used to be one big Canarsie high school like 25 years ago, when this whole area was mostly Italians and some Jewish people. The school was called Shore South then.

BRANDON

Where'd they all go?

STEPHEN

Most of the Italians moved out to Long Island, but there's still small businesses here run by them.

BRANDON

So, this whole area was basically white while *SAVED BY THE BELL* was actually airing on television?

STEPHEN

Huh?

BRANDON

Sorry, I use TV shows to help me reference significant time periods in history. For example, when did the Challenger explode? Right around when *THUNDERCATS* was getting off the ground. 'Off the ground..' Wow, distasteful, unintentional pun there.

Stephen sits silently, not sure how to respond to Brandon's verbal stream of consciousness.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

(referring to his personality)

Sorry. Welcome to me. It's like student loan debt. It freaks you out first, but eventually you ignore it like everyone else. So, how long have you worked here?

STEPHEN

Four years.

BRANDON

And you teach history?

STEPHEN

Yeah. I teach history to 11th and 12th graders. I'm also one of the guidance counselors, and I'm assistant coach for basketball.

BRANDON

Holy shit that's a lot.

STEPHEN

Yeah, I practically live at the school.

BRANDON

Four years? You're tenured then?

STEPHEN

Just started this year.

BRANDON

God, tenure sounds amazing.

STEPHEN

Oh it's the best thing about teaching, like a beautiful middle finger with a side of kiss-my-ass.

(intrigued)

So, Dard's got you teaching English too?

BRANDON

Yeah. I'm certified in ELA, so I can teach English and theatre. He just didn't mention anything about English though until after we moved up here, like right before school.

STEPHEN

Cause he knew you couldn't refuse to do it.

BRANDON

What do you mean?

STEPHEN

Think about it. What would you have done? Say 'no' after moving you and your family up here?

Brandon realizes he was intentionally misled by Mr. Dard.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)

That's Brooklyn baby. Welcome to it.

BRANDON

(slowly realizing)

Son of a bitch.

STEPHEN

Dard's been principal ten years now. He may be goofy sometimes, but he knows how to play the cards he's dealt and how to work the system.

BRANDON

(laughing)

Well, that's a little cryptic.

STEPHEN

(even more cryptically)

Hang around a while.

Brandon's laughter fades a little.

BRANDON

Can I be honest with you?

STEPHEN

If you can't, we're fucked from the get-go, right?

BRANDON

Touché--I've never worked in a school like this before.

STEPHEN

No?

BRANDON

Yeah, I've only worked in suburban schools. This place makes no sense to me. With the shared spaces, multiple schools in one building, metal detectors--the fact that the building is so old, or that you can't drink out of the water fountains--by the way, what's up with that?

STEPHEN

There's lead in the water... possibly.

BRANDON

Okay. That. That right there. I mean, what the fuck? Is the school the city of Flint, Michigan? How the hell does this happen at a school in America these days?

STEPHEN

Can I be honest too? It genuinely shocks me how shocked you are.

BRANDON

Oh, I know it probably does. I just feel so ignorant. I mean, I knew there were forgotten schools like this, I've just never been in a situation to see one firsthand, you know.

STEPHEN

I get it man. Totally.

Brandon reaches for the SUGAR to add a little more to his COFFEE.

BRANDON
So, where you'd you go to school
growing up?

Brandon takes a sip of coffee.

STEPHEN
Here at Shore South.

He immediately chokes on it and feels his METAPHORICAL FOOT go into his LITERAL MOUTH.

INT.-CANARSIE SCHOOL HALLWAY-AFTERNOON, SAME DAY

The school day has ended, and Brandon STANDS outside his classroom door, LOCKING IT. He starts to down the hallway. Mr. Dard CALLS for him from the OTHER END of the hallway.

MR. DARD
Hey, Mr. Greene! Quick question for you!

BRANDON
(quietly to himself)
Great, now what does he want me to teach?

Mr. Dard approaches him.

MR. DARD
Hey you know how to do like,
technical theatre stuff, right?

MR. DARD (CONT'D)
I'm the theatre teacher Mr. Dard.
So, yeah, technical theatre is part
of my job.

MR. DARD (CONT'D)
Perfect! Do you know how to work
the green screen filter on Tiktok?
I'm getting about like, 150-175
views on my posts, but I know if I
can throw in some fancy tech stuff
like green screen in my videos, I
can get it up to 200, or 225 views
at least.

BRANDON

That's not really the same thing as tech theatre Mr. Dard.

MR. DARD

Really? I thought you theatre guys used green screens on the stage all the time.

BRANDON

That's film and television.

MR. DARD

Oh, so that's like totally different then I guess.

BRANDON

(dumbfounded that this man runs a theatre school)
Yes, theatre is different than television and film. One takes place on a stage and the other-- doesn't.

MR. DARD

Damn. I really needed that green screen. I was wanting to do a green screen tok with this video of Morgan Freeman from LEAN ON ME. I'm going to share it at the next Shore South principals' meeting.

BRANDON

Sorry, I can't help you Mr. Dard. I don't know anything about Tiktok.

MR. DARD

(extremely dejected)
That's alright. I was just really hoping to go viral with this one. The kids would think I was lit.

Mr. Dard walks away disappointed. Brandon takes in a big breath and sighs.

EXT.-CANARSIE PERFORMANCE ARTS HIGH SCHOOL-AFTERNON- SAME DAY

Stephen exits the FRONT of the SCHOOL. Brandon comes out behind him, trying to catch up.

BRANDON

Hey, Stephen!

Stephen looks back as he HEARS his NAME.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
Hey man. Listen, I just wanted to say sorry if I insulted you earlier.

STEPHEN
(confused)
Insulted me how?

BRANDON
When we were talking about the school and how--.

STEPHEN
(interrupting)
Oh, cause you mean I went here when it was Shore South and you said this place was shitty?

BRANDON
To be fair, I never actually said it was shitty--I sort of, indirectly said it. What I'm trying to say is 'sorry' if I came off like an asshole.

STEPHEN
You weren't an asshole man. Just being honest.

BRANDON
Still. Ya know, sorry.

STEPHEN
All good man.

Brandon feels the need to explain himself further.

BRANDON
It's just that--I feel really out of place right now.

STEPHEN
I understand man. It's culture shock. Canarsie's not an easy part of Brooklyn, and this school is nothing like it was when I was going here.

BRANDON
Yeah, it's just, I'm just not like that though.

(MORE)

BRANDON (CONT'D)

I'm not a judgmental kind of guy. I mean, I support BLM and enjoy taking public transportation.

A moment passes between the two men. Stephen pondering Brandon's honest and a little bit ignorant profession.

STEPHEN

It's really okay man. We're all judgmental sometimes.

BRANDON

I'm really not though. That's what I'm saying. I'm better than that.

A moment passes between Stephen and Brandon.

STEPHEN

Did I tell you at lunch how Canarsie changed so much?

BRANDON

No.

STEPHEN

Basically, black people moved in, and white people moved out.

Brandon stands on the STEPS of the SCHOOLS. Taking in the words Stephen just said, trying to figure out an appropriate response. He has nothing.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)

See you Monday, Brandon. Enjoy the weekend.

Brandon simply stands on the school steps and watches Stephen walk away. He can see a student in his peripherals. It's Kamiya. She is sitting on a SMALL LEDGE by the stairs.

KAMIYA

You're right, you know?

Brandon notices her.

BRANDON

Oh, hey Kamiya. Right about what?

KAMIYA

This school. It's ghetto.

BRANDON

Oh you heard that? Shit, sorry. I didn't mean--

KAMIYA

It's cool. I hear a lot of things teachers don't mean for me to hear. You looked stressed.

BRANDON

Yeah...just, uh, trying to--rough couple of days, that's all. New job stuff, ya know?

KAMIYA

Change is hard.

BRANDON

Facts. 'Facts' is still in, right? I used to say 'dead ass', but I think I kind of missed the boat on that one.

KAMIYA

I don't know what 'missed the boat means'. 'Facts' is still in. 'Dead ass' isn't really a thing anymore. Think you'll go through an emotional breakdown because of your job?

Brandon volleys her blunt, brutal honesty.

BRANDON

(in pure 'no bullshit'
Brandon fashion)

Probably at some point. I'm an arts person, so depression and anxiety are pretty much textbook to my personality.

KAMIYA

(surprised by Brandon's bluntness and honesty)
Wow, that was really, real.

BRANDON

Well, I'm not that great at bullshit.

Brandon looks towards the direction Stephen left.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

My greatest weakness and strength,
I'm afraid...

KAMIYA

Hey! Me too! I always say what's on my mind, and people hate it, but I'm like 'fuck you', I'm going to say this anyways.

(changing tones)

I get depressed and have anxiety too, ya know. Mostly because of my dad though.

BRANDON

Your dad have depression and anxiety?

KAMIYA

Not anymore-- He's dead.

Brandon does what he does. Stays engaged in uncomfortable situations.

BRANDON

That sucks. I'm sorry.

KAMIYA

Thanks.

A somber moment lingers between them. Silence.

BRANDON

I smoke weed.

KAMIYA

Yeah, I know.

Brandon was always the slightly weird theatre kid growing up, and he sees Kamiya is one too.

INT.-L TRAIN SUBWAY CAR-AFTERNOON

Stephen sits in his seat reading a book as he commutes home from work. The train stops and the door open. The SAME HOMELESS MAN from earlier steps on board.

HOMELESS MAN

Ladies and gentlemen. I'm sorry for the interruption. My name is Gary, and I am homeless--

EXT.-STEPHEN'S APARTMENT-OUTSIDE STOOP-EVENING

Stephen walks out of his apartment with a BAG OF GARBAGE. He LIFTS the LID of the GARBAGE CAN, and throws the bag inside.

CUT TO:

Stephen walks back into his apartment and returns with a few CANNED FOODS and BOXES OF FOOD. He sets it outside the SMALL GATE of his apartment on the SIDEWALK.

CUT TO:

INT.-STEPHEN'S APARTMENT-SAME EVENING

SXStephen is back inside his apartment. He TURNS on the TELEVISION, then heads over to his COUCH. As he crosses the LIVING ROOM, he pulls back his CURTAIN and looks out the WINDOW. He can see a SMALL OLD LADY with a CART stopped in front of his BUILDING, looking through the canned foods and boxes. Stephen watches her for a moment, then lets the CURTAIN go as it covers the window from what's outside.

CUT TO:

INT.-MANDY AND BRANDON'S APARTMENT-SAME EVENING

Brandon SITS at his COMPUTER DESK in the LIVING ROOM. He scrolls through his GOOGLE SEARCH. The words "Canarsie history", "African Americans", "Jamaicans", and "Haitians" are visible on the COMPUTER SCREEN.

Mandy sits on the couch, RUBBING HER PREGNANT BELLY LOVINGLY.

She looks over at Brandon at the COMPUTER DESK, thinking about how she has her husband and Melanie does not. She glances over at a PICTURE on the WALL. The glance turns into a DEEP STARE. It is the PICTURE OF HER AND HER FATHER. He is in POLICE UNIFORM.

CUT TO:

EXT.-BROWNSVILLE NEIGHBORHOOD-EVENING

Melanie and Kamiya are walking through their Brownsville neighborhood. Melanie is pushing little Harold in his STROLLER. In the STORAGE SPACE underneath the stroller is the reusable grocery bag Melanie had with her at the food pantry when she ran into Mandy. It is full of boxed and canned food.

The family stops at an APARTMENT. Melanie pulls the reusable bag out from underneath the stroller. Kamiya stays with Harold as Melanie walks up the STAIRS of the STOOP to the apartment door. She knocks on it. After a few moments, and ELDERLY WOMAN opens the apartment door and steps out onto the stoop with Melanie. Melanie speaks with the elderly woman for a bit, then HANDS her the reusable grocery bag full of food.

The elderly woman thanks Melanie and gives her a hug. Kamiya watches this moment unfold from the sidewalk as she stands by with Harold and the stroller.

The food Melanie had taken from the food pantry the day she saw Mandy was for the elderly woman. It is a routine task Melanie completes for her often.

Melanie, Kamiya, and Harold continue the short walk to THEIR BUILDING. Once they arrive, Kamiya helps her mother get Harold out of the stroller as Melanie collects her BAGS AND Harold's DIAPER BAG.

The family heads towards their WALK-IN UNIT in the building. As they approach their door, MS. DEB BEDFORD (the woman who was speaking to Melanie on the phone at the beginning of the script) opens the STOOP door above Melanie's apartment.

She waves to Melanie.

DEB

Hey Melanie. Hey Kamiya, and Harold, good Lord, you're getting big.

MELANIE

(politely chuckling)
Oh he's an eater, that's for sure.

DEB

Such a beautiful family. You're truly blessed.

Melanie looks at her kids and smiles.

DEB (CONT'D)

Oh Melanie, I was able to get some help on my rent this month, so I put a money order in an envelope and slipped it under your front door.

MELANIE

That's great. Thanks Deb. You sure you're going to be okay this month?

DEB
 (laughing)
 Who knows? Worry about today only
 and let Jesus take care of the
 rest, right?

MELANIE
 (reluctantly, as if
 reciting mantra)
 We do what we got to do.

Deb WAVES bye and goes back through the stoop entry way to
 her apartment.

KAMIYA
 So, are we going to be okay now,
 mom? Since Ms. Bedford paid us this
 month?

MELANIE
 For this month, at least. We still
 need someone to rent the top two
 units of our building though if we
 are going to stay afloat. Don't
 worry though baby. Something will
 come around.

KAMIYA
 How do you know?

MELANIE
 "I don't know. I just also don't
 know how to give up hope". That's
 what your daddy used to say to me
 when I was nervous first about
 buying this building--and he was
 right. Something always came
 through in tough times, so we have
 hope.

A NYC POLICE CAR rolls by, lights on, horn blaring, headed
 somewhere.

KAMIYA
 I miss dad.

MELANIE
 Me too my love. Me too.

KAMIYA
 I wish the police never went to
 that empty lot. Dad would still be
 alive.

Melanie hears her daughter, but doesn't respond.

MELANIE

Come on, let's get your brother
inside, so we can get you guys
something to eat for dinner.

INT.-MELANIE/KAMIYA'S APT.-SAME EVENING

Melanie, Kamiya and the baby, Harold, are all sitting around the DINNER TABLE eating. Melanie smiles at Kamiya as they each take a BITE from their DINNER. Harold makes some CUTE BABY NOISES which make Melanie and Kamiya laugh. As the laughter settles, Melanie looks at a PICTURE of her SLAIN HUSBAND on the LIVING ROOM MANTLE. She has a SOMBER MOMENT REMEMBERING HIM, then returns to her dinner with her kids.

THE END