

**ZEBRA COUPLE**

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INT. LOW-ECONOMIC APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Twenty-four-year-old starving artists KEISHA KING, black, and JOHN PFEIFFER, white, cuddle on the comforter of a double bed.

The bed sits on the floor of this sparsely and cheaply furnished room, which is lit by a bare overhead bulb.

KEISHA

What time's the wedding?

JOHN

Three o'clock. But there's a thing at my parents' house first.

KEISHA

I'll get a pattern and make a dress.

JOHN

I need dress shoes.

EXT. QUIET, LEAFY SUBURB - DAY

Wearing his new dress shoes and only suit, John walks to the bus stop, where he waits.

LATER

As the bus drives off, John walks Keisha through his childhood neighborhood.

KEISHA

When was the last time you visited?

JOHN

Couple of years. It's a whole different world here.

KEISHA

It's pretty.

LATER

Keisha and John turn onto a block of identical ranch houses.

In the front yard of the first house, LOUIE VALENTINO, 50, spots them and abruptly stops landscaping.

JOHN

(neighborly)

Hi, Louie!

Louie glares at them hatefully.

Taken aback, John continues walking Keisha up the block.

JOHN

I forgot what it's like here.  
It's good I met you at the bus  
stop.

(Keisha says nothing)

Don't worry, my parents are cool.

Midway up the block, John turns them onto the walkway leading his parents' front door.

EXT. POOR URBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Keisha and John emerge from a new health food store in her neighborhood, which is being gentrified.

They stroll arm in arm.

A TALL BLACK MAN leans his whole torso out the window of a fast-moving car.

TALL BLACK MAN

(rage)

BOY, GET OFF HER ARM!

The car disappears down the avenue. Keisha and John continue walking, though they've unconsciously separated, no longer arm in arm.

EXT. SUBURBAN STRIP MALL - DAY

Keisha and John hold hands as they window-shop. Clearly the only black person for miles, Keisha wears a beret.

Approaching them is a group of eight white TEENAGERS, three girls and five boys.

BOY 1

Since when do they allow niggers  
in these stores!?

One GIRL snatches Keisha's beret.

John steps toward the Girl, but the Teens are too many, and eager to beat down Keisha and John.

TEENS

Don't put that hat on, it's got  
nigger on it...Let's find a noose  
and a tree and string this nigger  
bitch up.....

(to Keisha)  
 ...Go back to fuckin' Zululand...  
 (to John)  
 ...Fuckin' race traitor!...

The Teens inch closer to Keisha and John.

They're about to pounce--John opens the door of the shoe store beside him, shoves Keisha inside, follows her.

The Teens press their faces against the store windows, snarling insults and threats at them.

Boy 2 starts to open the door, but stops when he sees the STORE MANAGER dialing 911.

BOY 1  
 (indicating John,  
 Keisha and Store  
 Manager)  
 We'll be back for all three of  
 you!

Having "defended" their neighborhood, the Teens proudly, confidently saunter away.

EXT. POOR URBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Keisha and John are back in her neighborhood. As they walk, she takes his arm.

A black HOMELESS MAN, gray-haired but formidable, walks in the opposite direction.

As he passes them, he bumps Keisha's shoulder hard.

John angrily turns to the Man. The Man's ready to go, fists up like a boxer, eyes narrowed with hate.

MAN  
 Go for it! GO FOR IT!

John glares at the Man. Keisha tries pulling him away.

MAN  
 (moving closer)  
*C'mon, boy! C'MON!*

Keisha finally manages to pull John away.

MAN  
 GET OUT THE MOTHERFUCKIN' HOOD,  
 WHITE BOY! AND STOP STEALING OUR  
 WOMEN!

Keisha checks that the Man's not following.

She and John walk on silently, her hand no longer on his arm.

LITTLE LATER

Keisha and John approach her tenement apartment building.

JOHN

It's bullshit! We can't even walk  
down the street without being  
fucked with.

KEISHA

If you can't handle it, maybe we  
shouldn't be together. You only  
make it worse by letting it get  
to you.

John's hurt by her suggestion they should no longer go out.

SLOW FADE OUT.

SLOW FADE IN:

EXT. QUIET, LEAFY SUBURB - PARK - DAY

John and his WHITE WIFE--both wearing wedding bands--talk and  
laugh with another WHITE COUPLE.

SUPER: A FEW YEARS LATER

John spots a middle-age Black Woman, a home health aide or  
cleaning woman, beelining to the bus stop. She stares straight  
ahead, not looking at anyone, not wanting trouble.

At the bus stop she removes a book from her bag, and begins  
reading it, locking her eyes on the page.

After watching her a while, John looks back at his White Wife  
and the other White Couple.

No longer participating in the conversation, he thinks back to  
his and Keisha's mutual decision to break up, rather than face  
the opposition from members of their respective "races."

Watching the Black Woman alone at the bus stop, afraid to make  
eye contact with anyone, he's filled with sadness and remorse.

EXT. URBAN PLAYGROUND - DAY

Keisha and her BLACK HUSBAND shoot the shit with another BLACK  
COUPLE.

Keisha spots a rare WHITE GUY passing through the neighborhood. The White Guy walks fast, looking straight ahead, not engaging anyone, lest he invite trouble.

Keisha looks back at her Black Husband and the other Black Couple.

But she's no longer part of the conversation.

Thinking back on John, and their mutual decision to end their relationship, she watches the White Guy disappear in the distance.

Her face shows regret and sadness at letting society dictate who she loved.

THE END