

A THOUSAND AND ONE

Written by

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New York, NY  
August 2020

FADE IN ON:

**INT. JAIL CELL, RIKER'S ISLAND, WOMENS' WARD - DAY**

**CHYRON - NEW YORK CITY, 1994**

The grace of a little sun pushes through a barred window. It illuminates four brick walls aging in yellow paint, a toilet, and broken locker with the little desk affixed.

A FEMALE INMATE is perched on one of two cots. She's black, evidently pregnant and so world-beaten that her thirty years of age could pass for forty-five. She closes her eyes. From the opposite cot, another BLACK FEMALE INMATE leans in. She finishes a touch of lipstick delicately, the way one glamorizes a little sister.

This is INES DE LA PAZ (22, Black). She's slim, light brown, and enterprising enough to maintain the arsenal of goods crowding the locker top. There's also a few posters and fashionable 'fits strung on a makeshift clothesline.

Ines doesn't recognize how jilted the woman is as she rises, turning to clear the adornments on her wall. But then she turns back, feeling the burn of wanting eyes.

INES

Go ahead, take it.

The older woman giggles as snatches the beauty supplies scattered on the cot, dashing out before a change of mind.

**INT. RIKER'S ISLAND, WOMENS' WARD - LATER**

Ines is back in her element, renewed in street clothes that pop. These pieces are humble, but boyishly on trend. She resigns herself to a bench while a MALE CORRECTIONAL OFFICER finishes processing.

Sensing eyes on him, he glances up. Ines returns a devilish smile, as if the goal's to keep his gaze.

CORRECTIONAL OFFICER

(not falling, finishing)

You're free to go.

He hands over some scant belongings, including a winter coat.

CORRECTIONAL OFFICER (CONT'D)

Every time I see you, you look different.

INES  
Only on the outside.

**EXT. COMMERCIAL STREET, MIDTOWN MANHATTAN - LATER**

Ines sprawls the winter coat in her clutches as TWO STREET KIDS weigh the out-of-season bargain. A sea of socio-economically diverse FOOT TRAFFIC surrounds them.

INES  
Right now, \$50.

STREET KID #1  
Where we goin' with that?

INES (CONT'D)  
What you gonna do this winter?

STREET KID #2  
Let me see the label first -

INES (CONT'D)  
What you gonna do this winter, lay on your t-shirt?

CLOSE UP on the palm of her hand as street kid #1 slides over some cash and subway coins.

STREET KID #1 (O.S.)  
That's all I got.

INES (O.S.)  
(returning quarters,  
dimes)  
Just give me the tokens -

**EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET, BEDFORD STUYVESANT - LATER**

Ines is a force, rapturous and unfazed by the summertime stick as she jaywalks across the street. A few aggravated beeps. She sashays between cars like they don't exist.

In the backdrop behind her, LOCAL BUSINESSES ONE OR TWO GENERATIONS OLD. They're not thriving but still standing.

**EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD PARK, BEDFORD STUYVESANT - MOMENTS LATER**

From outside the bordering gate, Ines approaches A GROUP OF CHILDREN-AT-PLAY (ages six to nine). One DAINTY LITTLE GIRL grabs her attention, braids and beads swinging side-to-side.

INES  
Mama!

DAINTY LITTLE GIRL  
Huh?

INES  
A little boy named Terry out here?  
The little girl shakes her head.

**EXT. BASKETBALL COURTS - LATER**

Ines halts FOUR MALE YOUTHS engrossed in a half court game.

BOY 1  
He ya man?

INES  
He's six.

BOY 2  
(heading back to the  
court)  
She mean one of Janie's kids.

BOY 1  
Oh, they not over here.

INES BOY 2  
You see him outside? Nahhh...

BOY 3  
Check on Trinity -

**EXT. WOMENS' SHELTER, TRINITY AVE - LATER**

Idle chitchat with LOITERING RESIDENTS - a few old friends - keeps Ines busy. However, she's distracted by every car, NEIGHBORHOOD ADOLESCENT, and ADULTS that travels by.

She plops down on a hydrant in defeat. Growing limp, she pulls out a Newport cigarette. Her ears perk up when THREE TINY BOYS start yapping near the corner.

**EXT. BODEGA WALL, THE CORNER OF TRINITY AVE - MOMENTS LATER**

Ines creeps over, staring down at one child in particular. He's centered between two other boys, MICHAEL H. (7) and SHAWN (8) eating Marinos and jumbo icees. She smiles, almost too shy now to speak.

INES  
Little bit.  
(then)  
You don't hear me calling you?

MICHAEL H.

Yeah.

INES

It's him I'm talking to... Remember  
who I am?

TERRY (6), the tiny brown child she's been looking for,  
barely looks up, nodding dismissively.

INES (CONT'D)

Let me see your eyes.

He shrinks further into the bodega wall.

SHAWN

He not gon' answer, Miss.

INES

(relenting)

What's your name?

SHAWN

Shawn.

INES

And you?

MICHAEL H.

My name Michael "H" - there's two  
of us...

She peers back at Terry, who eases with the heat off him.

INES

Let's keep this between us,  
a'right?

INES (CONT'D)

Don't tell anybody I came by.

SHAWN & MICHAEL H.

(uncaring)

Okay.

She hands Shawn and Michael a little change for the store.

MICHAEL H.

You're pretty.

INES

I'm gonna be around more often.  
Hear that, T? I just wanna see how  
you doin'.

Terry's eyes glaze over.

INES (CONT'D)  
I'll see y'all around.

SHAWN  
Bye!

Terry's the first to run off. The other two follow behind.

**EXT. PARK - DAY**

Terry's getting on the monkey bars when he spots her. Ines on a bench, prioritizing hip hop magazine THE SOURCE over periodicals. Ines waves... he doesn't.

INES  
Hey!

From Terry's direction, we hear a scuffle --

He's fallen to the ground, still kicking defensively at Michael. His foster mother MS. JANIE (late 40s) intercedes, yanking Terry up.

MS. JANIE (O.S.)  
Aye, none of that!

Ines resists the reflex to step in...

FOSTER SISTER  
They pulled him down!

MS. JANIE (CONT'D)  
Okay, let's go. Everybody!

MS. JANIE (CONT'D)  
(over fuss and moaning)  
If y'all don't know how to act, you  
can stay inside!

The fussy group grabs their belongings. Ines does too.

**EXT. FOSTER HOME - LATER**

Ines settles at a bus stop across the street observing the children file into the house. As if he feels her presence, Terry sneaks a glance Ines' way. He's then yoked inside.

**EXT. SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - DAY**

A yard full of CHILDREN engaged in recess. Spotting TWO TEACHERS in the yard, Ines is less brazen in her attempt to get the attention of Terry's foster brother, Shawn.

INES  
(low, waving)  
Shawn!

SHAWN  
Huh? Oh, hi.

INES  
Where ya friend at?

SHAWN  
He not starting school.

INES  
Why?

SHAWN  
I'm not telling you!

INES  
Wow, it's like that now?

SHAWN  
What you gon' give me if I do?

Shawn looks over at the pack of SOUR POWER STRAWS sticking out of the brown paper bag in Ines' hand.

INES	SHAWN (CONT'D)
(cross)	That one.
Here.	

SHAWN (CONT'D)  
He in the hospital.

INES  
Why?

SHAWN  
Running from Ms. Janie like a dummy.

Ines sees the two teachers looking her way suspiciously.

INES  
(to the teachers)  
I'm going!

SHAWN  
(munching)  
He fell out the window and hit his head -

INT. RECEPTION AREA, SHITTY HOSPITAL - NIGHT

A FEMALE RECEPTIONIST BANGS the phone receiver down. Ines arrives to the desk ready to charm, a cute Teddy in hand.

RECEPTIONIST  
(unenthused)  
Can I help you?

INES  
I believe my son is here.

Other lines ring away, unanswered. The desk is swarmed in paperwork. The waiting room itself is filled with VISITORS, eager to be assisted by understaffed personnel.

RECEPTIONIST  
(searching)  
What's his name?

INES  
Terry.

RECEPTIONIST  
Last name?

Down the hall, Ines spots Ms. Janie surrounded by a FEMALE CASE WORKER, DOCTOR and TWO POLICE OFFICERS.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)  
Sweetheart.

INES  
I'm sorry, what'd you ask?

RECEPTIONIST  
We have a Terrance Wallace here. Is that who you're looking for?

INES  
Yes.

RECEPTIONIST  
Do me a favor and fill this out?

She picks up the sign-in sheet, handing it over to Ines.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)  
I need your driver's license or another form of ID. You said you were who again, his sister?



INES  
 (lying)  
 Damn, I left my wallet at home.  
 Can I come back?

RECEPTIONIST  
 Visiting hours end at ten.

**INT. SHITTY HOSPITAL HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER**

INES POV on the officials still in conversation with Janie.  
 She's settled in a chair beside SHEILA (85) who's snoring her  
 life away. She casually removes the woman's visitor's tag.

**INT. TERRY'S HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER**

Donning Sheila's tag, Ines makes herself at home in the chair  
 across from Terry's bed.

INES  
 You want one?

She sticks out a pack of NOW-OR-LATERS. Terry turns it down.  
 She takes one for herself.

INES (CONT'D)  
 Heard you fell. Let me see?

Terry pokes out his scabbing lip.

INES (CONT'D) TERRY  
 It hurt? Uh uh --

INES (CONT'D)  
 You could've died doing something  
 like that...

Terry shrugs, fiddling with action-figures from the bucket of  
 hospital toys, ignoring a small Teddy bear next to him.

INES (CONT'D)  
 You look just like my sister.

TERRY  
 No, I don't -

INES  
 (cheesing)  
 What, you don't believe me?  
 (digging into purse)  
 See look.

Ines retrieves some photos in her purse, placing them in his eye line. On top of the pile, the image of a HANDSOME BLACK MAN (20s) with a scribble "LUCK '92" in the corner. She peels it back, revealing a shot of TWO LITTLE BLACK GIRLS (6,8) with an ELDERLY COUPLE. Renee's hair is in it's natural state, a trendy style fit for 70s-era little black girls.

INES (CONT'D)  
That's me and René.

TERRY  
Why her hair look like that?

INES  
It was fly back then.

TERRY  
Where she at now?

INES  
I don't know. Can't find her.  
(then)  
But I found you!

A moment. She looks down at the neglected Teddy bear.

INES (CONT'D)  
What's wrong with the one I gave you?

TERRY  
It's corny.

INES  
(snatching the Teddy up)  
Well buy ya own damn toys then.  
(then)  
What you like?

TERRY  
Power Rangers.

INES  
Tell me more about your foster mother. You like her?

Terry's shrug is ambivalent.

INES (CONT'D)  
Pro'ly gone now anyway.

She leans into the bed. Terry squints at the pain of his injury, but keeps playing.

INES (CONT'D)  
They tell you anything about me?

TERRY  
That you left me on a corner.

INES  
...Why would they tell you that?  
Why the fuck would they go and tell  
you some shit like that?

A FEMALE NURSE steps in, but stops short when she sees Ines.

NURSE  
I'm sorry, I just need to check his  
temperature.

INES  
(to Terry)  
Get that outcha head.

NURSE  
(harmless, tending to  
Terry)  
I thought visiting hours ended  
early today.

INES  
Don't worry, I'll be gone soon.

**EXT. G'S UNIQUE BEAUTY SALON, BEDFORD STUYVESANT - DAY**

GLAMOROUS BLACK WOMEN, depicted in the awning, gaze down at GEE (late 30s) like guardian hood-angels. The plump salon owner, doesn't hide his disdain when Ines arrives.

GEE  
Ain't no damn way you coming back  
up in here.

INES  
(stepping forward)  
Why not?

GEE  
- Back up! I was wondering why the  
hell you disappeared... Sheet as  
long the sidewalk.

INES  
(nonchalant)  
...What that gotta do with hair?

He unlocks the gate, pulls it up.

GEE  
I'm gonna call the cops.

INES  
I want my last two weeks.

Gee moseys in, returning with folded bills she snatches.

INES (CONT'D)  
(counting)  
- It's short five.

GEE  
(pulling out more cash)  
It's a shame, but I'm glad this is  
nothing to you.

INES  
Imma keep doing what I been doing.

GEE  
Oh yeah, and what's that?

INES  
(finishing)  
Me.

**INT. EMERGENCY CARE, HOSPITAL - DAY**

Ines sits up on a hospital bed, sizing up her NURSE.

NURSE  
(checking temperature)  
About how long did you say the  
pain's been going on?

INES  
All morning.

NURSE  
(side-eying)  
Well than it's probably just a  
stomach ache. Come back tomorrow if  
it doesn't go away.

**INT. HALLWAY, CHILDREN'S WARD - LATER**

Ines sneaks through the quiet hallway, stopping when she  
lands outside of Terry's room.

**INT. TERRY'S HOSPITAL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER**

Ines sneaks a Blue Power Ranger toy between the sheets. His chest continues to rise and fall without a stir.

**INT. TERRY'S HOSPITAL HALLWAY - LATER**

Ines, on a bench at the opposite end of the hall, observes Terry's examination by a DOCTOR.

When he sees her, she waves.

Terry allows the doctor to check his ears with an otoscope. And then... discreetly... he wiggles a few fingers back.

Ines smiles.

**INT. TERRY'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY**

Terry is back in his street clothes watching cartoons next to half eaten breakfast. He's rocking less bandages now.

A few rhythmic knocks. Ines is at the door with a Red Power Ranger toy in hand.

INES  
Look what I got.

**INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - LATER**

Terry and Ines on a corridor bench. He knocks his action figure into hers, knocking it down to the floor.

INES  
Wow, really?  
(picking up the toy)  
Who's this one again, Tommy?

TERRY  
(nods)  
We going again.

INES  
In a sec. Wanna split this?

TERRY  
Yeah.

Ines shares some of her Kit Kat with him. He takes a few bites then goes back to the toys. Ines observes preoccupied doctors and nurses scurry by.

**EXT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS**

Ines holds hands with Terry, strolling.

INES

T, um... I think they gon' move you again. In case you don't see me for awhile, I wanted to come say bye.

TERRY

...To where?

INES

Your case worker won't tell me. But I'll see you soon, okay? I'll find you. However many times you move... I'll be right behind.

TERRY

Why can't I go with you?

INES

It's not that simple.

They reach the doorway to his room.

INES (CONT'D)

(releasing his hand)

I'll see you soon, a'right? Chin up.

He leans his wait against the wall, struggling to hold on to whatever he's bottling up.

TERRY

...Why you keep leaving me?

INES

You think this don't bother me too?!

Seeing the doubt on his face, Ines gets down on a knee, eye to eye with him. Terry allows her to embrace him.

INES (CONT'D)

It's not me, I promise. These people don't a give a fuck without a check.

She studies the foot traffic in corridor. Then, she spots it - the EMERGENCY EXIT a few yards the opposite way.

INES (CONT'D)

What time ya case worker get here?

TERRY  
I don't know.

INES  
Would it make you feel better if  
you came to stay with me, just for  
a few days?

Terry nods yes.

INES (CONT'D)  
...No harm in that.

**EXT. STREET CURB - LATER**

Terry's eyes travel among the PEDESTRIANS moving about, then  
up Ines. She's paralyzed in fear.

FEMALE PEDESTRIAN  
(to Terry)  
Hey, don't you leave that there!

He flinches as Ines spots the discarded juice box.

INES  
He'll do whatever the fuck he  
wants!

FEMALE PEDESTRIAN  
It's exactly why this city's going down -

INES (CONT'D)  
So what -

INES (CONT'D)  
He's bringing up the economy,  
bitch! How many jobs you create  
today?

The lady keeps it moving. Ines kneels down to Terry who's  
visibly shaken.

INES (CONT'D)  
(tossing trash)  
Don't let nobody push you around  
like that again. Hear me?

TERRY  
Yes.

Terry forces a brave face as Ines drapes him in her  
windbreaker, adjusting it to look less silly. TERRY'S POV as  
**Ines reveals a reassuring, magical, smile.**

She yanks Terry's hand, weaving between paused traffic until they reach a BLACK GYPSY CAB.

**INT. BLACK GYPSY CAB - CONTINUOUS**

She ushers Terry in.

INES  
(slams the door)  
Go.

The CABBIE (40s) peeks over his shoulder.

CABBIE  
Go where?

INES  
LES, please.

**HORN!**

CABBIE  
(to SQUEEGEE MAN)  
Get the fuck outta here!  
(back to Ines)  
I'm not going to Manhattan -

INES  
- We're already in here!

Terry grips the seat as the car jolts a few feet forward.

INES (CONT'D)	CABBIE
They're chasing us!	Who's chasin? I don't want any trouble -

INES (CONT'D)  
(over him)  
I don't know, just go! Go! Go!

The Cabbie presses the gas. The SQUEEGEE MAN backs off.

CABBIE  
The bridge is closed.

INES  
- That's fine, take tunnel.

He complains under his breath, turning the radio up as Ines rummages through her bag for loose cash. She sneaks a look at Terry who's slumped against his window.



INES (CONT'D)  
You sad to leave Brooklyn?

Terry nods, no... Collecting enough to cover the fare, Ines exhales and rolls her window down.

LATER:

Then Terry sees them for the first time... the skyscrapers that define the city's center. He listens to the SOUNDS OF MANHATTAN; **the boisterous noise has its own melody.**

Street scenes passing Ines' window BLEND TOGETHER IN A DASH OF COLORS, as if moving at the speed of a subway car.

TERRY  
They touch the clouds?

Ines leans over to see his view.

INES  
Almost.

TERRY  
Can we see all of it?

INES  
All of what, the city?

Terry nods again, yes.

INES (CONT'D)  
Maybe one day, we can try.

**INT. EVERYBODYHOUSE, LOWER EAST SIDE - LATER**

Ines storms inside, but Terry's slow to follow. TERRY'S POV scanning his mother's home for the first time - a lived in, but dilapidated building.

**INT. EVERYBODYHOUSE, LOWER EAST SIDE - LATER**

Terry appreciates the effortless **CADENCE** flowing through Ines' movements about the kitchen.

TERRY  
This is all of it?

INES  
All of what?

TERRY  
Where you live.

INES  
Got somewhere better in mind?

She passes the small television perched on top of the fridge.  
ON THE SCREEN, we see a news story begins with an overhead,  
pixelated, SECURITY CAMERA SHOT of Terry and Ines shuffling  
down the hospital hall and through the emergency exit.

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)  
A six-year old boy snatched...  
Brookdale, one of the city's most  
troubled and underfunded hospitals,  
reports that the child was spending  
his last morning in patient care.

A horribly inaccurate, unflattering sketch of Ines.

INES  
(vainly dismayed)  
Uh uh!

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)  
Authorities are still working  
to identify the young woman  
who was likely an estranged  
family member...

A dark, ultra-blurry photo of Terry amongst other kids at a  
party flashes on screen. You can barely tell it's him.

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)  
NYPD is asking anyone with  
information to please call Crime  
Stoppers at 800-577...

INES  
You mind staying a bit longer?

TERRY  
Uh-Uh.

INES  
...Good.

Ines turns the volume down as the NEWS ANCHOR appears on  
screen, beginning another segment.

INES (CONT'D)  
What you wanna eat, boo?

TERRY  
Cap'n Crunch.

INES

I don't have Captain Crunch. How  
'bout cinnamon waffles?

Terry's still glued to the muted TV screen. Ines brashly  
switches it off, pulling a box of waffles out the freezer.

TERRY

We gonna get in trouble?

INES

When I was your age, I ran away all  
the time. All they do is check the  
neighborhood, subways and  
schools... Not one foot is coming  
over that bridge.

She slides two sets of waffles into the toaster. She settles  
next to him while it cooks.

INES (CONT'D)

You hear?

TERRY

Mhm.

SOUND: Heavy feet speeding down the staircase.

In pops RUDY (30), a local jack-of-all-seedy-trades who owns  
the place. He halts in his tracks, startled to see the kid.

INES

Hey Rudy.

RUDY

Who's this?

INES

My baby.

He nods, not fully at ease, but moving on the fridge. *TING!*  
from the toaster. Ines gets up again. She lays the plated  
cinnamon waffles out on the table, then pulling a carton of  
Cookies 'n Cream from the freezer.

INES (CONT'D)

You want ice cream with yours?

TERRY

Yeah -

**EXT. LIVING ROOM, EVERYBODYHOUSE - LATER**

THREE TEEN STREET KIDS, presumably homeless, skate and horse play between the sidewalk and curb. They ignore an ADDICT (20s) sprawled out on the stoop, leaning.

**INT. LIVING ROOM, EVERYBODYHOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

Rudy **leans** his weight against a chair, half looking out front, half keeping eyes on Terry and Ines. Ines sits on top of an old cabinet across from him, smoking.

Terry's curled up on the couch. **He follows Rudy's cadence as he eases back up**, locking troubled eyes with the child.

RUDY  
(to Ines)  
How you figure the cops not on you?

Ines taps ash into a tray. Terry marvels at DAVITA (29, Transgender) strutting in.

INES  
They don't know where I live.

RUDY  
(thinks)  
...You're never gonna make it.

DAVITA	INES
Now why would you go and say	Why would you say that?
something like that -	

RUDY  
- Look at me, look how much of a  
fuck I give.

Blank face.

RUDY (CONT'D)  
Vita, you not from here, stay out  
of it -

INES  
I need any advice from petty drug  
lords I'll let you know -

RUDY  
LES is dead. Whole city's 'bout to  
be dead. They even cleanin' up  
42nd.

DAVITA  
(sensing Ines' concern)  
Baby, I'm fine. You know Disney's  
just dying to have me in one of  
their little shows...

INES  
It's always changing...

Passing Davita, Rudy casually kisses her. Terry's back  
stiffens at the sight. Meanwhile, the front flies open as two  
of the street kids dash for the stairs.

RUDY  
(whistles)  
Aye! Keep it outside -

STREET KID #2  
(halting, CHASE continues)  
Chase needs his headphones.

INES  
(to Terry)  
You okay, Little bit?

TERRY  
(shrinking)  
Yes.

DAVITA  
Shit like a grown man as small as  
you are. Ines, what you feed him?

INES  
Just breakfast.

Davita raises a brow.

RUDY  
(taps the glass)  
Tell him to take it over there!

STREET KID #1  
(muffled through glass)  
He's not moving!

RUDY  
What you mean he's not mov -

Rudy bolts to the front door, leaning out just enough kick  
the man. He's gone limp.

RUDY (CONT'D)  
Fuck!

DAVITA  
What happened?

RUDY (CONT'D)  
(to street kids)  
Give him the fuck outta here!

RUDY (CONT'D)  
I got a dead man on my stoop and  
Etan Patz over here -

INES  
A'right, that's enough!

Davita sucks her teeth leaving the room.

STREET KID #2  
What we supposed to do?

RUDY  
Dump him around the corner, I don't  
give a fuck. Last thing I need's  
the fucking cops showin' up.

The teens do their best to pick up the body. Rudy lets the  
screen slam behind him, sitting back down but unable to keep  
still as he rubs his eyes.

RUDY (CONT'D)  
(to Ines)  
I don't know if I can deal with  
this.

INES  
You can.

RUDY  
No, no, this is too hot. This too  
hot, for me.

INES  
...We'll buy some more fans -

RUDY  
- You know what the fuck I mean.

DAVITA  
(returns, to Terry)  
Take some of this.

TERRY  
(hesitant, low)  
Thank you.

With Davita's help, Terry ingests Tylenol with water.

DAVITA  
Little baby had a tummy ache.

INES  
(to Terry)  
...Why ain't you speak up?

DAVITA  
Shy... Ha! Look at that.

Everyone's attention diverts to the middle of the street. The addict shakes himself away from the young men's clutches, walking away as if nothing ever happened.

**EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET, LOWER EAST SIDE - DAY**

Ines and Terry stroll towards Rudy's with bodega goods in hand. He's masked by a cheap firefighter hat and toy sunglasses. He pulls the eyewear down some, examining the diverse blend of neighbors sprinkle the sidewalk - immigrant, hipster and a few yuppie-types.

INES  
(snatching snack)  
Gimme that.

She hands him a bottle of orange juice.

TERRY  
Who lived there before y'all?

INES  
(shrugs)  
Bunch of hippies.

TERRY  
And before them?

INES  
(playful)  
Probably some immigrants. Before that... an aristocrat...

TERRY  
Rudy and Davita's two niggas?

INES  
Where do you get off cursin'?

TERRY  
You curse -

INES  
So what if they are? It's enough  
room here for everybody.

Terry takes this in.

**EXT. EVERYBODYHOUSE, LOWER EAST SIDE - LATER**

Ines pulls the door but it's locked. She hits the buzzer about dozen times in a row. Three stories above, the street kid CHASE pops his head out the window.

CHASE  
(yelling)  
Rudy said don't let you in.

INES  
When he said that?

CHASE  
Just now before he left.

INES  
(yelling)  
Unlock the door.

He disappears.

INES (CONT'D)  
I'm not playing you piece of shit!  
(banging the screen door)  
I can do this all day!

TERRY	INES (CONT'D)
I'm hot...	Davita, you in there?!

Terry listens to her bang on the door again. He perches on the steps, closing his eyes. She's still banging as Rudy's head pops out.

RUDY  
Vita's not here.  
(to Terry)  
Anybody ever say ya mother's a  
dangerous woman?

INES  
Come downstairs so he can hear that  
better -

RUDY  
I'm not playin' ya little games.



INES RUDY (CONT'D)  
I should call the cops and - AYE!  
report a few faggots --

INES (CONT'D)  
- squatting on Delancey! We hustled  
together but now they acting  
shiesty!

Rudy retrieves a garbage bag from Chase, then letting it  
plummet down to the sidewalk.

RUDY  
Go to a shelter.

Ines, momentarily stunned, watches him disappear for good.

INES  
All the times that I had your back?

Terry's sweaty, sleepy head droops from the fist it leans on.  
Relenting, Ines nudges him before heatstroke sets in.

INES (CONT'D)  
(unbothered, leaving)  
Whatever, let's go.

**EXT. COMMERCIAL STREET, LOWER EAST SIDE - LATER**

Ines purchases a gang of papers from a STREET VENDOR.

**INT. \$1 PIZZA SHOP - LATER**

INES  
Look how big this man's head is.

Terry, seated across from her, peeps a front cover image of  
Mayor Giuliani.

INES (CONT'D)  
(flipping)  
He wants to turn New York into the  
suburbs. Good luck with that.

He has no idea what the fuck she's talking about. Pouted chin  
over crossed arms, Terry watches Ines checks news stories  
inside each paper, one by one. No mention of them. She sneaks  
a quick glance across the restaurant.

INES (CONT'D)  
That couple over there's on a first  
date. Won't last for long though.

TERRY  
How you know?

INES  
He doesn't like her. I can tell  
from his eyes.

Terry observes THE SEEDY MAN'S fast talk and consistent  
glances towards HIS LADY FRIEND'S purse.

INES (CONT'D)  
How's the pizza?

TERRY  
Good.

She keeps flipping.

TERRY (CONT'D)  
Where's my dad at?

She looks up from the page.

INES  
He's gone. But you wouldn't nuh  
liked him anyway. I have someone  
else in mind.

She flips another page.

INES (CONT'D)  
You miss your old friends?

TERRY  
They not my friends.

INES  
Yeah, I'm starting to feel like I  
don't have any friends either.  
Except you.

**EXT. PAYPHONE BOOTH, LES STREET CORNER - LATER**

Ines towers over Terry, covering his little body from being  
seen while he huddles into the booth. Leaning in to make a  
call, she keeps an eye on their surroundings.

TERRY  
How much longer?

Ines keeps her head to the receiver.

TERRY (CONT'D)  
How much longer?

Still no response from Ines.

TERRY (CONT'D)  
How much -

INES  
Give me a minute!

She slams the phone down, pulling out another quarter.

TERRY  
(after barely a minute)  
We gon' sleep out here?

His mother's eyes shift down, piercing into him.

INES  
You want to?

TERRY  
No -

INES  
- So shut the fuck up and let me  
finish!

Terry's face crumples.

INES (CONT'D)  
(pulling him out)  
You wanna cry? Fine, go back to  
Brooklyn.

Terry drags his feet.

INES (CONT'D)  
I'll call ya social workers right  
now! Since everyone else knows  
better -

TERRY  
(whimpering)  
I don't want to!

INES  
So what do you want to do, cause  
I'm tired of this!

TERRY  
I wanna stay with you!

Ines thinks for a moment to herself.

INES  
Listen, I'm sorry I cursed -  
(grabbing his jaw)  
Look at me! I'm sorry.

He nods forgivingly.

INES (CONT'D)  
You wanna find a new home?

TERRY  
Yes...

INES  
I'll go to war for you, understand  
that? Against anybody, but I need  
to know we're in this thing  
together. Tell me!

TERRY  
(mumbly)  
We're in this together...

Ines rises, referencing her old beeper to find a new number.

TERRY (CONT'D)  
What's "war"?

INES  
(dialing)  
Something you do to protect the  
ones you love.

**EXT. LES STREET CORNER - LATER THAT NIGHT**

Terry's leaning on the bag as a DOUBLE HONK wakes him up.  
KIMBERLY JONES (22, Black) rolls her car window down.

KIM  
(yelling)  
You better hop in, cause I'm not  
stopping!

Ines gets up, ushering a drowsy Terry to do the same. Kim  
slows the vehicle down some, but it's still in motion as they  
chase from the curb.

INES  
Bitch, stop the car! You see me  
with this bag!

KIM  
(yelling)  
Not around here, hell the fuck no!

Ines yanks the back passenger door open as her friend finally rests the engine.

KIM (CONT'D)  
I'on understand why you couldn't  
hop on the train... Oh, who's  
this?!

INES  
My son, Terry.

KIM  
You have a son now? Wow, he's big!

INES  
Terry, this is Kim.

Kim flirts with a finger wave.

KIM  
Cute lil' thing.

**EXT. JONES HOUSE, HARLEM - LATER**

A predominantly black neighborhood, made apparent by the SPRINKLES OF LITTER AND PEOPLE outside. Ines slams the car door behind her, opening the back for Terry. Kim wastes no time racing up the steps.

**INT. KITCHEN, JONES HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT**

Kim steps into the kitchen as her mother, MS. JONES (late 40s, Black), stirs a late night cup of tea. This is an educated, poised woman.

MS. JONES  
Is that Ghetto Ines in my living  
room?

KIM  
She needs a place to stay.

MS. JONES  
When you start hangin' with her  
again?

KIM

(low)

Shh! She's with her son. Please,  
don't say anything.

MS. JONES

For how long?

KIM

I don't know, a couple of weeks?

Ms. Jones laughs in disbelief.

KIM (CONT'D)

Wanna come say hi?

MS. JONES

(leaving)

I'm tired. We'll deal with this  
tomorrow.

**INT. LIVING ROOM, JONES HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER**

Ines and Terry are patiently seated as Kim returns with  
pillows and sheets for the sofa.

KIM

He can sleep in my room.

**INT. KITCHEN, JONES HOUSE - MORNING**

Sifting through mail, Ms. Jones watches NY1's "NY MINUTE"  
REPORT on her countertop TV. The REPORTER discusses economic  
recovery and a failed follow up to the 1993 WTC BOMBING.

She peers over at Terry in the opposite room.

**INT. LIVING ROOM, JONES HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

Terry sulks on the couch watching cartoons.

KIM (O.S.)

You get your GED?

**INT. KIM'S BEDROOM, JONES HOUSE - SAME TIME**

Kim and Ines, still in sleepwear. She's already found her way  
through Kim's hair products - finishing a new look.

INES  
(nods)  
Inside.

KIM  
Really, that's fly!

INES  
You get hype over the weirdest  
things -

KIM  
- So what's your plan, you up here  
for good?

INES  
(shrugs)  
I'm over these catty ass shops.

KIM  
Start your own -

INES  
With who's money? What am I suppose  
to do to right now? Me and my son  
need something to eat right now.

KIM  
(silence, then)  
I've been meaning to ask you about  
Terry. You have him with...

Ines nods.

KIM (CONT'D)  
He still locked up?

INES  
'bout a year left, I think.

KIM  
Then who's his...

Ines looks away.

INES  
The city had him. He's not supposed  
be with me.

KIM  
Can't you get locked up for  
something like that?

INES  
Not if you keep it to yourself.

KIM  
...It's safe with me.

**INT. KITCHEN, JONES HOUSE - LATER THAT MORNING**

Ines, refreshed in street clothes after days of distress. She's sprawled her limbs along a chair closest to the fan. Kim holds Terry on her knee, overlooking a coloring book.

KIM  
Look at the cute little elephants.

TERRY  
They look dumb.

KIM  
No they don't, stop -

Ms. Jones, over the stove sizzling breakfast, watches Ines.

MS. JONES  
Are you working?

INES  
I'm going job huntin' today.

MS. JONES  
What you plannin' to wear to interviews? You can't go into anybody's business lookin' and talkin' like that.

INES  
Why's that?

KIM  
She can borrow my stuff.

INES  
...Not 'white' enough for you?

Ms. Jones rolls her eyes. Ines takes this in.

MS. JONES  
(not hearing)  
All that yakkin' just makes me cringe.

Ines takes this in too.



MS. JONES (CONT'D)  
I tell my girls the same thing.

KIM  
(to Terry)  
Eat.

INES  
Never mind where you're from, as  
long as you don't remind anybody  
they left you there.

She storms off.

KIM  
Ines!

MS. JONES  
Now where is she going?

**INT. BODEGA SERVICE WINDOW, HARLEM - LATER**

Ines knocks the glass.

INES  
Let me get a Loosie and big burst.  
And nacho cheese sunflower seeds...

The BODEGA CLERK slides the cigarette through. Meanwhile,  
Ines eyes the small TV stationed behind the counter.

INES (CONT'D)  
They still talking about the kid  
snatched in Brooklyn?

BODEGA CLERK  
I dunno that story.

INES  
(thinks, then)  
Can you add a newspaper?

**EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET, HARLEM - MOMENTS LATER**

Ines' runs her fingers over the TOP NEW STORIES OF THE DAY.  
Terry's nowhere in the midst.

She scans the street of MOM-N-POP SHOPS from her post on the  
fire hydrant, mind traveling elsewhere.

INT. LIVING ROOM, JONES HOUSE - LATER

Kim surfs the dials of the TV.

KIM  
Okay, which show you like?

Terry's eyes float across the room, picking up the comforts of middle class furniture, artwork, family photographs...

MS. JONES  
(entering, over ringing  
phone)  
He still not talking?

KIM  
No.  
(picking up call)  
Jones' residence.

INTERCUT:

Ines flips to a flyer's backside, propping it up on her knee.

INES  
(into the phone)  
Don't let Terry out of your sight.

KIM  
What?

Ines doodles her face, along with the handwritten words "HAIR  
BY INES BEEPER # (212) 455..."

INES  
Keep him in the house.

KIM  
Ines, where are you?

INES  
Just do it, please?

KIM  
...Of course.

She bangs the phone.

MS. JONES  
She say where she was at?

KIM  
Uh uh. You like games, Terry?

Ms. Jones exhales, but turning to Terry she calms again.

MS. JONES

In this house we express ourselves.

He's tucked his face into the neck of his shirt. She gently pulls the collar down.

MS. JONES (CONT'D)

Who's hiding in there?

**EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET, HARLEM - DAY**

Ines moves into the road, rage channeled into astute focus. A car filled with TWO 30-SOMETHING YEAR OLD WOMEN rolls up.

INES

Excuse me!

She sticks a flyer into the window.

LADY IN CAR

You do extensions? I wanna take this french roll out and put some length in.

INES

I do everything. You come by my place or I'll go to yours.

LADY IN CAR

Okay -

INES

How much the Africans charge you?

LADY IN CAR

\$150 -

INES

I'll do it for \$75 -

LADY IN CAR

Okay, okay!

**INT. FRONT ENTRANCE, JONES HOUSE - LATER THAT EVENING**

Kim opens the front door for Ines.

INES

I bought him some clothes.

Kim sighs, letting her pass.

**INT. LIVING ROOM, JONES HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

Terry, on the ground surrounded by old board games, perks up at the sight of Ines. She drops shopping bags at his feet.

Kim glances at her mother. Ms. Jones glances at the clock.

INES  
(to Terry)  
See if those fit you.

Terry opens the sneaker box.

KIM  
You like 'em?

TERRY  
They too big.

INES  
You'll grow into them.

MS. JONES  
(to Terry)  
Why don't you take those upstairs.

He complies. Ines mouths "Thank You" to Kim. Kim blows an air kiss as she leaves for the kitchen. Ines waits for Ms. Jones to say something first. She doesn't.

INES  
Your day going well, Jonesy?

No response.

INES (CONT'D)  
I said how's your -

MS. JONES  
(flipping through mail)  
It's fine, Ines. Kim, check the  
stove for me please?

KIM (O.S.)  
Okay.

After a fit of silence.

INES  
You can at least act like you see  
me here -

INT. SECOND FLOOR LANDING, JONES HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Terry slumps against the wall, eavesdropping.

INT. LIVING ROOM, JONES HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

MS. JONES

Exactly what kind of response do  
you want? Strolling in here after  
hours of being God-knows-where -

INES

I checked in earlier -

MS. JONES (CONT'D)

- like some kind of street  
walker!

INES (CONT'D)

The fuck did you just call me?

KIM

(re-entering)

Oh shit -

INES

Run that to me one more time.  
Whatever you think of me just spit  
it out!

MS. JONES

(locking eyes,  
condescending)

I don't think anything of you...

Just as Ms. Jones turns away, Ines shoves her, causing the  
older woman to stumble, nearly tumbling to the floor.  
Regaining composure, she looks to Ines in bewilderment.

KIM

Ines, whassup with you?

KIM (CONT'D)

(reaching)

Ma -

MS. JONES

- Get off me, I'm good. You  
call that being a mother?

Ines retreats to the couch, curling into herself like a  
failure.

MS. JONES (CONT'D)

The hell are you teaching that  
little boy up there?

**EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET, HARLEM - DAY**

Ines and Kim are squared off outside of her car.

KIM  
So that's it, you got nothing to  
say?

INES  
I said I was sorry -

KIM  
- To me!

INES  
Was I wrong? Yes, what else you  
want me to say?

Kim rolls her eyes to keep cool.

KIM  
Can't keep fightin' everyone you  
disagree with. We gotta grow up!

INES  
She's never gonna like me  
regardless. That's why all she's  
ever done is attack my fucking  
spirit -

KIM  
- My mom's gonna be who she's gonna  
be. But like -

INES  
- But what?

KIM  
When are you going to realize that  
you're enough? Who cares what she  
says, why even let any of that get  
to you?

INES  
She called me a bad mother...

KIM  
(embracing her)  
Come 'ere.

Fragile in her friend's arms, Ines is less eager to let go.

KIM (CONT'D)  
She forgets you don't have one.

Kim bends down, knocking on the backseat window. INES POV through the glass, on Terry.

KIM (CONT'D)  
And you!  
(his face is stone)  
Get that chip off your shoulder. I  
know you hear me!

Kim opens the car door for him. Ines grabs their belongings from the trunk, observing the change in Terry's demeanor.

**EXT. STOREFRONT & RESIDENTIAL BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER**

A RESIDENT steps out just in time for Ines to catch the door. She waves bye to Kim, letting Terry step inside first.

**INT. LOBBY, STOREFRONT & RESIDENTIAL BUILDING - CONTINUOUS**

Terry heads for the stairwell.

INES  
T, come back. We're not going up.

Ines watches Kim drive off.

INES (CONT'D)  
(to Terry)  
Don't look at me like that.

She tries to touch his head affectionately, but he pulls away. A few tears have swollen into Terry's eyes.

INES (CONT'D)  
Why you being mean to me?

TERRY  
Cause you keep fucking up!

She pops him right on the mouth.

TERRY (CONT'D)  
Ow!

INES  
Stop thinkin' you can talk to me  
like that!

TERRY  
I liked them.

INES  
Some stuff's more important than  
coloring books.

Ines yanks a YELLOW BOOK out of the bag.

INES (CONT'D)  
Stay right here.

**EXT. PAYPHONE, COMMERCIAL STREET - MOMENTS LATER**

CLOSE UP on her barely still functioning Beeper.

Ines keeps hawk eyes on the building, dialing up someone.

**INT. LOBBY, STOREFRONT & RESIDENTIAL BUILDING - MEANWHILE**

Through the glass, Terry spots two BEAT COPS exiting a shop.

**EXT. STOREFRONT & RESIDENTIAL BUILDING - CONTINUOUS**

Terry creeps outside, leaning against the door front.

INES (O.S.)  
Pick up, pick up, pick up...

**EXT. COMMERCIAL STREET - CONTINUOUS**

Ines slams the phone down in defeat. She thinks hard. Opening the Yellow Pages, Ines runs her index finger down a list of traditional American last names. She stops at DIAZ, CYNTHIA.

INES  
(on the phone)  
Hi's this Cynthia?  
(then)  
It's your niece, Ines. My father  
never got a chance to reconnect but  
how are you, Mami?

She spots Terry, waving for him to go back inside.

INES (CONT'D)  
Good, listen I need a favor. The  
building I'm living in got  
asbestos. Yeah - they cleared  
everybody out, all the tenants.

Terry creeps down the sidewalk in the opposite direction.



INES (CONT'D)  
 (louder)  
 You gonna be home for little while?  
 (then, louder)  
 Huh? I can't hear you? Why don't I  
 just come by and we'll talk in  
 person. What's your address?  
 (muffling receiver)  
 Terry!  
 (back to the phone)  
 I'll be there in thirty minutes.

Ines snatches Terry up, just a few feet from the curb.

TERRY  
 Get off me!

INES (CONT'D)  
 Where were you going?!

INES (CONT'D)  
 All our STUFF was in there!

Terry doesn't respond, doesn't look at her at all. Then, Ines  
 peeps the unknowing officers for herself. They keep moving.

**INT. CYNTHIA'S APARTMENT, 112TH STREET BROWNSTONE - LATER**

CYNTHIA DIAZ (65, Dominican) lets them in. Telenovelas play  
 on the TV off-screen. Ines steps in with Terry sneaking a  
 look around.

INES  
 Hey Tia. It's just you?

CYNTHIA  
 (heavy accent)  
 You black?

INES  
 Yeah, and so are you...

Cynthia takes a good, better, look at Ines. Retreating to her  
 little table, but doesn't sit down.

CYNTHIA  
 ...You don't tell me you had a  
 baby.

INES  
 He's six.  
 (then)  
 It's nice to see you after all this  
 time. My bad for the short notice.

She nudges Terry towards the couch.

INES (CONT'D)  
We need a place to stay. Just a couple of nights.

CYNTHIA  
...I understand...

**INT. LIVING ROOM, CYNTHIA'S APARTMENT - DAY**

Terry's wrapped in his mother's arms, both fast asleep on the sofa. Cynthia appears from the hallway.

CYNTHIA  
(tapping Ines, waking her)  
Sweetheart, I need milk...

She rests a few dollar bills on the couch.

**INT. HALLWAY, PARLOR LEVEL, 112TH STREET BROWNSTONE - DAY**

Ines hits the bottom of the steps, opening the front door. MISS ANNIE (60s), the landlord and resident living on the building's lower levels is a few feet away in the next room.

MISS ANNIE (O.S.)  
Ah, ah, -

INES  
What?

**INT. LIVING ROOM, 112TH STREET BROWNSTONE - CONTINUOUS**

MISS ANNIE  
Sit your ass down. Right there.

Ines creeps in.

MISS ANNIE (CONT'D)  
You mind telling me what the hell's going on?

INES  
Nothing's going on -

MISS ANNIE  
- Lady in 4R says you tryna run game.

INES  
I'm her niece -

MISS ANNIE

- She don't know who the fuck you are! Poor thing too scared of gettin' stabbed or beat up.

(then)

If it wasn't for the little boy first thing I'd done is call the cops. But I'm gonna let you explain yourself, so talk.

INES

...we had nowhere else to go.

MISS ANNIE

How long you been on the street?

INES

Not long. A situation didn't work out.

MISS ANNIE

And common sense said to swindle some stranger... Where your people?

INES

Gone.

MISS ANNIE

Gone where?...You from up here?

Ines nods.

MISS ANNIE (CONT'D)

Go 'head speak up -

INES

- It got 'em.

INES (CONT'D)

Crack took my family, but I've happily moved on. Miss, I apologize for the trouble, but we'll leave.

Miss Annie goes perceptively quiet.

MISS ANNIE

...You and the rest of us.

(rising)

Pea!

Her grandson, PEA (6) scurries in. Ines remains frozen.

PEA

Yes?

MISS ANNIE

Clear your things out of Sadie's  
old room.

(to Ines)

I have a spare room in the back.  
Less awkward than staying upstairs.  
Rent goes to me. Try anything I  
keep a .44 ready -

**INT. LIVING ROOM, HAIR CUSTOMER'S APARTMENT - DAY**

CUSTOMER 1 models a fresh hairdo in the mirror.

CUSTOMER 1

(opening her purse)

You're really talented.

INES

(packing up)

It's nothing.

CUSTOMER 1

Does that mean I don't have to pay  
you then?

She hands Ines the cash anyway.

CUSTOMER 1 (CONT'D)

(still in mirror)

Well, I feel like something.

Ines places the cash, a small amount, into her pocket.

**INT. MISS ANNIE'S SPARE ROOM - DAY**

Ines blast tunes from the radio, playfully bopping as she  
pulls a fresh Tee over his head.

INES

What's wrong?

TERRY

Nothing. I like seeing you happy.

She smiles - *he's her friend again.*

TERRY (CONT'D)

Why Miss Annie always mad?

INES

Too many hairs creeping up to her  
chin.

**INT. LIVING ROOM, 112TH STREET BROWNSTONE - CONTINUOUS**

Annie fixes family photos along the wall. Pea babbles to Terry, explaining how to play the video game. Ines drops the envelope with rent on the table, but sticks around.

MISS ANNIE  
Leave it right there.

Annie wipes down an aged portrait of her DAUGHTER.

INES  
You ever see her?

MISS ANNIE  
Who, Keisha? She's cleaned up a few times.  
(glancing at Pea)  
That's a battle I can't fight.  
She'll come home for good when she's ready.  
(then)  
No one call you yet?

INES  
I found a job.

MISS ANNIE  
Oh yeah, where at?

INES  
Jamaica Hospital. A lab clerk.

MISS ANNIE  
In Queens?

Ines nods.

MISS ANNIE (CONT'D)  
That's what, two hours on the train? If you don't care... do what you have to do. Can't waste any time feeling sorry for yourself.

She hangs the frame with Keisha back up.

**EXT. 111TH ST. APARTMENT BUILDING, HARLEM - DAY****CHYRON - EIGHT MONTHS LATER**

Ines beams with glee as Kim moseys over to the entrance, Terry hoisted on her back. Kim drops the boy down to the sidewalk. Two moving boxes rest at his mother's feet.

KIM  
Aw, well look at you...

Ines opens the door, lavishing in the compliment.

KIM (CONT'D)  
Terry what books did we read today?

**INT. TERRY'S BEDROOM, INES' APARTMENT - LATER**

Terry hops around on his new bed.

KIM (O.S.)  
The dash is missing.

**INT. LIVING ROOM, INES' APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS**

Kim points to the tattered apartment number, swiping up a moving box that held the door open.

INES  
(unpacking)  
Huh?

Instead of 10-01 the sign reads 10 01 Ines waves it away.

KIM  
How much they charging?

INES  
Four-fifty a month.

KIM  
You did good, babe.

She joins Ines on the floor.

INES  
Let your mother tell it, I can't  
exist anywhere else, so.

Ines continues sorting.

KIM  
...Harlem still means a lot to a  
lot of people. You know that,  
right?

INES  
(dismissive)  
Pass me that?

Kim rolls her eyes, commencing an awkward silence.

INES (CONT'D)  
I stopped doing hair.

KIM  
Why?

INES  
I'm tired. And it's too much time  
away from Terry.

KIM  
He back in school yet?

INES  
(looking away)  
Up the street.

KIM  
I started applying too... I'm going  
to Clark Atlanta in the Fall.

INES  
You're leaving us?

KIM  
(taken aback)  
I wouldn't say it like that.

INES  
(after a beat)  
I'm happy for you.

KIM  
You can go back, too. Even if its  
part time or something like that.

INES  
Yeah, someday.

**INT. STOOP, INES' APARTMENT BUILDING - LATER**

Ines exhales the smoke from her cigarette. INES POV on the broken traffic light at the intersection. It's completely off at first, then **ticking rhythmically** back to yellow every time it should switch.

INES POV PAN to KIDS ON THE BLOCK playing near the curb. A MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN supervises from a nearby stoop.

NEIGHBORHOOD MAN  
(yelling from car)  
Make sure ya'll stay out the  
street.

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN  
I got 'em!

**INT. INES' BEDROOM - DAY**

Terry watches Ines transform once more. She's subduing her hair and makeup, stripping away the "ghetto" blackness. Maybe Ms. Jones was right after all.

TERRY  
How long you gon' be gone?

INES  
I'll be back this afternoon.

**INT. LIVING ROOM, INES' APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER**

Terry quietly observes the **effortless ticks flowing through Ines' movement** while she prepares to leave, placing on jacket, sneakers, grabbing her bag... The space is still bare, aside from a tv and couch.

INES  
You got cereal and milk. For lunch and dinner there's left overs in the fridge. Just don't heat it more than sixty seconds or you'll burn your mouth. And um... don't answer the door for anyone. If the phone rings, wait for the answering machine to come on to see if it's me. Okay?

TERRY  
Yes.

INES  
Don't pick up for anyone else. My number's on the paper right there if you need to reach me at work.  
(then)  
Okay? I said I'm leaving.

TERRY  
I heard you.



INES  
I'll be back around three.

As a last touch, she slides the drapes, leaving all but a sliver of natural light into the room.

**INT. LIVING ROOM, INES' APARTMENT - LATER**

Terry creeps into the hallway.

TERRY  
(shouting)  
ANYBODY HOME?!

He pulls a toy gun out of his pocket, shooting at an unseen enemy down the hall.

**INT. LIVING ROOM, INES' APARTMENT - LATER - MONTAGE**

- Terry pops a cassette into Ines' boombox.
- Terry hops around on the couch, slightly spilling a plate of leftovers and listening to music as he watches cartoons.
- No more music as he lies on the floor exhausted, half watching, then falling asleep to the news.

LATER:

- Terry wakens. The news is still rolling, but outside we hear CHILDREN-AT-PLAY. Moving to the window, he observes FOUR KIDS running around below.

**INT. LIVING ROOM, INES' APARTMENT - LATER**

SOUND: Keys at the door. Ines emerges from the hallway.

INES  
Terry.  
(then)  
Everything good?

TERRY  
Why nobody looking for me?

INES  
Cause we made it too hard for them.  
That was whole point, remember?

Not sure if Terry buys this, Ines places her things down.

**INT. LIVING ROOM, INES' APARTMENT - DAY**

Ines drags a chair through Terry's mess, across the floor to the couch, settling face-to-face with Terry.

INES  
(gentle)  
I'm everybody else now?

Terry bounces ball, she takes it away.

INES (CONT'D)  
I hate when you get this way. Why  
you so scared to open up?

Terry keeps eyes out the window.

INES (CONT'D)  
There's parts you don't even show  
me.

He's still despondent, she follows his eyes out the window.

INES (CONT'D)  
What you scared everybody's gonna  
see?  
(then)  
See that tall one over there?  
That's the Empire State Building.  
"Empire's" like our way of saying,  
'This is the greatest place in the  
world'. Why you think that is? Why  
you think so many people love it  
here? If they can be anywhere else.  
(no response)  
Aight, look down. You see those two  
tall buildings that look alike?

TERRY  
I think so.

INES  
That's the Twin Towers. You see how  
one's a little shorter. It's a way  
of saying, we're all the same, but  
still a little bit different, you  
know?

It's hard to tell if Terry's looking or just lost in a daze.

INES (CONT'D)  
I loved doing that when I was  
little.

(MORE)

INES (CONT'D)  
 No matter wherever, if I could make  
 'em out, felt like I was home.  
 (thinks, looks away)  
 What happened to me, baby?

TERRY  
 I don't know.

Ines rises, going for her Newports.

INES  
 I don't know what the fuck I'm  
 trying to tell you, T. You don't  
 wanna hear me out, that's fine.  
 (then)  
 But there's more to life than  
 fucked up beginnings.

**EXT. INES' APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY**

A small baseball rests by the curb, near a few broken crack pipes. Ines retrieves it. She fumbles the pitch. Terry drops his bat in disgust.

TERRY  
 You not holding it right!

INES  
 (cigarette in mouth)  
 - Be nice! This new for me, too.

Terry swings the bat, hitting it this time.

**INT. INES' LIVING ROOM - LATER**

Terry and Ines on the floor, going head-to-head in a video game. Sensing she's losing, Ines snatches his remote, he fights to get it back.

**INT. INES' BEDROOM - EVENING**

Ines wraps an arm around Terry, falling asleep as he finishes reading a DR.SEUSS BOOK to her. They're blanketed by NEIGHBORHOOD VOICES outside.

	TERRY	INES
What -		(helping)
		- happened.

TERRY (CONT'D)  
 Happened then... Well, in Ho-Ville -

INES  
- Who-ville.

**INT. LIVING ROOM, INES' APARTMENT - DAY**

Terry plays video games. Ines sifts through bills he's drawn on. TERRY POV of scattered photos on the coffee table.

TERRY  
Who's that?

Ines picks up the photo, drifting back in time.

INES  
...That's when I was pregnant.  
(jokingly, puts it down)  
Look at how cute I was back then.  
This body was a playground for a  
thousand niggas until you came  
along!

TERRY  
That's nasty.

The room's slightly more furnished now. When she opens the front door, Rudy has his hand out, holding a Manila envelope.

INES  
(grabbing the envelope)  
What if we need to go to the  
doctor?

His skin is pale and less healthy. Ines reviews the documents - a phony birth certificate and other records for Terry.

RUDY  
(entering)  
Just show up and say you're sick.

INES  
T, look who it is!

TERRY'S POV as **both adults turn his way.**

TERRY  
...Hey Rudy.

RUDY  
Sup, Little Man?  
(then, to Ines)  
How long's it been now?

INES

About a year. They classified it as  
a runaway.

RUDY

No way.

Rudy narrows eyes on Terry in disbelief.

RUDY (CONT'D)

Ines, I ain't mean no harm to you.  
Just had my own battle to fight.

INES

(rising to walk him out)  
Who loves a lil' drama more than  
me? Everything works out as it  
should. It was nice to see you.

RUDY

(following)  
Got a lotta new things going -

INES

Yeah?

RUDY

Hot box, numbers, whatever. Hit me  
up.

Ines shuts the door, tossing the envelope down on the table.

INES

(sighs)  
I went with Daryl. Last name,  
Raymond. Daryl Raymond and we moved  
here from Jersey, okay? Terry's  
your middle name.

Terry's eyes don't leave the game. The house phone rings.

INES (CONT'D)

T!

TERRY

I don't like it.

INES

(picking up the phone)  
- Hey Kim.

Ines moves into the kitchen.

TERRY  
(rumbling to himself)  
Daryl... Raymond...

**INT. LIVING ROOM, INES' APARTMENT - DAY**

Terry, in ELEMENTARY SCHOOL UNIFORM, enters the sounds of ELEVATED VOICES - but things quiet down as he shuts the door. Sitting at the kitchen table, MARCEL 'LUCKY' DIAZ (26) turns to him - a handsome but scruffy-looking man. He's the same man from the photo Ines first showed Terry in the hospital.

LUCKY  
That him?

Ines briefly peeks into the hallway, dish and cloth in-hand.

INES  
(to Terry)  
Why standing there like you scared?

**INT. KITCHEN, INES' APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS**

Terry makes his way down the hallway, pressing himself into the kitchen wall opposite of Lucky when he enters.

INES  
(to Lucky)  
Lady across the hall walks him home  
for me.  
(then)  
Terry, I want you to meet Lucky.

Terry sizes up this weary-eyed man. It's clear that a few years in prison have given his spirit a beating, yet there's still a disarming way about him.

TERRY  
(faux-tough)  
What's going on.

LUCKY  
What's up, little man?

INES  
Lucky's gonna be moving in with us.

TERRY  
For how long?

LUCKY  
 (chuckles)  
 He kicking me out already.

Ines laughs too, but Terry's much less amused.

**INT. INES' BEDROOM - DAY**

**A HORN** sounds from elsewhere outside the window, just as Lucky thrusts into INES... **The release of this lovemaking is slow, coinciding the cadence of street ambience...**

Ines grips him even harder for **the second horn, thrust and release...** Despite her enthusiasm, Lucky pulls away prematurely, leaving her alone on the bed. There's just not enough life back in him yet.

LUCKY  
 Where was he before?

INES  
 (nonchalant)  
 How many times you gon' ask that?

LUCKY  
 'Til I get an answer.

INES  
 No one's even looking for him -

LUCKY  
 Yeah they not looking for him,  
 they're looking for me! You have  
 any picture of what's going on out  
 there? I just got out -

INES  
 (still composed)  
 - How many times I been locked up  
 for you?

LUCKY  
 I'm not going back.

INES  
 Remember what it was like growing  
 up without a father?  
 (then)  
 I want us to be a family.

LUCKY  
(leaving)  
I wanted you. But you're fuckin'  
crazy.

INES  
Nuts for thinking you would  
understand.

**INT. LIVING ROOM, INES' APARTMENT - LATER**

Terry creeps into the room. Ines quietly listens to life outside the window. She doesn't acknowledge him.

TERRY  
You mad at me?

She nods, no.

**EXT. INES' APARTMENT BUILDING, ENTRANCE - DAY**

Ines and Terry, buried in winter coats, carry grocery bags with zombie-like energy. Just as they reach the steps, the roar of a motorcycle hits the block.

Showman Lucky, more alive and refreshed, rounds his way towards the building. He catches Ines' blushing at the looks of her NEIGHBORS.

**INT. INES' LIVING ROOM - LATER**

Ines keeps an eye on Lucky as she prepares dinner. He's doing push-ups nearby.

INES  
...Where'd you stay?  
(then)  
Marcel, where'd you -

LUCKY  
- Posted up with Mike.

INES  
That bike not hot is it?  
(he nods, no)  
...I need another can of soup.

LUCKY  
After the game.



INES

I need you to go now. And why don't  
you take Terry with you?

He shoots her a *look*.

**EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET, HARLEM - MOVING - LATER**

Terry and Lucky are side-by-side. It feels more like  
eggshells than concrete is paved under them.

NEIGHBORHOOD WOMAN

(passing)

How you doing, Lucky?

LUCKY

I'm good, Mama. How's your mother?

Quick glance at her back side.

LUCKY (CONT'D)

Do me a favor, walk on this side of  
me.

Lucky gently pushes Terry away from the street curb towards  
the inner sidewalk. **He can't stop fidgeting, but in Terry POV  
is just another part of naturally RHYTHMIC swagger.**

LUCKY (CONT'D)

You always this quiet?

TERRY

Sometimes.

LUCKY

What you thinking about?

Terry shrugs.

LUCKY (CONT'D)

Sounds like a lot.

Terry musters up some courage...

TERRY

How'd you get the name 'Lucky'?

LUCKY

Stories for another time.

(then)

Made a couple mistakes is all.

TERRY

...And I'm a mistake too?

LUCKY

Who told you that?

TERRY

It's why you don't want me around.

LUCKY

That's not true. Yo shake that off.

(then)

You're a blessing. For your mom  
especially. Everything's just  
complicated.

This time he's the one sneaking a look at Terry, who's face  
is still dispirited.

LUCKY (CONT'D)

Let's pop in here real quick -

**INT. BODEGA - CONTINUOUS**

Orderly queues don't exist here. LONZO (43), the shop owner,  
finishes a transaction. HALF A DOZEN OTHER CUSTOMERS flash  
purchased items, leaving exact change on the counter.

LUCKY

(whistles)

Lon-zo! Let me get a pack of  
Newports.

LONZO

Aye Luck, hold on -

HERO

- Look who it is! How long you been  
out?

OFFICER DANIEL "HERO" EVANS (32) and PARTNER are in the back  
waiting on sandwiches. Lonzo places the item down but rushes  
to the back of the store, leaving Terry and Lucky stuck  
waiting for the change.

LUCKY

...Couple of months.

Hero hands Lonzo a bag of barbecue potato chips to layer on.  
Terry moves closer to Lucky's side, out of the cop's sight.

HERO  
Staying out of trouble?

LUCKY (CONT'D)  
(low)  
T, come stand by me.

LUCKY (CONT'D)  
Minding my business.

He ushers Terry towards the door.

HERO  
You look good.

LUCKY  
Yeah.  
(stepping out)  
Lonzo keep the change!

**EXT. INES' APARTMENT BUILDING - LATER**

Terry and Lucky pass A GROUP OF MEN playing dice out front.  
Hero's car pulls up, trailing them.

HERO  
...Who's this?

LUCKY  
Say "hi" T.

TERRY  
Hi.

HERO  
Aye Luck, let me talk to you.

LUCKY  
There's nothing we need to talk  
about.

HERO  
Nah I just wanna catch up -

LUCKY  
So there's nothing we need to catch  
up about.

Hero steps out of the car with his partner, attempting to hit  
Lucky's arm jokingly, but gets swiftly knocked away.

LUCKY (CONT'D)  
Yo, get your hands off -

HERO  
You tried to hit me?

MAN PLAYING DICE  
Ayo - come on, what y'all  
doin'?

HERO'S PARTNER  
Stay out of it!

LUCKY  
(yelling)  
T, go upstairs!

Terry complies. Hero and his partner pin Lucky's arm behind him as he's shoved and searched against the side of the car.

**INT. LIVING AREA, INES' APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER**

Terry plops down on the couch without a word.

INES  
(busy cooking)  
Where's Luck?

TERRY  
Downstairs with the cops.

INES  
Oh.

She pauses... *then it hits her*. Ines jets to the window, three seconds later, she's out of apartment.

**EXT. INES' APARTMENT BUILDING ENTRANCE - MOMENTS LATER**

Ines keeps her distance from the policemen.

INES  
Officer, what's the problem?

HERO  
(frisking)  
No prob, we'll be outta shortly -

**EXT. INES' ROOM, INES' APARTMENT - LATER**

Lucky's returned, lying on the bed in the same solemn state.

INES  
Everything's changing. Couple of  
years from now, we won't even have  
to worry about these kind of  
things.

He doesn't respond. She cuddles up beside him.

LUCKY  
What do two crooks know about  
raising a family?

She playfully pops him in the shoulder.

**EXT. BASKETBALL COURT, NEIGHBORHOOD PARK - DAY**

Lucky's pensive, taking his time warming up with the ball, **in cadence**. Terry, Pea and HALF A DOZEN KIDS from the block surround him, trying to get it back but he keeps teasing.

LUCKY POV on a DRUG DEAL just out of the kids' eye sight.

LUCKY  
(to Ines)  
Gimme kiss.  
(to kids)  
Watch this.  
(ball goes in)  
Give me another one.

Ines pecks his lips, blushing as he makes it again. Terry's not going for this. He stops playing, backing away.

PEA  
That's not fair!

INES  
A'right, A'right, that's  
enough.

**INT. HALLWAY, INES' APARTMENT - DAY**

Before Terry steps a foot out of his room, Ines bursts of her own, in just a t-shirt and panties. Lucky's chasing behind.

**INT. LIVING ROOM, INES' APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER**

Lucky corners Ines by the wall, submerging her in kisses.

**INT. KITCHEN, INES' APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS**

Terry's disgusted as he holds a gallon of milk above his cereal. He lets it drop to the floor.

TERRY  
I'm sorry.

INES  
(rushing over)  
It's alright.

In one glance, Lucky sizes up the real mess to clean up.

LUCKY (O.S.)  
You too sensitive -

**INT. LIVING ROOM, INES' APARTMENT - DAY**

INES  
So be sensitive to my sensitivity!

Terry slides from the dinner table and crawls to the couch, dodging his parent's leaps on and around furniture. They're still kids themselves.

INES (CONT'D)	LUCKY
You make a joke of everything! Lucky, who was she?!	Let go of my arm!

Lucky tumbles over the couch, facing the TV when he lands. Ines nearly climbs over at him but stops midway.

**EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET BLOCK PARTY, HARLEM - LATER**

RETURN TO WARM WEATHER brings vibrance back to block. Ines grips Lucky's hands with no plans to let go. They're surrounded by a small cluster of NEIGHBORS, still in "wedding attire" as if fresh from the courthouse.

**Terry takes in the collision of music, noise and people interacting; even voices echoing from a car zooming by.** Lucky spots Terry off to the side. He steps away from Ines, kneeling down beside the child.

LUCKY  
T, your mother's my wife now, but I want you to know from the bottom of my heart that I'm here for the both of you. We're blood now.  
(then)  
You scared I'm gonna take her away from you?

TERRY  
(turning away)  
No...

LUCKY  
Nobody's going anywhere from this point on.  
(MORE)

## LUCKY (CONT'D)

I promise to protect you and you  
other, with everything I have. You  
understand? Give you the life we  
never had.

Lucky hugs him, kissing Terry on his head as he gets back up.  
It's the first hug Terry's ever received from a man.

## FEMALE NEIGHBOR

(holding camera)

Come now, all three!

Awkwardly at first, Terry, Ines and Lucky pose for the photo.

## NEWSREPORTER (V.O.)

A slower, safer, more civilized  
city on the horizon -

**INT. LIVING ROOM, INES' APARTMENT - SAME TIME**

NY1 plays while Ines moisturizes her scalp.

## NEWSREPORTER

I'm Vivian Lee with the NY1 Minute.  
According to the Mayor, the crack  
down on low level offenses is a  
quality of life issue.

A slide goes up, next to the NEWSREPORTER, listing changes:  
No jaywalking, graffiti, dogs without a leash, Squeegee Men,  
turnstile jumping.

**EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS - DAY - MONTAGE**

Like a real New York minute, we jump time.

- Ines hustles to work in NEW LOOK #1. She's a working woman  
now, still reinventing herself for fun.

- MATCH CUT as Ines gracefully crosses ANOTHER STREET, in NEW  
LOOK #2 - much less herself, more mainstream.

- CUT TO images depict THE CHANGING FACE OF TIMES SQUARE.

## NEWSREPORTER (V.O.)

And if federal court lets new  
zoning laws take effect, starting  
today 42nd street will have to take  
on a new look to meet the law.

The reel cuts to the street interview of an EXOTIC DANCER.

MALE EXOTIC DANCER  
 We're working class, too. Not  
 effecting anybody, if you choose to  
 go in and watch a movie, you go in.  
 If you don't like it, you keep  
 walking -

**INT. TERRY'S ROOM, INES' APARTMENT - DAY**

Lucky finishes locking a gold cross around the neck of OLDER TERRY (10, baby-faced). He waves his hands in prayer motion over the child.

RADIO DJ (O.S.)  
 Brooklyn officers charged today  
 with torture and sodomizing a 25  
 year old Haitian immigrant - 22  
 year old Diallo was shot 41 times  
 by the street crimes unit...

He cracks the window open, letting in fresh air and sounds.

**EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET, HARLEM - MOVING - DAY**

**CHYRON CARD - 2001**

A row of more windows - early 20th century facades tower over TERRY (13, scruffy hair but still baby-faced) PEA (13), AND TWO OTHER FRIENDS. They're all on bikes - taking ownership of *their streets*. A few VOICES **echo** from out the windows, friends stuck at home.

Like Lucky's chain on his neck, Terry gleams more than ever before. They cruise first, then pick up speed **like a subway car, accelerating so fast that the HOMES AND STOREFRONTS BEHIND THEM START TO VANISH INTO A BLEND OF COLORS.**

**EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET, HARLEM - LATER**

Terry and Pea **speed with synchronized haste** down A CLEANER CITY SIDEWALK.

PEA  
 So I'm kickin' it to her like "ah-  
 ah-ah, whatever whatever..."

TERRY  
 Yeah -

On Terry's response, they **SWEEP** passed a PEDESTRIAN.



PEA  
- but she still not goin'!

**EXT. SIDE OF A BUILDING, OPEN BODEGA - MOMENTS LATER**

Pea and Terry patted down by TWO OFFICERS, brown bodega paper bags in hand.

PEA  
I'm not startin' freshman year  
without no pussy, B! I'm not -

OFFICER #1  
Mind shutting ya mouth for two seconds please?

PEA (CONT'D)  
My fault, sir -

**EXT. BASKETBALL COURT, NEIGHBORHOOD PARK - LATER**

Pea, Terry and half a dozen FRIENDS, huddle by the benches.

PEA  
Light skin or exotic, fatty,  
no medium to hot breath, no -

FRIEND 1  
Nigga them shorties don't  
want you -

PEA (CONT'D)  
Nigga that's standards - don't  
fault me for caring about my heart!

**EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - MOMENTS LATER**

With new drinks in hand, sweaty Terry and Pea **tease the curb in synchronized haste** past a NEW RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT. Tall, anti-social, glass windows stand out like a thorn.

PEA  
What's goin wit' ya look -

Terry **leaps to the sidewalk**, avoiding a car. **Back to the synchronized march.**

PEA (CONT'D)  
Even niggas from 4-5 don't  
lea' the house like that.

TERRY  
Stop tryna knock my style -

PEA (CONT'D)  
- Since when's "bum nigga" a style -

They **HALT AND PIVOT IN UNISON**, resting hands on the wall.

MOMENTS LATER:

Pea and Terry are almost done being patted down, again.

OFFICER #1  
(releasing Terry)  
Thought you looked older.

OFFICER #2  
You two, stay out of trouble.

TEACHER (V.O.)  
Daryl can be a little aloof  
sometimes...

**INT. CLASSROOM - DAY**

A Parent-Teacher conference. Terry, aka DARYL, sit across from his middle school TEACHER. He's beside INES (29) has evolved, still hip, but more subdued, like a mid-30s woman who has lived and put most of those fun days behind them.

TEACHER  
He daydreams a lot, but overall  
he's a bright kid.  
(condescending)  
Quite articulate actually.

INES  
(deep sigh, insulted)  
Is that so?

TEACHER  
To be honest Mrs. Raymond, I don't  
think he belongs here. What are  
your plans for next year?

Aloof Terry's eyes turn to her.

INES  
He wants to go to Manhattan Center.

TEACHER  
Have you thought about applying for  
the specialized high schools?

INES  
No.

TEACHER  
You should. Would you be open to  
that Daryl?

TERRY/DARYL  
(shrugging)  
If they got girls.

TEACHER  
(to Terry/Daryl)  
A lot of those kids go on to MIT,  
Harvard... It might take some  
getting used to... It wouldn't be  
as many minorities...

INES  
My son's never been 'minor' -

TERRY/DARYL  
(low)  
Ma, stop.

INES  
We'll think about it.

TEACHER  
Please do.

**EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL STREET, HARLEM - LATER**

Ines, still annoyed, strolls with Terry towards the subway -  
shaking off the way one feels when it's assumed that you're  
an idiot. He play-hits her.

TERRY	INES
What's wrong -	(joking)
	The hell happen to ya head?

TERRY (CONT'D)  
I told you I want braids.

INES  
Can you not insult my eyes in the  
mean time?

TERRY  
Ma, you knew the store was shut  
down?

INES  
They sold the building.

TERRY  
So where we supposed to go?

INES  
Go down to Ramirez'. What's a  
couple of blocks.

TERRY  
I don't like going over there.

INES  
(dismissive)  
Well...

TERRY  
We got stopped by the cops again.

INES  
Were they lookin' for someone?

TERRY  
I'ono.

INES  
They take your name?

TERRY  
(irate, swerving scooter)  
No. I'm just callin' out so you  
know it ain't me.

Ines relents, taking in the strip's transformation. The business majority has shifted from LOCALLY-OWNED SHOPS TO NATIONWIDE CHAINS. It's hard to tell if we're in Harlem or Anywhere-Where-Else, USA.

**EXT. INES' APARTMENT BUILDING - LATER**

The block's changed too - cleaner, less local characters and foot traffic. Ines halts at the door, squinting at a nearby residence being repainted. A FEMALE NEIGHBOR's stooped below.

INES  
What's going on down there?

FEMALE NEIGHBOR  
Someone bought the building.

**INT. INES' KITCHEN - DAY**

Ines huddles of a paper on the counter. Terry hops by to get to the fridge.

INES  
Anything change?

TERRY  
Ma, I'm hungry.

INES  
So, go to store.

TERRY (CONT'D)  
With what money?

INES (CONT'D)  
I gave you some earlier this week.

TERRY  
Ugh, come on. Please?

INES (CONT'D)  
Hand me my purse.

Terry complies and Ines, digging into her wallet, retrieves a few bills. Before Terry can snatch it from her hand...

INES (CONT'D)  
I've got ten dollars to my name.  
I'm giving you five.

TERRY  
Thanks Ma...

Terry settles in the window, finishing off the carton of orange juice. Ines tapping her cigarette pack on the table.

INES  
You thought anymore about what she said?

TERRY  
Who said?

INES  
Your teacher!

TERRY  
Why everything good mean I gotta go somewhere else?

INES  
You know I'm not gonna be here forever, right? What kind of life you want for yourself?

TERRY  
(shrugs)  
Guess that means you gotta live forever.

INES  
Oh, if only.

TERRY  
What's up with you and Luck?

INES  
Excuse me?

TERRY  
Y'all not talking or something?

INES  
Try asking him that and see what he says... but stop tryna change the subject. You don't have to go, but at least have the option.

**EXT. BASKETBALL COURT, INES' APARTMENT COMPLEX - LATER**

When Terry pops out of the building, he's shocked to spot LUCKY (33), still in his work clothes, shooting free throws.

LUCKY  
Come shoot some hoops with me.

TERRY  
I'm about to go to the store...

LUCKY  
You need some money? Here.

TERRY	LUCKY (CONT'D)
Ma gave me some -	- Take it anyway. A man should always have money in his pocket.

Stepping onto the court, Terry retrieves a few folded bills.

TERRY (CONT'D)  
But where you been at?

LUCKY  
Needed a few days to clear my head.

TERRY  
Feels like it's been longer than that this time. Y'all breaking up or something?

Lucky nods *no*, before making another shot.

LUCKY  
(gesturing to ball)  
Wanna shoot?

He settles on the bench next to his construction gear. Terry lingers under the hoop tossing shots.

LUCKY (CONT'D)

Your mother ever tell you how we met?

TERRY

(approaching)

No.

LUCKY

She used to work at this coffee shop that closed down a few years ago. I get my hair cut right across the street, so one day, I see her and I'm like "Who's this fly shorty in the window?"

(then)

I go in. Order a bagel or whatever. I'm sitting down but still not really sure how to kick it.

TERRY

So what'd you say?

LUCKY

(thinks)

I told her the truth. That she was the most beautiful woman I ever seen.

TERRY

Were you nervous?

LUCKY

(nods)

I walked out. Just felt like she should know. Leave it at that.

(then)

But something told me to go back a few weeks later. And this is when I had my other bike, so... I said "let me take you for a ride when you get off." She said "yeah". We been rocking ever since.

Terry settles down next to him on the bench. Lucky takes in the courtyard around them.

LUCKY (CONT'D)

T, don't get caught up in none of this shit you see around here.

TERRY

Have I ever?

LUCKY

No, but I'm not stupid. A lot of times it's not even you, it's the company you keep. Took me too long to learn that. Nothing worse on a man than not being able to provide for his own family. Keep the power you have over your life.

Terry gives him a beat to recover.

TERRY

My uh... my teacher wants me to apply for the specialized science high schools...

LUCKY

Yeah? So what you gonna do?

TERRY

I don't know... What you think?

LUCKY

It's not up to me. You getting older, time to start thinking for yourself.

Lucky abandons him on the bench, heading back onto the court. Terry remains momentarily, but then musters up the courage to join him. His stride's full of angst.

TERRY

What?

LUCKY

(withholding ball,  
studying him)  
You need a haircut.

As Terry sucks his teeth, Lucky pulls him into his chest.

LUCKY (CONT'D)

...I love you... You hear me?

TERRY

(muffled, still hugging)  
Yeah!

When they release, Terry does all he can to hide his joy. He takes the ball.



**INT. HALLWAY, INES' APARTMENT - LATER**

Lucky's light on his toes, easing towards the bedroom.

**INT. KITCHEN, INES' APARTMENT - SAME TIME**

Ines remains mum, letting him pass without a word.

**INT. CLASSROOM - DAY**

Terry surrounded by a room full of PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS. They huddled over the exams being distributed.

ADMINISTRATOR

Do not open up your workbooks until  
every person has received an exam.  
There's about fifteen to twenty  
questions in each portion, you'll  
have approximately ten minutes per  
section to respond on the sheet -

TWO TEACHERS are off to the side, monitoring the group. One of them, ANITA TUCKER (38) winks and smiles Terry's way.

**EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE, MIDTOWN MANHATTAN - DAY**

Lucky sweeps, then tosses big pieces of waste into the dumpster. Construction noise muffles a SUPERIOR verbally chastising him. Lucky retorts back, but the man has the last word before marching off.

**INT. INES' BEDROOM - SAME TIME**

Ines hits the snooze button on her alarm clock.

**INT. INES' BATHROOM - LATER**

The shower head stutters at first, then flowing freely enough for Ines to cleanse her soapy hair strands.

**INT. INES' BATHROOM - LATER**

Ines makes the last touches on thickly-braided cornrows.

**INT. LAB FRONT DESK - LATER**

Ines is the only clerk working the front desk. She feels the glare of her SUPERVISOR, but sits up even prouder.

Her cellphone vibrates. She freezes at the sight of a text.

**INT. INES' KITCHEN - LATER**

Terry is slouched over by his window nook. She's snatches the paper, unable to compose herself.

INES

Let me see it!

(reading)

You got into Stuyvesant? Ain't that  
the top one? I'm so proud of you -

She goes to embrace Terry but he dodges her.

TERRY

I don't see the big deal. All I  
had to do was prove I could get in.

INES

I changed my mind.

TERRY

Well I haven't. I'm not going!

INES

You know how hard I'm bussing my  
ass to get you chances I never had?  
You make me feel like a fool!

TERRY

Be a fool then -

She hurls a dish he barely knocks out of the way in time.

TERRY (CONT'D)

That almost hit my face!

INES

Get the hell out before I knock the  
shit out of you.

**INT. TOP CHOICE CARIBBEAN RESTAURANT - LATER**

Pea and ANOTHER FRIEND (14) join Terry in the booth.

PEA  
 (eating)  
 Nigga T always on the verge of  
 tears.

Terry escapes to the restaurant counter. TERRY'S POV on the CASHIER's figure as she bends down to grab a new stack of paper bags. SIMONE (14, dark brown) rings up his soda.

CASHIER/SIMONE  
 Anything else?

TERRY  
 Yeah, where can I call you?

She rolls her eyes.

TERRY (CONT'D)	TERRY'S FRIENDS
...Aight, gimme your Myspace	- Yeahhh.
then.	- Get it, T!

CASHIER/SIMONE  
 Unavailable222.

TERRY  
 Woowww, so I can't get to know you?

CASHIER/SIMONE	PEA
There's nothing else I need	Stop frontin' like he ain't
to know about you or ya	doin you a favor.
little smelly ass, dirty ass	
friends.	

CASHIER/SIMONE (CONT'D)  
 (looking over Terry)  
 Next customer!

Terry settles back down at the table.

PEA  
 Knew you wasn't gettin' that.

TERRY  
 (sucks teeth)  
 I ain't trippin' on her.

PEA  
 (munching)  
 Cause I already tried four times.  
 Gotta be a dike. She bad though.

Terry keeps staring at her.

**INT. LIVING ROOM, INES' APARTMENT - LATER**

Ines rides the edge of her chair, staring at Lucky. He's dazed on the couch.

INES  
I need you to talk some sense into him.

LUCKY  
Sayin' what exactly?

INES  
That he should go to a better school?

LUCKY  
(thinks)  
...He doesn't wanna be controlled.

INES  
Who gives a fuck about what he wants... what does he need?

She waits for a response...

INES (CONT'D)  
I'm talking to myself now -

LUCKY  
- I don't know.  
(thinks)  
Matta fact, I do... it's you. Not with me... with T I'm talkin'...

INES  
Like how?

LUCKY  
You could be a bit nicer. Less tough.

INES  
...Anything else?

LUCKY  
- You're always on edge...

INES  
(catching herself)  
What else? I'm listening.

LUCKY

Always beefin'... Maybe if you  
quiet down some... he'll actually  
hear what you have to say.

She processes.

INES

...You used to like that I was  
spicy.

LUCKY

He'll do good at any school.

Ines thinks some more...

INES

I'm trying to be quiet, anymore  
quiet I won't have no voice at all -

LUCKY

- See there it go.

INES

Quiet's not 'when you go missing  
for weeks and I say nothing'?

LUCKY

(rising)  
- I'm not arguing.

INES

While you go through your 'woe is  
me' bullshit? Figure whatever-the-  
fuck out and I'm left fightin' wars  
all by myself?!

LUCKY

See how loud you are?

INES

I'm talkin' loud so you can hear  
me! You don't understand quiet.  
Wonder what happens if I leave too -

LUCKY

I don't gotta hear this right now. Just cause I feel like it!

INES (CONT'D)

LUCKY (CONT'D)

Never tired of being angry -

INES

When I got something to be angry about! We from the same fuckin' place! I'm tough like you tough, tired like you tired. So why's it so hard for you to have my back?

(then)

Show up for me, Lucky!

LUCKY

Are you done?

She plops back down in the chair.

INES

Go be nice and tell him whatever you want.

Lucky's faces her while he puts on his jacket, pausing midway through. She's quiet but still fidgeting.

LUCKY

You're scared...

LUCKY (CONT'D)

Of gettin' caught?

INES

- Something's gonna happen. I can feel it.

INES (CONT'D)

He tell you he got stopped by the cops? A few times.

LUCKY

(thinks, then relaxes)  
Let him use his other name.  
He doesn't have ID -

INES (CONT'D)

- That's not the point!

LUCKY (CONT'D)

I don't know.  
(placing jacket on)  
Days bound to come anyway -

Ines gets up and shoves him - so hard that when his back hits the stove, the handle breaks off.

LUCKY (CONT'D)

It was a fuckin' joke!

# **EXT. INES' APARTMENT BUILDING - LATER**

Terry heading in, crosses paths with Lucky who's heading out.

LUCKY  
Take care of your mother.

**INT. INES' HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER**

When Terry steps inside Ines is back on the couch, waiting.

TERRY  
Where Lucky go?

INES  
I don't know and don't care.  
(then)  
I'm only saying this once. You go  
to that school or you find  
somewhere else to live.

SHARP CUT TO:

**EXT. FOOT'S APARTMENT, HARLEM - DAY**

Terry slouches against his book bag. He's got a "first week of school" clean cut and crisp pair of Air Jordans on. Pea, next to him on the couch, peruses a collection of CDs.

**Pea, followed by their friend FOOT (19) glances at Terry.**  
Observing his pissy mood, they say nothing. Foot, seedy-looking but largely harmless, returns to blasting tunes.

PEA  
Foot, where's Blueprint?

FOOT  
Tony's pickin' it up around 11.

TERRY  
(sighs)  
We should get outta here soon.

FOOT	PEA
Time y'all headin' to class?	- Iono, you got Dipset's mixtape?

**INT. BEDROOM, INES' APARTMENT - LATER**

The alarm clock reads 9:33AM as Ines' slams the snooze button. The otherwise quiet room rumbles with light thuds and voices from other parts of the building. Meanwhile, NYPD sirens steadily sound off outside, growing louder, closer, and heading her way.

She pops up, knocking about, slipping and nearly tumbling to the ground on her way to the living room window.

**INT. LIVING ROOM, INES' APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS**

Ines sticks her head out of the window just in time to catch the brigade of SOUTH-BOUND COP CARS pass the building. OTHER HARLEMITES look on too, from windows and fire escapes.

INES  
What happen?

NEIGHBOR AT WINDOW  
You haven't seen the news? World  
Trade Center got hit.

A brief relief washes over her.

INES  
Again?

NEIGHBOR AT WINDOW  
Go up on the roof, you can see the  
smoke from Central Park-

But when she looks down at her hands, they're both trembling.

**INT. FOOT'S APARTMENT - SAME TIME**

An emergency vehicle rips by. Terry turns his head from the window to TV. Pea, Foot and Terry watch, dumbfounded as smoke descend from both towers.

FOOT  
(low, jaded)  
Tha's white people problems.

Foot rises and starts stuffing *some things* into his pockets.

PEA  
Where you going?

FOOT  
Down to 12th. Nigga, there's no  
cops in Harlem right now! Shit's a  
fuckin' holiday.

Pea and Terry keep watching in a stupor...

TERRY  
Yo, my school is down there.



PEA  
You not going to school today.

**EXT. FOOT'S APARTMENT BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER**

Pea and Terry run up to an NYPD car's window.

OFFICER  
Get out of the way! Go home!

PEA  
Officer what's goin on'?

TERRY  
Y'all headed down there?

The car rips off. Red firetrucks, blue and white NYPD vehicles fly down an otherwise empty road, but Pea and Terry are surrounded by halted foot traffic. TWO HARLEMITES ramble in a fit of hysteria, outside of a local SHOP.

HARLEMITE #1	HARLEMITE #2
Both towers came down back to back, just crashed -	(pulling SHOP gate down) They hit the Pentagon too, that's not no accident, this ain't no accident -

The gate CRASHES down -- Terry picks up on the shifting ambience. It's an uneasy quiet. He climbs on top of a mailbox, getting a better view of the chaos. Pea's just below him hungry for more action.

**INT. INES' APARTMENT BUILDING, COURTYARD - LATER**

**No traffic, just eery silence.** When Terry arrives, Ines is already outside.

INES  
Had me scared half to death -

TERRY  
- They let us out early.

INES  
What happened to the phone I gave  
you?

TERRY  
It died.  
(then)  
Where's Luck?

INES  
Haven't heard from him yet. His  
site's downtown.

They shrink at the overwhelming sirens around them. She looks at him again, more thoughtful.

INES (CONT'D)  
How'd you get up here?

TERRY  
I got a ride.

**INT. LIVING ROOM, INES' APARTMENT - LATER**

**Radio silence between Ines and Terry.** TERRY POV on Ines beating her cigarette box against the sill, **in a rhythmic pace.** Finally, he goes for the remote.

INES  
Don't turn the TV on.

Terry slips back on the couch. Noticing, Ines' softens.

INES (CONT'D)  
Or if you want turn on it, put it on mute. I'm stressed enough.

TERRY  
Forget it.

Ines gets back on the house phone, dialing a number, taking another gander out the window... scanning... searching... She jets passed Terry towards the front door.

**EXT. INES' APARTMENT BUILDING, SIDEWALK - MOMENTS LATER**

Lucky's surrounded by several NEIGHBORS. His face and uniform is partially covered in gray debris.

LUCKY  
I had to walk all the way up from Chamber Street.

NEIGHBORHOOD MAN  
Here boss, drink some water.

Lucky leans on the side of a car, taking sips from the bottle and pouring the rest over his face. Ines and Terry arrive.

TERRY  
Pop!

Ines' watches them, left behind as they embrace.

LUCKY  
I'm good, T. I'm good.

Lucky then reaches for Ines. They peck lips, in a way that's both loving, yet awkward...

INES  
You sure you're alright? ...Can't  
be good to inhale all that stuff.

LUCKY  
(nods)  
Shit is just wild.  
(to everyone)  
I saw both towers come down. I had  
to carry this one lady ten blocks -

Ines attempts to comfort Terry, but he pulls away. Lucky keeps talking, Terry beside him. Ines meanders away again, **quietly** casting attention on the hole in the skyline.

**EXT. DOWNTOWN MANHATTAN - DAY**

Terry stares at an American flag waving above him and Lucky. They're among a huddle of PREDOMINATELY ITALIAN, IRISH, LATIN AND BLACK AMERICAN CONSTRUCTION WORKERS, PLUS THEIR LOVED ONES. All heads bow in prayer. Behind them, a sidewalk memorial and tall gate filled with missing people posters.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER  
We doing this for Pat, our brothers  
Angelo and Andre. Every day that we  
come out here, this for them and  
their families.

The crowd applauds. Terry sees how intently Lucky listens.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER (CONT'D)  
For New York. We're not rebuilding  
our city, we're rebuilding our  
spirit! Coming out of this stronger  
than ever!

LUCKY  
(inspired, applauding)  
Go New York.

**EXT. WORK SITE, UPPER MANHATTAN - DAY**

Hard hats cover WORKERS milling about the roof of a NEW RESIDENTIAL HIGH RISE.

**CHYRON - FOUR YEARS LATER**

A pile of dirt hits the ground below. LUCKY (38) proudly directs street traffic below, now supervising others.

LATER:

Lucky relaxes on the curb. LUCKY POV on the building. It's made of steel and glass like the skyscrapers - cold, anonymous, yet magnificent.

**INT. CLASSROOM, STUYVESANT HIGH SCHOOL - DAY**

TERRY (17), centered amongst racially diverse peers, is in a daydream until the bell rings. He may carry himself differently than others in the classroom, but now he owns it.

**EXT. SIDE ENTRANCE, STUYVESANT HIGH SCHOOL - LATER**

Terry unlocks his bike. He pauses before climbing on, **listening to the surrounding traffic.**

**EXT. DOWNTOWN MANHATTAN STREET - MOMENTS LATER**

Terry snakes through traffic with the same kind of wanderlust he first experienced as a child in the cab with Ines.

**EXT. UPTOWN MANHATTAN STREET - LATER**

Terry joy rides through Harlem foot and traffic, still peppered with bombastic sounds distinct to the neighborhood.

**EXT. INES' APARTMENT BUILDING - LATER**

Terry hands Lucky supplies while he plays music and fixes his Harley motorcycle. The rest of Harlem may not have changed much, but this block's on it's way to beautiful.

LUCKY

I don't understand how you ride that thing everyday.

TERRY

I just like it.

LUCKY

Uh huh. So which college you decidin' on?

TERRY  
I don't know yet.

LUCKY  
Go somewhere far. My era ain't have  
those kind of shots.

TERRY  
Yeah, maybe.

LUCKY  
Show off that legacy of Harlem.  
(then)  
You should be more excited.

TERRY  
Nah, I am...

**EXT. COMMERCIAL STREET, HARLEM - DAY**

INES (34) steps out of the train station.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)  
Psst, Psst! Ayo, ma!

She's surprised to see Lucky there waiting in front of a "IF  
YOU SEE SOMETHING SAY, SOMETHING" advert.

INES  
(smiles)  
What you doing here?

LUCKY  
(bashful)  
I can't walk my lady?

She's still readjusting herself.

LUCKY (CONT'D)  
What's the matta witcha bag?

INES  
Random searches downstairs.      Oh.

LUCKY (CONT'D)

INES (CONT'D)  
Haven't seen you this happy in  
awhile.

LUCKY  
Yeah?

They stroll down the avenue, unburdened by the previous  
tensions other PEDESTRIANS could bring.

LUCKY (CONT'D)  
Remember what this place was like  
when were coming up?

INES  
I remember.

LUCKY  
You should be proud of yourself.  
Ines, we made it.

Ines smiles, barely looking up. She's reserved now, as he wanted.

LUCKY (CONT'D)  
You don't seem happy...

INES  
You think Terry resents me?

LUCKY  
Teenagers hate everybody.  
(then)  
I do sense a little void in him...  
First couple years of his life he  
had nobody. Kid's walkin' 'round  
with a broken heart.  
(then)  
Maybe it's time for y'all to have a  
real conversation. Give him some  
answers he's been looking for...

This coming from Lucky makes her brows furrow.

INES  
...I'll know when it's time.  
(then)  
Um. Once T goes off to school, I  
think wanna go back to doing hair  
again. Maybe open up a shop.

LUCKY  
Can't wait.

**INT. INES' APARTMENT - DAY**

Ines opens the door on JERRY (31, white). He wears glasses, but otherwise has a easygoing nature about him.

JERRY  
Hi, I'm Jerry.  
(clarifying)  
Your new landlord -

INES  
(shaking hand)  
- Good morning.

JERRY  
(stepping in)  
I wanted to come by and introduce myself.

INES  
(closing door)  
That's nice of you.

JERRY  
I'll be outta your way in a few minutes.

INES  
No, it's alright.

Jerry looks around, inspecting.

INES (CONT'D)  
You have the buildings across the street too?

JERRY  
Yeah. I see you been here almost ten years. Everything working fine? Heat coming up, hot water?

INES  
Yeah, just about.  
(following him)  
Actually I noticed a few loose tiles around the shower -

JERRY  
Uh oh, something happened here?

Jerry notices the old damage to the stove.

INES  
Yeah, that's old.

He's crouched down to get a better look.

JERRY  
I can fix it for you.

INES  
Really?

JERRY

Yeah it's no problem. And some new cabinets, these gotta be at least twenty years old. You meet Javier?

INES

Who's that?

JERRY

The new Super. Let me see when I can have my guys come in. Take care of that and the tiles.

**EXT. COURTYARD PARK, HARLEM - DAY**

A lone firetruck sounds down the street. LUCKY listens to a somewhat calmer, somewhat safer, surrounding neighborhood.

LATER:

He coaches a TEAM OF YOUTH BASKETBALL PLAYERS. Following after them, he moves slower than usual. Short of breath.

**INT. INES' APARTMENT BUILDING, STAIRWELL - LATER**

Lucky fights his way up the steps as best he can, then finally collapses.

**INT. CANCER WARD, HOSPITAL - DAY**

Terry sits at the edge of Lucky's hospital bed sifting through a box of CDs and vinyls.

TERRY

Which one you wanna hear?

Lucky pulls a 70's era soul record from the pile.

TERRY (CONT'D)

That's mad old.

LUCKY

Old. Pass that one right there.

Terry hands him a Hip Hop album. Lucky points at the credits.

LUCKY (CONT'D)

What does that say? What's the sample?

(then)

You don't even know your own taste.



TERRY

But some of these are so random.

He keeps sifting anyway.

LUCKY

You can have 'em. That way you can  
take your time and flip through  
everything.

Still in work clothes, Ines rushes in. She hangs her jacket.

INES

Anyone else come by?

**INT. CANCER WARD, HOSPITAL - DAY**

Lucky, visibly more ill, admires Ines who's fast asleep in the chair opposite his bed. She wakes at his coughing.

INES

Try to finish your food.

LUCKY

I'm not hungry.

Recollecting himself, he fixes his eyes on her.

LUCKY (CONT'D)

Why'd you love me?

INES

Same reasons everybody else.

LUCKY

That's not an answer... I wanna  
know why.

INES

Stop talking and get some rest.

Lucky complies, albeit briefly.

LUCKY

I don't think I ever really knew  
where it came from. Whether or not  
I deserved it. And maybe that's why  
I never fully gave it back.

INES

(stunned, then dismissive)  
Damaged people don't know how to  
love each other, tha's all.

A NURSE interrupts to check his vitals.

**INT. TERRY'S ROOM - DAY**

Terry sifts and listens to Lucky's eclectic collection.

**EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL STREET - LATER**

Terry cruises alone. However, this time his **pace is slower, jazzier**, and influenced by his broadening musical palette.

**INT. TOP CHOICE CARIBBEAN RESTAURANT - LATER**

Terry's alone, long-faced over the scraps of a meal. Suddenly, a carton of fried plantains lands on his table.

SIMONE  
(walking away)  
Try not to look so pitiful.

TERRY'S POV on SIMONE (18), moving with her head held high, resumes work behind the counter.

**INT. LIVING ROOM, INES' APARTMENT - LATER**

Ines enjoys a private moment of reflection, peering out the window. Terry exits the kitchen, heading for his room.

INES  
T, sit down.  
(when he settles)  
Um. There's a few things I want to talk to you about. Before Lucky passed -

TERRY  
Don't talk to me about Lucky.

INES  
It's not about him -

TERRY  
I don't want to talk to you about anything.

Ines just stares back at him, baffled.

TERRY (CONT'D)  
Only thing I wanted more than a mother was a fucking father.  
(MORE)

TERRY (CONT'D)

Maybe if you didn't push so hard on him, walking around here so miserable all the time, he'd still be here.

Ines sits back, as if to imply, *"Is that so?"*:

INES.

Huh.

(then)

You don't mean that.

He doesn't respond. Ines takes a moment to herself, briefly peering out of the window again, then leaves the room.

**EXT. INES' APARTMENT BUILDING, ENTRANCE - DAY**

Ines lands in the doorway, resting as NEIGHBORS blast tunes, dance and eat. It's their version of a sendoff for Lucky. INES POV on a YOUNG KIDS saddled up on Lucky's parked bike.

She eases down the stoop, joining the effort to share out portions. Terry, a few feet away with FRIENDS, narrows eyes down the street.

TERRY

Ma...

(waits)

Ma!

INES

- What?

TERRY

That lady keeps looking over here.

Near the corner, a WOMAN and FOUR YEAR OLD GIRL, stand waiting. Hesitating at first, Ines waves them over.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Who's that?

INES

Lucky's daughter and her mother. Fix them a plate. I need to run upstairs.

TERRY

His what -

INES

We'll talk about it later...

Before Terry can respond, Ines abandons him on the sidewalk.

**INT. LIVING ROOM, INES' APARTMENT - DAY**

Ines allows the TWO WORKERS to enter the space.

**INT. INES' BEDROOM, INES' APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER**

Ines returns to her bed, flipping channels and slurping up a Cup-of-Noodles.

THE SOUND of heavy bangs and drilling.

She chews....

THE SOUND of heavy bangs, louder drilling.

Ines keeps on nibbling...

THE SOUND of heavy bangs, louder drilling and a HUGE THUD.

Ines freezes, nearly spilling the soup.

**INT. INES' BATHROOM - DAY**

Ines stands with Jerry, pointing her finger at the gaping hole in the destroyed bathtub.

INES  
It wasn't so big at first but more  
fell down this morning.

Jerry listens, inspecting the floor and dislocated sink.

INES (CONT'D)  
All we got right now is the kitchen  
sink.

JERRY  
I know, I know.

INES  
Come, let me show you the kitchen.

**INT. LIVING ROOM, INES' APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS**

JERRY  
I saw it already.

Terry's sprawled out on the couch listening to his CD Player.

JERRY (CONT'D)

(eyes shifting)

Ines, uh -- look, this is my mistake. The guys thought it was a full flip. I'm happy to let them come back in here and finish, I won't charge you anything.

INES

Just let me know what day. I can stay home from work or Terry can be here if it's after school -

JERRY

We'll need to clear you out of the apartment. It's too much damage here, gotta lift everything.

INES

Like how long?

JERRY

'Til it's done. Couple of months?

He tenses up and so does Ines.

INES

(elevated tone)

And what are we supposed to do in the meantime?

JERRY

Calm down -

INES

Don't tell me to calm down -

JERRY

(condescending)

Like two adults. Okay?

Ines complies, burying her old instinct.

INES

We have no shower... and no stove.

JERRY

Maybe there's friend of yours or family you can stay with? The building's too old. I fix one thing and I'll just have to come back a few months later. That way we can get in here and replace everything all at once.

INES  
There's gotta be another option...

JERRY  
Or you can leave.

She looks him dead in the eyes. It's not as warm as before.

JERRY (CONT'D)  
My hands are tied. Give me a call  
when you know what you wanna do.

She closes the door behind him. Terry lifts his headphones.

TERRY  
Why you ain't fight him on that?

Ines cuts eyes at him, then heading for her bedroom.

**INT. INES' KITCHEN - LATER**

Terry's in his spot by the window, accompanied by a telephone book. He listens to drilling in the apartment above as he dials a 212 number.

**INT. TOP CHOICE CARIBBEAN RESTAURANT - SAME TIME**

Simone's tending to a short line of CUSTOMERS.

SIMONE  
(answering phone)  
Top Choice. Simone speaking.

TERRY (O.S.)  
Simone?

SIMONE  
Yes?

TERRY (O.S.)  
I just wanted to let you know, I  
think you're the most beautiful  
girl -

SIMONE  
Would you stop fucking calling  
here, please? I'm at work -

TERRY  
Call me tonight then.

She thinks.

SIMONE  
Fine. I gotta go.

She takes the number down and hangs up.

SIMONE (CONT'D)  
Miss, to stay or to go?

**EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL STREET - DAY - MOVING**

Terry and Simone saunter quietly.

TERRY  
Walk on the other side of me.

He guides her to the inside of the sidewalk, seizing the opportunity to touch her waist.

SIMONE  
Um?

TERRY  
It's for protection.

SIMONE  
Right...

TERRY  
You always this quiet?

SIMONE  
No... I'm just so used to cursing  
you out.

TERRY  
Oh so that's what it is?

SIMONE  
...But I'm trying to be nice.

**INT. CHINESE FOOD TAKE OUT RESTAURANT - LATER**

Terry's dumbfounded at the sight of Simone drenching a carton of four fried chicken wings and fries with barbecue sauce, hot sauce and ketchup.

TERRY  
Think you've put enough?

She gobbles another fry, watching him then poke around.

SIMONE  
You know you want one.

Terry takes a drenched one.

TERRY  
Why you always actin' all stank  
when we come around.

SIMONE  
It's not an act, your friends are  
dumb as fuck. Especially Pea.  
(mocking)  
"What you gon' do about that  
'kitchen'? Damn, when you gon' eat  
some more meals? Wowww! Whaddup  
Midnight?" -

TERRY  
- Alright, alright...  
(then)  
I get it.

She keeps eating.

SIMONE  
I'm sorry. I probably shouldn't  
talk about your friend like that.

TERRY  
Yeah.

SIMONE  
I'm just tired of the way they talk  
about me. I got teased all through  
149, all through junior high... I'm  
not fucking with anybody tryna make  
me hate myself.

Terry's stopped eating. He's just listening now, admiring.

SIMONE (CONT'D)  
How'd you miss a year of school and  
still end up in Stuyvesant?  
(then)  
You like it there?

TERRY  
(shrugs)  
It's okay.

SIMONE  
Okay and... what else? What don't  
you like about it?



TERRY

I don't know. Just don't.

SIMONE

There's nothing wrong with being smart you know. We could use a few more engineers around here.

TERRY

I don't care about none of that.

SIMONE

Oh yeah, so what do you wanna do?

TERRY

I make music.

SIMONE

(brow raising)

You wanna rap?

TERRY

No... like...

Terry tries to play it cool but he shrinks into the chair.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Like, you ever seen 'The Wiz'?

SIMONE

Yeah.

TERRY

...Stuff like that. This black guy Quincy Jones did the whole score. And some other movies.

SIMONE

Like... a composer?

TERRY

(shrinking)

Yeah...

SIMONE

P.S. I know who Quincy Jones is.

(then)

That's why you don't like it. You should be in some kind of arts school.

(then)

Do you know how to write music?

TERRY

Nah, not yet.

SIMONE

You should learn. You could go to Juilliard... I could help you find out what it takes.

TERRY

It's too late for that.

SIMONE

Where'd Quincy Jones go?

TERRY

He didn't go to school.

SIMONE

(smiles)

See... look at that!

She dips another fry.

TERRY

I wanna see you again.

SIMONE

...I should be honest with you. I'm moving in a couple of weeks.

TERRY

For real?

SIMONE

To my uncle's in Florida. We lost our house, some confusion with the deed.

TERRY

Oh... Sorry to hear that.

SIMONE

I think my mother's tired of being here anyway. We can still keep in touch though. On myspace...

TERRY

Yeah.

SIMONE

I wanna hear your songs. Maybe you can write one for me -

**INT. LIVING ROOM, INES' APARTMENT - LATER**

Terry slumps down in front of the TV. Ines tends to the makeshift kitchen.

INES  
Why you look so glum.

TERRY  
I'm fine.

Terry looks up from the TV.

INES  
What's her name?

TERRY  
I'on know what you're talking  
about.

INES  
So who's the girl I saw you outside  
with?

He thinks.

TERRY  
Just a girl.

INES  
She ya girlfriend?

TERRY  
I like Spanish girls, Ma.

INES  
Pardon me?  
(then)  
What, she look too much like you to  
take seriously?

Sensing he won't respond, Ines shakes her head.

INES (CONT'D)  
(thinks)  
You know little boy, I love you,  
but I don't know if I really like  
you anymore.

**INT. TERRY'S ROOM - NIGHT**

Terry lies awake. Then, a noise in the next room causes him to jump up.

**INT. INES APARTMENT - NIGHT**

Ines, in the puddle of a flooded kitchen and living room.

TERRY  
Ma, what happened?

INES  
Can you bring me a cloth?

As Terry steps closer, he sees how the inches of water have already ruined the couch bottom and stereo system. Ines opens the console beneath the TV, releasing water trapped inside.

INES (CONT'D)  
I'm gonna call Miss Annie in the morning. See if you can stay over there for the rest of the week.

**INT. CLASSROOM, STUYVESANT HIGH SCHOOL - DAY**

Terry/Daryl leans over his desk, not at all engaged with the social studies lesson. He pushes his chair out.

TEACHER  
Daryl, is there an issue?

TERRY/DARYL  
(leaving)  
I need to be excused.

**INT. GUIDANCE COUNSELER'S OFFICE - LATER**

Terry's slumped in a chair as the counselor, Anita Tucker, towers over him. This is the same teacher Terry encountered while taking the entry exam. You can tell she's the popular type amongst students; relatable but still respected.

MS. TUCKER  
Now what was that all about?

Terry barely moves, as if he's checked out.

MS. TUCKER (CONT'D)  
Showing up late, not handing in your work and now just... walking out? Something's on your mind.

TERRY/DARYL  
I said I'm fine.

MS. TUCKER  
What's going on with the college.  
You made your decision?

He's drifted again.

MS. TUCKER (CONT'D)  
Daryl?

TERRY/DARYL  
Not yet.

MS. TUCKER  
And why's that? You discuss this  
with your mother?

TERRY/DARYL  
Yeah a little.

MS. TUCKER  
You know this is a safe place.

Terry thinks.

MS. TUCKER (CONT'D)  
How have things been at home since  
your father passed?

TERRY/DARYL  
The landlord's pushin' us out.

MS. TUCKER  
(frowning)  
I'm sorry to hear that.

Ms. Tucker thinks to herself.

MS. TUCKER (CONT'D)  
When do you turn eighteen again?

TERRY/DARYL  
End of the month.

MS. TUCKER  
Would you want to come work with  
me? I run the after school program  
at CCA. A few hours part time.

TERRY/DARYL  
How much it pay?

MS. TUCKER  
It's money. Enough to help you and  
your mom a little.  
(MORE)

MS. TUCKER (CONT'D)

You do good, we'll work on something better this summer.

(then)

I don't need working papers since you're turning eighteen soon. Ask your mother for your birth certificate and social.

TERRY/DARYL

Thank you, Ms. Tucker.

MS. TUCKER

Happy to help.

She's still studying him as he turns to leave.

**INT. MANAGEMENT OFFICE, INES' APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY**

Ines **strides slowly, in sync with the broken traffic light on the corner.** It jolts from red to green.

LATER:

She snaps a photo of her rent check, using her flip phone.

**INT. LIVING ROOM, INES' APARTMENT - LATER**

Terry unlocks the front door.

TERRY

Ma?

**INT. INES' BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER**

Terry searches all of Ines' drawers until he finds the manila envelope with his birth certificate and social.

**INT. PEA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Pea snores on his bed. Terry's sprawled on a blow up mattress wide awake. He sits up, pulling out a sheet of paper and pencil. Using a textbook to guide him, **he sketches out the notes of a melody.**

**INT. GUIDANCE COUNSELOR OFFICE - DAY**

Terry's barely made his way through the door.

MS. TUCKER  
Daryl, we need to talk. Your  
paperwork was denied.

TERRY/DARYL  
What?

MS. TUCKER  
That social security number you  
gave me isn't valid. I'm glad I  
caught it before anyone else did.

TERRY/DARYL  
I forgot it expired.

MS. TUCKER  
...That's not how it works.

TERRY/DARYL  
So then, I don't know. Does this  
mean I can't get the job?

MS. TUCKER  
Before I can even look into any of  
that, we've gotta straighten out  
how you ended up with a phony  
papers. Did you really ask your  
mother?

TERRY/DARYL  
She doesn't have 'em.

MS. TUCKER  
You are from here right?

TERRY/DARYL  
What you mean?

MS. TUCKER  
Born in the States?

TERRY/DARYL  
Oh. Yeah, yeah.

MS. TUCKER  
This could mean a lot of hell for  
you. To get a job, to do anything -

TERRY/DARYL  
It's probably still with the city.  
From when I was in foster care.

Ms. Tucker thinks, then picks up her office phone.

MS. TUCKER  
(dialing)  
I have a friend down in social  
services who can help -

TERRY  
Nah, it's cool.

MS. TUCKER  
(into phone)  
Hey Janice, listen I need a favor.  
I have a student here -

TERRY  
(hanging up phone)  
Ms. Tucker, I said it's alright!

Ms. Tucker jumps back, bewildered.

TERRY (CONT'D)  
They don't know I'm with my mother.

MS. TUCKER  
...And why's that?  
(then)  
Who are you supposed to be with?

Terry thinks.

MS. TUCKER (CONT'D)  
Have you told anyone else about  
this?

TERRY  
No.

MS. TUCKER  
(thinking, then)  
Is Daryl your real name?

More stand off from Terry.

MS. TUCKER (CONT'D)  
(voice raising)  
If you lied on your college  
applications, that's a felony -

TERRY  
- Its Terry. Terry Wallace.

MS. TUCKER  
How long ago did this happen?



TERRY/DARYL  
When I was little.

MS. TUCKER  
I was a social worker for years.  
If the city didn't want to give you  
back, it's likely because something  
happened.  
(then)  
Regardless of what, you're still a  
ward of the state. By law, I have  
to report this.

TERRY/DARYL  
I'll be eighteen in a few more  
weeks. Why does it even matter?

MS. TUCKER  
I can't keep this to myself, not as  
long as I know. And going under a  
different name - this is such a  
mess. I have to speak with your  
mother.

**EXT. INES' APARTMENT BUILDING, ENTRANCE - LATER**

**A BURST OF NEW YORK CITY CLAMOR** as Ines leans against a  
neighbors car, seething. A few remnants of her old personal  
style has returned. She watches everyone who enters the  
building. Her WHITE FEMALE NEIGHBOR hits the steps.

INES  
Sweetheart. You see Javier lately?

WHITE NEIGHBOR  
Who?

INES  
The Super.

WHITE NEIGHBOR  
Not since yesterday.

INES  
Alright.

WHITE NEIGHBOR (CONT'D)  
Sorry.

**INT. KITCHEN, INES' APARTMENT - LATER**

When Terry steps inside, Ines is busy nursing the leaks in  
the ceiling with various pots and bins. He observes the  
gaping hole and the panels that have fallen to the floor.

INES  
What you doing home?

TERRY  
Can I talk to you?

INES  
It'd be nicer if you can help.

TERRY  
What happened?

INES  
What does it look like? I called  
the Super about ten times since  
yesterday.

TERRY  
It's about the job with Ms. Tucker.  
She said I need my birth  
certificate.  
(then)  
The real one. And my social.

She pauses the work.

INES  
What do you mean 'the real one'?

TERRY  
The papers I found in your room  
didn't work -

INES  
(yelling)  
What do you mean the papers from my  
room? You gave her that?

INES (CONT'D)	TERRY
Why wouldn't you ask me?!	I didn't know I had to!

TERRY (CONT'D)  
She said she wants to come by  
tomorrow evening and talk to you.

Ines takes a seat.

INES  
For what?

TERRY  
I don't know, what was I supposed  
to say?

INES  
I don't know how the hell we gon'  
get ahold of that.  
(then)  
Come with me outside. I need to  
smoke.

**EXT. ENTRANCE, INES' APARTMENT BUILDING - LATER**

Terry joins Ines on the stoop.

INES  
T, you should see if you can stay  
with Pea for a bit longer. While  
Jerry's fixing everything.

TERRY  
And where you gonna go?

INES  
I'll figure out. Don't worry about  
me.

In the silence between them, Ines smokes what's left of her  
cigarette. INES POV on the traffic light. **Ticking between red  
and green**, it's finally getting repaired by a CITY WORKER.

INES (CONT'D)  
What time your teacher coming by  
tomorrow?

TERRY  
'Round six, I think.

Ines smokes in pensive trance, then cuts eyes at Terry.

INES  
You wanted to leave me...

TERRY  
No?  
(then)  
Why would you say that?

She holds her gaze.

INES  
Forget it, come on. I should clean  
up from now and get it over with.

**INT. LIVING ROOM, INES' APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS**

Ines heads towards the kitchen. Terry trails behind.

INES

(soft)

I don't need any help, T. All you  
gon' do is slow me down.

TERRY

Okay.

INES

I'll go to your school tomorrow,  
and straighten everything out with  
Miss Whats-Her-Face.

Terry watches her disappear into the kitchen. WE HEAR Ines  
shuffling the water-filled pots as he heads to his room.

**INT. TERRY'S ROOM - LATER**

Terry lies down, listening to the ceiling fan whirl. Murmurs  
of conversations bleed in from the street as his eyes shut.

**INT. HALLWAY, INES' APARTMENT - LATER**

Terry moves through the quiet corridor. The sounds of  
neighbors in the hallway spill in from the front door that's  
been left ajar. Terry shuts the door, locking it behind him.

TERRY

Ma?

He peers into the half-cleaned kitchen, but she's not there.  
Terry moseys over towards the bedroom... She's gone.

**INT. KITCHEN, INES' APARTMENT - MORNING**

Terry's like a hawk, eyes on the courtyard.

TERRY

(to Kim, on the phone)

Hey Titi... you heard from my  
mother yet?

We see Anita Tucker, alongside FEMALE ACS CASE WORKER and TWO  
POLICE OFFICERS exiting a car out front. The teacher and  
officials make their way to the entrance.

TERRY (CONT'D)  
Well can you call me back when you  
do? I've been trying her all  
morning.

A knock at the front door.

TERRY (CONT'D)  
Aunt Kim, hold on. Lemme give you a  
call back....

**INT. FRONT DOOR, INES' APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS**

Terry cracks the door open, revealing Ms. Tucker, the case worker and officers.

MS. TUCKER  
Hi Terrance. Is your mother home?

TERRY  
No.

MS. TUCKER  
She left for work already?

TERRY  
I think so.

MS. TUCKER  
You mind if we came in and talk to  
you for a bit?

TERRY  
Um... um yeah. Okay.

The officials enter. Terry shakes everyone's hand.

MS. TUCKER  
This is Anne. And this is Officer  
Phillips. Officer Picone. May we  
have a seat?

TERRY  
Yeah. Hold on, sorry -

Terry moves to clear his book bag and other personal belongings from the couch. Ms. Tucker the case worker settle across from Terry. Meanwhile, he peeps the officer's movements around the landlord-neglected space.

CASE WORKER  
How long ago did she leave?

TERRY  
Yesterday evening.

OFFICER #1  
What was the last thing she said to you? Did she say anything out of the ordinary? Anything unusual?

TERRY  
Not that I remember. Everything seemed fine.  
(irritated)  
Could y'all not go through all our stuff?

MS. TUCKER  
(to officers)  
Guys, can you please.  
(then)  
Terrance, we really need your cooperation on this.

TERRY  
It's Terry. Is she gonna get in trouble? Why does it even matter? I'm almost eighteen.

All adults exchange glances.

MS. TUCKER  
Well... about that. It's difficult for me to say what I have to say right now but, Ines is not your biological mother.

Terry looks to the others for clarity.

TERRY  
This some kind of joke?

MS. TUCKER  
No. It's not.

Anita retrieves two large Manila envelopes from her handbag. The first reveals Terry's foster care records, which she plops down on the coffee table.

CASE WORKER  
Terry, this is who you are...

She hands several files and images over to Anita.

ANITA  
Look, and this is the woman who  
abducted you.

They're mug shots and criminal files for young Ines.

OFFICER #1  
Whatever she told you was just some  
lie she cooked up.

Terry eyes travel to the old criminal records.

MS. TUCKER  
I'm sorry you have to find out this  
way.

OFFICER #1  
Are you sure you don't know where  
she is? No ideas at all?

TERRY  
No.

The officer retreats.

MS. TUCKER  
Give him some room. For now we  
should focus on what's best for  
Terry going forward.

TERRY  
What's best for me?

They don't hear.

MS. TUCKER  
(to case worker)  
He doesn't have any other known  
relatives we can trust.

CASE WORKER  
That's fine, we can place him at  
Sheltering Arms for the time being.

CASE WORKER (CONT'D)	ANITA
It's a family services program.	I know what it is.

CASE WORKER (CONT'D)  
Just for a couple of weeks until we  
can navigate next steps.  
(to Terry)  
If that's alright with you?

The adults turn back to Terry, awaiting his confirmation. Finally, he nods.

**INT. LIVING ROOM, INES APARTMENT - LATER**

Terry, alone in the space, takes his home in for the last time. The front door's ajar, so he doesn't hear Ms. Tucker creep back in, knocking just below the tattered 10 01 sign.

MS. TUCKER  
You ready?

**EXT. INES' APARTMENT BUILDING - LATER**

Terry steps outside with the officials. His block's the quietest it's ever been as he steps into the car.

**INT. SLEEPING QUARTERS, SHELTERING ARMS - DAY**

A room full of bunks. Terry joins OTHER BOYS waking up and making their beds.

**INT. COMMON ROOM, SHELTERING ARMS - LATER**

Terry and Ms. Tucker sit across from each other in silence.

MS. TUCKER  
Were you aware that Ines and Lucky  
had a miscarriage?

Terry's brows furrow.

MS. TUCKER (CONT'D)  
A little boy, while she was in  
jail.

He remains stoic.

MS. TUCKER (CONT'D)  
I know it's a lot on your mind. And  
it will be for a long time... I  
just hate that she got away with  
this for so long...

TERRY  
I don't know where she is...

MS. TUCKER  
That's fine.  
(handing over files)  
(MORE)



MS. TUCKER (CONT'D)

To look over on your own time. ACS still hasn't located your birth family, but we're working on it.

Ms. Tucker grips her temples.

MS. TUCKER (CONT'D)

Everything was such a mess back then, '93, '94. In my office, only records you had on some kids was just an index card.

(then)

I don't know what else to say. Except that I am sorry this happened to you, Terrance.

TERRY

And what about everybody else?

(then)

The lady who kidnapped me, but actually took care of me, is a criminal. I get that. But what about everyone else?

He pushes his chair out.

TERRY (CONT'D)

I think we're done.

**INT. SHELTERING ARMS, RECEPTION - LATER**

Terry heads for the front exit.

TERRY

I left a couple books by my friend's house.

She taps the clipboard on the desk.

COUNSELOR

You gotta sign out.

TERRY

Sign out for what?

COUNSELOR

Every time you leave. You know the time for curfew?

TERRY

*Curfew.*

COUNSELOR

Wait, wait - excuse me! Hello?!

He's already out the door.

**EXT. KITCHEN, MISS ANNIE'S HOUSE - DAY**

Miss Annie gathers dinner ingredients scattered across the countertop as Pea and Terry hang in the adjoined living room.

MISS ANNIE

Pea, where's your mother?

PEA

She said she on her way.

She cast a heartwarming glance at Terry.

MISS ANNIE

Still nothing after all this time?

Terry nods.

MISS ANNIE (CONT'D)

Where you staying?

TERRY

The youth home on 132nd.

PEA

Why don't you come stay with us?  
You know we got room here.

TERRY

I'm not tryna burden anybody.

MISS ANNIE

Baby, I don't know there's such  
thing as 'home' for anybody black,  
but you're more than welcomed here  
if you need some place to *live*.

Terry lingers on Miss Annie's words.

PEA

(switching subjects)

Peep what's going on outside?

Terry leans over Pea to get a view. A WHITE FEMALE NEIGHBOR running out of the house to flag the ice cream truck.

TERRY

She wants him to turn off the music.

The DRIVER continues blasting tunes, but the woman whips her Blackberry phone out and puts the receiver to her ear.

PEA

Ice Cream Iris.

Terry returns back to his spot on the couch. For the first time, he contemplates the comforts of this home.

PEA (CONT'D)

(mocking)

"Hello, officer... yes I'm calling again to complain about how black my neighborhood is."

MISS ANNIE

Neighborhood's getting better if you ask me.

PEA

For who?

MISS ANNIE

Me... and white people! Ha! You know people keep coming 'round, trying to buy the house.

PEA

What? You ain't tell me that.

TERRY

It's gonna get worse?

MISS ANNIE

(not hearing Terry)

Mhm, guess how much.

PEA

Three-Fifty?

MISS ANNIE

Four. 'magine how much it's probably worth. I ain't moving shit. As hard as me and your grandfather worked to get this. But that white couple downstairs paying FOUR TIMES what I used to get.

Terry frowns.

PEA  
If anybody else comes around, you  
let me do the talking.

MISS ANNIE  
Oh, I bet you would.

**EXT. PAYPHONE, NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - LATER**

Terry cradles himself into the booth along a quiet strip.

KIM (O.S.)  
Hello?

TERRY  
(a whimper)  
...Titi?

KIM  
Yeah, Terry is that you?

TERRY  
(whimpering)  
Yeah...

KIM (O.S.)  
Terry, what happened to you?

TERRY  
(whimpering)  
...I don't know...

**EXT. SHELTERING ARMS - SAME TIME**

KIM  
Listen, I'm in New York. I came to  
get you, but I stopped by the home  
and nobody knows where you are.

INTERCUT:

TERRY  
I'm at a payphone.

KIM (O.S.)  
Want to meet me back here?

TERRY  
Okay.

KIM (O.S.)  
Okay. I think you should stop by  
the house first... Pick up any last  
things you want to take with you...

**EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - MOMENTS LATER**

Terry gazes down the long avenue. Heading for the curb, he waits for a car to pass. He drops his skateboard and kicks away from the QUIET sidewalk...

**INT. LIVING ROOM, INES' APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER**

When Terry steps in, we see the figure of Ines packing a few items into a garbage bag.

TERRY  
Ma?

Ines pauses momentarily, then continues on. She's cut her hair into a shorter pixie style, natural texture competing with remnants of relaxer.

INES  
Hi, Terry.

TERRY  
What are you doing?

INES  
I left some things.

Terry tries his best to not side-eye. She continues packing.

INES (CONT'D)  
Don't stand there looking over me.  
I know they already got to you  
so... feel free to run along.

He takes this in.

TERRY  
But can we talk?

INES  
Talk about what?

TERRY  
Are you serious right now?

INES  
Fine, you wanna talk? Let's talk.

Ines drops the bag, sauntering over towards the table. Terry joins, but barely sits down before...

INES (CONT'D)  
- Fetch me my Newports.

TERRY  
You were just over there -  
INES (CONT'D)  
(dismissive)  
Over on the stand.

Terry complies begrudgingly - some things don't change. He returns, slapping the cigs and lighter down on the table.

TERRY (CONT'D)  
Is all they're saying really true?

INES  
What you want me to say? That I  
fucked up? Yeah I fucked up... but  
life goes on, so.

TERRY  
...As long as it's your call -

INES  
- Did I make the choice or did you?  
Standing there in that hospital.

TERRY  
Thinking you was my fucking mother!

INES  
Don't you raise your voice at me.  
I'll still knock your narrow ass  
down -

TERRY  
(resettling)  
- Did Lucky know?

INES  
(reluctantly)  
Yeah he knew. Didn't agree with it,  
but he knew.

Ines puts the cigarette out on her ashtray.

TERRY  
So why'd you do it -

INES  
I don't know why, T. I don't know  
why I did what I did.  
(MORE)

INES (CONT'D)

It was just a little thing that  
became something else...

Silence...

TERRY

...And that makes it right?

INES

- Oh shut the hell up! Who made you  
the chief of right and wrong?  
You think I don't have feelings  
too? Like I didn't spend all those  
years taking care of you?

(then)

- Who the fuck was there to ever  
take care of me?! You want hear  
"sorry," but who's gonna say sorry  
to me!

(then)

God forbid I stand up for anyone  
else, let alone Ines, you the only  
we get to feel sorry for.

Ines finally pulls out a cigarette. Terry gives her the  
chance to calm back down.

TERRY

Did you lie about all of it?

She thinks, pulling out another cigarette.

INES

Not the part about loving you, no.  
Not that you ever cared.

TERRY

Don't put words in my mouth -

INES

Please, nobody gives a shit about  
black women 'cept for other black  
women and even that shit is messy -

TERRY

- That's not true!

INES

- You didn't give a damn unless you  
needed me! Not just you, everybody!

The sound of a siren elsewhere spills in.

TERRY

- You were my mother! Now how am I supposed to feel?

Resettling by the window, Ines sees a few nosey neighbors gathering across the street.

TERRY (CONT'D)

They not gon' let you get away.

INES

I'm not going to jail...

(then)

I'll miss this smelly little fucked up city. Was only a matter of time.

TERRY

Before what?

INES

(thinks, then)

Before I figured out that New York lied. Letting us think it was anymore special or different than anywhere else.

Terry ponders this over.

TERRY

(tearing)

You never loved me... I was just supposed to replace somebody else.

INES

That's really what you think of me? Go through all this, cause of that?

(a moment)

I loved you! I tried to tell you, once... but I was too scared to lose you! ...I never left you on a street corner, Terry. I'm the one that found you.

(then)

You were too young to remember, but I sat with you outside my shelter for hours. In case anyone showed up. Then ACS came. I heard you got placed in some home nearby.

(then)

I got locked up again... But couldn't get you off my mind...

(then)

I am sorry, T. I just wanted to look out for you.

(MORE)



INES (CONT'D)

Make sure you didn't chewed up by the system like I was. Cause lookin' at you, I saw myself... Maybe you would've found a better home. I didn't want to take the chance...

(then)

I was lonely. And I saw someone who needed me... But maybe I'm the one who needed you. Someone to love me.

(then)

But I don't want it anymore, not if it's based on a lie, not if being loved by you or anybody else means not lovin' myself.

Ines resettles in the chair, soothing some angst.

INES (CONT'D)

They can call me whatever they want. I already know half the shit they gonna say and guess what, I still won. I WON! 'Cause I know you're gonna be somebody!

(then)

Whether or not anyone else wants to see that or see ME, I know who the fuck I am!

TERRY

And who am I now, huh?! When was I supposed to get the chance to decide that for myself?

INES

Who are you Terry? What kind of man did I teach you be? Somewhere deep down I hope you know the answer to that.

TERRY

(choking up)

I don't...

Terry wipes his tears, finally beginning to relieve all that's tensed up inside of him.

TERRY (CONT'D)

I wish I didn't know. I wish you did a better job keeping that whole lie to yourself.

(then)

I wish it could've continued, so we could've continued. I wish...

(MORE)

TERRY (CONT'D)

(then)

I wish I knew how to be better to you, so you never felt like you had to leave me alone.

(then)

I'm scared that one day I won't be able to come home anymore. One day I'll show up and it'll be like we never happened. Like this wasn't our home, our living room.

(then)

I miss laying in my own bed. The one you made for me. Where's home for me now, Ma?

Ines remains quiet as Terry stands.

**INT. TERRY'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER**

Terry gathers his own belongings.

**INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Making his way out, Terry beholds Ines at peace on the couch.

TERRY

...War?

INES

(not processing)

What's that?

He plops down beside her, then reaching over to drag the getaway bag to their feet.

**EXT. INES' APARTMENT BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER**

Terry steps out first, then Ines. INES POV on A GROUP OF NEW YOUNG WHITE NEIGHBORS, all spirited as they unload a moving truck. Scattered below on the stoop, A FEW BLACK TENANTS.

FEMALE TENANT

Cops was lookin' for you the other day.

INES

(stepping down)

Them and everybody else.

**EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - LATER**

Terry and Ines let **a few cars rip by**. Terry then hails a cab. As one slows down, he embraces Ines for the last time.

TERRY  
(still holding)  
Now who's gonna protect you?

INES  
(releasing)  
You should go.

**The clamor of police car sirens echo** from somewhere far, off fighting some other crime. Terry gently kisses her forehead. She dips inside the car.

**INT. TAXI CAB - CONTINUOUS**

The CAB DRIVER's already got the meter going. Through the back window, Ines sees the young ~~child~~ man she raised still standing in the street as the car moves to the light.

Cabbie gets a good look at her from the rear view mirror.

CAB DRIVER  
Ok, Miss where to?

She turns around, contemplating.

*CUT TO BLACK.*